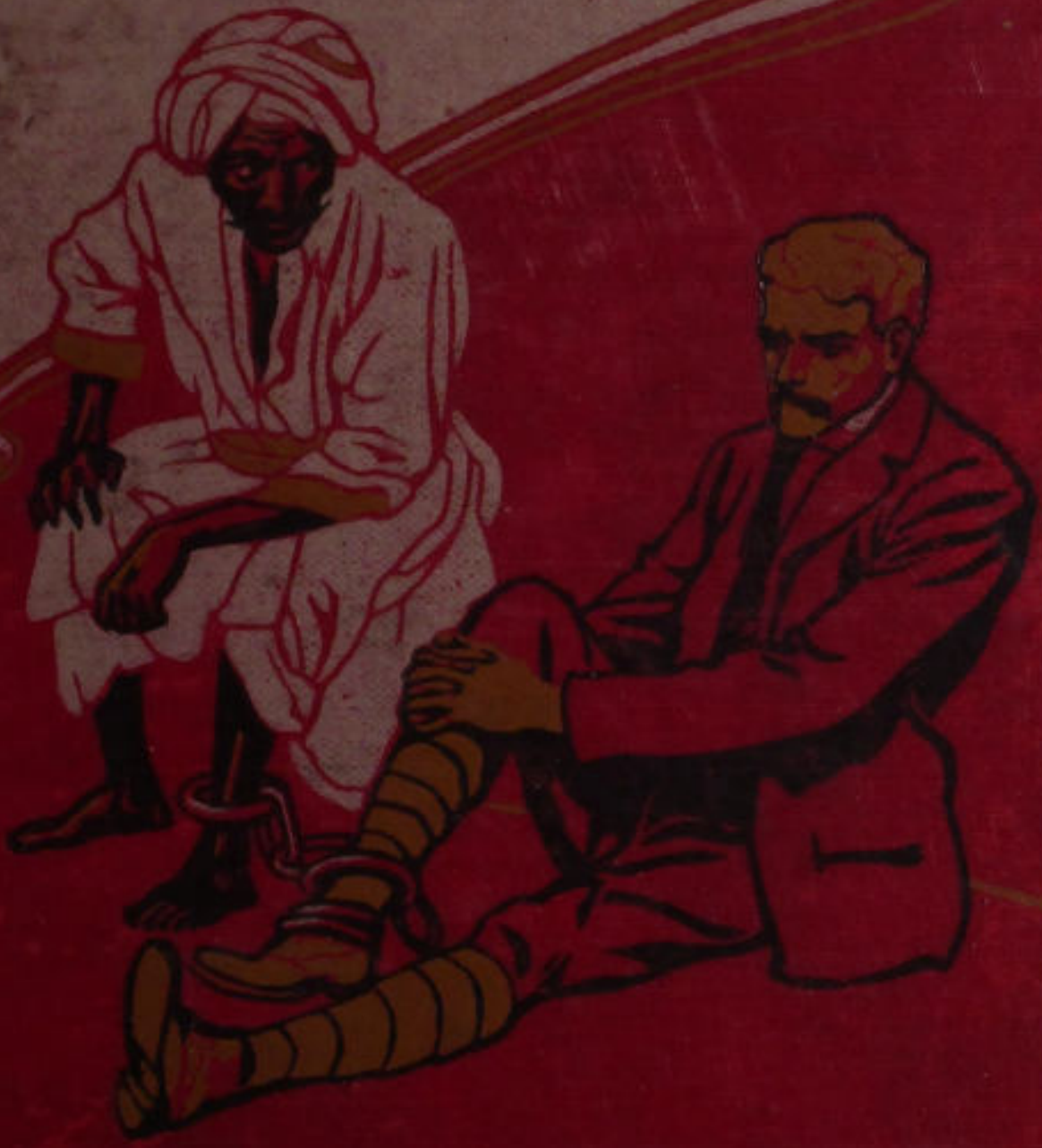
WITH GORDON AT KHARTUM

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD



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With Gordon at Khartum

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"JOHNNIE MOUNTED ON THE SAME CAMEL AS HIS FRIEND"

With
Gordon at Khartum

BY

ELIZA F. POLLARD

Author of "The Doctor's Niece" "The White Standard"
"The Old Moat Farm" &c.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCES EWAN

BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED
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ILLUSTRATIONS

WITH GORDON AT KHARTUM

CHAPTER I

"A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND"

"MOTHER, will it suit you if I ask a friend to stay with me next week?"

The speaker was a young man of one- or two-and-twenty, tall, good-looking, of a pure Anglo-Saxon type, fair hair and complexion, with a well-developed athletic frame, evidently a man accustomed to sports; indeed Harold Anderson had a good repute at Oxford as oarsman and cricketer. His tutors were apt to say that he gave more time to sport than was compatible with his studies. But that was such a general complaint made against young men, that his father, the Rev. William Anderson, Vicar of Berkhamstead, was satisfied to give a casual warning, and leave the rest to his son's good sense. Harold knew that his father wished him to make his mark at the university, and was determined when the time came to put on a spurt and not disappoint him. He was one of those brilliant young men who can trust themselves to accomplish a given task, and who can do in a short time, with perfect ease, what other men would require double time and trouble to acquire. He was the eldest son, and his parents were naturally proud of

him; he had done well at school, and they expected he would take a first-class degree at college. Of course his father looked forward to his taking holy orders, and Harold had at one time considered this a settled question. Suddenly a change had come over him, and in a conversation with his father they had both come to the conclusion that for the present it would be well to leave this an open question. Mr. Anderson was a broad-minded man, and understood full well the reason for his son's hesitation; he also knew that all thoughtful men and women have to pass through certain stages in their religious lives, out of which they more often than not come forth with strengthened faith and more understanding minds. To hurry a young man into the Church was against Mr. Anderson's principles, because he looked upon his office as the highest and most sacred which it can fall to the lot of any man to hold. Mrs. Anderson had been bitterly disappointed, but her husband persuaded her to let the matter drop, assuring her that, if left to himself, Harold would, he was sure, ultimately fulfil all their desires. He was now in his last term, and had come home for the long vacation. To his request, his mother, who was sitting at her writing-table in the morning-room, the windows of which opened on to the vicarage lawn, answered almost reproachfully, "My dear boy, you know your friends are always welcome."

"I do know that both you and my father are more than good on that score," said Harold. "But this is no ordinary friend, Mother, and I am not sure whether my father, as vicar, would care to entertain a Mohammedan."

At this Mrs. Anderson turned round; she was very

like her son—the same fair complexion, refined features, and strong, wise face.

"A Mohammedan!" she repeated.

Harold laughed. "Yes, a Mohammedan; and I am afraid some of the members of the parish might make a grievance of this. But he is really one of the finest fellows I have ever known." Adding, "A perfect gentleman."

"Who is he?" asked Mrs. Anderson, her curiosity and interest aroused.

"He is Prince Hasan, the third son of the Egyptian Khedive Ismail."

As he spoke Harold drew a chair up to his mother's table, sat down beside her, and continued: "Prince Hasan came to Oxford shortly after I did; his father, the Khedive, has a passion for everything English. Do you not remember his coming to England and paying a state visit to Queen Victoria? I was a small boy at the time, but I remember hearing it talked about."

"Of course I remember it," said Mrs. Anderson. "This Prince Hasan is his son, then, I suppose?"

"Yes. It was Pasha Ismail who received the Emperor and Empress of the French at the opening of the Suez Canal. It is wonderful what little impressions these things seem to make on the English people in general," said Harold; "we are so frightfully insular!" and with that he got up impatiently and began pacing up and down the room.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Anderson, "you must remember we have so many home interests; besides, living in the country makes a great difference. If you were talking to your Aunt Mary, a London woman in society, she would probably have the whole thing on the

tips of her fingers, whereas I have had nothing to keep my interest alive; I have no doubt your father will remember all the particulars. I know this Suez Canal business is a magnificent affair, and Mr. Lesseps is considered a grand man to have carried it through."

"It is a marvel of engineering," said Harold; "ninety-nine miles of canal from Port Said to Suez, why, it has opened the world out. But that is not the important point now, it may be the result, for the Khedive's association with foreign countries has made him desirous of giving his sons an insight into European life and educating them up-to-date. He has three sons—at least, three that I know of—Tewfik Pasha, the eldest; Prince Huseyn, his second son; and the man I am speaking to you of, Prince Hasan, the third. They are the sons of a beautiful Georgian slave, whom Ismail Pasha married. She must be not only beautiful but very clever, for she has brought up her sons with the greatest care. Tewfik has always lived with her in her palace at Heliopolis; he has never been sent abroad, but has been educated by European tutors; he speaks English and French fluently, and, I believe, several other languages; his mother has watched over him, knowing, what we do not realize, the jealousies and dangers which surround him as heir to the kalifate. Prince Huseyn was sent to Paris, and has been almost entirely educated there. Prince Hasan came to Oxford with a perfect knowledge of English. He is a very clever man, and has done remarkably well; this year he proposes taking his D.C.L. degree, and will then travel. He has already asked me, though, of course, I have decided nothing before consulting you and Father, to accompany him. It would be a splendid opportunity for me; I should probably go with him to

Egypt, which is what I desire above all things. There are openings for a man there now which did not exist formerly; and at all events I should gain vast experience—learn the manners and customs of the natives, and of the court, &c. Many men have risen in the diplomatic world without as good an opening as I shall have."

"That means," said his mother in an aggrieved tone, "that you will throw up all idea of taking holy orders."

"Not necessarily," answered Harold; "but before I settle down to be a country parson, if ever I do, I desire to see the world. If I go with Prince Hasan, moreover, I shall be no expense to my father, and my time will not be wasted. You see Bert is coming on, and Cecily and Doris will be leaving the school-room; therefore, in these years of waiting, before I can decide what I will ultimately do, I have no right to be a burden on my father, I must earn my own living. I could not bear to see you, as I see many fathers and mothers, oppressed by the expense of growing-up sons dependent upon them. I have already had more than my share, and as soon as I have taken my degree I ought to be doing for myself. I think you will agree with me, Mother, that if I accept Prince Hasan's offer my lot will lie in pleasant places."

Mrs. Anderson had risen, and was now standing beside her son. "You are a dear, good fellow," she said, looking up at him with a mother's pride; he was her eldest son, and, although she would not acknowledge as much to herself, her best beloved. "I wish I could always think your lot would lie in pleasant places, dear; but that might not be good either for you or for me," she sighed, adding quickly, as she heard steps on the gravel-path beneath the window, "There comes your father. We will ask him if he has any objection to Prince Hasan's

visit; if not, then write by to-day's post and invite your friend."

She went out by the long French window into the garden and met her husband. They had had happy, quiet lives, these two, with as few cares as it is possible for a man and woman to have in life. Their children were healthy and handsome, all their hearts could desire; their parish was a pleasant one, their church the chief centre of their existence, and they served it with love and devotion. They had, so far, had no great sorrow. Their hearts were glad, so they had remained young, and were able to look on the pleasant side of life; to enter into their children's joys as light-heartedly as if they were still themselves children. There was something almost boyish in the vicar's greeting to his wife.

"You look serious, Mary," he said; "has that big boy been worrying you, dear?" and, raising his stick, he shook it at Harold, as he too came out into the garden.

"Not at all," answered Mrs. Anderson, linking her arm in his; "but he has astonished me rather, and he may astonish you. He wants to ask Prince Hasan, Khedive Ismail's son, here for a week."

"And why shouldn't he?" said the vicar; "he will be a guest out of the usual running, at least. Have you any objection, my dear?"

"None whatever," she answered; "only, you know, he he is a Mohammedan, and some people might think it strange that you, a vicar, should entertain a heathen."

"First of all, he is not a heathen," answered the vicar; "you forget, a Mohammedan does not worship wood and stone, but one God. His opinions, his faith, differ from ours, but he cannot be classed with idolaters; and even supposing he were, why, then we might convert him.

Think what that would be, Mary. Certainly, ask Prince Hasan, my dear boy," he continued, turning to Harold; "it will be most interesting. I shall have to give a lecture in the village schools after his visit."

As if the matter were settled, he went on talking to his wife about ordinary parish business. In the evening, as father and son sat together after dinner, Harold explained to him what his plans for the future were, and received an unqualified approbation. "It is a splendid opening," said the vicar; "it will give you time to turn round and make up your mind for the future. If I had had a voice in the matter, I could not have wished for any better opening for you."

So it was settled, and that same night Harold wrote to Prince Hasan, asking him to come to the vicarage and make the acquaintance of his family. In due time the prince wrote back, expressing much pleasure in accepting the invitation. Necessarily the advent of an Egyptian prince created great excitement, not only in the vicarage itself but also in the village. The two girls, Cecily and Doris, were especially excited, and Doris never ceased asking Harold what he was like.

"Coal black," he answered; "and he will roll his eyes at you till you are terrified."

"I know that is not true," said Doris, tossing her head. "I am not so ignorant as not to be aware that Egyptians are not black. I wish you would just tell me something about him, Harold."

"Wait and see the hero; that will be far more satisfactory," answered her brother. "He is my friend, and I am prejudiced in his favour."

Cecily was a tall, handsome girl of sixteen, unusually clever; a devourer of books, and therefore possessed a

fair amount of general knowledge. But, as she said, "We never really realize what people or countries are like if we do not see them. When I am grown up, if possible, I shall travel." She was more like her father than her mother, with large gray eyes and soft brown hair. She and Harold were great friends, though he loved to tease her; but still he found her very companionable, and many were the long walks they took together. Indeed, Cecily was his special confidante, and had known of Prince Hasan's offer before either Mr. or Mrs. Anderson had been made aware of it. Though she grieved bitterly at the thought of being separated from Harold for an indefinite time, Cecily agreed with him that it was a splendid offer not to be refused. She was very glad to have an opportunity of seeing Prince Hasan, who was likely to be her brother's companion for the next few years. Mrs. Anderson was somewhat at a loss as to how she ought to treat her stranger, there was the question of food besides religion.

"Do not trouble, Mother," said Harold, "he will conform to our ways; avoid pork, and leave the rest to take care of itself. As for his religion, he will observe that in the most unobtrusive way in this country, though you may be quite sure he will not neglect those observances which are obligatory upon every Mohammedan. Five times in the day they pray; for, says the Koran, 'prayer is the pillar of religion and the key of Paradise', and cannot as with us be left to chance. Their first prayer is before sunrise, the second at noon, the third in the afternoon, the fourth, before sunset, the fifth, the first watch of the night."

"Why, they can get no sleep!" said Doris.

"Evidently enough," answered Harold; "and one

thing has especially struck me—they are not ashamed, as we Christians are, of being found saying their prayers. It has happened more than once that I have been in Prince Hasan's room at one of those especial times, and he has quietly, without making any excuse, stopped what he was doing, or even saying, gone to his praying-carpet, and recited his form of prayer, his face turned towards Mecca; bending the knee and touching the ground with his forehead, and at the end turning to the east or west, invoking the aid of the angels."

"I wonder whether we shall see him do this," said Doris. "It must be very curious."

"There is nothing curious about it," said Harold savagely; "there is something very beautiful to me in this continual acknowledgment of the necessity for prayer and the existence of the unseen world. The whole principle of Mohammedanism is what we should call the working out of our own salvation. They have no Saviour. They have three principal dogmas: 'prayer carries us half-way to God'; 'fasting brings us to the door of His palace'; 'alms procure admission'. Therefore all these things are essentially necessary to man."

Cecily had listened attentively to what her brother said. She was herself very strict in her religious observance, and was therefore likely to appreciate the same in others. Doris was three years younger, a child still, with a pretty cherub face and bright golden hair. She was the plaything of the house; her father called her a "sunbeam", because she came darting in and out. No one ever knew where Doris would be, and her governess, Miss Moran, had much difficulty in holding her in, and obtaining, as she said, the very smallest amount of work compatible with any education at all.

On the appointed day Prince Hasan arrived, a tall, slim gentleman, in European dress, much to Doris's distress. She had hoped he would have been in Oriental costume. The only thing he wore different from others was a fez instead of the ordinary hat. His features were regular, and his dark eyes wonderfully bright and soft. His complexion was similar to a European's, but more opaque; his whiteness he inherited from his Georgian mother. His hair was coal black. The first thing which struck Mrs. Anderson was the great charm in his manner. He was at home at once with them all, courteous and most perfectly adaptable, ready to talk of his own country and his own people, and before the first evening was over he was no stranger, they seemed to have known him for years. He answered the girls any questions they liked to ask him, and they were not shy; he talked with Mrs. Anderson about his mother, how wisely she ruled his father's house; and to her question of "how many wives Ismail had", he answered, "My father has but one wife, the mother of his sons. By the laws of Mohammed he may have four, but it is rare for a khedive to have more than one wife. She has had the whole management of our education; she has chosen our teachers, of course, with my father's assistance. You must not imagine, madam, that women are of no importance in our lives; the wife rules the family quite as much as you European ladies do, and their task is more difficult, because the household is so large. The number of slaves necessitates close supervision and much care; they are of all ages, old and young, and babies. It is one great family, and they are all like children, cared for and spoilt."

"Ah, but slavery is a very wicked thing," said Doris.

He smiled at her. "There are many sorts of slavery," he answered. "In the East it has always existed, and I doubt whether it will ever be entirely done away with. I do not think our household slaves would exchange with your servants. They are well fed, well clothed, and have little to do because of their number. You in England do not understand the difference between house slaves from generation to generation. The slave-trade, as carried on in Africa, that is what everyone must desire should be done away with. But if we were to-morrow to liberate our household slaves, and desire them to go out free into the world on their own account, I do not think they would care to obey us. It is very important that the difference between household slaves and the trade in slaves should be made clear to the English mind."

This and many other things he taught them, and the Egyptian question, which was then being much discussed in Europe, appeared in quite a different light to Mr. Anderson. Many were the conversations he had with the young prince, and when he took leave of them they all felt they were losing a friend.

"You will come back and see us again," Mrs. Anderson said at parting.

"Madam, I will come back as often as you ask me. I have had a delightful holiday, and I only trust nothing will prevent your son accompanying me on my foreign tour, and going with me to my home."

"I cannot see anything in an ordinary way to prevent it," said Mr. Anderson. "I wish I were a young fellow myself to have such a chance."

This first visit was repeated several times, and each time with greater success, until it grew to be an under-

stood thing that when Harold came home Prince Hasan should come with him. The following year he took his D.C.L. degree; and Harold had come out, as his father and mother had hoped he would, first class, high up on the list.

In the autumn of the same year they took a final leave of the vicarage. Doris absolutely wept as much for Prince Hasan as for Harold. "He is so gentle and kind!" she said.

The house seemed very empty when the two young men were gone; but a few weeks later there arrived a great packing-case from the Khedive Ismail to Mrs. Anderson, containing rich cloths and fine silks embroidered in gold and silver, bracelets, ornaments for the hair, girdles in chased silver and gold, in fact such a wealth of gifts that Mr. Anderson would have hesitated to accept them, had he not known it would have been discourteous to do otherwise.

And so that short chapter in all their lives closed, to be remembered in years to come with infinite pleasure, if with some sadness.

CHAPTER II

OLD FRIENDS

I HAVE just had a telegram from my father, the Khedive; I am afraid I must start immediately. There are likely to be difficulties at Cairo. I cannot tell you any particulars, because they are of a confidential nature. I am heartily sorry to part from you, Harold. We have been good friends, and you have made my journeyings pleasant and instructive to me, but I do not suppose you will be willing to follow me to Cairo; there is no pleasant prospect before us, I fear."

"Indeed I shall only be too glad to do so," said Harold. "I always contemplated going back with you, but it is for you to decide whether you will have me or not."

"Have a man with me whom I can trust!" said Prince Hasan. "You scarcely realize what that means. In Egypt we trust no man, except"—he paused, and looked at Harold—"Englishmen."

"Thank you!" said Harold. And then he continued: "You have had good specimens of Englishmen out there lately. Chinese Gordon did you a good turn or two. I remember hearing my father say he was the finest man he knew; his influence over men of every nationality was beyond all imagining."

"Yes, I only wish we had him now, for I foresee a crisis. I shall do my best to persuade my father to get

him to return to us. He did splendid work, but he was sent out, as you know, solely to put a stop to slavery. I have before tried to explain to you the impossibility of doing this completely and satisfactorily. Gordon realized it to the full, but in England you cannot. Slavery has existed in every part of the world, and in every age, but more especially in the East. In England you have not learnt to distinguish between domestic slavery and the slave-trade. It was against this last Gordon warred, unsuccessfully, as he himself acknowledged, but if he comes to us now it will be on quite a different footing. We have that madman, the Mahdi, to reckon with, and I greatly fear he will give us considerable trouble, and that for some time to come there will be war throughout the country. We have already many Englishmen amongst us, Swiss, Germans, and Austrians, whom my father has been wise enough to place at the head of affairs. You will not, therefore, be alone if you come with me. You will have compatriots, and I need hardly say you can count upon my friendship."

"Even if you tried to dissuade me, I should still go to Egypt and take my chance," answered Harold.

"And your people at home," asked Hasan, "what will they say?"

"They are prepared for it," answered Harold. "My father is most desirous that I should continue my journeyings with you, and that I should accept any post offered me by your government. I shall meet with no difficulties there."

"Then it is a settled thing," said Prince Hasan, his face lighting up. "We will get our papers in order, and meet the first boat which touches at Marseilles for

Egypt. I think we ought to be ready to start in three days."

Harold's heart was lighter than Prince Hasan's, because when they turned their faces eastward he did not yet realize what the life he was entering upon entailed; but Prince Hasan, young as he was when he left Egypt, knew all the intrigues of the Egyptian court. He had accompanied Ratif Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army, in the Abyssinian war, and had there as a mere boy received his baptism of fire. Like most Orientals he was older than his years, and was now both ready and willing to take his share in maintaining his father's position as khedive. But he arrived too late, the crisis had come, and was over. The morning of the day when he reached Cairo the fiat had gone forth. Ismail had once more broken faith with the nations, and they had forced the Sultan of Constantinople to send him his dismissal. Then a touching scene had taken place in the beautiful palace. Ismail sent for his son Tewfik, and when the latter entered his father's presence, we are told, the old Khedive rose, saluted him in a most dignified manner, kissed his hand in token of homage, and afterwards embraced him, saying that he hoped he would be more fortunate than his father had been. So Tewfik was made Khedive, and that same evening Ismail went on board his great yacht, the *Mahrousa*, with his wife and household, and sailed away from the land of his birth and of his glory, as so many have done before and after him. He might well have exclaimed, as did Boadil el Chico, the last of the Moors, "Allah akba, when did misfortunes ever equal mine?" And the ship went down below the golden sea-line and disappeared in the horizon, and a new era dawned for that most ancient of king-

doms. An aureole of religious romance hangs over Egypt, as it does over no other country in the world. The patriarchs of old trod its soil; it was the nursery of learning and science, fruitful beyond measure. A land of refuge even for the Christ; we see the virgin mother and child beneath the shadow of the mighty pyramids, resting from the mid-day heats. There is not a century of the world's history in which Egypt has not played her part. It forms a link between the east and the west; that long strip of sea, the waves of which once rolled back at the command of the Almighty to let the Israelites pass over from captivity to freedom, separates two continents; great deserts stretch on either side, an allegory in itself, typical of the human soul—its wanderings through the desert of sin, the purifying waters of baptism, and the great hereafter in that Canaan which we all hope to attain to. So we think of that ancient land as quite apart from the present modern Egypt, which has sprung up out of the ashes of the past.

Harold found himself in the midst of, happily, a bloodless revolution. The three sons of Ismail were deeply attached to each other; both Prince Hasan and Prince Huseyn did willing homage to the new khedive. Thus these these three young men—for the new khedive was only twenty-six years of age—made a bond to stand together as one man. Indeed, before she set sail with her husband, their mother had sent for them and admonished them with tears to hold fast one to the other, and they had promised her they would do so. She had been a very beautiful woman, and a very wise one, and her sons both respected and loved her. She had also desired to see Hasan's English friend; so Harold had been ushered

into her presence, and she greeted him, speaking in perfect English, and though, according to custom, her face was hidden, the beautiful eyes pleaded eloquently as she begged of him to remain with her sons.

"I am quite willing to do so," he answered, "but I am afraid I shall be of but little use to them, as I have no knowledge of political life."

"Then you will learn," she said, "for you English have a natural gift for the making and the governing of nations; besides, you are Hasan's friend, he trusts you. A true friend is the best gift Allah can bestow upon man. Farewell!"

He bowed in answer, and left the room with a certain sense of responsibility upon him which he had not felt before. This feeling rather increased during the following day.

His affection for the two brothers and theirs for him was of an unusual character. Prince Hasan was the cleverer of the two, but Tewfik was so thoroughly in earnest, so desirous to secure by every means in his power the prosperity of his country, that Harold felt the deepest respect for him, and an intense desire to serve him. They trusted him completely, asked his advice, and often consulted him upon subjects with which he was by no means familiar. The result was that all his spare time was spent in studying the last thirty years of Egyptian history, and to accomplish this he was not infrequently up all night long. Thus, after the first few weeks, there probably was not a man in Egypt who knew better than he did the interior state of the country. To strengthen his government was Tewfik's aim and object. He allowed nothing to escape his notice, and went personally into every measure

suggested by the foreign consuls; but when he had interviewed his prime minister, Riaz Pasha, and the heads of the different departments, he would find his way to Harold's office, and invariably held council with him and Hasan.

"You have no public appointment," he would say to him; "you are an outsider. Whatever question I ask, you can answer me without breaking faith with anyone else. This is a great relief to me. I can speak openly to you, and that is what I can do to no one else."

There was at Cairo, even as there is now, a fairly large European population. It consisted especially of French and English, the financial commissioners and their families, the military element, and a vast number of clerks and civil officials.

Therefore, if the fact of his having no public appointment was a satisfactory one to the prince, it was quite the contrary to Harold. The favour he enjoyed with the princes soon became known, and his position entailed upon him the greatest discretion. When he went amongst strangers, or even intimates, he found it difficult to avoid answering indiscreet questions. More than once he had occasion to say, "You must excuse me, but I never talk shop when I come out to rest myself; I leave that behind me in the palace. And you must remember it is not my business I am transacting; indeed I have no business at all, I am simply Prince Hasan's private secretary."

Having done this once or twice, by degrees he ceased to be so greatly molested.

One day Prince Hasan sent for him. "My brother is anxious I should go to Alexandria," he said, "and, of course, you must go with me. We shall start to-night.

We have been informed that a serious Arab revolt is pending, and we are anxious to know how far this is true. There is no believing anything people say, so I am going to reconnoitre, and with your help I hope we shall get to the bottom of it."

"I am not sorry to go to Alexandria," answered Harold. "Ever since I have been here, in every letter my mother has asked me to find out the whereabouts of a Mrs. Cave, an old school friend of hers, who married a missionary. He died about three years ago. She has remained in Egypt, and is, we believe, at Alexandria. People have such a vague idea of distances! Being in Egypt, my mother thinks I must easily get to Alexandria; she is very anxious to have news of her friend. Mrs. Cave has three children, and my mother wishes she should send her eldest boy to her to be educated, but she has refused to part with him or with either of the little girls. She devotes herself to mission work among the Copts and Arabs."

"It would be better for her to return home," said Prince Hasan. "Egypt at the present moment is no fitting place for a lonely woman and her children."

"She was a missionary before she married Mr. Cave," answered Harold, "and they then came out to Egypt together as missionaries. He died in Abyssinia, and she has ever since been working among the Coptic females; she is deeply interested in her work, and will not hear of throwing it up. Her husband did a good deal for the building of an Anglican church at Alexandria, and she wrote in a letter to my mother that all her interests lie in this country; that she would feel herself lost if she returned to England."

"Nevertheless it would be well if she did return,"

said Prince Hasan; "Alexandria is especially unsafe just now. It is full of Arabs, and Arabi Pasha is giving my brother much trouble. He is at the head of a strong national party, who hate all foreigners, resenting their interference in our national affairs. I am going to see him; he is building fortifications all round Alexandria, and he will not desist from doing so either at the request of the allies, the Sultan, or the Khedive."

"Are you going to try and stop him?" said Harold.

"I must; the allies will not allow it," answered Hasan. "I have the English consul-general's ultimatum in my pocket, which I shall lay before Arabi. You will be ready to start this evening."

"Of course I shall," answered Harold.

"We shall take the new railway," said Prince Hasan, smiling. "It is not very new, seeing it was finished in '65; but it is still known by that name."

Harold had little difficulty in discovering Mrs. Cave's house. She was well known in Alexandria. The mission-house was situated between the new town and the native quarters. Mrs. Cave was a woman of a little over forty, still handsome, with a sad face when at rest, but which changed at once when she spoke, lighting up with a wonderful sweetness, which accounted for the influence she had obtained over the native women, amidst whom her life was almost entirely spent. She had three children—her eldest boy, John; a girl of ten, called Elsie; and the youngest, a small child of five years, born just before her father's death, who bore the Egyptian name of Isa. There were good schools at Alexandria, and she sent them there every day till four o'clock in the afternoon, during which time she devoted herself to missionary work, but her evenings and mornings she gave to her

own children. John was a fine handsome lad, and won Harold's heart at once.

"I know it will end in my being obliged to send Johnnie away," she said sadly, "and it is very good of your mother to think of me; but then she was always thoughtful of others, and we were great friends."

"Why do you not come home yourself?" asked Harold.

"Because I have an object to live for here which I should not have in England. I have been twelve years in Egypt doing mission work. Johnnie was only two years old when we came. I am deeply interested in the natives; I work amongst them and with them every day, and it keeps me from thinking and grieving. If I went back to England I should have nothing to do. I have other reasons. Our means are very small. I have a certain income from the Missionary Society which helps us to live; the climate is good, the children are well. I do not think I should be right in throwing this position over. I am not likely, at my age, to get as remunerative and as congenial an occupation in England."

"But the children," said Harold.

"Johnnie must go, I know, next year," she answered; "but there is no reason why the girls should. We have here an English population, an English church, and good schools. What more can they require? When they are older, I will send them if necessary."

"We could not leave Mother; why do you want us to?" said the elder girl, Elsie, throwing one arm round her mother's neck. She was a tall girl, with heavy brown hair, parted on her forehead, and tied back with a crimson ribbon. It was the only colour about her, for her dress, like her little sister's, was of white linen. She had what is generally defined as an interesting face, with

much of her mother's sadness in it. Harold had a strange feeling as he looked at her for the first time. "That child has a doomed face," he thought. The little one, on the contrary, was sunny and bright, with yellow Saxon hair hanging to her waist; a clinging, laughing little mortal, impetuous and eager. She sprang on her mother's lap and hugged her.

"Me not leave Mother," she said; "naughty man, go away!"

They all laughed, and Harold no longer pressed the matter. He saw that Mrs. Cave was a woman who, having made up her mind, was not likely to change.

"We will give you a real English cup of tea," she said, rising; "and then Johnnie shall show you he is no dunce, but is, I think, as well advanced as most English lads of his age. Still, he must go to England some day. We know that, don't we, boy?" and she put her arm round him.

"Yes, we know it," answered Johnnie; "for, you see, sir," he said, addressing Harold, "I am my mother's only son, and I have to take my father's place and be a missionary, as he was."

"Then you will have to go to college and be trained," said Harold.

"I am afraid we shall not be able to afford college," said Mrs. Cave; "but there are other ways of attaining the end we desire, and I have some influence which I must bring to bear for his advancement. By the by, Mary always told me that she meant her eldest son to take holy orders. Have you done so?"

"No, I have not," answered Harold, colouring slightly. "I am afraid I have disappointed my mother on that score."

"Why have you?" asked Mrs. Cave.

"I cannot answer your question exactly at present," he said, "but my father and myself have both agreed that I had better wait; and as Prince Hasan and myself have become great friends at college, I agreed to accompany him on his travels, and am now with him in the position of his private secretary. But, of course, this will not always last, and when I return to England I shall have to make my final choice."

Mrs. Cave looked at him earnestly. "And I trust you will choose the better part," she said. "I will pray for you, but first of all pray for yourself."

"You have given me the same advice as my father gave me," said Harold; "I am not likely to forget it. Now, little ones," he continued, turning to the children, "this is too serious talk for you. See what I have brought you!" and he drew from his pockets sundry little parcels, gifts which Mrs. Anderson had sent for Harold to take with him for her friend's children.

There was naturally considerable excitement in undoing the parcels. Mrs. Cave withdrew a little apart to read the letter which accompanied the gifts.

"I wish I could persuade you to come home, my dear Agnes," her friend wrote. "I think your exile has been long enough, it is time you took a rest. There is a little cottage in our village which would just suit you and your children. I always think of you as I pass it. Try and make up your mind to come, but if you will not do so, at least send Johnnie. I think your boy and my Bertie must be very nearly of the same age; they would be companions for each other. You need make no difficulty as regards expense, for you know I have money independent of my husband. If we are not rich we can

still manage to do for your boy as we shall for Bertie. We consider it our duty, your husband died at his post."

Tears sprang into Mrs. Cave's eyes as she read. "It is very good of your mother, very good indeed," she said, turning to Harold; "I will write to her and tell her that I will try to send Johnnie in the autumn. This is the month of May; if I send him in September, it will be time enough for the schools."

She could say nothing more, for the children were clamouring round to show her their gifts: Isa enraptured over a real English doll in long clothes, Johnnie and Elsie with books and presents suitable to their ages—all three supremely happy. Then Mrs. Cave said: "Quick, children, put everything away now, and let us get tea. Call Ayesha." A Moslem Egyptian girl of some fourteen years appeared. She had a face such as we see in old manuscripts and museums—straight features, olive complexion, and black eyes.

"This girl is one of my converts," said Mrs. Cave; "she is a good type of her race. She is not as yet a baptized Christian, because it is so difficult to make the Mohammedans understand the divinity of Christ. To them He is a prophet of a lower grade than Mohammed."

The tea-party was a merry one, and somehow or another it happened that henceforth Harold was a daily visitor to Mrs. Cave's house, and learnt much from her concerning the natives, which was to prove useful to him in the future. One afternoon she was deeply distressed. "I am afraid we shall have serious mischief," she said, "if the Arab population is not quelled. Rumours are rife amongst them that the English and French are going to take possession of the country, drive out the

native population, and put all Mussulmans to the sword. Something ought to be done, and that quickly, to pacify them."

"We are quite aware that mischief is abroad," said Harold, "and everything is being done to soothe and satisfy Arabi Pasha; but it is very difficult to do this. He is a fanatic, and objects intensely to any military command being held by the Turks or Circassians; he will not hear of a Christian being placed in any position of power. The allies are equally firm, and now the Sultan has ordered Arabi to appear before him and answer for his dissatisfaction, but he flatly refuses to go to Constantinople. I wish I could persuade you, Mrs. Cave, to go with the children to Cairo. I do not think Alexandria a safe place for English women and children. Prince Hasan was speaking to me on the subject only yesterday. Arabi and his adherents are for ever haranguing the people, and they are becoming more and more turbulent. Don't you think it would be better if you went away, if only for a time?"

"I am so well known here," answered Mrs. Cave. "I think whatever happened I shall run very little risk of being molested; the Arabs know me, and the women are friendly with me. No, unless things get much worse I think I shall stay here. I have no friends at Cairo, and it would be a great expense."

"You need not take expense into consideration," said Harold. "Prince Hasan would give you free railway tickets for yourself and children, and I am sure the chaplain at Cairo would welcome you."

"You are very pertinacious," said Mrs. Cave, smiling. "Well, I promise you that if things are not quieter in a day or two, I will go. Does that satisfy you?"

"I suppose it must," answered Harold; "but I should be better pleased if I might see you off to-night."

"That is quite impossible. I must put my house in order before I leave, and by that time I believe things will be settled, and I shall not have to go at all," she said, smiling.

"I hope so," answered Harold. But he spoke doubtfully, with an anxious, undefined feeling that there was danger in the air.

CHAPTER III

THE MASSACRE

THE day was just dawning when Harold was awakened by shouting and screaming in the streets, accompanied by the sound of many steps and savage yells. He sprang out of bed, ran to the window, threw it wide open, and looked out. To his surprise and horror he saw hundreds of Arabs with spears and scymitars rushing hither and thither to the right hand and to the left. Slipping into his clothes, he was just leaving his room to make enquiries, when a loud knock at his door was followed by Prince Hasan's appearance.

"What I feared has taken place," he said rapidly. "That man Arabi has so effectually roused the natives that they are rushing loose over the city, entering the houses, and killing every foreigner they can lay their hands on. Quick! my man is bringing a native dress. Put it on, you are not safe in European clothes."

In a few minutes Harold found himself arrayed in full trousers of linen, a shirt with wide sleeves, a kaftan reaching to the ankles, confined at the waist by a girdle, a linen skull-cap, a red fez with a tassel, round which a turban was wound. Thus he was completely transformed.

Whilst the servant was dressing him, Prince Hasan explained:

"It is that man Arabi; he has been haranguing the native Arabs until he has driven them mad, and now

he is nowhere to be found, the rascal! You'll do," he added, looking him down; "but you had better stay in the house."

"I cannot," answered Harold, "I must find my way somehow to Mrs. Cave's. Their house stands apart, and though she says she is safe, no one is safe with an infuriated mob let loose."

"You cannot go there," said Prince Hasan; "or, if you insist on doing so, I must accompany you."

They went to the window again and looked out. It was a frightful scene, the white-clothed, turbanned figures, with their dark faces, hideous in their fury. Many Europeans had rushed out of their houses at the noise, and were instantly killed; blood was flowing in the streets. Some of the foreigners in sheer panic had rushed back into their houses, only to be followed and murdered in cold blood. It was daylight now, and the sight was terrific.

"I must go to that poor creature," said Harold, taking up his revolver.

Prince Hasan raised no further opposition, but called two or three of his own guards, and bade them follow him. Descending into the streets, he himself attempted to speak to the mob, but in vain. They laughed, a hideous laugh, and rushed on; they had tasted blood, and their thirst was not slaked. A few recognized the prince, and even made way for him and his followers.

"Keep close up against the houses, and hold your face down that they may not see its whiteness," whispered the prince to Harold, as they pushed their way onwards. More than once they stopped, attempting to save the life of some poor wretch who vainly strove to escape the murderers.

The houses were invaded, shrieks and cries rung in the air—the scene was too dreadful for description. In vain the government officials did their best to stem the tide; they were but one man to a score. Mrs. Cave's house, as we have said, lay between the native town and the new city, and the Arabs, emerging from their own dwellings on their way to the city, passed in front of the mission-house. As Harold caught sight of it, he saw that it had already been attacked.

"We are too late," he said between his teeth.

The two young men ran forward, leapt the paling, and the first sight they saw was Mrs. Cave's speared body, lying full length on the door-step. She had evidently been in the act of trying to escape with Elsie, who had also received a spear-thrust and lay dead beside her. A few yards behind Johnnie had fallen; but the passage was dark, and it was not easy to decide whether he was dead or alive—evidently he had been left for dead. Harold lifted him in his arms and carried him to the little sitting-room. Prince Hasan and his men in the meantime had done the same for Mrs. Cave and her little girl, but they had already passed away.

"Is that all?" asked the prince, looking at Harold.

"No, there was another child," he said. "A little child of five years old, and an Egyptian servant-girl; they may be hidden somewhere. Seek for them while I attend to the boy."

It was in vain, they hunted high and low, neither the child nor the maid could be found.

Of that so lately happy family, Johnnie was the only one left, and he was still unconscious.

"I must leave you," said Prince Hasan, "this massacre must be stopped. It will not be safe for you to carry

the boy into the streets. I will leave you two of my men as guards outside; you had better remain here."

Harold nodded, and the prince left him.

"Send a doctor if you can," were Harold's last words. "I can only partially stop the bleeding. I am afraid a small artery has been cut, and I have nothing at hand to prevent the bleeding bursting out again."

"I will do so," said the prince, and he went quickly out, leaving Harold alone with the dead, and, as he feared, the dying.

As the prince retraced his steps to the palace, he again made every effort, at the risk of his own life, to check the massacre. Dead bodies were lying in the streets, the natives were throwing up their arms and shouting to Allah. It was a wild scene. He sent a messenger immediately for Arabi, whose house was beyond the city walls. Either he really was, or pretended to be, ignorant of what was going on. When summoned, he immediately mounted his horse with some of his chief officers and men, and, riding into the midst of the rebels, harangued them—told them they were good Mussulmen, that they had shown their zeal for their religion and country, and must now desist; the Europeans had had their lesson, and would probably profit by it. The massacre was stayed as if by enchantment.

"You will be responsible for this to my brother," said Hasan, when Arabi reported that the city was quiet "He will communicate with the Sultan. You are perhaps not aware that an Anglo-French fleet is assembling at Souda Bay, and I have telegraphed to the British admiral what is happening here. I have also telegraphed to my brother at Cairo, and he will probably be here in a few hours."

The Arab chief laughed.

"All this is nothing to me," he said. "I have the whole Arab nation with me. We are not going to be slaves of the English; we are not going to be made Christians of."

"You are not asked to," said the prince. "But I am not going to argue with you; others will do that more effectually than I can." And he turned haughtily away.

Arabi went forth also, with his head high, and was greeted by his followers with shouts and yells of approval. In the city there was bitter weeping and wailing for those who had fallen victims to this attack. Upwards of one hundred and fifty Europeans had been killed, and there were several women and children who had disappeared and could not be accounted for. Fathers, mothers, husbands flocked to the government-house with their bitter complaints. Every assistance possible was given them.

Johnnie, when he recovered consciousness, was carried to the prince's palace, and a room and a nurse provided for him. The doctor pronounced his recovery certain. He had had a spear-thrust through his shoulder, but, strange to tell, no vital part had been touched; he was simply suffering from fright and loss of blood. When he could speak, he told Harold that, hearing a great noise and knocking at the door, his mother had run down. Elsie, who slept in her room, had followed her. He also had risen, and was on the bottom step when the door was opened, and he saw his mother fall, and the faces of those horrible black men crowding in. Then Elsie, with a shriek, fell also. He had no time to reach them, before he was himself transfixed with a spear-

thrust. Then he lost consciousness and knew nothing until Harold arrived.

"And Isa, did you not see her?" asked Harold anxiously.

"I don't remember," answered the boy; "she must have been asleep."

He broke into passionate weeping, crying bitterly for his mother.

"Is she badly wounded?" he asked.

"She cannot come to you, you must be patient," said Harold. For they had been obliged to tell him she was wounded, and Elsie also. "Now, try to sleep."

The nurse made Harold a sign to leave the room, which he did, and at once set about searching after the youngest child, Isa. He was not alone, others were occupied in the same way. These lost ones seemed to call for their help. Who knew what their fate might be, whereas the dead lay sleeping, their troubles over, "safe in the arms of Jesus".

On the following day, when the dead were laid to their eternal rest, there were many present to whom the words, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours" appealed with realistic force.

For the finding of Isa a heavy reward was offered. Both Prince Hasan and Harold went amongst the Arab population of the town and the neighbouring villages in search of the child, but neither she nor the Egyptian maid-servant could be heard of. That they had been killed was doubtful, as their bodies had not been found.

"Fortunately she is very young," said Prince Hasan. "Had she been the other girl's age, it would have been more serious, for she would probably have been sold and

sent into some harem, and so never heard of again. But this child will not yet be shut up; her fair appearance and her golden hair will mark her; she may yet be found, I do not at all despair. I have some Arab followers, and I will speak to them concerning her; they may be able to trace her."

With this vague hope Harold was obliged to be satisfied. As soon as possible he sold all Mrs. Cave's possessions. There was but little money in the house, and that little was expended in laying her and Elsie in the same grave. Then he wrote to his mother. Of course the news of what had taken place at Alexandria had already reached England, and the general indignation was great.

"You will communicate with me at once," Harold had written, "for we shall not remain here longer than necessary."

Troops were at once sent out under Sir Garnet Wolseley. Arabi, though threatened with the consequences, continued to strengthen his fortifications at Alexandria. On the 10th of July the first shot was fired from H.M.S. *Alexandria*. The forts answered, but were soon silenced, and before many days were reduced to ruins.

By the Khedive's orders Johnnie remained at the palace, though every house door was opened to him, and every English woman would willingly have taken him in and mothered him. But Harold had determined not to lose sight of him until he had seen him safely on board ship on his way home to England. From the bonny rosy boy he had been he was reduced to a mere shadow, nervous in the extreme, starting at every sound.

"I am so sorry," he said more than once to Harold

"I cannot help it. I am afraid I am a terrible coward; but I always see those horrid black faces, with their rolling eyes, as they struck my mother down." And with difficulty he repressed his tears.

He knew now that she was dead; he knew also that Elsie was dead. They had told him that Isa was probably alive and safe, for everyone believed that the Egyptian girl had taken her away to some place of safety.

"If she is with Ayesha, she is all right," he said; "for she was devoted to Isa, loving her next to my mother. She will bring her back."

"Do you think she is to be trusted?" Harold asked him.

"I should have thought so," he answered; "but who can tell now! I should like to stay here with you till she is found," he added. "I do not think Mother would have wished me to leave her behind. She was our baby, and we all loved Isa so. Don't send me to England yet; I will be very good, and not bother you."

Harold felt that the responsibility of keeping him with them was serious, but he agreed to keep him a few weeks just to pacify him.

The English do not generally sit down under an insult, and on this occasion they acted with promptitude. Troops were sent out, and arrived in August; and though the men suffered greatly from heat and insufficient provisions, they advanced rapidly, and on the 9th September, beneath a splendid Eastern moonlight, they charged Arabi's troops at Mahsameh and drove them back. Three nights later, under the cover of darkness, an army of fifteen thousand men moved silently forward till they came close up to the enemy; so close, indeed, that

with difficulty they avoided their outposts. As the day dawned, suddenly, without any warning, the Highlanders charged into the midst of the Arabs, and before six o'clock in the morning the great battle of Tel-el-Kebir was fought and won. The whole army joined in the pursuit of the remnant of Arabi's army, and succeeded in dispersing it and taking him prisoner. Thus in twenty days the campaign was brought to an end, and the British troops entered Cairo in triumph. All England rang with the news of this great victory. A handful of Englishmen against a horde of savages! In a few hours Tel-el-Kebir was a familiar name in the mouths even of children.

Arabi, with his ministers, was brought to trial, and condemned to death.

Our commanders tempered justice with mercy, and commuted the punishment to imprisonment for life in Ceylon.

The Khedive, with Prince Hasan and their suite, returned to Cairo, Harold taking Johnnie with him.

CHAPTER IV

JOHNNIE'S DESPAIR

NOTWITHSTANDING every effort made by the government, police, and by private friends, the search for Isa was unsuccessful. Both she and the little handmaid had disappeared. The only conclusion Prince Hasan could come to was, that they must have escaped out of the house and been killed. That their bodies were not found was accounted for by the supposition that they might have wandered beyond the precincts of the city, and there met their end. Isa's fair face and golden hair would have betrayed her origin. They did not venture to tell Johnnie this, for he took the matter so deeply to heart. He went to Cairo much against his will, for he hated leaving the place which had been his home so long. Nevertheless the change did him good, and he quickly recovered his health; still, not a day passed but what he reverted to his loss. He was by no means an ordinary boy, for he had been his mother's companion; and when such is the case, a child's mind develops rapidly, especially a fatherless child; and Johnnie had, since his father's death, grown to feel that sooner or later the care of his mother and sisters would be his work in life. He remembered his father well; he had stood beside his bed when he was dying, and had listened to his commendations. "You are very young now," his father had said to him; "but you will grow up, Johnnie, and God grant

that you may grow up a good man. You were born in a land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the heathens reign supreme, even as they did when Joseph dwelt in the land. He remained faithful to the God of his fathers, and was blessed. Do thou likewise, my son; remember always the first commandment, with promise: 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land'."

"I will remember," said Johnnie. The impressions he then received were so strong that they had taken possession of his young life. He had naturally a character which does not forget, and in the midst of his play the thought of his mother had been ever present with him. However he might be occupied, in work or play, a wish of hers, a thought that she might be anxious at his absence, was sufficient to make him hurry home lest she should miss him. He managed always to pass by the girls' school, and take the two children with him. At first this caused him to be considerably laughed at by his fellows, but it made no difference to him. He looked them straight in the face, and said: "They are my care; you have fathers, they have none." After which he was never molested.

It is not surprising, therefore, that having lived and thought for others, as few children are called upon to do, he should feel acutely the loneliness and desolation which had fallen upon him. There was a fierce hunger at the boy's heart for his mother's love, and for the clinging hands of the little sisters. There is no despair greater than a child's, because the unformed mind cannot stretch itself into the future. It just suffers with all its strong animal feeling almost without hope; the present and the past exist, but the future is a blank. And so it

ofttimes happened that a great despair came over Johnnie as he sat in his little room in the palace, or wandered out into the streets beneath the trees in the gardens of that beautiful city of Cairo. Instinctively he scanned the faces of the children, if perchance he might find the little face of Isa amongst them, and then he would turn away ashamed of his folly; whether he would or no, the tears poured down his face, and he would go and throw himself on the grass in some solitary corner, and weep from the very depths of his heart. This happened to him one day, or rather one evening, for the sun was setting—one of those glorious Eastern sunsets, reddening land and sky—when suddenly a voice spoke to him. "Little boy, little boy," it said, "what is the matter with you? Why are you weeping?"

Johnnie was angry at being caught, ashamed of himself; he had hidden himself in this little corner, where the trees and the shrubs grew thickest, so that he might not be seen. He stopped sobbing, but would not answer, nor even look up to see who this stranger was who spoke to him. "He will go away," he thought, "if I do not answer him." But the stranger did not go away; on the contrary, he threw himself down on the grass beside him, and repeated his question: "Little boy, little boy, what is the matter?" For a few seconds Johnnie resisted, but a will stronger than his own mastered him, and, turning on his side, he opened his eyes, from which the tears were still flowing, and he saw lying beside him a man in a white uniform, wearing a fez. The lower part of his facce was hidden by a black beard and a heavy moustache of the same colour. He wore spectacles, but Johnnie could see that his eyes were bright and dark, and were fixed upon him not unkindly. "Who

are you?" he asked, just lifting his head from the ground, and wiping his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Never mind who I am," said the stranger; "tell me who you are, and why you are in trouble."

This time Johnnie did not hesitate. There was something in the voice of the man which attracted him; it was gracious and kind, and so Johnnie answered: "My name is John Cave; and I am miserable because my mother and my sister have been killed and another little sister has been stolen, and I am alone in the world."

"Poor laddie, these are indeed hard lines!" and the stranger put out his hand and gently patted him. "But you are not alone," he continued; "God is with you."

"I know that, of course," said Johnnie impatiently. "My father was a missionary, and my mother too, but somehow it does not really help me. I wish I had died with them! Oh, I wish I had died!" And, heedless of the stranger, despair again seized the boy. He threw himself back on the green sward, and tore up the grass with his young nervous hands, whilst his whole body shook with the agony of his weeping.

"He is a strong lad—a strong lad to feel grief so deeply," thought the stranger, and he too sat up, and, without speaking, put out his hand and stroked the boy's tumbled hair. The effect was magical. Just what was needed—the touch of a human hand. Little by little the sobs died down, and Johnnie turned his white face upwards, looked the stranger for the first time in the face, and cried out: "It is hard, so hard!"

"It is hard—very hard," was the answer, and a gentle arm was thrown round him, and he was drawn closer to the man, so that the weary body of the child rested

against his. Little by little the sense of isolation which had so oppressed Johnnie left him. The stranger drew out a handkerchief and wiped his tear-stained face, talking to him gently. "The pain will leave you presently, and you will be able to look up and see the sunset. Then we will talk," he said.

And it came to pass just as he said. The pain died out, leaving a great soreness behind. But Johnnie was able to sit up, the stranger still keeping his arm about him, and he saw that he was a tall, thin man, dressed, as we have said, all in white, who looked at him and smiled at him a pleasant, gracious smile; and Johnnie noticed that there was a little foreign accent when he spoke to him, so he asked again, "Who are you, and why are you so good to me?" and the answer came, "I am Edward Schnitzler, but the natives call me Emin Effendi, and I am here in Africa to try and prevent the evils from which you are suffering. So you must tell me all about what has happened to you, and why you are in so much trouble."

Without hesitation Johnnie obeyed, and told him the whole story of the massacre of Alexandria, and how his mother and sisters had been killed and lost. It was not a new story to Emin Effendi—all Europe had rung with it—but he let the child go on as if he were quite ignorant of what had so hurt him. He had an intuitive knowledge that it would be a relief to him. When Johnnie had finished, he said quietly, "I think we shall find Isa; not just at once perhaps, but in the end."

"That is what I say," answered Johnnie, a flash of light brightening up his poor wan face, "and that is why I have begged not to be sent to Europe. What would Isa do if she came back and found no one to welcome

her? Besides, no one cares so much as I do, and no one can look for her so well."

"Quite true, quite true," answered Emin. "You love her, and love is a great power. I think you are right; for the present, at least, you must stay in Egypt."

"Then, will you tell Mr. Anderson that you think so?" said Johnnie.

"Who is Mr. Anderson?"

"He was my mother's friend, and his mother wanted me to go home to her. Mother would have sent me this autumn; because, if I am to be a missionary, I have much to learn. But now it does not signify; the first thing is to find Isa."

"Where does Mr. Anderson live? Will you take me to him?" asked the stranger.

"He lives in the palace, he is Prince Hasan's secretary, and I am living there also. They are very good to me, but I am frightened, always frightened, that they will send me away."

"I think I can arrange that," said Emin. "Did you say your name was Cave?"

"Yes," said Johnnie.

"And your father was the Reverend Frank Cave. Is it not so?"

"It is."

"He was first in Abyssinia, and then he moved to Alexandria?"

"Yes, that's it," said Johnnie.

"Then I knew him very well," said Emin. "And I know another man who knew him well also. He and I are great friends, and he will do for you more than any other man can. So you see, my little boy, God has not left you friendless. On the contrary He has raised up

friends for you; therefore you must not be faithless, but believe in His goodness."

Johnnie coloured up, and bent his head as if he were ashamed of himself. The stranger watched him, then drawing the boy still closer to him he said gently, "Tell me what is in your mind."

Johnnie hesitated.

"Tell me," said Emin Effendi.

And the boy answered: "I used to love God, but I have ceased to do so. Why has He let the wicked men kill my mother, who served Him by day and by night, and taught us to do the same?" And a fierce light came into his blue eyes, a look of hatred.

"Hush, hush!" said the stranger; "you are only a little boy, and you do not understand. You think only of yourself, and God thinks of the big world and everyone in it. The evil you are suffering may be for the good of others, even as the Christ's sufferings saved the whole world. God cannot think of you alone; so many others need His care. Your mother is past all pain, she is at rest, therefore we must not sorrow for her selfishly, because you just want her, but remember that her death may bring forth fruit, and help the people in this heathen land to a better life and to more knowledge. Have faith in God, little boy, as you had in your own father."

He rose, still holding Johnnie's hand, and then the two walked side by side through the gardens, beneath the avenue of trees which bordered the road-side, and Johnnie saw that many people bowed to his companion. Once or twice he was stopped on the way, and so Johnnie guessed he was no ordinary traveller. When he heard him called Doctor Emin, he asked quickly, "Are you a doctor?"

"Yes, I am a doctor," he answered with a quiet smile.

An officer in full uniform came up at that moment. "You are wanted at the palace," he said; "people have been scouring the country for you."

"Is anything wrong?" asked Emin Pasha.

"We fear everything is wrong," was the answer. "Come quickly!" And without giving him time to bid Johnnie good-bye, he put his arm in his, and the two went together towards the Abdin Palace. Johnnie, with a quicker, firmer tread than he had had for some time, went across the square called Ezbekiya, and for the first time since he had come to Cairo, looked about him and was amused at the sights and sounds which met him at every step. He was suddenly greeted by a young Egyptian, the son of Eurif Pasha, a high official in the Egyptian government — a pleasant, courteous youth, who, recognizing Johnnie, having seen him at the palace, bade him "Good-evening!" and asked, "Where are you going, and why are you alone?"

"I have nowhere in particular to go. I have no friends here," said Johnnie.

"Oh yes, you have, if you did not always run away from us!" said the young Egyptian. "Come with me. We will go down to Boulak, and see the steam-boats and dahabiyas start for the Nile voyage. It is very amusing."

Johnnie willingly consented, a fresh impetus had been given him, and so the two went off together. Youth requires the society of youth, and the sudden contact with young Osman had the effect of rousing Johnnie from his almost morbid sorrow more than anything else had done. Kind and sympathetic as all men and women had been to him, they were men and women, and the

young are always inclined to feel that their elders cannot understand them. Osman was only a year older than Johnnie, and was well educated, speaking English fluently, and able to talk on every subject, being perfectly up in the topics of the day. He had heard of Johnnie's loss, and, as everyone did, felt interested and sorry for him; and seeing the boy looking so sad and lonely he asked him to come along with him.

On their way to Boulak he chatted with him, and when they arrived at the starting-place, he explained everything about the boats and the voyage down the Nile. It was very amusing to watch the natives coming and going—the bustle of the travellers, carriers with the luggage, the unloading of fruits and vegetables, the continual chatter in all manner of tongues; besides, Osman was full of news, taking for granted that Johnnie knew everything that was going on just as he did. He was especially full of the expedition to the Soudan under Colonel Hicks, or rather Hicks Pasha. "When he has squashed the Mahdi," said Osman, "then we hope we shall have a little peace."

"That Mahdi interests me more than I can tell you," said Johnnie. "I wish I could see him. I wish I were old enough to volunteer and go out with the English officers to the Soudan. You see, I have always lived in Africa. I can speak Arabic as easily as English."

"Why should you not go?" said Osman. "Interpreters are always wanted, and a boy might, in many cases, be more useful than a man. I will speak to my father, and if you can come with us you may reckon that I will be your friend."

"Thank you!" said Johnnie, and he held out his hand to young Osman, who, smiling a broad, good-natured

smile, said, "You cannot imagine how glad I should be," and he shook his hand heartily.

"I will come and see you to-morrow morning," he said, as they parted at the palace.

"Do," said Johnnie cheerily.

When he sat down to dinner that evening, and Harold asked him what he had been doing, he said: "I've been making friends with young Osman, son of Eurif Pasha. We walked to the Boulak together, and along the banks of the river. I like him very much. He is coming to fetch me out to-morrow morning." But he did not tell him what he hoped to do.

"That's first rate," answered Harold, surprised at the change in the boy's tone and manner, for Johnnie's future was beginning to be a serious consideration to him. He felt he could do nothing for him in his present state of morbid despair. "If he roused himself, it would make all the difference," he had said to Prince Hasan.

Now this happy consummation had taken place, he was delighted, and set about thinking how he could keep him up to the mark.

CHAPTER V

AYESHA

WHEN the Arabs had burst into the mission-house, Ayesha, who was sleeping on a mat outside her mistress's door, had sprung up and made way for her to pass. "Go in to Isa," Mrs. Cave said quickly, "and if she wakes comfort her."

The end followed the beginning so rapidly. Ayesha saw her mistress fall, heard Johnnie's shriek, and at the same time the yells of the furious mob outside, and knew at once that there was rapine and murder abroad. She went into the room, wrapped the child, still sleeping, in a coverlet, and ran with her through the back way into the gardens. She did not pause there, but went on and on, and entirely avoiding the European part of the city, she succeeded in gaining what is known as the native town. Long before this Isa was awake. At first she began to cry, but Ayesha hushed her, drawing the coverlet over her head. She was a heavy child, but the Egyptian girl, though thin and lank, was strong; nevertheless her strength began to fail her, and she slipped behind some wretched huts and squatted on the ground, still holding Isa fast.

"What is it, where's Mummy?" asked the child, with a terrified look on her little face.

Ayesha did not answer her, but, unrolling the coverlet, —fortunately it was of soft, silky material, often used for bed coverings in a climate where the heat at night

is very great,—the child stood in her white bed-gown, fastened daintily at neck and wrist with pale-blue ribbons, her beautiful golden hair tumbled about her. She looked like an angel, only that her little mouth was puckered up and her eyes were full of tears.

"No cry," said Ayesha; "baby good, Ayesha take care of her."

"Mummy!" pleaded the child, and she looked round her, partly with fear, partly with wonder. In the meantime Ayesha took the coverlet and deftly wound it round the little figure, enveloping her after an Eastern fashion from head to foot.

"Now baby walk," she said.

But, childlike, Isa resisted the leading hand, and stood still, pointing to her bare feet. Fortunately it was dry weather, otherwise this part of the town being unpaved was, in wet weather, hardly passable. The yells from the city reached them; Ayesha, terrified, could not stop to reason with the child, but, kneeling down before her, put her, after the native fashion, on her shoulders, and so carried her with far greater ease than in her arms. She knew the country well, and ran with her till they were in the fields and gardens beyond the city. They reached at last a low house built of mud bricks, roofed with palm-matting and straw, the ordinary peasant's house of the country. At the low doorway, which was exceedingly small, a woman stood, who put out her hands to stop the girl, saying in the native dialect, "Who are you, and where do you come from?"

Stooping, Ayesha slipped Isa off her shoulder, and then pointed back to the city.

"What are they doing there?" asked the woman.

And Ayesha answered, "It must be Arabi's men, they

are killing the foreigners." And pointing to Isa she added, "Will you hide her?"

"She can stay here, and you too," said the woman, "and when the fighting is over you can go back." She was an Egyptian, and her husband also; Copts, as they were called, belonging to the original Egyptian race, members of the first Christian Church, which was a mixture of the Greek Church and the Roman Catholic Church, and at one time persecuted by both.

Ayesha knew she was safe here; indeed, it was not very likely that the Arab rebels would come out so far, or interfere with these quiet peasant people; so she pushed through the narrow entrance into a long, low room, squatted down on the floor, and took Isa, who was now looking white and scared, on to her lap. There was but little light in the room, a hole in the wall serving for a window.

"Is she hungry?" asked the woman, and turning away she fetched a piece of bread and a cup of milk.

The child ate and drank eagerly, but between each mouthful she cried wistfully, "Mamma! Johnnie!"

"Yes, by and by," Ayesha answered. When she had finished her meal she rolled her up in her coverlet and hushed her to sleep. Dazed and tired, the child slept, and then the woman, taking her from Ayesha, carried her into an inner room and laid her on a pile of mats. "She will be safe there," she said.

Her husband had been out since the dawn, and now came back with a terrible account of what was going on at Alexandria. He was a big, fine man, wearing the Egyptian peasant dress—full white cotton drawers, and one fine blue cotton garment open at the neck called "galabiyeh"; a close-fitting white cap covered his head.

"There will not be a foreigner left alive," he said, "if it goes on much longer. The Arabs are mad; they are killing everyone they meet, and not content with that, they are breaking into the houses, stealing and robbing."

Seeing Ayesha, he asked who she was. "She is an Egyptian girl, and was servant in the house of some English. She has saved one child."

"Ah!" said the man, and his eyes gleamed with pleasure, "Where is it?"

"In there sleeping," answered the woman.

Without speaking, he lifted the curtain which separated the inner from the outer room and went in. Whether he touched her or not, Isa awoke, and, seeing the strange dark face looking at her, shrieked piercingly.

In an instant Ayesha was beside her, had picked her up, and was holding her in her arms. "What have you done to her?" she asked fiercely, "Would you kill her?"

The man laughed. "Why should I kill her?" he said. "I only looked at her. She will be worth a hundred piastres, I would not kill her." And he rubbed his hands.

"What do you mean?" asked Ayesha. But evidently the man regretted having spoken so plainly.

"I mean nothing. You stay here with her, in a few days you will know and be glad." And he went back to his wife.

"Look after them, and see they do not escape," he said to her. "When the fighting is over I will take her into Alexandria. The English, if any are left, will give much money for her, and we shall be praised. Take care that girl does not escape. We must get rid of her, we do not want to share the prize with her; but I'll see to that, never you mind."

Suspecting something, Ayesha had crept to the opening, and, straining her ears, caught sufficiently what the fellah said to make sure that there was danger for both her and Isa. She looked at the little child, wondering what she could do with her. Wherever she might try to hide her, her whiteness would betray her nationality; and she had no clothes, nothing save the little white bed-gown, with its blue ribbons. The girl did not reason, she did not know what she felt, except that she was not going to give up that child to the man. Her woman's nature clave to it, and in her own language, and after her own fashion, she spoke to Isa and caressed her, and Isa understood. Holding her still in her arms, she sat down on the bundle of carpets and looked round, and for the first time noticed that in the opposite corner of the room another child lay on a similar heap; a little bronze child, as dark as Isa was fair, with a bald head, clean shaven, except for a tuft of black hair on the crown. It was quite naked.

"If only I could make her look like that!" and then she fell to thinking. Evidently she was not much accustomed to this exercise of her brain, or she was tired with the events of the morning, for she dropped asleep, and Isa did the same. Once or twice the Egyptian's wife came in and looked at them, and went out satisfied.

It was mid-day when Ayesha awoke and sat up; and Isa, roused, began to cry. The heat in the room was intense. She lifted the child up, put her on the ground, and, taking her by the hand, led her into the outer room. The fellah and his wife were having their mid-day meal, the baby was rolling on the floor.

"You will eat?" said the woman, and for the first time

Ayesha felt the want of food. She thanked her, and squatted down beside the woman, who pointed to a plate of red earthenware containing a mess of "dukkah", a savoury compound of peas, salt, pepper, and herbs, which takes the place of meat, rarely eaten by this class of Egyptian. She also gave her a piece of bread, and pointed to a bowl filled with milk.

Ayesha eat gladly, Isa stood leaning against her. Her little face had a strange expression of wonderment on it. She did not understand, but she knew that something had happened, and instinctively clung to Ayesha as her only guardian.

From time to time Ayesha would feed her with her fingers, and obediently Isa ate what was given her as if it had been part of the ceremony. And all the time Ayesha was thinking, "They will kill me and sell the child. Somehow I must escape and find out what has happened to my mistress." But the difficulty was to get away, for the fellah's wife never left her. When the sun went down, however, the woman and her child went out through the low door to get a breath of air, and she said to Ayesha, "You may come, but not the little one, for if anyone saw her they would question us because of her white face."

Isa had by this time recovered herself. She understood Arabic, and cried out, "I will go to Mummy! I will go to Mummy!"

It required all Ayesha's knowledge of her little ways to keep her quiet even for a few minutes, and the woman grew angry. "She is a little devil," she said; "she has an evil eye."

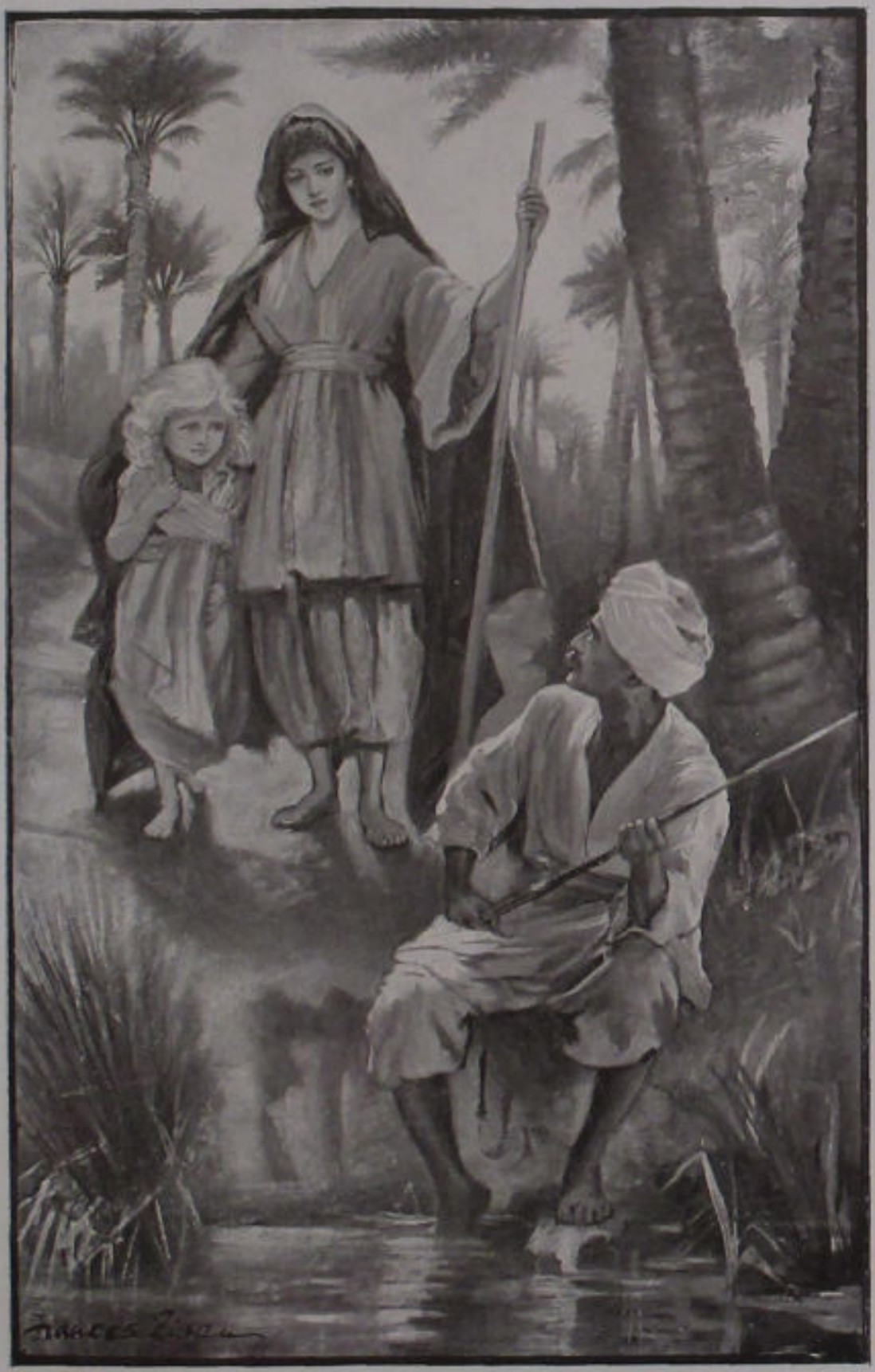
The Egyptians are very superstitious, believing implicitly in the evil eye. They also believe in magic arts.

Their religion was, we are told, a dark, yet mighty faith, and even after the introduction of Christianity there remained, engrafted in their souls, much of the superstition and mysticism of their ancestors.

Ayesha knew this well, and the fear grew stronger and stronger that they would kill them both. When the woman was outside she looked round to see if there were any possible way by which she could escape. She found there was none. Then she took Isa in her arms, and half in English, half in Arabic, she talked to her in a low voice, telling her that if she were good they would go that night to Mummy, but that she must not cry, and she must not talk. Then she went with her into the inner room, and, looking around, found a little shirt belonging to the boy. She put this on Isa, underneath her bed-gown, and she further examined to see if she could find any other covering. In doing so she came across a brown cloak of camel's hair, such as was worn by the boys who tended the flocks and herds, and a long staff which they also carried stood in a corner. She seized both of these, smiling broadly. "We will get away, Isa, now, and go to Mummy."

Then she crept back into the inner room and looked through the hole that served for a window, and she saw that the woman and her child had wandered away. Looking about on shelves and into boxes, she gathered together some dates, dried fish, eggs, and cheese. This she put together into a cloth which lay close to hand, and tied it in such a fashion that she could swing it on to her back.

She did this, put on the cloak, drawing the hood over her face, then she wrapped Isa in her silk coverlet, and, hiding her under her cloak, pushed through the narrow



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"SITTING ON THE BANK WAS A MAN HOLDING A ROD"

doorway. "Now we must run," she said, "quick." She turned at the corner of the house in the opposite direction to the way the woman had taken, and came, either by chance, or rather because God guided her, to a narrow path bordered on either side by date-palm trees.

"This must lead down to the canal," she thought. And she was right, only it was some way off still. Isa seemed perfectly to understand they were running away. She was a sturdy little girl, and had been accustomed to walk with her mother and with Johnnie, so that now in the cool evening, after her day's rest, she showed no sign of weariness. Once or twice when they saw men coming in the distance they avoided them by running behind the trees or slipping down in one of the many furrows which separated the plots of ground. At last Ayesha saw the canal, and made straight for it. "If only we have the good luck," she thought, "to come across a boatman or a fisherman." And in this she was fortunate, for sitting on the bank was a man holding a rod; a small boat was anchored below.

She approached him warily. He turned at the sound and looked at her. When she stood within a yard of him, she stopped. "Have you any use for your boat?" she asked.

"I must go back in it from whence I came," answered the man.

"And where is that?" Ayesha asked.

The man mentioned a village at some distance from Alexandria. "Will you take me there?" asked Ayesha. At the same time from a little bag she drew out a small piece of money and showed it to him.

"Why do you want to go there?" he asked. "It is but a poor place. Have you neither father nor mother?"

"We have no one," answered Ayesha. Then she looked at the man, and noticed with a natural instinct that his face was a kindly one. He wore the ordinary dress of a Nile boatman, the yellow shirt and loose gray vest and white turban. He was also young, for the closely-cropped beard on his bronze face was black.

"You have wife and children?" she said.

"Naturally," he answered.

"Then take us to them, and I will serve you without wage. I have a little sister," and opening her camel's-hair cloak, she advanced in front of him and showed Isa clinging to her. "We are orphans, and a fellah who lives not far from here took us in, and I worked for his wife; but she was a bad woman, and beat me and the child, and I heard her husband say he would get rid of me and sell my little sister, so I ran away. I cannot hide in Alexandria, because Arabi is in the city, killing all the people. Take me to thy village far away, I pray of you."

"Art thou a runaway slave?" asked the boatman.

"No, we are free-born, and can prove it to thee," she replied.

"But the child is white," said the boatman.

"That is as may be," answered Ayesha, "still she is my sister."

The man shrugged his shoulders, then slowly and with a certain dignity he rose, picked the child up, and led the way down to the water's edge. Without speaking he helped Ayesha in. Just as she put her foot into the boat she saw the fellah running down towards them.

"Quick, quick!" she said; "he is coming!"

"Who is coming?" queried the boatman.

Ayesha pointed to the man.

"What has he to do with you?" he asked.

"Put out and I will tell you," she answered.

"Have no fear, I am as strong as he is," said the boatman. They were already in mid-stream when the fellah hailed them. For some minutes he ran beside them on the towing-path, gesticuating and shouting, "She is my slave!"

"It is not true, and you know it," said Ayesha, standing up. "Do not believe him," she continued, turning to the boatman.

"I will take your word for it," he answered. "I know the fellah, he is a bad man;" and he rowed on.

Isa began to cry.

"Hush!" said Ayesha, "you know you promised." And Isa smothered her tears, whispering only in a little plaintive voice, "Mother! Johnnie!"

The fellah, seeing it was not possible to catch them, stopped, exhausted, still gesticulating angrily; but they soon lost sight of him, for darkness fell upon them; it did not last long, for the moon rose, and the land was brilliant with light. Ayesha was no longer afraid. By the time they reached the boatman's village Isa was fast asleep at the bottom of the boat. It was a poor place he took them to. The boatman told his wife all he himself knew about them. They partook of the rough food offered them, and then lay down on a heap of mats and slept. Ayesha was worn out, but with a certain feeling of contentment muttered wearily to herself, "When the fighting is over I will go to Alexandria, perhaps they are not all dead." And then she slept.

CHAPTER VI

"LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH"

TOWARDS morning Ayesha was awakened by the tossing and moaning of the child beside her. She touched her, and became aware that she was burning with fever. Rising, she went to the corner of the room, where she had seen a great brown pitcher of water. There was no drinking-vessel, so she filled her hand and gave Isa to drink thus; but the child would not remain quiet. She tossed and rose from her bed, and strove to get out of the hut, seeking for air. Therefore Ayesha wrapped her up and carried her forth, and sat down on the ground with her, rocking her to and fro. But the fever only increased, and when the boatman and his wife rose and came out to her, the child was in high delirium, calling for her mother, beating the air with her little hands, struggling with Ayesha to be free.

"It is the fever," they said; "she will die."

"She must not die," said Ayesha. "What should I do without her? Tell me how can I save her."

"Take her into the hut and lay her down, and I will give you coverings for her and a drink," said the woman. "If she breaks out into a great sweat, we may save her; but I think not, she is too young. Surely someone has cast the evil eye upon her."

And so it came to pass that for twenty long days

Ayesha watched over the child. They sent for a medicine-man, and with incantations and other ceremonies he gave her bitter herbs to drink. Ayesha would not think of leaving her long enough to go into Alexandria and see what had happened, but at the end of the first week she persuaded Kuku Agha, the boatman, to go, for though they were only a few miles distant, they had no news of what was taking place there. Ayesha told him to go to a medicine-shop and ask for the powder that is good for the fever. "I do not know what it is called," she said, "but I have heard of it." And pulling forward a plait of hair which had been tucked away under the cotton kerchief which was bound round her head, she unfastened a little long bag, took from it a small coin, and gave it to the man.

"You have money!" he said.

"Just a little," she answered; "before I went to the fellah's I worked in Alexandria, but the old woman who kept the child fell sick and died, and I had to take her: it cost me much money."

The boatman went to Alexandria, and learnt how all the foreigners had been murdered, and how their houses had been destroyed. "There is no one left," he said. He brought back the white powder, and Ayesha mixed it in water and gave it to the child to drink; but at first it seemed to take no effect.

They cut away her beautiful golden hair, and put wet palm leaves upon her head by night and by day. At all hours Ayesha changed them, going down to the river for cool water. The bonny child was reduced to a mere skeleton. She had ceased to do anything but utter that terrible low moan, and the boatman and his wife were getting impatient.

"What is the use?" they said. "She must die. And the hut is too small for us all and a sick child. Throw her out, so that the end will come quickly, and her soul will be released."

But Ayesha could not. She herself was growing gaunter every day; she ate but little, and she never seemed to sleep. Her whole days and nights were spent beside the child. The boatman was not a bad man, and seeing that the child did not die, he built for them a sort of shelter of wood and plaster, with a straw roof, and spread matting on the floor. It was just a shelter from wind and weather, nothing more. Ayesha was grateful. And there they lived, the dying child and the Egyptian girl.

"I have no money to give you," she said to the woman, "but I will work for you."

After the first week or two there was little to do for Isa. She was unconscious most of the time. The boatman's wife would go in to look at her, and shake her head, saying, "To-night, to-morrow, she will die."

But night after night passed, and many mornings dawned, and still she lived, with only the silken coverlet laid over her. Her face had grown so small, it was almost like a new-born child's, and the restless movements of the little hands alone told whether she was awake or asleep.

Ayesha busied herself between whiles, grinding corn at the mill, after the old Egyptian fashion, between two stones. She would patch and mend clothes, wash at the river, do anything that came to her hand, with far more knowledge than the woman had; and in return they gave her small portions of food, a handful of dates, a drink of milk, and sometimes a little fish, which the boatman had

caught. She required so little food. And so the days passed by, and Ayesha had lost all count of time. Sometimes she would wonder whether Isa would always be like this. She asked the woman once, and she answered her, "When twenty-one days are over, she will either live or die; but I tell you she will die."

"How can I let the child die?" cried Ayesha. "My soul cleaves to her soul. If she die, I shall die also."

The woman went to her husband and said, "It does not matter, she will die." And surely Isa would have died but for Ayesha's incessant watching and the child's wonderful constitution. Had she been in her own home so much would have been done for her! Fruit and delicate drinks would have been given her, but here she had nothing but cold water, and a little goat's milk with which Ayesha every few minutes moistened her parched lips. The great leaves from the plantain-tree were always fresh upon her brow. Sometimes Ayesha would take water and wet cloths and wipe down the child's emaciated body, as she had seen Mrs. Cave do for her children night and morning. She would gather great branches of the mimosa-tree, and, sitting beside Isa, would fan her by the hour. She would even, when the fever seemed lower, carry her out into the fresh air, spread a mat under a group of trees growing near the hut, and, sitting down with her in her arms, softly sing to her. Ayesha had no wisdom, but she had instinctive love, and love guided her.

Weaker and weaker grew the child. She could not even lift her little hands, she could no longer cry or moan, and Ayesha felt in her heart that she would die. It was late one night. She had lain all day motionless, as good as dead it seemed, and Ayesha stood at the open

ing of the hut and looked out upon the land bathed in the beautiful moonlight of the East. Tears were rolling down her face. She was a beautiful girl, of pure Egyptian type, her complexion of a pale, transparent yellow. She was tall, a model of beauty in form and shape. She was not yet fourteen, but at that age an Egyptian girl has almost attained her perfect growth and development. Her features were straight, her mouth rather full; her eyes large and black, of an almond shape, with long beautiful lashes. She wore but little clothing—a short shirt reaching to the knees, a pair of white striped stuff, cotton trousers, and over all a large loose gown with long sleeves, so long that they could be turned up over the hand, and so supply the place of the tarhah[1]. Her clothes were of better material than those of the lower class usually, for Mrs. Cave had rather prided herself upon Ayesha's appearance, and kept her daintily as she did her own children. Native Egyptian men or women do not undress at night, but lie down in their clothes; so she stood clothed at the entrance of the tent.

Suddenly a thought seemed to come to her. "Her mother's God, will not He save her?" she exclaimed aloud. "Why have I forgotten Him? Maybe He will drive away the evil geni; the child has her angels." In Ayesha's mind there was a great mixture of religions. Mrs. Cave had found her a lonely girl, without father or mother, and she had brought her first into the mission school, and then to her own house. There Ayesha had learned something of the Christian faith, and had dropped many of the usages of the Moslem religion, but her unformed mind had not learnt to discriminate.

[1] face-veil.

There was one God, and Mohammed was his prophet, and Jesus Christ was also a prophet. There is so much in the Moslem religion which resembles the Christian faith, especially as far as the Old Testament is concerned. Elisha and Elijah, Abraham and the prophets, were not unfamiliar to her, and the time she had been with Mrs. Cave had been so short that it was all like a tangled web in her brain. She had always prayed, turning her face to Mecca, and she had seen Mrs. Cave and her children kneel down and pray also; she remembered the words with which they ended each petition, "For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen", and therefore now, with the hopeless feeling that all had been done, and that yet the child was dying, she wondered whether the Christian's prophet would save her.

Again and again she repeated the words, and she went back into the hut and knelt beside the child, saying, "For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

There, with the moonlight streaming in upon them, lay Isa, scarcely breathing, the Egyptian girl beside her, and the only sound breaking the stillness were those words, "For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

Gradually, whether it was the monotony or intense weariness which overcame her, Ayesha drooped, and her head rested on the mat beside the dying child.

She slept, how long she never knew—time was nothing to her; but when she opened her eyes it was day, the crimson rays of the rising sun lighted up the earth. It shone like a big crimson ball in the horizon through the opening of the hut. Ayesha, with a cold feeling at her heart, turned and looked at the child beside her. "Surely she is dead," she thought; but the blue

eyes were wide open, looking at her, not with the glazed stare of unconsciousness, but with a feeble awakening of life. "Isa," she said. There was no answer, there was no strength. The parched lips could not move, only as with the rising sun, the light in the eyes grew stronger.

Instantly Ayesha rose; she had nothing to give Isa but that powder which Kuku had brought her, and a little milk-and-water. She took some of the latter, mixed the medicine in it, and gave it to the child, dropping it into her mouth from her fingers. For the first time Isa showed a distaste; it was very bitter, and the poor, thin lips puckered feebly.

"What can I give her?" thought Ayesha, feeling that something was needed to keep life in her. Suddenly she remembered that the boatman had brought in some melons the day before, and had given her one. She picked it up, tore it open with her fingers, and let the juice drop into Isa's mouth. The effect was magical. Her lips parted, feebly she sucked the sweet, luscious fruit. It lasted only a few seconds, then the eyes closed again, and she slept. She lay, not as she had done before, unconscious, but breathing softly, with life in her — very feeble, but still it was life. A great joy filled Ayesha's heart as she rose and went out of the hut into the red sunshine.

The boatman joined her. "Dead?" he said.

Ayesha looked at him. "No," she answered. "Come and see."

Kuku stooped his head, entered the low shelter and looked at the child, bathed in the light of the morning sun. "It is a miracle," he said.

"It is Jesus Christ, Amen," answered Ayesha.

"Who is he?" asked the boatman.

"The Christian's prophet," answered Ayesha.

The boatman shook his head, and went out again into his wife's hut. "The child is sleeping and will live," he said. "Come and see."

The woman obeyed, went into the shelter as her husband had done, looked at the child, and said, "It is true, she will live. What have you done to her?"

"I have done nothing," answered Ayesha; "it is 'Jesus Christ, Amen,' who has saved the child."

All that day till evening Isa slept, then she awoke again, but still she could neither speak nor move; they gave her a cup of warm goat's milk, and she slept again, and so it was for two or three days. She drank and slept, and no one knew yet whether she would live or die. But on the third day she smiled and moved her hands when Ayesha came near and spoke to her. She had no voice and her eyes were dry; she could not weep, she merely looked piteously into Ayesha's face. If only her mother could have seen her thus, coming back, little by little, from the shores of that river called Death which she had well-nigh crossed, but which was now receding before her. What had held her back? Surely it was the love of this heathen maid. There was no one to joy over Isa, no one to welcome her back to life; only Ayesha, but she seemed to ask for nothing else.

Gradually the strength as of an infant came back to her, but it became apparent that she remembered nothing of the past. There was a great blank over the child's soul. Ayesha was all in all to her; she would lie and watch her as she moved about the shelter, she would smile at her, she would take her brown fingers in her little white ones with clinging weakness. If Ayesha left

the shelter for one minute, a look of terror would come into Isa's face, and a little cry, as of a trapped bird, would escape her. As for Ayesha, her soul was knit to the child's; she loved her with an intensity of devotion, the dawning of the woman's soul in her. Anyone else would have feared to touch that small, emaciated body; but Ayesha had no fear, she would take the silken coverlet and wrap it round her and carry her out, sitting for hours with her, pillowed in her arms, crooning to her, singing to her little Arab songs, talking to her in Arabic; and little by little Isa answered her in the same tongue. She spoke no English word, that language, like everything else, was forgotten.

"How can I give her back to her own people?" she thought. "I will not. She is my sister. She does not remember;" and she set about seeing how she could earn her living and Isa's. She could not remain a burden on the boatman and his wife. There was a little village at a short distance, and she hired herself out to bring water from the river to the house-wives. She was clever also with her needle, and would make and mend, and in return she would receive figs or rice and different sorts of food, enough for her and the child. She was never idle. Kuku's wife showed her much kindness. She had three or four children of her own, who, by degrees as Isa grew stronger, would come round her and play with her, so that Ayesha was free to come and go as she would. But she was never long absent, she had a sort of fear lest someone would steal the child from her.

Out of the long white bed-gown which had been Isa's only covering when she carried her from her home, Ayesha manufactured for her shirts which reached just below her knees, and a little head-dress which fell like

a veil behind her. She had never removed the gold chain with the cross from round her neck; but the boatman's wife had remarked upon it, and she had grown fearful lest it should prejudice the Moslems against her. Therefore she said, "It is a charm." Now the Egyptians reverence charms and believe in them; and so no one touched it.

Isa had no shoes, but as soon as she could walk went about with her little bare feet like the other children. It was many weeks, however, before this came to pass, and before any of the roundness or beauty of childhood came back to her. In the large blue eyes there was a look of vacancy; and sometimes the little brow would pucker together, as if she were trying to think or trying to remember, but she never did. The golden hair began to grow in soft little curls round her face. It was such an ethereal beauty that came to her, as if she hardly belonged to this world, and the women and even the men looked at her with reverence. "Is she a child or an angel?" they asked each other, for the Mohammedans have a firm belief in angels, even in their appearance upon earth. Ayesha kept her so daintily in her scant white clothes, and though at last she mixed and played with the children, she was never one with them, but rather something higher. Rough with each other, they were gentle with her. Her name was one of their own, Isa, and so they called her, and by degrees it became habitual if any delicate morsel of food was given to one of them, they would bring it to her, and she would divide it between them. She never took much for herself, but kept a big share for Ayesha, and then portioned the rest out.

The fair weather went by and the Nile overflowed its

banks to make the land fruitful, and Ayesha and Isa still remained in the village and were content; for the child still did not remember, the past was a blank to her. In her mind, what she was she had ever been, and Ayesha, the boatman, his wife, and her children were all the world to her; it was as if she had never known any other life.

CHAPTER VII

A MARRIAGE

SHE will make a good wife, and she is beautiful. She told my wife once that her mother had been the wife of a sheikh, that he had died, very shortly after her mother had died also, then she was cast out, and went, with her little sister, to live with an old woman in Alexandria, who was well-nigh blind, and whom she led about, begging for charity. An English lady saw her one day and took pity on her, and paid the old woman a sum of money to hand her over to her. She also provided for the child, and Ayesha lived with her a long time and took care of the children. They were very happy, and she learnt a little English and reading. Then Arabi came and killed the foreigners. Ayesha escaped with the child, and took shelter with a fellah and his wife. She happened to hear them say to each other that they would get rid of her and sell the child to the English because she was white, and she ran away. I was fishing on the canal that day, and she came to me and asked me to carry her down the river, for she was afraid of the man. I saw him coming after her, so I took them in my boat and brought them here, and she has lived with us ever since. The child fell sick, and she tended her as a mother would; and she prayed, and the great God heard her, and saved the child's life. The little one is an angel, and has a charm round her neck. Since she came to us all things have prospered with us. I have had

work, the crops have been good, and the girl, Ayesha, has served us as if she had been my wife's sister. You are not the first young man who has asked for her in marriage, but she said to my wife, 'I will not be any man's wife, unless the man will take my sister also'. Now, if you will do this, Moussa, I think she will live with you and be your wife. You do not require more than one wife, and the child is but a little thing, and does not count. When she is older you can take her to wife, or marry her to another."

"I am willing," said Moussa, a tall, good-looking young Egyptian sailor, who for some time past had been coming and going from Alexandria to the village where Ayesha had taken shelter. He had seen her often as she went and came, carrying the water-jar on her head, and he had noted how straight and well-grown she was, and though her face was covered, her eyes shone brightly and were well-shaped. She made no use of the kohl to paint her eyes and eyebrows, though this is common to almost every Egyptian woman. She thought but little of herself, because of her great love for the child. She was simple, and did not care to please, seeing that she was not in the least anxious to get married.

Kuku's wife had said to her: "If a man asks you to be his wife, say not nay, for thou art of age, and it would be well for thee to have a husband."

"And my little sister?" Ayesha had answered.

"I will keep her; she is a blessing," answered the woman.

"Nay, but my heart would break," said Ayesha. "I will not be parted from her."

It was but a few days after this conversation that

Moussa had arrived in the village. He was much sought after, for he was known to be well-to-do. He had a boat of his own, and during the winter season would take foreigners up the Nile, and make much money. He, too, spoke a little English, and served as guide, knowing all the places which foreigners visited—the Pyramids, and the temples and the tombs which lie along the Nile river. He and Kuku had known each other for some time, and it was Kuku who had said to him, "Thou shouldst take a wife", thinking of Ayesha. Moussa smiled, and showed his white teeth, saying, "I am willing. Who is the girl?"

That is how they came to converse together.

"She has no friends," Moussa said. "You must be to her as a father, and tell her that I am willing to take her as my wife. I have none other. She will have to do all the work, and go down the river with me, as I have no house; but I will build her one if we agree, and I will take the child with her. She is so little."

"And, as I tell you, she is a blessing. Fatima will not be glad to part from her."

Even as they spoke they saw Ayesha coming towards the house with a jar of fresh water from the well, poised on her head, and holding Isa by the hand. The child was laughing and talking merrily; her little bare legs, browned by the sun, were now strong and round. Indeed she was brown altogether, by exposure to the sun and air; her golden locks had grown darker, and clustered thickly round her face. She wore the same white shirt and linen head-dress which Ayesha had made for her, and she looked like an angel.

Moussa smiled again. "The girl is well, and the child is well. I will take them both."

That evening Kuku's wife, Fatima, spoke to Ayesha, and told her what Kuku had said, and Ayesha was glad. And so it was settled that she was to marry Moussa and be his first wife, and that she was to go with him down the Nile in his dahabieh, taking Isa with her.

There are many ceremonies in Egypt previous to a maiden's wedding a man, as also there are frequently many wives; but in Ayesha's and Moussa's case the ceremony was much simplified, and it was Kuku and his wife who acted as parents for both of them. Moussa had no father, and his mother had married again, and was in a harem far away at Dongola.

Matters were easily settled. Moussa was desirous to have the girl. In her case she had not been hidden from him, as the women in the towns are before their marriage. Since she had come to live among her own people she had always worn a tarhar, because Fatima had told her she must; but when she was at Mrs. Cave's she had not covered her face.

Moussa was generous. A dowry is always given to the bride, and he gave her about five hundred reres,[1] which was a very great sum for a simple boatman; but he was cunning, and had more than one boat, though he did not tell her so. The following day there was a great meeting, and the contract was made. A chapter of the Koran was read out, and the money was paid over to Kuku, who stood in the light of a father to Ayesha. He who does this is called a "wekeel". That same day Moussa went to Alexandria, and when he returned—for the marriage was to take place on the morrow—he brought with him strings of beads and bracelets and ear-rings for his bride, and all the maidens in the village

[1] £10

envied her. But she would not come forth. Isa only showed herself, for she had a new shirt on, and beads round her neck, and she laughed with glee.

"Even as Ayesha wilt thou be one day," Fatima told her.

In such small villages marriages are not so ceremonious as in the town, therefore both Moussa and Ayesha, owing to their position and loneliness, agreed that it should be conducted without any pomp or ceremony. In these cases a mere sentence, "I give myself to thee", uttered by the female to the man who is to become her husband, renders her, according to the laws of Mohammed his legal wife.

The following days are called "zefehs", and many ceremonies are observed. The husband does not take the wife sometimes for seven or eight days to his house; Moussa therefore left Ayesha with Fatima, and went once more to Alexandria, returning with two asses. Egyptian asses are noted as being the most excellent asses in the world. They are generally large, and in every way superior to those of our country. Evidently Moussa had taken great pains in choosing his asses. They were furnished with stuffed saddles; the front was covered with red leather, and the seats had a kind of soft woollen lace round them, in red, yellow, or other colours.

"I will take her straight to Cairo, where my boat lies," he said to Kuku. "There is much going on there at the present, and I expect some of the Englishmen who are going against the Mahdi will want my boat. I cannot delay, I must be ready for them."

And so it came to pass that Ayesha was seated on one ass and Isa on the other, and, accompanied by the

sounds of tambourines and some kind of drum, with women dancing before them, they went out of the village which had been to them both such a happy home. But Ayesha was glad, for her husband had looked kindly upon her face and told her she was beautiful, and they went forth together.

Fatima, as she saw them go, wept.

"Assuredly," she said, "they will have luck, for they have taken the child with them."

When they reached Cairo, Moussa guided them down the narrow streets in the old part of the city until he came to a brick house, coloured red and white. A low wooden door, painted green, with projecting windows above it, was let into the wall, with this inscription over it: "He is the great Creator, the everlasting".

It was a large house, and Ayesha knew at once that her husband must be in receipt of much money to take her to such a house. When he knocked at the door it was opened by a slave, and they entered into a sort of paved court-yard, in the centre of which was a fountain. They were ushered through this to the harem, where they found only one middle-aged woman, who received them kindly, and pointed to a cushion whereon they could sit. Slaves brought them refreshments, and the woman, who was evidently the mistress, explained to Ayesha that this was Moussa's uncle's house, and that he was a rich merchant. She also looked at Ayesha curiously, saying:

"You are Moussa's new wife. He has never had one yet, though many have been offered to him. He is a strange lad to go so far, when he might have found a virgin to his mind in Cairo who would have brought him wealth. So his uncle told him, but he would not

hear reason. He said he had watched you for many months, and that he would take no other woman for his wife. You are lucky, and the child also. Will you leave her here?"

"No," said Ayesha; "we are agreed that she is to go with us, and I am going with Moussa on his boat."

The woman laughed. "You do not know, then, that he and Mustifa, his uncle, have many boats, the best in Cairo; he will be a rich man one day."

"That does not signify to me," said Ayesha. "He is my husband, and I will serve him whether he be rich or poor, for he has taken me with desire, which is not often the case."

"True," answered her companion. "May the Prophet bless you and him!"

That night they slept at the house, and the following morning Moussa came for them, and they rode on asses through the narrow streets down to Boulak, which is the port of Cairo.

On their way, as Moussa walked beside her, Ayesha said to him: "Why did you deceive me; it is not well for a man to deceive his wife?"

"How have I deceived you?" said Moussa.

"Didst thou not tell me thou wast a poor man, and that I should have to work for thee, and now I find thou art rich? Look at my ass; it is as fine an ass as a pasha's wife could wish for. And the house you took me to is no common house, but well furnished."

Under his moustache Moussa smiled, and then, turning his face to her, he laughed. "The house is not mine," he said, "but my uncle's. I have nothing of mine own but what I work for; but he is generous, and he said to me, 'Marry a woman of thy choice, so shalt

thou know happiness, and I will be content'. I looked about me," said Moussa. "Many were offered to me, but I did not care for them. They were all alike, I did not see them; but when I saw thee, as thou camest from the well, where I had watched thee standing to take thy turn to fill thy pitcher, as Rebecca stood of old and met her fate, my heart went out to thee, and I loved thee. I came again and again, as thou knowest full well, to see my friend Kuku, and thou wast always the same. But still I waited, for thou hadst none of thine own people of whom I could ask thee in marriage. At last Kuku spoke to me of thee, and then I unburdened myself, and I have been happy ever since. Now I am in Paradise. May God grant that it may last for ever and for ever!"

"My heart is glad also," said Ayesha, and her beautiful eyes, all that was visible in her face, shone down upon him like bright stars.

"Now I have something to tell thee," continued her husband. "When I was a young boy I served an Englishman, and I learned to love him. He was a great man, and he preached to me, telling me of his Christ, who was a prophet, greater even than Mohammed. He was a very merciful man, and succoured the poor and sick. It was in the Soudan, and I stayed with him two or three years. He would not suffer the buying and selling of slaves; he would release them and help them to establish themselves as free men in the land, and this is the cause of the present war, and of the great battles which are being fought. The Mahdi has arisen, and says he will drive the foreigners out of the country; and I was told a week ago that this Gordon Pasha had been sent to bring peace in the land, so I came to Cairo, and true

enough I found him here, and I offered to serve him again, and he was willing. But I told him also that I wanted to get married, that I had contracted with thee, so that I could not draw back. 'I will follow you', I said to him, 'as quickly as I can, and I will bring my wife with me and give her in charge to my mother at Dongola'. He understood and was satisfied. And that is what I am going to do now. My uncle would have had thee stay in his house until I should return, but I like best taking thee with me."

"Thou didst well," said Ayesha.

"The General leaves Cairo to-morrow evening. He told me he was going by train to Assuan. There we shall meet him, and I shall take him on board my vessel. He will go down the river with us as far as Wady Halfa. After that I know nothing of what he will do. He is glad I should have a boat of my own, for surely it will be of use to him, and my uncle has given me one of the best."

By this time they had reached the port. "See, yonder is our ship," he said. "I have called it after you, *Ayesha*."

The river was full of ships, and the little vessel he pointed to lay beyond the bridge at Boulak. Lifting Isa off her ass he put her on the ground, and then helped Ayesha to alight. He took the child once more in his arms, and they made their way across the decks of several other ships until they reached their own. These Nile boats are all made on much the same pattern. On the upper deck there is a sort of little house built, containing several rooms, designed for travellers. The roof of this little house forms another deck, which is covered with an awning, and makes a sitting-room. At the

farther end there was a division which formed another room. To this he took Ayesha. "This is for you," he said, "that you may have air and light." In the lower deck there was also a couple of rooms and a kitchen. It was beautifully clean, and had evidently just been done up with much care, with new sails and rigging, and painted fresh outside and in. Ayesha's recess was furnished with pale-blue cushions and white matting. She had not been accustomed to so much luxury, and both she and Isa laughed with pleasure as they threw off the shawls and cloaks in which they had been enveloped.

"Shall you have any passengers?" Ayesha asked.

"Two or three," he answered; "but I will not take many, because we want to go quickly to be ready for the general when he reaches Assuan."

Even as he spoke, two or three officers with their servants entered the boat, and very shortly afterwards they moved down the river; but Ayesha and Isa were well cut off from all intrusion, and unless they went out upon the deck no one could know of their presence on board.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAHDI

"THE Mahdi! Who is the Mahdi?" was the query on many lips at this time in England when the eyes of all Europe were turned upon Egypt.

The answer came. "He is an impostor, an Arabian, a man by birth of no account, of a poor and obscure family; his father was a religious teacher, who had taught him to read the Koran. He died when his son, Mohammed Ahmed, the future Mahdi, was but a lad. He at once turned his attention to religious studies, and subsequently became the disciple of the highly-revered Sheikh Mohammed Sherif; but before this he had become versed in all that concerned the Mohammedan religion. This Sheikh Mohammed was the exponent of an especial doctrine, called by the Arabs 'Sammania Tarika'."

Already Mohammed Ahmed was very learned, but he now gave up his whole mind to theology and became an ardent supporter of Sammania Tarika.[1] We have before mentioned the prophecy, believed by all Moslems, that in the twelfth century a Mahdi would come who should restore the Mohammedan religion to its original purity. Probably it was at this time that the idea came to the Mahdi that he himself was destined to play this part. Like all young disciples who have any enthusiasm,

[1] Sheikh et Tarki signifies "the guide of the way."

Mohammed Ahmed conceived a very strict rule of life, and went so far as to protest against the laxity of his master, Mohammed Sherif. He therefore fell into dire disgrace, for which he could obtain no pardon. He retired to the Island of Abba, and though he was then offered pardon by the Sherif he refused it, saying that he could have no respect for a master who acted contrary to the religious law.

Little by little his power grew; people from all parts sought to obtain a blessing from this holy man. Gifts of money and of kind were brought to him; he kept little or nothing for himself, distributing everything to the poor. He sent forth a pamphlet, summoning all true believers to use their influence to purify the religion of Mohammed, which was becoming debased and insulted by the corruption of the government.

In these early days of his career there is little doubt but that the future Mahdi had high aspirations, and fully believed himself that he was called upon to drive all other religions out of the land, and to make Mohammedanism the greatest power in the world. There were many Mahdis before and after him, but they were of no account. He had one great follower, Abdullahi, who stood by him and served him faithfully. Thus his power grew, till at last he received upwards of a hundred visitors a day at the place where he had established himself, namely, the town of Massalania. The people came from afar to look at him and listen to his teaching and seek his blessing. He lived in a little straw hut, hardly large enough to hold two people. He had no one to serve him; he even fetched his own water from the river. The miracles he performed were numerous. "Trust in God" was his continual utterance.

Abdullahi was the man in whom he first confided the secret of his divine mission, and Abdullahi said: "Long before he trusted me with his secret, I knew that he was a messenger of God".

Patiently he bided his time. Not till he was forty years of age did he announce himself as the Mahdi, thus creating for himself a personality, with the express object of driving the Turks, Egyptians, and Europeans out of the country.

Charles Gordon had originally been sent to the Soudan for the purpose of putting a stop to the slave-trade, which to a very great extent he succeeded in doing, making the export of slaves from the black countries almost impossible. This had aroused the anger and indignation of all the coloured population. The Mohammedan religion allowed slavery; the land and cattle had alike from time immemorial been tended by slaves. That immense misery and frightful cruelty had been engendered by slave-hunting and slave-driving is an undeniable fact. Whole villages were destroyed by the slave-hunters. The markets of Omdurman, El Obeid, Cairo, Alexandria, and many others witnessed the public sale of men, women, and children, who had been driven out of their homes, and who had suffered many miseries. Once in the hands of their masters they were seldom ill-used, but it was this trade that Gordon had virtually succeeded in making impossible. Domestic slavery was no misery to the people themselves; on the contrary, slavery in the households of rich Arabian merchants and the better class of Arabs was, as in South America, an evil, from a religious point of view, but caused little personal discomfort to the slaves themselves. What the higher class of Arabians resented was that

their refractory slaves, not their good ones, were encouraged by the British government to run away from, and make complaints against their masters, and were then received into their mission-house, and set free. With the slave-trade itself they had no sympathy; quite the contrary. They recognized the evil of these wholesale raids upon the native population.

The Mahdi's aim and object was to encourage the slave-trade and the slave-hunters. These men enriched themselves by robbing whole villages, carrying off the women and girls for their harems or for their slave-markets. He waited to make a declaration of war until he judged that the time for doing so had come. The number of his disciples increased by hundreds and thousands; still, no alarm had been felt with regard to the Mahdi by the Egyptian government. Mohammed Ahmed was looked upon merely as a fanatic, who had obtained a certain hold upon the imagination of the people; suddenly information was given to the government that he was likely to prove a danger to the public peace.

Rauf Pasha was at this time Governor of the Soudan, and he despatched a steamer to the Island of Abba with a messenger to Mohammed Abu es Saud, desiring him to bring Mohammed Ahmed to Khartum. Previous to this, notice had been given to Mohammed Ahmed by his friends not to go to Khartum, for if he ventured there he would be detained. Therefore when he received the order to present himself before the Governor-General at Khartum, we are told he rose, and, striking his chest with his hand, shouted, "What! By the grace of God and His Prophet I am the master of this country, never shall I go to Khartum to justify myself!"

From henceforth Mohammed Ahmed knew that the die was cast, that he could no longer hesitate, but must go forward; therefore he collected his disciples and prepared for war, stirring up his adherents throughout the length and breadth of the Soudan, rousing the strongest religious enthusiasm by declaring that the Prophet had appeared to him and announced that all persons taking part in this religious war should earn the title of Emir el Aulia, which means "favourites of God".[1] Fire and sword were now let loose upon the Soudan. It were too long to tell of all the skirmishes and battles which took place between the Mahdi's crowd of ill-armed and undisciplined men and the government troops. For sixty years the country had been governed by Turks and Egyptians, and the people had been crushed under the weight of taxation. Now this holy Fiki had arisen to lighten their burdens, and whole provinces arose and flocked to him. There could be no doubt in their minds that he was the Mahdi el Muntazer, the expected "Mahdi", whose only desire was to uphold the faith, without regard to wealth or property. Therefore the Arab tribes crowded round him, and he led them from place to place, laying waste the land, besieging the towns and villages of the Soudan, burning and destroying with fire and sword whatever impeded his triumphal progress.

I have written somewhat lengthily of this man because he holds such a prominent position in our story, and it is as well my young readers should know what was the cause of a war which ended so disastrously, and spread such universal sorrow throughout England. The Mahdi

[1] In the Koran the expression occurs, "Are not the favourites of God those on whom no fear shall come, nor shall they be put to grief?"

and Charles Gordon stand side by side at this time; the fanatic possessed of such marvellous power that he could rouse a whole nation to do his mad will, and the Christian hero and martyr whose will was the will of God, who had no personal ambition, and whose watchword was "Duty".

No, not even Gordon himself knew the task which was laid upon his shoulders. A religious war is a fierce and cruel thing, but fanaticism, in the form it took under the Moslem rule, was far worse. The Mahdi's influence had attained to such a height that the vital question was —how could he be checked in his wild career? Some fifteen days after the terrible defeat of Hicks Pasha he took the important town of El Obeid. It is difficult to understand the power to which this man had attained, by no great action, by no especial personal prowess. His appearance was not striking; he was a strongly-built man, not ungraceful, differing but little from the ordinary class out of which he sprung. There were far finer men than himself in his army even among his own followers.

He was more than usually dark, his dress was of the plainest. The most remarkable thing about him was his smile, an expression which was never absent from his face. His lips were well-cut, showing singularly white teeth. And here again there was a marked peculiarity. Between the two middle front teeth was a "v" space, supposed in the Soudan to portend luck. For this he was dubbed "Abu Falja". His great authority arose from his affirmation that every act of his life, and every order he gave, came direct to him from God. He considered himself an inspired man, and his motto was "We shall destroy this world and create a new world".

That he himself ever imagined his success would be as great as it was is doubtful. Indeed he himself only realized it when he saw the armies of Egypt fall like a pack of cards before his untrained troops. His triumphant entry into El Obeid was, we are told, a scene of savage grandeur. The people threw themselves on the ground and worshipped him as he passed along; he held them in thraldom by the magic of his presence and his words.

From Kordofan to the border-land of the great desert he was master, the whole of the Arab population believed in him. If there were a few who still doubted or had their eyes opened to this marvellous imposture, they still joined themselves to him, because they feared him, and felt assured that no government could send a force strong enough to overcome him.

The native's faith in England was broken down, everything had combined to bring this about. Deserters from the English camp came to the Mahdi and begged to be received into his service, because they argued that as the government was not strong enough to uphold its authority individually, they must seek safety with the strongest. The inhabitants of the towns and country realized the terrors of the situation. They looked upon the Soudan as a doomed country, and hastened to make the best of their way out of it. It was a very Exodus.

It was against this man that Gordon was called upon to act. It was a portentous task, which the far-distant government of England could not realize; but surely he did. He had been called and he came. It was not with him a question of success or failure; he could but do his best, and in doing his best he knew that he faced death. But that he never feared. He had long since learnt and

practised that Christian doctrine of perfect faith in the All-Father.

There is one other man who it is almost necessary should be introduced. We have mentioned him already. His name was Abdullahi, whom the Mahdi created Khalifa, in imitation of the Prophet Mohammed, whose friend and adviser was Abdu Bakr. This Khalifa was hated with a deadly hatred, because he was a cruel, hard man. Therefore he desired the Mahdi to invest him with full powers and make a proclamation that such was his will and pleasure. This he did, declaring Khalifa Abdullahi to be the commander of the faithful. In every point he made him equal to himself. "He is of me, and I am of him," he declared. "Behave with all reverence to him as you do to me." This was followed by a long proclamation ending with, "I believe in him. Obey his orders, never doubt what he says, but put all your confidence in him, and may God be with you all! Amen."

Much has been said, and much was said then, of Gordon's popularity with the tribes, especially with the Western Arabs; but that had existed some years earlier, before the Mahdi appeared upon the scene. Now the false prophet stood a great figure in their midst, the tribes adored him; and to face these thousands of men who feared death no more than he did, Gordon came alone, with no force at his back, depending entirely upon his personality to conquer. He had been sent to evacuate the Soudan, and he looked to the native tribes for assistance in this stupendous task, and they, with the Mahdi's proclamation before their eyes, knew that every Arab found guilty of giving assistance to the hated Turk or Egyptian was a betrayer

of the faith, and as such would lose his money and property, his wives and children, and would become the slaves of the Mahdi and his followers.

Was it natural, was it possible, that they should support Gordon? He bore with him as he travelled southwards the government proclamation for the abandonment of the Soudan, by which it was evident that in giving up the country he forsook the very inhabitants who ought to have rallied round him. He gave them over to the Mahdi, so to speak. It was, therefore, taken for granted that Gordon's personal influence was paramount to the personal interests of every native man, woman, and child in the Soudan. Such was the position, a seemingly impossible one, and yet this brave man never hesitated; he was called, and he went where Duty led.

CHAPTER IX

TO THE RESCUE

THE morning after Johnnie had made friends with Osman, when he descended into the great hall of the palace he saw that something must have happened; officers stood in every corner, some sombrely silent, others gesticulating. He caught the name of "Hicks", "the army of the Soudan", "the Mahdi", but he could make no sense of it. Seeing Osman standing at the other end of the room, he went to him.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"A terrible thing—a catastrophe!" he answered. "Colonel Hicks, or, as he is called, Hicks Pasha, has been defeated, and his whole force destroyed. We have heard no particulars yet, very little can be known of the disaster, but we shall hear more later."

Throughout Cairo that day men went and came hardly speaking to each other. News arrived but slowly. Several days more passed by before any details could be obtained. In the meantime, what was to be done? That was the question on every man's lips.

The Mahdi and his warriors occupied the whole country, such were the reports. As everyone agreed, the uncertainty as to what had really taken place rendered the waiting for news intolerably painful.

During this time, Harold was engaged entirely with the prince and the government, and able to pay but

little attention to Johnnie, who was thus thrown more and more into Osman's company, and became as engrossed and interested in the public events as everyone else.

"What a pity it is," he said to Osman, "that we are so young! I wish I could go and fight the Mahdi."

During the days which followed there was a great rush for news, but none came. It grew more and more certain that a clean sweep had been made of the Egyptian army. That another army should be created was the only thing upon which every man was agreed. Baker Pasha was to take the command. The Egyptian troops were called out and reviewed by the Khedive. The terror of what had taken place affected the moral of the whole army. After the review, the Turkish officers came to Baker Pasha and told him that they would not go to the Soudan, that they had been enrolled to fight in Egypt only, and that it was against their agreement. The Egyptian officers themselves did not absolutely refuse to go; but even they felt injured, for there was no regular army, only the gendarmerie had been retained, and was now once more called out for active service. Everything was in such a state of disorder and despair, that the position seemed hopeless. Who would disentangle it? At the end of a fortnight, news was positively received that not one man was left to tell the tale of what passed in that fatal battle of Kashgill.

A few weeks later this was also found to be untrue, for a wretched, travel-worn man arrived at Cairo, stating that he was the sole survivor of that terrible expedition. He had lain for some time as dead, with a lance wound in his back; had been picked up by an Arab, who,

strange to say, had taken pity on him, tended his wounds, and helped him on his way. His arrival at Cairo was a great excitement. He was the first and only witness of what had taken place during those three days' fighting. He would probably never have escaped if he had not been a black man.

"The fighting," he said, "occupied three days." The reason given for this was that the rocky nature of the ground, and the number of trees, obliged the soldiers to fight in detached groups. The Arabs surrounded each of these groups separately, picked out their men, and shot them down. Hicks Pasha, said the informant, had fought like a lion, and was the last man of his staff to be killed.

In England, as in Egypt, the difficult question was: "Who shall now take the lead? Who will know the right thing to do in a country so little known as the Soudan?" And the answer was: "There is no man but Charles Gordon". He had already been governor-general in the Soudan, he was known, and his influence with the natives was a recognized fact, so now men clamoured for him.

The Khedive, his two brothers, and Harold Anderson were closeted together in the Khedive's private apartment discussing this very subject, when the door was thrown open, and a man in plain clothes entered. He had scarcely advanced two steps when the Khedive sprang up. "Gordon!" he said, and his face brightened. It was verily as if an angel had suddenly appeared amongst them.

Charles Gordon had left England on the 18th of January, and on the 24th he was standing before the perplexed Khedive, prepared to take up the work which

all the world had agreed he alone was capable of doing. Only one man accompanied him, Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart, in the capacity of his military secretary. In a few seconds he was seated beside the Khedive, having been hastily introduced to Harold Anderson. Maps were spread out, and the four were deeply engrossed in deciding what his first movement should be.

Johnnie Cave and Osman were from henceforth sworn friends, and were continually together. No one is as eager as a boy to take up an adventurous life, and it seemed to Johnnie that apart from his own private sorrow there was nothing more important in the world than the struggle going on in the Soudan. He and Osman together picked up every scrap of information it was possible to collect, and brought it to Harold. Johnnie's perfect knowledge of Arabic served him now in good stead. Many things were whispered among the native population which the authorities of themselves would never have known. There were, naturally, native interpreters, but they were official; besides, they were marked men, as were also the journalists; but this boy was simply a loafer, gathering up with eagerness all he heard and saw. By degrees he had made himself so useful to Prince Hasan and his secretary, that they kept him in the office, translating messages which arrived from the Soudan, interviewing Arab chiefs, who could speak no language but their own, in fact, doing anything and everything which came to his hand.

The change in him was marvellous. In the last few months he had grown considerably; his face had gradually assumed a thoughtful expression, and sometimes Harold would laugh and remark to Prince Hasan, "He has quite the air of a young diplomat". The idea

of sending him to England was indefinitely deferred; he was so useful and trustworthy, that in the present position of things he grew to be invaluable. His education had been of a kind which suited exactly with the present needs. He wrote a good hand, he spelt correctly, and his use of language was good. This came from home training. In Latin, Greek, and the sciences he might have been found wanting, but in all ordinary subjects he was well grounded, and his knowledge of Arabic was perfect, both in speech and writing. Therefore it was that Harold had decided that he should remain in Egypt.

"He is still quite young," he wrote to his mother, "and I believe if I tried to send him back to you he would run away. He fully thinks, that one day or another he will find Isa. Half the information he brings us is got in the slums of Cairo. He frequently goes about in a native dress looking for her, and no one will touch him or injure him, for his misfortune is known by all, and even the Arabs pity him. His active life, his many interests, have developed both his mind and body. He is in perfect health, and though I believe at times his heart is very sore within him, he has learnt to master his feelings. One day he said to me: 'When that terrible thing happened I told you I did not love God any more. When I said it I was very wicked, and I knew that I should grieve my mother beyond measure, for she loved God, and so I tried to say my prayers again, and to ask God to teach me to love Him. It all came back to me, and with it there came, too, a certainty that one day I shall find Isa. My mother is gone, and Elsie is gone, but I feel that Isa is living, and so I pray that I may live to find her and send her home to your mother. She will take care of her, and bring

her up a good woman, as my mother would have done.' And somehow, without any reason," Harold continued in his letter, "I have the same feeling, only where can the child be, and what lessons will she learn in the life she must be leading? However, we can only have faith in God, and bide our time. You must not expect to hear so regularly from me as heretofore. I shall probably be starting for the Soudan with Prince Hasan, and it is quite settled I shall take Johnnie with me. Six months ago he was comparatively a child, now he is a youth, tall for his age; he is just fifteen, serious and thoughtful in face and manner. I am very fond of him, and so is Prince Hasan."

Upon receipt of this letter Mrs. Anderson was deeply affected. She and Mrs. Cave had been school friends. The one was rich and the other poor, but this had made no difference between them; only the one had the pleasure of giving, and, as it were, of keeping a watch over her less fortunate companion's needs. Little by little this had grown to be an accepted duty—we might say happiness. She was by no means a poor girl when she married Mr. Anderson, whereas her friend, who possessed no worldly goods, had chosen a man who was also poor; but they had worked together in love and unison, and had been very happy. The friends had been perfectly satisfied with their individual lives, and had kept up a close correspondence. Every year cases had come over from England to the far distant mission home, with many of those necessaries which, to the Caves, were luxuries, unattainable at the solitary stations where their lot was cast.

The news of her friend's death had been a severe shock to Mrs. Anderson, it was her first real sorrow in

life. It snapped so many links, it destroyed so many secret hopes; and, besides, the horror of it was so great. To be killed thus, with her child in her arms —murdered! The fate of the little girl Isa absolutely preyed upon her mind. Johnnie was comparatively safe in Harold's care, but what had become of that little child, Isa Mary, as she had been called after her, for she had stood godmother to her. She was the only one of the children who had been born in England, during a short holiday which the missionary and his wife had spent at home.

She remembered well a feeling coming over her as she carried the child home in her arms after the baptismal service. "I wish you would leave her with me, Agnes," she had said; "she is so small to be travelling about the world, roughing it as she must do."

"Oh, you are quite mistaken!" Mrs. Cave had answered. "She will suffer less as an infant than the two others who are older. Besides, you know quite well I cannot part from her, not now at least. It will be hard enough when I have to let Johnnie go." And Mrs. Anderson had understood the soreness of her mother's heart, and had not insisted.

Still, this child had seemed to belong more especially to her. When cases were sent over there was sure to be something especial for Isa, and the child always wore round her neck the little gold chain and cross which her godmother had placed there on her baptismal day. She was almost as deeply grieved at the loss of this child as she would have been if she had been her own. Both her husband and she wrote to Harold, telling him to spare no expense to find Isa, and the hope that Johnnie might assist in this had almost consoled

them for his remaining in Egypt. As weeks and months went by, the thought of the little one never faded from her mind. It was strange, but no one would accept the fact of Isa's death. "She will be found one day," Mrs. Anderson had said to Cecily, "but how and under what circumstances I dread to think of."

And so, in this quiet English home, prayers went up daily for Isa, that either she might be brought back to them in safety, or that God might send his angel of peace and carry the child home, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest".

CHAPTER X

JOHNNIE'S DESTINY

THE nations were now thoroughly roused to a sense of the necessity for taking strong measures against the Mahdi. A brave and gallant man, Tewfik Bey, was the governor of Suakin, a town on the Red Sea. He was entirely invested by the Mahdi's troops, and could get no news of the outside world. The garrison were at their last extremity: there was no food left except one bag of grain, the dogs and all other animals had been devoured. Tewfik Bey had hoped that some of the friendly tribes would have relieved him.

But when no one came to his assistance. "It is better," he said, "to fight than to starve."

It was difficult for any commander to reach him because of the drought; the enemy had filled up all the wells. By day and by night the rebels kept up a continuous fire on the town.

Baker Pasha, who was in the neighbourhood, determined, therefore, to march on to another town in the Soudan, called Toka, and thus divert the enemy's attention from Tewfik and give him a chance to escape. Baker Pasha had previously done all he could to relieve the town, offering, we are told, one hundred pounds to any sheikh who would take food into the place.

On a dull morning, with the rain pouring down upon them, his troops were aroused by terrific cries; the

Arabs were upon them. So ill-disciplined and difficult to manage were the Egyptian troops, that it was in vain the general tried to force them to fight on this occasion. On the contrary, they threw down their arms and fled before the enemy. There was no rallying them. They were officered by Englishmen. Heroes they were, and brave Christian soldiers. Their names have come down to us—Leslie, Morris Bey, and Captain Walker.

Whilst the Egyptians were flying they stood to their guns; and so they were seen to the last, a silent group of determined men, who died at their post. For five miles the fugitives ran, pursued by the enemy, and when they came to the coast the English soldiers had to keep the cowards back to prevent them swamping the boats in the rush they made to save themselves.

After this there was a fixed determination among the English that from henceforth they would never go to battle alone with the Egyptians—far better a regiment of Nubians. The blacks were good fighters, the Egyptians were cowards. This fatal defeat is called the battle of Teb.

Reduced to the last state of despair, having dried leaves only for their food, Tewfik represented to his men that by fighting they might save themselves; and gallantly he led them forth, but Osman Digna's hordes of Arabs rushed down upon them. Never was a braver defence made than Tewfik's. He formed his men into one square, and for a long time it was impossible to break through their ranks. At last the Arabs succeeded, and then every man was massacred. The children and women in the town suffered the same fate.

This fatal battle of Teb and the fall of Suakin settled the fate of the Soudan. When the news reached London

troops were despatched, with officers whose reputation left no doubt as to the ultimate result. On the very ground where that first battle of Teb was fought, not long afterwards a second one took place, but this time every precaution had been taken to ensure success. The English soldiers knew what was expected of them, and were ready to die doing their duty. The pipers of the Black Watch played the bagpipes as the soldiers advanced cheering. For four hours the battle lasted, and then a loud cheer went up from the Gordon Highlanders. Their pipes piped up again, thus announcing a victory.

This was followed quickly by the occupation of Toko, an important town on the Red Sea. It was reduced to almost as bad a state of starvation and misery as Suakin. Great were the rejoicings with which the population of the town greeted their deliverers, but all alike, at home and abroad, shuddered at the list of casualties. Not less than twenty-two officers were killed, and of privates and men upwards of two hundred. We are told that the Mahdi's loss amounted to upwards of one thousand.

It was hoped—in fact it was almost believed—that the Mahdi would now waver and retire, but this proved to be a fallacious hope; he continued his course. No wonder, therefore, that General Gordon's presence in Egypt was greeted with enthusiasm. The second day after he reached Cairo he had met Moussa. The Egyptian made him a low obeisance, and showed extreme delight at seeing him again.

"I am at your service, Pasha," he said.

Gordon knew that he could trust this man. He had had him as a boy about him, and he was well pleased to find him again. He knew that Moussa was devoted to

him, and would serve him to the death. "Can you charter me a vessel to take me from Assuan to Wady Halfa?" he asked.

"I need not charter you any other man's boat, I have my own," said Moussa proudly. "I will start at once, and be there to meet you."

"Good!" said Gordon. "I hold you at your word. I shall go by rail to Assuan. You must be quick. And from Korosko to Berber, I shall cross the desert."

"Your Excellency will need camels, it is a dangerous road," said Moussa.

"No matter," answered Gordon; "I have traversed worse, as you know."

"Yes, your Excellency." With a nod of his head Gordon left him, sure that his orders would be carried out to the full.

Moussa went straight to the port to have a last look at his vessel, to see that it was in order for sailing the following morning. When he reached the port he saw a boy standing about, and he knew by the look of him that he was an English lad. As he came up, the lad looked him full in the face. To reach his own vessel Moussa had to cross the decks of several other ships, and was preparing to leap from one to the other, when the boy came forward and said quickly:

"Have you a boat? Are you going up the Nile?"

"Yes, I start to-morrow morning; that is my vessel yonder," said the sailor.

The boy flushed crimson. He ceased speaking English, and addressed the boatman in Arabic. A sudden thought had evidently flashed across his mind. "I have money," he said, "and I want to go. Will you take me?"

"And your father, what will he say?" asked Moussa.

"I have no father and no mother, I have no one," answered he. "I was born in this country though I am English. They want to send me to England, and I won't go. When did you say you would sail?"

"Early to-morrow morning," said Moussa.

"Then I will come on board," said the boy. "How much?"

Now Moussa knew that English boys came and went much as they chose, and it seemed to him quite natural that this lad should wish to go up the Nile, so he named a moderate price.

At once the boy put his hand into his pocket, drew out a handful of paper money and coins, and counting out the sum he mentioned, gave it him.

"Good!" said Moussa, taking the money.

At dawn the next morning, before he fetched Ayesha and Isa, Moussa went once more down to his boat. The boy was waiting for him. "Come along," he said, and, smiling, he took him on board, showed him over the boat, and gave him a small cabin on the lower deck. There was a cook, a Nubian, and two or three sailors already there, and everything was ready to start when Moussa left him and went on land.

Whilst waiting, the lad walked up and down the deck, but, growing impatient, he asked one of the sailors: "Where has the captain gone? it is getting late."

"To fetch his wife," answered the man. "It is not usual to take women on these journeys, but he is just married, and is taking his wife to her mother-in-law."

Satisfied with this explanation, the boy betook him-

self to his cabin, and was not on deck when Moussa returned with Ayesha and Isa. He sat down upon a cushion in the corner of the cabin, and fell into deep thought.

Need I tell my readers that the boy who had thus shipped himself off was Johnnie Cave? He had been bitterly disappointed the previous day when Harold Anderson told him that late events had rendered it impossible for him to take him with him. He and Prince Hasan were starting at once for Suakin, Emin Effendi for Darfur, and General Gordon for Khartum; they none of them knew what difficulties lay before them, but they were all agreed as to the folly of taking a young boy with them. Harold had spoken very kindly, but very firmly.

"I have arranged," he said, "with an English professor, now in Cairo, that you shall live with him. He will carry on your education, and when I return, it will probably be to go back to England, so we shall go together. If I do not return," he added, "then I have written to my father, and he will see after you. I have left money for your expenses with the professor; and this will, I trust, keep you going for the present," he said, putting money into the boy's hand.

"Thank you!" said Johnnie, in a cold, quiet voice; but Harold had not thought much of this, because he knew him to be naturally silent, especially when he was unhappy, which he knew he must be at being left behind. He was himself leaving Cairo that night, and there was so much to be done and thought of, that he did not see Johnnie again until he was at the station, and then in the hurry of departure he had only time to say "Good-bye", and to express a hope that he would

be comfortable at Professor Dobson's. Looking out of the window as the train moved on, he saw the boy's white face gazing anxiously after it.

"Poor fellow," he thought, "he is very lonely. If he had been two or three years older I would have risked taking him. He is clever, and can make himself useful, but he is too young. Besides, we none know what we are in for."

Johnnie left the station with feelings bordering on despair. He walked without knowing where he was going, and so found himself at the port. Acting on the spur of the moment, he did as we have related. His excitement had been so great that he had not closed his eyes all night, and it was barely light when he had slipped out of the palace.

For the first day he remained in his cabin, fearful lest among the officers on board there might be one who would recognize him.

In this solitude, with only the sound of the rippling water as the vessel glided up the river, Johnnie experienced a strange sensation—what we should call a revulsion of feeling.

"I have done wrong. I have proved myself ungrateful to a kind friend," he thought.

We must remember that Johnnie had been brought up by a woman. If his father had lived it would have made a vast difference in his character. He would have been more disciplined, he would probably never have acted so rashly as he had just done, or if he had, he would have been less sensitive, not to the wrong-doing, but to the feelings of others. He was very fond of Harold. He had clung to him; and to find himself thus suddenly cast off was intensely painful to him, and the old feeling which had

been so strong upon him after his mother's death came back again. "What does it signify? No one cares what becomes of me. Whether I live or die, it will make no difference to anyone."

Then he seemed to hear his mother's voice say, "But it will make a great difference to you whether you live or die well, my Johnnie."

He knew that he had acted contrary to all Harold's expectations, and that when he heard of it he would be deeply grieved. Harold had trusted him, he had laid no commands upon him. From the first he had treated him as a younger brother. Surely this return, to say the least of it, was ungrateful. Johnnie's character was impetuous, and as he had thrown himself on board this vessel without one moment's hesitation, so he as quickly saw the wrong-doing of it, and he strained his mind to find out how to remedy it. Alas! he had yet to learn that we can never go back. We must all realize that, sooner or later, a false step will bear its consequences, and must be faced bravely. He was in this mood when Moussa, finding he did not come on deck, in his kind-heartedness came down to him. "Sir," he said, "the gentlemen are going to dinner; will you not join them in the dining-room? There are only three or four officers. It is lonely for you here alone."

"I would rather not see anyone," said Johnnie. "How far up the river did you say you were going?"

"As quickly as the wind will take me to Assuan," answered Moussa. "There I am going to meet a great man who is my friend, and whom I served long ago. He is the greatest man in Egypt now."

"Then I know who he is," said Johnnie. "General Gordon."

Moussa nodded his head.

"Do you know him?" he asked.

"I have seen him," answered Johnnie. "And now I will tell you something, Captain, for I like your face," the boy continued. "I have done a foolish thing. I wanted to see the war, but my friends would not take me. Suddenly I came across you, and an idea struck me—I will go by myself."

"That was foolish. What will a young man like you do by yourself?" said Moussa. "When I took you on board, I thought you would go a little way up the Nile, and then back again."

"No, I want to go all the way—as far as you can take me. I will not go back now."

"Then what will you do?" said Moussa.

"What I tell you," he answered. "I will go with you to Assuan, and when General Gordon comes on board I will speak to him, and I will ask him to let me serve him. I can do a great many things. You see, I speak Arabic perfectly, I know you Egyptians, I know the Arabs—I have lived with you all my life. Surely I ought to be able to do something."

"I think you ought to be able to do a great deal," said Moussa. "But I tell you the general is severe; he will not be pleased at your having run away."

"I know it was wrong," answered Johnnie, "and I will tell him so. But you see, Captain, I am alone in the world; I have no one, except the son of a friend of my mother's, and he has gone with Prince Hasan to Suakin. I wanted him to take me with him, but he would not, and that angered me."

"Well," said Moussa, "I understand that. I dare say it will all come right. But you must not stay down

here, come and have dinner. I will tell the officers I am taking you to meet General Gordon. That will be true, you know."

"I suppose it will be," said Johnnie, doubtfully, and he followed Moussa into the dining-cabin; when he looked round he was satisfied that he knew none of those present, and need not, therefore, give any account of himself. After dinner he went on to the upper deck, and enjoyed the air and the novelty of thus floating up the Nile, but throughout the following days he kept himself to himself, speaking to no one but the captain. They had a quick voyage, and reached Assuan to find the general had been delayed, and had not yet arrived.

Moussa also learned that he could not take his wife to Dongola, that the Mahdi was already there. "You will have to remain on the boat," he said to Ayesha, "until I can take you back; or perhaps I may take you on to Wady Halfa."

Ayesha was perfectly content; whatever he did was right in her eyes. Arab women are brought up to have no will save the will of their lords, and though she, owing to her position, had had to choose and think for herself and Isa, she easily laid her will on one side, and was ready to do as she was bidden. Impatiently all day Johnnie waited for Gordon's coming. Moussa had taken a great liking to the boy, and Johnnie was only too glad to help him in any way on the boat to wile away the time. It was a strange coincidence that he should be there within a few yards of Isa and yet not know it, but so it was; and there are more wonderful things still in the world. He went ashore with Moussa, he watched the other boats come in, and all the time he was thinking, "What shall I say? I have done wrong, I know I

have done wrong, but I hardly wish it undone. I am glad to be here rather than in Cairo. Do you think he will send me back, Moussa?"

"No, I don't think so," said Moussa. "I will try that he shall not. You are no longer a very young boy, you are fifteen. We Egyptians are men at that age; I am only twenty, and I was with the general at Khartum when I was younger than you are."

"Tell him that," said Johnnie.

"I will," answered Moussa.

CHAPTER XI

ACROSS THE DESERT TO KHARTUM

"SIR, I am very sorry; I know it was wrong, but I could not stay there alone," and Johnnie looked straight up at General Gordon, whose face was stern as he listened to the boy's story.

"I have heard all about you, John Cave," he said. "I knew both your father and your mother, and it was by my advice that your friend, Harold Anderson, did not take you with him. What was your idea when you got on board this boat? where did you intend going to?"

"At the moment I thought of nothing but of getting away," said Johnnie; "but of course I meant to ask some officer to take me into his service as soon as I landed. When I heard you were going to Khartum, sir, I thought, I hoped," said Johnnie, "that perhaps you would let me serve you."

"Where I am going is no place for boys. It will be bad enough for us men," said the general; "you must go back with Moussa."

There was a dead silence for a moment; evidently Johnnie was having a struggle with himself; the general watched him without appearing to do so. At last the boy spoke, though his voice trembled.

"Sir," he said, "I must obey you, but if you would only let me stay with you I would do anything and

bear anything. I can speak Arabic, I can run commissions, I can ride horses and camels; there is nothing I will not do," he said, "if you will only keep me. You see, sir, I am quite alone in the world; I have nobody, nobody at all, to care whether I live or die; and I would like to die serving you and my country, for I am an English boy, and my father and mother both taught me to love England. Let me stay!"

He uttered the last words in such a pathetic voice that it easily touched the general's tender heart. After all the boy was right; he was alone, if he sent him back to Cairo he would eat his heart out in loneliness. The general saw this clearly, and yet he had done wrong. He turned away and paced two or three times up and down the deck, talking in a low voice to Johnnie's first friend, Emin Effendi, and Johnnie stood quite still, waiting for the verdict which was to him, boy that he was, as a verdict of life or death. Suddenly he felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and a voice so kind, so different from what it had been before, said: "Listen to me, my boy, and remember, if you were a soldier I should not pardon you, because you have disobeyed orders, but now you will say for your excuse that you owe no man obedience. Morally you are wrong; you did, out of gratitude, owe obedience to Harold Anderson, but I understand your feeling of desolation, and desire to do something to fill your life. Therefore I will not send you back to Cairo, I will grant your request and keep you with me; but mind, never again must you disobey in thought or deed."

"I never will, sir," said Johnnie.

"You will write at once to Harold Anderson and tell him what you have done, and that you are with me, and

you will ask his pardon. I will see that he has the letter."

"Thank you, sir!" said Johnnie.

The general turned away. Johnnie went into his cabin and wrote the letter, brought it on deck, and would have given it at once to the general, but he found him conversing with other officers. He therefore bided his time, and the moment he saw the general alone he went up to him. "Sir," he said, saluting, as he had seen the soldiers do, "here is my letter."

The general put out his hand and took it. Impulsively Johnnie stooped and kissed that hand, then, looking up into the general's face, he said: "I did not thank you, sir. I do now, oh, so much!"

"All right, my lad!" said the general, smiling; "remember our compact."

"I shall never forget it," said Johnnie, and he never did. From that hour he had found his master, a man who had, above most men, the power of making himself loved. No one who ever came in contact with Charles Gordon begrudged him their service. He had that wonderful gift of winning men's hearts. In the days when he was simply a second lieutenant of Engineers at Woolwich he had the same reputation of winning hearts. Throughout the Crimean campaign, in the trenches of Sebastopol, the same sympathetic nature made him popular with his men and fellow-officers. In China he had won his laurels, and so great were his services there, and so much was he appreciated, that he still bears the name of 'Chinese Gordon'. Wherever he went, whatever he did, he made his mark; a Christian soldier, and a Christian gentleman, ready to put his hand to any work to which his country called him.

He had done good work in the Soudan before now—three years of incessant toil and anxiety, and now he had returned, not actually upon the same work, but for the checking of the power of the Mahdi, who, if he was not a slave-hunter himself, encouraged it throughout the land, destroying towns and villages; professing poverty, fasting, and prayer, whilst he was slaying women and children or distributing them as slaves among his chiefs, secretly leading a life of abomination, undoing the work Gordon had done. We have already shown what a mighty task lay before him, how the weight of empire rested on Charles Gordon's shoulders. The government's orders were to evacuate the Soudan, because as long as it remained under the Egyptian government the evil would continue. (The Egyptians were not strong enough to withstand the hordes of Arabs, which, under the Mahdi, were sweeping down upon the country and towns of the Soudan.) To treat with the Mahdi, to prevent further warfare, to pacify the population, and then to evacuate the Soudan, leaving it in the hands of the sheikhs or chiefs, who had been deposed when the Egyptian government had taken possession of the country. Such was the task before him.

With a certain innate sense of the greatness of the man, Johnnie often watched him as he walked up and down the deck, wearing a patrol-jacket, his arms crossed, without sword or weapon of any sort, only a rattan cane under one arm, so well known in China that they called it the "wand of victory"; a quiet, sedate figure. And the boy's heart went out to him, and a feeling of pride and joy such as he had never experienced before came over him. He was this man's servant, he was to do his work, and he knew that he should do it, come what

might. As they advanced up the river they became more and more aware of the state of the country. Fugitives from the country were coming into the towns and villages, and they told terrible tales of the devastations of the Mahdi.

"I have done wrong to bring my wife," said Moussa to the general; "but, you see, I had only been married to her one day. I think I will leave both her and her sister in Korosko. I have a friend there, and he will take them into his harem, then I shall be free to go with you, sir, across the desert to Berber."

"Don't trouble about me, Moussa," said Gordon, "you know I can always find my way."

"I have no doubt of that," said Moussa; "the White Pasha will find ready hands waiting for him to take him across the desert, but still I would rather go with you."

"Do as you think best," said Gordon. "If you stop at Korosko, why should we not go from thence across the desert to Berber? You could leave your boat there, it would be looked after."

"Certainly, your Excellency. We can go from Korosko to Berber, and by river down to Khartum."

"Then we will do that," said Gordon.

At Korosko Johnnie caught a glimpse of Ayesha and her little sister as they were being landed. Both of them were so muffled up that there was no chance of seeing their faces. He was standing by the general at the moment, who, smiling, said: "They look queer, don't they, Johnnie? I wonder how our little girls would like to be muffled up like that?"

"Not much, I think," said Johnnie; "the little sister I have lost was smaller than that girl, and she ran about so free and happy."

Gordon looked down upon him. "God has sent you sorrow early in life, my boy," he said. "They were taken, and you were spared. It must surely be that there is work for you to do in Christ's kingdom on earth."

"I never thought of that," said Johnnie, "I have only thought of how hard it was to be left alone."

"We are never alone," answered Gordon, "or rather I might say we are always alone, because our souls in life and death are in God's hands only. That is our spiritual life, a great solitude which never ends. Our earthly life is but a shadow, so soon passeth it away and we are gone."

He uttered these words almost as if he had been speaking to himself, and Johnnie realized from whence came that sense of fearlessness, so different from bravado, which belongs essentially to the man who knows that we are passing through this world, not from life to death, but from death unto life eternal.

A perfect ovation awaited the general when he landed at Korosko. It was known that from thence to Berber the desert was unsafe, but he found old friends, Bedouin Arabs, who offered him their assistance in crossing the desert. "They would accompany him," they said. But Gordon declined their escort, for his one idea was to get on as quickly as possible, and a large caravan would have hindered him. Moussa knew his master well, and silently and rapidly made preparations for the journey across the desert. It was now for the first time that Johnnie was able to show himself to advantage. His knowledge of the language enabled him to buy many necessary things in the bazaar, and to do commissions which both Colonel Stewart and the general required. He was very happy and very proud.

Emin Pasha was his especial friend. He stood in no awe of him, and if he was in any difficulty he never hesitated to go to him for advice. "He is a jolly little fellow," said Emin to the general. "I told you we were not far wrong in keeping him, he has completely changed during the last few days. If you could have seen him as I did a few weeks ago, lying under the bushes sobbing his heart out; those sensitive natures want bracing up, and that is just what you can do for him."

"I hope so," said Gordon; "but he is very young to be doing our work."

"He will do it all the better because he does not know what he has to face," said Emin; "a boy is like a cat, and always falls upon his legs." The general laughed.

The day after their arrival at Korosko the camels were ready laden, and the party started, the general mounted on a great, white camel, chosen by Moussa especially for him.

"It's hardly fair, your Excellency," Moussa said; "you always go faster than anybody, and this camel will leave us far behind."

"All right!" Gordon answered; "I shall find plenty of work to do till you come along."

As Emin Pasha mounted his camel he saw Johnnie standing at a little distance. "Come on, boy," he called out; "haven't you a camel of your own?"

"No, sir; Moussa says I shall ride with him."

"Come along with me," said Emin; "I like company, you know." Delighted, Johnnie mounted on the same camel as his friend, Colonel Stewart on another, and Moussa with the greater part of the baggage completed the party. But Moussa was right. The White Pasha,

always noted for the rapidity of his travelling, went at such speed that they had difficulty in keeping within sight of him.

Berber was reached without any accident; the journey had been so successful that Gordon believed the dangers had been exaggerated. He found that great fear existed among the population from Berber to Khartum lest the Mahdi should attack them before his arrival. He therefore sent a message to Khartum in order to encourage the inhabitants: "Remember ye are men, not women."

He, however, decided to despatch as many women and children as possible to Cairo.

"You must do this for me, Moussa," he said; "I cannot trust them to anyone but you. You must take them back to Korosko, and then on your boat to Cairo; you can pick up your wife on the way."

Moussa was very angry at this. "Your Excellency, I will go with you," he said.

"You will do no such thing," said the general; "you will do as I tell you." And Moussa knew he must obey.

Johnnie was very sorry to part from Moussa. "Never mind," he said, "I will do the White Pasha's bidding, but I will be back sooner than he even imagines." And with that he went sulkily on his way.

"If all Egyptians were like that man we should not have this trouble," said Emin to Johnnie. After their long ride over the desert together they had become even greater friends than before.

Emin said truly, Johnnie saw no danger anywhere; he was the life of the party, always at hand ready to be of service. Thoroughly acclimatized, he was not troubled with even a touch of fever; whilst, on the contrary, Colonel Stewart and the general were feeling the varia-

tion of the climate greatly. Not that they heeded it; they had too much to do to think of themselves, and after twenty-four hours spent at Berber they made their way up the Nile to Khartum. The general's reception here was marvellous. "A wonderful day" he himself called it. The people poured forth to meet him. At night the town was a blaze of illumination—flowers and lamps, bright banners and variegated lanterns, coloured cloths and bangles made a great display. Johnnie watched his hero with admiration; he had never seen his like, and he never would again; he instinctively knew that. He went through the midst of the people with his "wand of victory" in his hand, talking to one, comforting another, driving fear away from every heart; even the little children crept up to him, and he never failed to give them a word or smile.

"Ah, truly," thought Johnnie, "it is a wonderful day, and he is a wonderful man!"

CHAPTER XII

"A WEARY WAITING"

JOHNNIE always looked back to these first weeks at Khartum with pleasure; they were the happiest he had ever known. He went about everywhere with the general, *doing* deeds of mercy, releasing prisoners, taking food to the hungry, punishing the evil-doers. He learnt then, and never forgot it in his after-life, how justice can be tempered with mercy.

People crowded to the palace where Gordon had taken up his residence with the English officers, who had come thus far with him, and the people came pressing round him, kissing his hands and feet, calling him Sultan, Father. He, so to speak, once more opened out the town; the telegraph was repaired, so that messages were sent to the outside world. He created a sort of justice-hall in the palace itself, where he and Colonel Stewart bade people come and tell their grievances. He found that there had been much ill-feeling created against the government by the burden of taxation laid upon the people, who still feared that heavy demands would fall upon them for past debts. He assured them that such would not be the case, and taking the government book, in which these debts were recorded, he burned it in the palace-yard.

The late governor, Hussein Pasha, an Egyptian, had been noted for his cruelty. He used the bastinado with

impunity. A story is told of how, a few weeks before Gordon came to Khartum, he had bastinadoed an old man's feet till the skin was torn off and the sinews exposed. His people now carried him up to the palace and laid him before Gordon. "We will have no more of this," he said; "no whip, no bastinado. Bring me all the kurbashes and implements of punishment; you will see what I will do with them." They brought them and laid them before him.

"Now," he said, "we have made a bonfire of the tax-book, we will make a bonfire of these." And he himself set fire to them.

Shouts of joy greeted the flames as they lighted up the square. Proudly Johnnie stood beside his general, laughing with glee and gladness.

One thing more remained for Gordon to do, namely, to telegraph to Cairo that fifty pounds of the ex-governor's salary should be sent down for the old man he had injured.

"If he objects to this," said Gordon, "send him down to Khartum and let us see what his reception will be like."

The governor preferred sending the fifty pounds.

Khartum had already for many months been surrounded by the enemy, but was not so closely invested but that the people could come and go. Before taking Khartum it would be necessary for the Mahdi to take the town of Omdurman, therefore the dervishes invested it, pouring heavy fire into the fort. Gordon had determined, if he could, to make such concessions as would ensure peace. He yielded up Kordofan to the Mahdi; he also advised that Zubeyr Pasha should be made governor-general of the Soudan, issuing a proclama-

tion to this effect regarding the slave-trade: "That from henceforth nobody should interfere in the matter, that one by himself may take a man into his service; henceforth no one will interfere with him, and he can do as he pleases in the matter without interference on the part of anybody, and I have given this order out of my compassion for you".

This has often been made a reproach to Gordon, because Zubeyr Pasha was one of the fiercest slave-holders and slave-traders in the Soudan, and raising him to be governor-general meant that the slave-trade would once more be re-established in the country.

So strong was the opposition Gordon met with from the anti-slavery party in England that the man was not nominated. The difficulties Gordon had to face were so enormous that it is impossible for us to judge this action of his.

He probably saw that at the present moment the principal object to be gained must be by compromise with the Mahdi. The misery of the country, the sieges laid to all the towns, which one after another fell into the hands of the Mahdi, were the cause of such terrible suffering and cruelty, that his one idea was to stop it anyhow, if only for a time. To attain this end he had to ask himself the question—Which was the greater of two great evils? The cruelty of the Mahdi to his prisoners, the agonies to which the women were put, were worse than slavery, and were to an eye-witness like Gordon so intensely painful, that his whole soul revolted against it. He chose, therefore, a mode of action which at the time seemed to him the best. This is the only explanation that can be given to those who blame him for thus yielding up of a principle. It was easy for

the anti-slavery party in England to call out, but they did not see what he saw; they did not hear the cries and moanings from every town and village through which the Mahdi passed. A long correspondence between Mr. Gladstone and Gordon took place on this subject. No one warred against slavery more than Gordon did. At the same time he knew what other Englishmen did not know, the great difficulty of the whole question, and he acted to the best of his ability. Would others have done better, or even as well?

Khartum was inhabited by people of almost every race and nation. There were very wealthy men in their midst—Greek and Egyptian bankers and merchants, with fine houses and great gardens. The general knew full well that if the Arabs succeeded in entering the town the havoc would be terrible, and therefore he did his utmost to encourage every person to hold fast and defend it to the last. He was surrounded at first with brave fellow-countrymen, who seconded him to their utmost, but he was obliged to part with them, sending them to points where he thought they would hold the enemy at bay. Such was the case with Emin Pasha, his great friend, who was despatched to Equatoria, which, for some time at least, he was able to hold against the enemy. Johnnie saw him go with much sorrow.

The title of Pasha had been bestowed upon Emin before he left Cairo. He knew the Soudan better than most men, seeing that when Gordon had given up the governorship he had passed it on to his friend. He was about the only man left of any experience.

Just before Gordon reached Khartum he received news of the fall of Darfur, of which province Slatin Pasha had been governor. He was an Austrian officer,

and had gone through the whole campaign. He was a great loss to Gordon, for he was a man full of expedients, immensely brave, and greatly feared by the Mahdi. He was now prisoner with the Mahdi, and was suffering great hardships.

When he heard that Gordon had reached Khartum his satisfaction was immense, and by some extraordinary means he managed to get a letter conveyed to him, in which he gave him news of the Mahdi's camp, and of his own desire to escape. It was impossible for Gordon to assist him. Before many weeks were over matters began to bear a still more serious aspect. The governor of Omdurman sent a message to the general, asking him for assistance. He had none to give. He bade him send the women and children out of the town, under escort, to Khartum, and then if he and the garrison could not hold out they must surrender. He only regretted that he had not despatched the female portion of the population sooner, because now it was impossible for him to send them to Cairo; the Arabs were gaining ground every day.

Gordon was from henceforth fully aware that there could be no peace between him and the Mahdi, and that he would have to fight.

With great difficulty Moussa made his way to Khartum, bearing the comforting news that the English were sending troops over, and before long the general might expect assistance.

But this assistance did not come as rapidly as he expected, and the town was beginning to be in a desperate condition. Gordon took counsel with Colonel Stewart, and it was determined that a steamer should be prepared, and that the colonel, with Mr. Power, the

Times correspondent, should go down the Nile to meet the English forces, and hurry them on their way to Khartum. Reluctantly Colonel Stewart agreed to this, for he was most unwilling to leave Gordon alone. He himself fully knew the necessity for haste, for if Omdurman fell into the hands of the Mahdi, Khartum could not hold out, and the general would be alone to face his enemies. Gordon would not consider this question even. "He could remain alone," he said. "You will take Johnnie with you."

"If you think it best," answered the colonel; "but the boy would be as well with you as with us. He will be subject to just as much danger."

"Very well," said the general, "he shall remain." He was glad to keep the boy, for he had grown very much attached to him; and as for Johnnie, it was simple adoration which he felt for his master. So that matter was settled.

When the inhabitants of Khartum heard of the proposed expedition, one and all wrote letters to be taken to friends. All General Gordon's official and private papers were also committed to Colonel Stewart's care. There was really no reason for imagining that any great mishap should befall them, or, supposing difficulties did arise, some one or other would in all probability escape.

Freighted thus, the *Abbas* took its departure for Cairo. With Colonel Stewart went Mr. Herbin, the French consul, and Mr. Power, the *Times* correspondent, also a bodyguard of Greeks.

Thus it came to pass that General Gordon remained alone in Khartum, his only friends being Moussa, the Egyptian, and Johnnie Cave. They watched the vessel as long as it was in sight, and then returned to the

palace. From this time forth Johnnie never left the general's side; he slept in a small room opening out of his. There was little to relieve the monotony of the days which succeeded one another. Two or three successful sorties, which were really of little or no good, took place. The thing which occupied the minds of all the inhabitants was "The English, when will they come to relieve us?"

And eyes and hearts were strained to watch for that coming.

The Mahdi pressed the siege of Omdurman. Another cry came from that town for food, and Gordon despatched three steamers, laden with provisions, though Khartum could ill afford to do this. Unfortunately the sacrifice was of no use; the rebels attacked the steamers, sank one, and took possession of the other two.

One morning Johnnie was on his way to the barracks, where he had been sent by Gordon, when he came across a boy of his own age, mounted on a donkey. He saw at once that he was a stranger, and accosted him. "What do you do here?" he asked in Arabic.

"Hush!" the boy answered. "I have come a long way, but I have news. Take me to Gordon Pasha."

"I will take you fast enough," said Johnnie. "I believe you are a spy."

"I should not be so foolish," was the answer. "There is no need of a spy here; the Mahdi knows all about you."

Putting his hand on the donkey's bridle, without any further parley Johnnie led him to the palace.

"What is your name?" asked Gordon, when the boy was before him.

"My name is Morgan Fur," he answered, "and I have

come from Slatin Pasha. The Mahdi knew I was to come. Slatin Pasha is my master, and he is in sore straits. He has written to you once, twice, and you have sent no answer, and now the Mahdi believes that he is bidding you hold out, and he has laden him with double chains, and he has only a few beans to eat. He is very miserable. Here are the letters," he said, holding out a packet to Gordon.

"And there is other news too," he added.

"What news?" said Gordon.

"You sent a steamer down to Cairo," said the boy. "It has been heard of; it will never reach the town."

"Why not?" asked Gordon, and Johnnie, looking up at him, saw that his face had paled.

"A horseman arrived from Berber a week ago with news that the ship was wrecked," said the boy, "and that every man on board was killed by the natives. There is not one left."

"Is this true, or is it a lie?" asked Gordon.

"It is true," answered the boy.

"And was nothing saved from the steamer?"

"All the papers and letters were brought to the Mahdi, and he gave them to Slatin Pasha, my master, to read; and he persuaded the Mahdi to send me to you, so that you might feel that it is useless for you to hold out any longer."

He drew another paper from his pocket. "Slatin Pasha said this would prove to you that I am speaking the truth." It was General Gordon's own military report.

The general uttered not a word, showing no sign of the sorrow which he felt in his heart. "Take the boy, feed him, and send him back the way he came," he said

to Johnnie; and therewith he left the room in which the interview had taken place.

Once alone, Johnnie broke forth, caught the boy by the shoulders, and shook him till he cried out for mercy. "I don't believe a word you have said. You are a liar!" shouted Johnnie. "Get ye to the kitchen and ask for food," he said, "I'll not give it to you!" and he kicked him.

"Johnnie!" said a voice behind him. The boy turned sharply round and faced the general.

"How dare you," said the general, "to strike a messenger, for he is nothing else?"

"I can't help it," said Johnnie. "I hate him; he is a liar!"

"How do you know it?" continued Gordon. "I believe he is speaking the truth. Do as I told you —take him, feed him, and send him away."

Choking down his passion, Johnnie obeyed. "Come along," he said to Morgan Fur, and led the way to the kitchen.

He stood over him while he ate, then he saw him mount his donkey and ride away, but he never spoke to him. An hour after, the general found him lying face downwards on a mat at the door of his room sobbing his heart out.

"My boy," he said.

Johnnie looked up. "Oh, sir, are they all gone?" he exclaimed.

"And if it be so, are they not safe in God's hands? Get up and come with me," he answered.

Johnnie obeyed. Struggling with his sorrow he followed the general's steps to the English church, which, during all this siege and trial time, stood open. It was

crowded now, for it had been made known that the general would speak to his fellow-countrymen, and there was still a fair population of English merchants and their families in the town. Many were refugées from Omdurman. In a few words he told them what had happened, and then asked them to pray with him. There was not a dry eye amongst those present as they listened to his voice, thanking God for having delivered their brethren from the evil to come.

Then he spoke a few words of hope, and faith, and trust. "We will not despair," he said, "though it seems hard to do otherwise." And he went into their midst and led them back into the town, comforting them, as he alone had power to do.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST STAND

WHO does not know the story of how one brave man kept up the courage of a whole city? though Khartum was half-starved, suffering from disease—for even small-pox had broken out amongst them. "They are coming, our countrymen will come!" Gordon repeated again and again, with that wonderful bright smile, which went to the hearts of men and women alike. It were easier far to go into battle and fight a visible enemy, than patiently, helplessly, so to speak, combat the wasting strength, the fear, which now was fast undermining the body and souls of the population of Khartum. He would not let them despair; he kept up discipline and order, the services in the church were never neglected, and he himself was ever present with his people. Every day he invented something new to excite curiosity and interest, and rouse their flagging spirits. He sent five steamers to Metemmeh to await the English and bring back the supplies quicker than they could bring them themselves, but they were never heard of again. He had been so sure that help would come to him when needed; he had never realized the possibility of an English expedition being delayed. Therefore, neither he nor the inhabitants, and, as we have said, they were wealthy, at least the greater proportion, had made any provision against this disaster. He had not urged the inhabitants of Khartum to leave,

because he believed them to be safe, but he had taken in, as we have seen, a vast number of women and children from Omdurman. These had all to be fed and provided for. In the beginning of the year he found himself running short of provisions for his troops. He had to dole out biscuits and dhurra to the destitute people. There was no bread, the stores were empty. What could he do but persuade as many of the inhabitants as possible to seek refuge elsewhere? He put boats at their disposal, and tried to point out to them that they could escape out of the city to Equatoria. The silence which surrounded the city must have been truly awful. No news was received; they would have no warning that the English were coming, until they saw the steamers coming up the river to their assistance. The merchants of Khartum were not willing to forsake their property as long as there was any hope of rescue. Many of them buried their gold and valuables, and preferred remaining in their homes.

The general watched Johnnie anxiously; he was his shadow, following him everywhere. It seemed to him that every day the lad grew taller and thinner, his face whiter, and his eyes larger. One day he said to him: "It is of no use, Johnnie, you must go; Moussa shall take you."

"To whom will you send me?" the boy asked. "I have no one but you in the world; you are to me father, brother, friend. I will not leave you."

What could he say? Himself, he was so fearless of death; he did not look upon it as an evil, but as a release. And the boy said, truly, "His home was in heaven, his dear ones were there. Where they had gone, surely he could fearlessly follow."

So Johnnie remained, and Moussa remained, and the days went by. Omdurman fell, and though no one said as much, they knew that the circle was narrowing round them. They saw the tents of the Arabs, as it were, creeping on them, and nothing came to cheer them. Every morning they awoke with the hope that before nightfall they should hear guns firing and English voices hurrahing. Standing on the steps of his palace, Gordon would strain his weary eyes down the river, in the vain hope that he might yet see the steamers with the union-jack floating at their prow; but neither sight nor sound came to cheer him. He did not even know that the English advance-guard had met the Mahdi's troops at Abu-klea, and had utterly defeated them; that many of their chiefs had been slain and most of the emirs had fallen. That something had happened, Gordon suspected, because the greater number of the besiegers had suddenly retired from the neighbourhood of Khartum. In very truth, the Mahdists were terrified. The result was that the Mahdi, fearing that the English would arrive and raise the siege of Khartum, determined to delay no longer. If he were surprised, he felt sure that all the victories that he had gained up to the present time would be useless. There were those in his camp, prisoners, chained hand and foot, who listened and prayed for the English to advance, as earnestly as did the inhabitants of Khartum. Slatin Pasha, lying in chains, Lupton Bey, who was working a gun in Tuti Island, and many others, strained their eyes for a sight of those steamers which never came. The delay was inexplicable.

Did not the English generals know that so many precious lives were waiting for their coming—that every

hour, every minute, was a case of life and death? What Gordon thought, what Gordon felt, no one has ever told, for no one knew. Words, save to cheer his people, he felt were useless. He could but await the course of events, and whatever happened he was satisfied. It was the will of his Master. No stranger sight has ever been witnessed than the crossing of the White Nile by the Mahdi and his followers on the night of the 25th of January, 1885, to join the Arabs who were encamped there, ready to fight on the morrow. Standing up in the darkness, the Mahdi preached one of his wild sermons to his followers, telling them of the glories of Yehad, making promises of joys in that future life to all who fell in the fray on the morrow. "Fight! fight till the death!" he yelled; a wild, gorgeous figure looming out in the blackness of night.

And they answered him with yells and wild gestures, frantic as his own. Did Gordon hear them, and if he did, had he any preparations to make?

He had done nothing to protect himself; he had no guards about him, his palace gates were open. He had done his best for others, for himself he had not cared at all. A steamer was lying close to the palace, and the captain was waiting for Gordon or for orders. He had made no redoubt within the fortifications, he had absolutely done nothing to protect himself. He had been told that on the night of the 25th January the Mahdists had decided to attack, and he strove with all his might to rouse the spirits of his troops. In the evening he made a display of fireworks, he caused the band to play, he spoke cheerily to all the men, and then the city slept.

With some difficulty Gordon persuaded Johnnie to go

to rest. "I will call you at the least danger," he said. "You will want all your strength to-morrow."

Then he had called Moussa to him, saying: "If I am killed or taken prisoner to-morrow, you will see to the boy; indeed, do not wait for that, but if the Mahdists should gain footing in the town, hurry him at once out of the palace to the steamer *Ismailia*, and go yourself with him. I have made him promise me that he will do as you bid him, and I do not think he will break his word. Let him have a chance, and you too," he said, "for you are both young."

As Gordon said these words he passed his fingers through his hair. His head was uncovered, which was rare, and Moussa saw that it was quite white, as was also his short beard. They had been dark when he came to Khartum.

"I will obey your Excellency to the last," said Moussa, "but you will not expose yourself more than possible."

"No," said Gordon, "that were a sin, but I must be to the fore, and I do not think they will spare me."

He was right. The day was scarcely dawning when the Mahdists attacked the weakest point in the town, a broken-down parapet and a tumbled-in ditch near the White Nile, weakly defended by a few inhabitants.

Thousands and thousands of wild Arabs dashed through the mud and water and poured into the town. Storming parties attacked the troops in front, from before and from behind the defenders of the city were assaulted. The resistance they made was of the slightest, the troops laid down their arms.

"Lil Saraya, lil Kenisa!" meaning "To the palace, to the church!" was shouted by the Arabs as they rushed into the town.

The palace was surrounded, the massacre had begun in the basement. As he passed through the hall Gordon paused a second. Moussa was beside him. He put a key into his hand. "The boy is locked in my room asleep," he said gently, "go and do what I told you."

There was something so stern in his manner, so peremptory, that even at that crisis Moussa knew that he must obey, and he went.

He had taken his last look of the man he had served so faithfully, for, stepping out upon the parapet of the palace, up the steps of which a surging mass was already dashing, he called out in a loud voice: "Where is the Mahdi?"

In a second a huge spear transfixed his body, then another, then another; he fell forward on his face dead, and the steps of the palace were stained with the life-blood of this great soldier of the Cross.

It is needless here to recount the horrors which followed, the wholesale massacre of men, women, and children; the lust of gold led these savages, who called themselves men, to perpetrate deeds of horror impossible to imagine or to tell.

When General Gordon's head was taken to the Mahdi, he flew into a great passion. "I would sooner have had him alive!" he said. It seems that he had given the order that he should be taken alive, but God had not willed it so. He had given "His beloved rest". "He had fought the good fight with all his might. God was his strength and God his right."

When the news of the fall of Khartum reached the English expedition, every Englishman on board was deeply affected. At first they doubted it, and continued to push forward, and on Wednesday morning,

just two days after the fall of the city, a sharp crack of rifles was heard in the direction of Tuti Island. The two steamers which had been so longed-for had come at last, with Sir Charles Wilson, an English officer, on board. A heavy fire from the dervishes was poured in upon them. They could see Khartum, and they knew that the rumour was true. Sadly, with aching hearts, they turned about and steamed back, but as they did so they noticed a small boat making towards them. It seemed to contain but one man. Nevertheless they stopped, and when the boat came up alongside the *Bordein* they saw that the oarsman was wounded, and that another figure lay at the bottom of the boat. To haul them on deck was the work of a few minutes. The boat was sent adrift, and the steamer once more went on its way.

CHAPTER XIV

"SICK UNTO DEATH"

WHO are you, and who is the lad?" asked the commander of the *Bordein*, the steamer which had so nearly reached Khartum in time to save it.

"I am Moussa, a Nile boatman, but I have vessels of my own, and in one of these I brought the general from Assuan to Korosko, then we went across the desert to Berber, and from thence to Khartum by the Blue Nile. I had served him before, but I shall never serve him again. May Allah rest his soul in Paradise!" and great tears filled the man's eyes and rolled down his face.

"You did not see him killed?" said the commander.

"No, I did not see him killed, Allah be praised," said Moussa slowly. "He bade me go and rescue the boy. But I saw him go to his death, and I heard the yells and shrieks of his murderers."

Unable to control himself, Moussa buried his face in his hands, shaking from head to foot.

Several officers were standing near, and a sort of simultaneous groan escaped them. The commander himself turned away, and paced up the deck and back again. By that time Moussa had recovered his composure, and, as if half-ashamed of himself, lifted his head, saying:

"I am a man, yet I weep."

"To your credit," said Sir Charles. "Now, what about the boy? Who is he, that you should have such care of him?"

"That is more than I can tell you," said Moussa. "He came to me when I was just about to sail up the Nile to meet the general at Assuan, and he asked me to take him as passenger. I hesitated, because I saw he was but a lad, and asked him by whose leave he came.

"'By no one's,' he answered. 'I have no one in the world who has a right to bid me do this or that. I am alone. I can pay you.'

"It was no business of mine, so I took his passage-money and gave him a deck cabin. When we were well on our way I saw him speaking to the general, who was evidently not best pleased; but Emin Pasha was there, and he pleaded for the boy, and that same evening he told me:

"'Moussa, I am going with you to Khartum. I am going to serve the general.'

"And he kept his word, for from that hour he has scarcely lost sight of him. He was always at hand; always ready to run messages, to write letters, to do any and every thing. He speaks Arabic as well as I do. I believe he was born in Egypt, but I cannot tell you his name; to me he is Johnnie. The general was very fond of him. He slept in a room opening out of his, and he must have gone and looked at him that last morning. The boy was worn out with night-watching, and must have fallen into a heavy sleep, as boys do. The general did not awaken him, but went out of the room, and turned the key in the door. When I met him he was looking round.

"'Moussa,' he said, 'see to the boy. I have locked him into the room.' He gave me the key, and went on——"

Again Moussa paused, and his voice trembled.

"To his death," he added in a lower voice.

"I opened Johnnie's room. He was still sleeping. 'Get up!' I said, shaking him. 'The general wants you; follow me.'

"He was up in a second. How, I can never tell you, sir; but by some manner of means we reached the garden at the back of the palace. We hid in a boat-house behind some barrels. It was scarcely dawn. The shrieks which reached us were awful. We knew that the people were being massacred around us, for as I peered through a chink of the light planks of the shed I saw dead bodies lying about.

"'The general!' Johnnie kept repeating. 'Let me go to him!'

"'Go to him you cannot,' I answered. 'He bade me take you to the steamer *Ismailia*, which is lying, you know, close to the gate. He will meet us there, if he can. We must make for it.'

"'Ah! if he can,' said Johnnie, light suddenly dawning upon him. 'Let us go!' and he sprang out of the shed before I could hinder him, and made one dash down to the edge of the river. A great Arab sprang after him, but I had my revolver, and I shot him dead. I saw the boy leap into the river, and swim to the steamer. I did likewise, and we were hauled on deck.

"Fagarli, the captain, asked, 'Where is the general?'

"'Coming,' I answered, in the hope that he would still come, and to prevent the captain steaming away. He was as devoted to the general as we all were, and though he was forced to steam into mid-river, he moved a long time backwards and forwards in front of the town, hoping against hope that the Pasha would join us. But he never did. And then the Mahdi sent and offered the

captain his pardon if he surrendered. He had left his family in Khartum, and some of his crew; therefore he accepted the Mahdi's offer, but I and Johnnie would not. There was a small boat towed to the steamer. We let ourselves drop into that, cut the ropes, and rowed with all our might down the river. That's two days ago," he added. "We had but a handful of food between us. I know the river well; its sheltered spots and its little islands, and so I managed to keep under shelter and hide from the dervishes. We were well-nigh dead with hunger when we saw your ships and heard your fire, and we knew you had come, alas, too late! The dervishes saw us also, and fired into our boat. A shot struck Johnnie, and he fell to the bottom of the boat. Then I made one supreme effort to reach you. Will the boy die?"

"I hope not," said the commander, "but he is badly hit. Yours is a wonderful story, and you have been a brave fellow."

"How should I be otherwise with such a master?" said Moussa proudly. "Ah, sir, why did you let them kill him?"

"You do not suppose we should have done so if we could have helped it?" said the commander in a quick, pained voice. "Do you not think it is hard enough for us to bear the knowledge of our failure? What will they say in England? Khartum fallen, and Gordon dead!"

What did they say in England when the news reached home? One cry of horror and anger burst forth, even from those who did not fully understand the disgrace and loss which had fallen upon the nation.

A vague hope remained for a long time in the minds

of many that Gordon might be still living. None of those who had escaped out of the doomed city had seen him killed.

Navigation on the Nile is by no means easy on account of the sand-banks; and it requires a practised pilot to guide the vessels in safety past the Cataracts, to prevent their being wrecked on the sand-banks.

Moussa gave a word of warning to the pilot, but the man was unwilling to brook any remark, and suddenly the *Bordein* grounded. The position was a difficult one, because the Arabs were entrenched at Wad-Habeshi, and the English in their camp at Gubat. Sir Charles's force, which was a small one, had been sent on in front, for the immediate relief of Khartum, until the troops could push forward. This accident, therefore, was awkward, because the vessel was heavily laden, and could not be floated off. The only thing to do was to send to Gubat for help.

"If your Excellency will let me, I will take a little boat down and ask for help," said Moussa. "I know the river well."

"If you will, I should be glad," said Sir Charles. "I will send an officer with you."

This was successfully done, and the ship *Sophia*, under the command of Sir C. Beresford, started to relieve Sir Charles; but the enemy heard of this, and when the steamer approached they poured into it a perfect hail-storm of rifle and cannon shot. Those on board knew that they must go to the relief of their comrades, and fought with intense bravery. There must have been amongst those men a feeling of bitter disappointment for what had taken place at Khartum, and an intense hatred towards these savages, who now once more im-

peded their progress. They would not be beaten again. They set their teeth with bull-dog resistance.

Suddenly a shot penetrated the boiler, and entirely disabled the ship, but the engineers and the men set to work with determined intrepidity to repair the damage. All that night they worked under heavy fire, and to the astonishment of the enemy, early the next morning the *Sophia* steamed on her way. It was no joke, for the dervishes kept up one running fight; but so continuous was the deadly fire which the English poured from the ship into the ranks of the dervishes, that it succeeded in silencing their guns, and the *Sophia* reached Sir Charles and relieved him. In this fight the Emir and a considerable number of the dervishes had been killed, and the result was important. The defeat of the dervishes by this one steamer caused the Mahdists to reflect, and seeing that the English did not make any move forward to reconquer the Soudan, they let them retreat to Dongola without attacking them. It was this final retirement of the British which convinced the Mahdi that he had at last won the Soudan, and he broke forth into rapturous delight. In the mosque at Omdurman he announced the news to his followers, representing in glowing colours the flight of the unbelievers. He assured his people that not one of them would escape, because the Prophet had exhibited his power by a mighty miracle, drying up all the water-skins, so that the unbelievers would die of thirst on their way back. Thus in grief and sorrow ended this Soudan campaign, but everyone knew that matters would not rest there, and that before long England would vindicate her name and her honour.

As Johnnie lay in the bunk of the *Bordein*, he knew little of what was going on. He was dangerously

wounded, and the surgeon on board held out little hope of his life. It was impossible for anyone to question him, for he was seldom conscious; and when he was, he was not allowed to speak, because of the bleeding. He only roused himself a little when Moussa came to him; his was the one familiar face among so many strangers, and he evidently clung to him. All the officers on board were very much interested in Johnnie, and every possible attention and kindness was shown him. As far as anyone knew, these two were the only individuals who had escaped from Khartum, and the information they could give was of the utmost importance. They had not actually seen Gordon die, and the particulars of that last scene were only known long afterwards.

"Where do you come from? where shall I land you?" Sir Charles asked Moussa.

"I left my wife and her sister at Korosko, but they had orders to go back to Cairo as soon as possible. But that does not signify," he said; "the general told me to see to the boy, and I shall not leave him. We will go with you as far as your ship will take us, out of this fighting land if possible, afterwards I will care for him."

Sir Charles consulted with his fellow-officers, and they came to the conclusion that they must not lose sight of Johnnie. "He is an English subject, and we are responsible for him," they said. "Moussa is a fine fellow, and it will be well for us to keep in touch with him, for he has much information which may be useful to us."

So they told him that they would take him to Cairo, and there see if they could not find somebody interested in the boy. Throughout the journey Johnnie lay between life and death; only his youth and his good constitution saved him, at least so the surgeon said.

A couch was made for him on deck, and Moussa would carry him him up every day that he might have sun and air. "It is not only his wounds and the hardships he has gone through," said the surgeon. "The boy is miserable, and has not the will to rouse himself and live."

Sitting down beside him one day, Sir Charles took his hand. "My boy," he said, "where shall we take you to? Who are your friends in Cairo?"

"I have none," he answered.

"Think, that cannot be. Who were you living with?"

Johnnie hesitated for a moment, then he said: "My mother and sisters were killed in Arabi's massacre at Alexandria. A young man called Harold Anderson saved my life; he was secretary to Prince Hasan, and accompanied him to the seat of the war. I wanted him to take me with him, but he would not; he left me in Cairo. I hated being left, and determined I would go, and Moussa took me on his vessel. General Gordon came on board on his way to Khartum, and he took me into his service. I have been with him ever since. That is all I have to tell you." He turned his face away and closed his eyes, and Sir Charles saw the tears running down his face.

He waited a little time, then said gently: "But you have not told me your name?"

"John Cave," he answered.

Seeing he was utterly exhausted and overcome with grief, Sir Charles left him.

Walking up and down the deck with a fellow-officer, he said: "I suppose the boy is some merchant's son. When we reach Cairo, I will give him in charge to the clergyman. He is the most likely man to find out his

relatives. Certainly few boys as young have had so many adventures."

To Johnnie as he lay on deck, floating down the Nile with the blue sky overhead, he was like one in a dream. He only knew that he was unhappy; he had no wish to recover. "It is always the same thing," he thought to himself; "they all go, only I seem to remain. Surely my turn will come too, I cannot always live."

He had such a distaste of living, such a horror of it, since that last agony at Khartum. Others might doubt whether the general had met his end, Johnnie never doubted; he knew he had, and the shrieks and yells of the Arabs still rung in his ears. "He thought of me till the very last," he would say again and again to himself. "Why did he want Moussa to save my life? What for? What good am I?" And then, in his great weakness, tears would roll down his face, and Moussa would find him in that utter misery, or one of the officers would come to him and would try to cheer him. But it was all in vain, the boy seemed to be slipping away; he gained no strength, his face grew thinner and more wan, his hands were transparent.

"The wound is healing," said the surgeon, "but the boy is dying—dying from utter misery."

CHAPTER XV

HOME FEARS

NOT only at the breakfast-table of Berkhamstead Vicarage, but in almost every house in England, the opening of the newspaper was, at this time, the event of the day.

Egypt was on everyone's lips. A feverish impatience possessed the nation. "What is the government doing that Gordon has not yet been relieved?" was the general exclamation.

True, not one in a hundred knew the difficulty of that Nile journey, the conveying of troops over the desert. Still, it was an unheard-of thing that for months a man should call to his countrymen for help, and that the call should remain unanswered. When at last the news flew from telegraph to telegraph that Khartum had fallen, and that Gordon and his handful of men had perished, there was suppressed anger and shame on every face. It seemed to one and all that a supreme effort ought to have been made to save them. What was all our wealth and prestige worth if we let our brave men die without help?

For months past the Anderson household had followed with intense interest the course of the war. The map of Egypt and the Soudan was familiar to them all. Pictures taken from illustrated papers decked the schoolroom wall. Doris was intensely excited. The news of

the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and the latest battles of the Soudan were greeted with enthusiasm, but the question uppermost on everyone's lips was—How long will General Gordon hold out? What are the English generals doing?

And now the end had come, and when her father read the news out from the paper, Doris threw herself into an arm-chair, and sobbed as she had never sobbed before in her young life.

"It is a terrible disaster," said Mr. Anderson, breaking the silence. "They say Sir Charles Wilson was close at hand, and that he missed Khartum by a day or two."

"It does not matter by how long he missed it," said Cecily passionately. "He has missed it, and that brave man is dead."

"Have you any idea where Harold may be?" said Mrs. Anderson.

"No, not the faintest; he did not go with Gordon, he went with Prince Hasan. He must have been at Suakin and Toka. I am surprised we have had no letter from him," answered her husband.

"And Johnnie Cave. I wonder where the poor little boy is?" said Mrs. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson looked up, and his face was very sad. "In Harold's last letter he said that he had gone on board the steamer at the same time as General Gordon, and placed himself under his care. The general wrote as much to him. We have heard nothing of him since then. I am afraid he must have been at Khartum," he continued. "There is no way of knowing at present. The telegraph wires are cut, and the Mahdi holds Khartum, Omdurman, and all the neighbouring towns."

"And to think we cannot help them!" said Mrs. Anderson, tears filling her eyes.

Great sympathy was shown for the Andersons in the village and in the county generally. All the brightness seemed to have gone out of Mrs. Anderson's face. This losing of her first-born son, her darling, was a bitter trial. Mr. Anderson felt it as keenly, but he was a man. He went up to London to the war-office to enquire if his son's name was on the list of the dead or wounded; but it was not found on either. The secretary, however, vouchsafed to say: "You must not build too much on that, for I do not think we have half the names of those who are lost. I will not say killed, because possibly they may be still living. There are many Englishmen and foreigners in the Mahdi's camp. One of the most important is Slatin Pasha, the Austrian officer, who has done such good work in Darfur; but we get no news even of him. No letters are allowed to pass, they all go to the Mahdi."

With this scant information and a heavy heart he returned home, to be faced by Doris, who stood at the door to receive him, a smile on her lips. She ran down the garden-path to meet him, linked her arm in his, and said, "Father, I have an idea."

"And what may that be?" said Mr. Anderson. He smiled at her bright face, though his heart was heavy.

"Let us go to Egypt," she said, "you and I. Cousin Hugh will take your work, and Mother and Cecily will see after the parish. It will be so much more satisfactory; we shall be sure to hear something, and we could write every day to Mother, or whenever the mail goes out."

"Have you told your mother this?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"Oh yes, I told her! I always tell Mother everything directly I think it," said Doris.

"And what did she say?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"That it would be a great relief," answered Doris.

"But I think it is Cecily who ought to go, not you. You are a mere child, Doris," said her father.

"I am fifteen," said Doris. "Fifteen, Father. And you know Cecily is not strong, and I am as strong as a horse."

"What on earth should I do with you in Cairo?" Mr. Anderson asked.

"Oh, nothing at all!" said Doris. "When you didn't want me, I could stay in my room. But you know one always makes friends, Father, and there are lots of people in Cairo just now as anxious as we are. There is sure to be a nice woman amongst them who would let me hang on to her."

They had reached the house by this time, and were standing in the hall, where Mrs. Anderson met them. "Any news, William?" she asked.

"Nothing satisfactory, my dear," he answered. He told her what the secretary had said. "And here is Doris plaguing me to go to Egypt. What do you think of that, Mary?"

"I do not think it would hurt either you or her," said his wife. "Certainly if I were you I should go; Doris is a different matter."

"Now, Mother, that is too bad," said the girl. "You know you were quite agreeable to my going just now."

"Quite agreeable is not the word," said Mrs. Anderson. "It seems more natural for Cecily to go, only she is not strong at present, and I doubt whether she would stand the fatigue."

Doris looked at her father, and pulled his coat-sleeve. "Say yes, Daddy; do say yes!" she whispered.

"We will think over it," said Mr. Anderson to his wife. "We will let you know to-morrow, Doris; but mind you sleep, and do not make a rampage over my head."

"I will be as quiet as possible. I will do anything as long as you will take me," she answered.

"Well, we'll see," said her father.

Husband and wife sat together that night in earnest converse. "It may be months," said Mr. Anderson, "before we get trustworthy news. You see, they are fighting in different parts, and this Africa is so large. Our only chance of tracing Harold is through Prince Hasan. I have written to the consul at Cairo, and he said something about Dongola. Now, that is in the very opposite direction from Khartum."

"And then there is Johnnie Cave," said Mrs. Anderson. "A whole family swept away. It is really terrible."

"Well, would you really like me to go—do you wish it, Mary?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"I think I do," she answered. "Of course I should have been glad to go with you, but I do not think that is possible. We could not leave the two girls alone; and then there is the parish, it would suffer terribly. No, I will stay and do my work here, and we will send for your nephew, Hugh Miller. His views are the same as yours, and he is an active, bright man. He will keep things together; it will be so much better than having a strange locum-tenens."

"Very well," said Mr. Anderson. "It all seems easy, too easy perhaps."

"Nay, say rather," said Mrs. Anderson, "that matters have so arranged themselves that it is God's will you should go."

"We will take it so," answered her husband, "and Doris and myself will start by the next steamer. You will never get her in the school-room again when she comes back," Mr. Anderson added, smiling.

"It will be rather difficult," said Mrs. Anderson; "but I scarcely think it is worth while troubling over what is now so far away. Miss Moran will finish Cecily, and will help me, and then I can give her a long holiday until Doris comes back. Of course it is hard to part with you, William, the first time since we have been married; but there is the boy, and I really feel as if I could not go dragging on without any news of him at all."

"It does not follow that I shall be able to send you any," said Mr. Anderson. "Waiting is a hard trouble, Mary, one of the hardest things we have to bear in this world." And with that they went out into the hall, took up the bed-room candlestick, and ascended the stairs together, as they had done for so many years of happy married life.

"I shall have to go up to London to-morrow," said Mr. Anderson, before falling asleep, "and find out when the next boat starts."

"You will go by Suez," said Mrs. Anderson.

"Of course I shall," answered her husband. Then silence fell between them, and they slept.

. . . . . .

"Father, look!" Mr. Anderson and Doris were standing in the principal street of Cairo when their attention was suddenly attracted to a motley crowd of sailors and

officers, Nubians and Arabs, and as they approached they saw in their midst a stretcher, upon which lay a youth. Beside him walked an Egyptian sailor, smiling and nodding familiarly to the crowd.

"What has happened? Is it an accident?" asked Mr. Anderson of a man standing beside him.

"No, sir; or rather yes, it is an accident. That youth and that Egyptian sailor are the only survivors of Khartum. They have just now landed from Sir Charles Wilson's steamer, and the youth is being taken to the hospital."

Deeply interested, Mr. Anderson, with Doris on his arm, pushed their way through the crowd, and just caught sight of a white face with closed eyes. "Who is the lad?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"I don't know," answered the man, "but you see the people are giving him a perfect ovation; they say he is very bad and will not live. We shall hear more in a day or two. Moussa is well known in Cairo, and he will tell the story."

"Moussa. Is that the Egyptian sailor walking beside him?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"Yes; he was devoted to the general, and went after him to Khartum. He must have been with him at the last. His fortune is made; he can get as many piastres as he likes for telling the tale. Look at the journalists following close upon him."

And in very truth a group of journalists were hustling each other to get speech with Moussa.

"By and by," he said, "by and by. I must see to my boy first."

"Why do they take him to the hospital?" Mr. Anderson asked. "Has he no home in Cairo?"

The man shrugged his shoulders. "You are very curious, sir; everything will come out in good time." And he went his way.

"Oh, Father, did you see the boy's face? I cannot think he is an Egyptian, or anything but an English boy. How could they have escaped from Khartum, those two only?" And then suddenly she exclaimed, "Father, suppose he were Mother's Johnnie!"

"Nonsense, Doris!" said her father.

"I don't see that it is nonsense," answered the girl. "Johnnie was in Khartum. Why should he not have been saved?"

"Come along, it is time for lunch," said Mr. Anderson. "You will write romances some day, Doris."

"It flashed across me," she said, "as soon as I saw him, 'that is Johnnie Cave'. Do let us ask, Father."

"Certainly I will ask," he answered, "but it is not possible with that crowd of people round him. Wait till he is settled in the hospital; this afternoon we will go there."

They went back to the hotel, but Doris had no appetite for lunch. All the conversation turned upon the arrival of Sir Charles Wilson's *Bordein*. "If they had been twenty-four hours sooner they might have saved Gordon," said an elderly gentleman. "I don't say Sir Charles is to blame, I don't think he is, but why didn't Gladstone send out an expedition sooner? It is government dilatoriness that has lost this man's life and many others." And not a voice was raised against this verdict.

"Does anyone know the name of the boy?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"Oh yes!" answered the gentleman. "Few lads have had such experiences as Johnnie Cave, the missionary's

son. His mother and sisters were killed in the riot at Alexandria, and he was saved and brought to Cairo by a young fellow, secretary to Prince Hasan."

Doris could not restrain herself. She uttered a cry, "There, Father, I told you so!"

Everyone turned and looked at her. She was already well known in the hotel as the pretty English girl, with her sunny face and eager manner.

"Do you know him?" asked Mr. Bennett, the gentleman who had told the story.

"Oh yes!" she answered; "we have come to find him."

"Then you have come in the nick of time," Mr. Bennett answered.

"Can you tell me," asked Mr. Anderson, "how he came to go to Khartum at all?"

"Yes," said Mr. Bennett, who was an inhabitant of Cairo. "When Prince Hasan and his secretary left, the boy felt himself alone. A tutor had been engaged for him—a friend of mine, Professor Dobson—and as his pupil did not turn up, he went after him all over Cairo, and at last traced him to Boulak, the port. After close enquiries, he found a sailor who had seen him go on board with Moussa at an early hour that same day. There was no going after him up the Nile, so he had to let him take his chance, and that chance evidently landed him at Khartum with General Gordon."

"I wonder the general didn't send him back," said Mr. Anderson.

"My dear sir, there is no going back at such times. But we shall hear all particulars presently."

"Father, how can we get to see him? What shall we do?"

"We must go at once to the consulate," said Mr. Anderson.

This they did after lunch. The boy was well known there, from the time of his escape from Alexandria. Of course the tutor had carried his complaint to the consul, and enquiries were made, which resulted in it being discovered that he had gone with Moussa up the Nile. "Since then we have lost sight of him," the consul said. "Of course I will give you an order to go and see him. They say he is very ill—not likely to live. He must have suffered great privation. Then he had a bullet-shot through his shoulder, which just shaved the lung, and though everything has been done for him on the steamer, he does not seem to rally. Sir Charles and his officers are deeply interested in him, but the surgeon on board says that the shock of Gordon's death has so unnerved him that he has not strength to rally. I was speaking to that Egyptian sailor, Moussa, just now. He says the boy never left the general's side for months, but on that fatal morning he had fallen asleep. The general must have gone in and looked at him, then come out, locked the door, and given the key to Moussa, with orders to take him on board the *Ismailia*, the very steamer which was waiting to save him, had he chosen to be saved; but he went out, faced the mob, and was killed on the steps of his palace. That is the story he tells. But you had better see Moussa yourself. He will tell you how he saved himself and the boy. It is wonderful."

"First of all I will see Johnnie," said Mr. Anderson. "Who knows, the fact of finding he has friends again may do him all the good in the world."

"Probably it will," said the consul. "I earnestly

trust so; he must have the making of a fine man in him, for the general to have taken such a deep interest in the lad."

"Have you heard anything of my son?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"Nothing," said the consul. "Communications are very difficult, for the Mahdi and his troops swarm over the country. But if this be really the boy you are looking for, you have had exceptional luck; and I have no doubt that as your son is neither on the list of the wounded or killed, you will trace him before long."

"I hope so," said Mr. Anderson.

"Here is an order to admit you to the hospital at once."

"Thank you!" answered Mr. Anderson. "Now, Doris." And father and daughter went off together in the direction of the hospital.

CHAPTER XVI

AT CAIRO

EVERYTHING was new to Doris from the hour she left England. They had travelled as rapidly as possible. The boat services were regular, and nothing had impeded them. Her interest in all she saw and heard was intense; at the same time she never lost sight of the object of their journey. The very next day she had insisted upon her father beginning their enquiries, but it was quite useless. No one had heard of Johnnie—a strange, insignificant child, he was lost in the crowd; and from the heights of hope Doris had fallen into the depths of despair. "We shall never find Johnnie or Harold!" she said to her father the second day after their arrival.

"I am going to the palace to-morrow," said her father. "I shall see the Khedive; he will probably have news of his brother, and consequently of Harold." But the visit had been deferred by the events we have just described.

When they reached the hospital, Mr. Anderson gave his letter to a porter, who conveyed it to the first house-surgeon. After waiting a few minutes, this gentleman appeared, a Dr. Schlutzer, a German. He was looking irritable and upset, and began at once by saying: "My dear sir, if the consul wants to kill the boy outright, he has only to go on after this fashion. I cannot keep the boy's ward clear, they come crowding in and stand staring at him. I have been obliged to put two nurses

on guard, and to draw a screen round his bed. It is against the rules, and the consul ought to know it."

"But this is such an exceptional case," said Mr. Anderson; "the one individual who has escaped from Khartum."

"That is no reason why he should be made a show of," said the doctor; "really I must ask you to go."

Tears sprang up in Doris's eyes. "Oh, sir," she said, "ours is not idle curiosity! You must let us see him! We have come all the way from England to find him; we are his mother's friends."

"He told me he had no friends," said the doctor sharply. "What do you mean?"

"Just what my daughter tells you," intervened Mr. Anderson. "My wife and his mother were like sisters. The boy was coming to us, but he was detained in Cairo by my son, in the hope of finding his sister, but when my son left with Prince Hasan, the boy went to Khartum. It is a mere chance our finding him."

"You call it chance," said the doctor, "I call it destiny. He has gone through enough to kill a dozen boys, and I am not sure that he will pull through. He is utterly exhausted. You had better return to-morrow."

"Oh, sir," said Doris pleadingly, "let me see him, if only for a few minutes! I do not think I shall hurt him."

Overcome by the girl's earnestness, the doctor growled, "Well then, come, you must take the responsibility upon yourselves." For the first time in her life Doris went through a hospital ward, with white beds on either side, in which lay suffering humanity. She looked with awe at the trim nurses gliding hither and thither. They had placed Johnnie at the end of the ward, and, as the doctor said, a nurse was on guard.

"Well, Nurse," he said, "this young lady has been too much for me. She and her father have come from England to find this very boy."

The nurse shook her head. "He would be better let alone at present," she said.

"Of course, I know that," retorted the doctor. "Move the screen."

Mr. Anderson stepped forward to the head of the bed, and looked down upon Johnnie. Doris remained at the foot. It was some five or six years since they had seen him, but Mr. Anderson recognized him at once. He had been a nice-looking little boy, with regular features, fair skin, and brown hair—a very happy little chap. Now the same face was white and drawn, and when the boy lifted his eyes to Mr. Anderson, there was a look of acute pain in them.

"Johnnie, do you know me?" he asked.

"Yes, I know you; you are Mr. Anderson. Have you come all this long way to find me?"

"Of course, I have come to find you and Harold," answered Mr. Anderson.

"I am very glad," said the boy. "I hope you will find Harold; but as for me, it does not matter."

Then there came a bright voice from the foot of the bed: "Nonsense, Johnnie, it matters very much!" and looking up, he saw a girl in a white summer frock, with a shady hat, from beneath which the golden hair fell in clouds, and his cheeks flushed.

"Who is she?" he asked. "Not Isa, she is too big."

"No, she is my daughter, Doris. Do you remember little Doris? When you were at the vicarage, she was the baby," said Mr. Anderson.

He shook his head, and smiled. "And has she also come to find me?" he asked.

"Yes, and to take care of you," said Doris, coming close up to him. "Oh, Johnnie, Mother will be glad! I shall write to her this very night."

A look of wonder came over the boy's face. "Does she really care—do you care that I am alive?"

"Care!" said Doris. "Oh, we care dreadfully! Do you think if we had not cared we should have come all this long way to find you?"

"It is very good of you," he said dreamily.

"It is not good at all," said Doris; "it is our pleasure, our happiness. We have been so miserable about you and Harold."

He smiled. "Harold, yes,—but me?"

"Almost as much," she answered. "And now you have got to get well, and come home with us."

"If you wish him to do that, you must leave him now," said the doctor's stern voice.

"But I may come back to-morrow?" asked Doris, looking up.

"If I find he is not upset by your visit to-day, yes, you may come."

"Thank you!" said Johnnie, and for the first time a light came into his eyes. He put out his hand, first to Mr. Anderson and then to Doris. "It is nice to have friends," he added. "It is very good of God to have sent you to me. Now, you must find Harold."

"Yes," said Mr. Anderson cheerfully. "Now I have only one lost sheep to find, I shall be able to give my whole attention to him. Doris is right, Johnnie, my wife has been almost as anxious about you as about her own son. And, who knows, you may help us."

"I wish I could," said Johnnie. And then Mr. Anderson kissed him, and Doris kissed him.

"I am your sister, you know," she said, smiling at him,—such a bright face, like a ray of sunshine. Johnnie thought he had never seen anything so sweet since little Isa had been taken from him.

When they were gone, he turned to the nurse, saying, "Now I think I can sleep, everything is so different."

With deft hands she straightened his bed, shook up his pillows, gave him some warm milk to drink, and then left him. When she came back he was fast asleep. "I believe their coming will save him," she said to herself. And she was not far wrong. The greatest factor in life is hope, and when Johnnie turned his back upon Khartum and the man he loved so well, and lay wounded and sorrowful on board that boat, he lost all hope, and he well-nigh died of it.

As he had felt himself carried through the streets of Cairo he prayed that he might die. The events of the last year had been almost too much for such a youth, and he looked out hopelessly upon the world, not with the happy joyousness which would have been natural to him, but with fear. His nature was extraordinarily sensitive, made more so by living alone with his mother, with no man's hand to uphold him, therefore he felt the shocks which had followed each other so rapidly in his life more acutely than an ordinary boy might have done. His year with General Gordon at Khartum had done much to strengthen him, and the strong religious influence which had been brought to bear upon his character had enabled him to face calmly the events of a life which told even upon men. Now it seemed to him as if everything had crumbled away, there was nothing left to hope

for, nothing to fear. Suddenly he saw that bright girl's face at the foot of his bed, telling him, with smiling lips, that they had been seeking for him, that they had come to fetch him, and hope sprang up again, and a glimmer of light penetrated the darkness which seemed to envelop him. He had fallen asleep, with her girlish voice in his ears, "I may come again to-morrow"; and when he awoke he knew that something good had happened to him, that he had something to expect, and the cloud rolled away.

"Well, my boy, you are all right to-day," said the doctor's cheery voice as he looked down upon the small, white face. The eyes were bright, and the lips were smiling.

"Yes, I am all right, Doctor. I think I shall get well," answered the boy.

"Of course you will. Why, do you know you are a hero, and everybody is asking for you," said the doctor.

"Me a hero!" said Johnnie. "Oh no! I have done nothing at all."

"Only that you were in Khartum for a whole year. Is that nothing?" asked the doctor. But he had touched a sore point. Johnnie's eyes filled with tears.

"Never mind, we won't speak of it," said the doctor kindly. "What you have to do now is to live, and to prove yourself worthy of having lived so long with a man we all mourn."

"Ah! I had not thought of that," said Johnnie. "I thought there was nothing to live for, doctor."

"There is always something to live for, if God wills that we should live," said the doctor.

"I know there are a lot of good men in the world,' said Johnnie. "Did you know Emin Pasha?"

"I should rather think I did," was the answer. "He is a fellow-countryman of mine, and sent for me over here." And then Johnnie told him how he had been his friend, and how much he loved him.

"I rode all the way from Korosko to Berber on his camel with him. It was awful fun. I was sorry when the general sent him to Equatoria, but I am glad now that he went. He will come back one day."

"I hope so," said the doctor. "I will write and let him know you are here, when I get the chance of a messenger. And now no more talking."

He examined him carefully, dressed his wound, and then left him to be cared for by the nurse. "That is a young life worth saving," he said to himself; "he has seen so much and he has known good men."

Later in the day Mr. Anderson and Doris arrived, but Mr. Anderson could not remain long, as he was to have an interview with the Khedive, who had a communication to make to him which might lead to getting some news of Harold. So, leaving Doris with Johnnie, he went to the palace. The Khedive received him almost affectionately.

"You were like a father to my brother when he was in England," he said, "and his devotion to your son is very great; but I am afraid I have bad news for you. In the last skirmish at Dongola he was made prisoner; at least we think so from another source, but we do not really know where he is. If you will go to the Austrian agency they may give you some light, but I am sorry to tell you that if he is a prisoner it is almost impossible to get a man out of the Mahdi's hands. It may be months, it may be years before we shall succeed in getting him freed, unless he can make his escape. There is

Slatin Pasha, the late governor of Darfur, who has already been some time a prisoner in the Mahdi's camp, and yet no money has been spared to enable him to escape, but unsuccessfully. However, we can but hope for the best; but if he is at Omdurman it will be very hard to get at him. My brother will be back in Cairo in the course of a month or two, I hope, and he may advise us what it is best to do."

Upon leaving the Khedive Mr. Anderson went straight to the Austrian agency, sent in his name and his son's, and was immediately conducted into the presence of Baron Heidler.

"I am very sorry you have had to come to me on such a hopeless matter," he said, "but this at least may comfort you, we are able to tell you that your son is at Omdurman. With the greatest difficulty we occasionally get a few words from our unfortunate compatriot, Rudolf Slatin. An Arab brought us this message yesterday: 'Englishman, H. Anderson, prisoner; let family know'."

Deeply grieved as he was, Mr. Anderson was thankful to be assured that his son was still living. Of course he had not the vaguest idea of the difficulties which lay in the way of procuring his liberty.

"I suppose we shall be able to send him money, and to assist him," he said to the agent.

"Not openly, and with great difficulty," was the answer. "Slatin's family send large sums of money over to us to ease his imprisonment. Now and again we are able to give some relief, but I do not suppose he receives the third of what we send. Every Arab is a thief, and we have only the Arabs with whom we can deal. They must be well paid to make it worth their while, for they

run considerable risk in transmitting the money to the prisoners. However, if you are prepared to lose half of what you send, we will do for your son what we do for Slatin. One consolation you have is, that he is a less important personage, and therefore not likely to be so closely watched. The Mahdi is very proud of having Slatin as his prisoner, and he rarely lets him out of his presence, or from the door of his tent. 'See,' he will say to his disciples, 'this is Slatin Pasha, governor of the whole of Darfur. We were his slaves—formerly he could do with us as he would; now he is my slave, and he cannot move unless I choose.' For the smallest offence he is laden with chains and irons. His life is a burden to him."

"I heard he had made himself a Mohammedan," said Mr. Anderson.

The consul shrugged his shoulders. "That is true," he said. "He found it was his only way of making life even tolerable. We must not judge him hardly."

"I judge no man," said Mr. Anderson, "but nevertheless I hope my son will not be so tempted."

Very downhearted, he left the consulate. There seemed no solution of the problem. Harold was a prisoner, and would have to remain one, at least for some time to come. And so he went back to the hospital, to find Doris playing a game of chess with Johnnie. The boy looked up at him brightly, and asked, "Have you any good news, Mr. Anderson?"

Mr. Anderson did not like to tell him what he had heard, but simply said, "Nothing definite, my boy. We shall doubtless have news in a few days. Prince Hasan is returning to Cairo."

"And Mr. Harold is not with him," said Johnnie

sharply. He had passed through so much, he had lived so much in the midst of hopes and fears, plots and counter-plots, that he saw more clearly than others. "If Prince Hasan is coming back, why does not Mr. Harold come back with him?"

"That does not follow at all," said Mr. Anderson. "They got separated. Now, Doris dear, we must be going. I met the doctor when I came in, and he said he thought Master Johnnie had had visitors enough for to-day."

"I have been very happy," said Johnnie. "Once or twice I thought that all the past was a dream, and that I had just awakened, but of course I know it is not;" and the shadow fell again over his face.

"No, it is not a dream, Johnnie," said Mr. Anderson; "it is the ladder up which you have to climb to heaven."

"Jacob's ladder?" said the boy.

"Yes, Johnnie."

"Good-bye, my boy!" He stooped and kissed him. Doris put up the chess-board, and then she too kissed him, and after a womanly fashion she straightened his sheets and put the big bunch of grapes her father had brought within reach of his hands.

"If only we could find Isa," he said, looking up at her. "We would all go home together."

"Ah, yes! I forgot," said Mr. Anderson; "we have Isa to look for still. I think I shall have to go to Alexandria for that;" and he was turning to go, when he saw Moussa coming up the long ward. He was so smart in his boatman's dress that he attracted Doris's eyes at once.

"Oh, look who is coming there!" she said.

Johnnie lifted himself up a little. "It is Moussa, my dear Moussa!" and he held out both his hands to him.

"Ah, my little master!" said Moussa, "you were dead yesterday, you are alive to-day."

"Yes, I am alive, Moussa," answered Johnnie. "God has sent friends."

"There is nothing like it, nothing in the world like friends," said Moussa; and his handsome face glowed, and his dark eyes shone upon Mr. Anderson and Doris. "You came in time, sir," he said to Mr. Anderson, "or the light would have gone out."

"Are you the Moussa who was at Khartum with our boy?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"Yes, we were there together, sir. They are making much of me in the town," said Moussa, "and yet I did nothing. I did not fight—there was no fighting, we just waited."

And Mr. Anderson remembered how he had said to his wife before starting, "To wait patiently is the hardest thing in life; action, battle, doing, is nothing compared to waiting".

"Will you come to my hotel and speak to me. I should like to consult with you," said Mr. Anderson.

"I am at your service, sir," said Moussa. "I will come this evening."

"Then I will wait for you. Now, we must be really going. Good-bye, Johnnie!"

"Good-bye, sir! Good-bye, Doris!" answered Johnnie. And so they went, and the boy fell back upon his pillows, tired with this glint of happiness.

CHAPTER XVII

HEAVY HEART

AT home at the vicarage there seemed but one hour in the day, but one hour in the week, to Cecily and Mrs. Anderson, and that was the post and the mail day, when letters must go out and letters must come in.

They were a very small party round the breakfast-table now. Just Cousin Hugh, Cecily, and Mrs. Anderson; Bertie was away at school, and Miss Moran was taking her holiday. It had seemed better that she should do so at first, Mrs. Anderson thought, for with the continual anxiety and strain of events, Cecily's mind was hardly fit for study. She felt keenly the danger to which Harold was exposed and her father's absence. The home had never been broken up before. The absence of Doris's bright face and chirping voice made the quiet of the house terrible to her. For the first week she went about looking as if she were in a dream, until one morning Cousin Hugh said to her: "I don't know how you mean me to see after everything, Cecily! I am doing the best I can in the schools and in the church, but I do not know the people in the parish. You must either introduce me to them or do the visiting yourself. Your mother has as much as she can do with her mothers' meetings, and her clubs, and her house and visitors—in fact, I think she is overworking herself."

Hugh Miller was a tall, handsome man, just thirty, and had been working as curate in a big London parish. He was a very earnest churchman, and not one to take his duties lightly. Fortunately for Mr. Anderson, he was changing his cure, intending to take a curacy in the east of London, to gain further experience, when he asked him to come to his assistance. He was feeling fagged, and his uncle's request had come at a propitious time. "A few months at Berkamstead and I shall feel quite young again," he thought, and accepted willingly.

There was plenty work in the large, wide-spread parish and in the well-organized church services. Besides, he was very sorry for his uncle, for he knew how bitterly he would take to heart the loss of his son. He and Harold had been great friends. He had known of his difficulties, and agreed with him that it was better he should wait before taking holy orders.

It was a great comfort to Mrs. Anderson to have him. She was able to speak to him freely on all subjects, and had only the previous day remarked to him: "I don't know what I shall do with Cecily. She just drags herself about, does nothing, and does not seem to care for anything."

"Ah, well, she must be made to work," he answered. "We must rouse her, she cannot go on in that way." And so he attacked her the next morning after breakfast.

"Oh, Hugh, really I cannot," she said. "I hate going anywhere. Everybody asks me the same question and says the same thing. 'Isn't it dreadful? Everybody killed—and your poor brother, where is he?' As if I could tell them," said Cecily.

"Well, you need not answer them," said Hugh. "I

am caught in the street every time I go out, but I shake my head and say, 'We are waiting'. At present your mother is your first consideration, and she is worried and overworked. She has an immense deal of letter-writing. Can't you do some of it?"

"I wrote a long letter to Father yesterday, and a short one to Doris," said Cecily. "I went into the village and did some commissions for Mother. Is not that enough, Cousin Hugh?"

"Well, if you call that work, I call it play," answered her cousin. "I should like to put you into a London parish."

"Girls cannot go about by themselves in London, so I should have less to do there than here," she said.

"And would, consequently, be more miserable," said her cousin. "Now, Cecily, we have to divide the work between us—myself, Mr. Warner, the curate, your mother, and yourself, and we must each take our share."

At that moment Mrs. Anderson came in. Cecily turned round to her indignantly. "Here is Hugh lecturing me, Mother. He wants me to do parish work, and you know I have not done much yet, and I do not feel up to it, with all this misery about Harold, Father, and Doris." And as she spoke, she sat down and began to cry.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Anderson, "crying is no use at all. Hugh is quite right. I sent Miss Moran away, because I thought active occupation would be much better for you than school-work at present. If we all sat down and cried, we should not mend matters, and we should probably be ill ourselves. I am astonished at the amount of work your father does. Hugh and I were

in his study yesterday together, and we found there was enough to occupy us both. You are nearly eighteen, Cecily. It is time you took something on your own shoulders."

"I thought you did not like me visiting the cottages," she said.

"Well, not promiscuously, you are too young for that yet," said Mrs. Anderson; "but there is a great deal that you can do, and there are the schools. We have decided between us that we will give you a district of your own, and that you shall give Hugh an account of your work every day, as you would do if you had to work with your father. You must try and rouse yourself, my child!" and she put her hand on Cecily's shoulder.

They had been kept such children, with no cares and no responsibilities, that this sudden change took Cecily unawares. She had always been ready to run a village errand for her mother, to go and see an old woman, or carry food and clothes to the needy, but she had never worked independently, and, naturally timid, she shrank from it.

"I shall not know a bit what to say to the people. What is the use?"

"Oh, you will soon find out, Cecily," said Hugh, laughing. "Just try for a week. Uncle and Aunt have spoilt both you and Doris. But you are all right, you will get on well enough." And so the matter was settled, and the very next day they put Cecily to work.

The first letters they received from Mr. Anderson and Doris were, of course, just ordinary travellers' letters. "The child is full of excitement," Mr. Anderson said.

It had been posted from Marseilles, and Doris's attempted descriptions made them all laugh. The next

letter was from Cairo, the evening of their arrival, before they had made any effort to trace their lost ones, but the third letter opened with almost a cry.

"Mother, Mother dear, we have found him!"

The mother's eye glanced across the lines. With a throb at her heart and then a spasm of involuntary pain, she read: "Johnnie Cave".

"Not Harold," said Cecily.

"No," said her mother, recovering herself; "but I am very glad at least that Johnnie is found." Then there followed a long account of how this had happened. Doris was almost eloquent. And the whole thing was so wonderful—it was like a story. Then her husband's letter told her about Harold, gently and sadly; but he broke the news straight to her as he had heard it at the Austrian agency.

"He is evidently alive, and, as far as we know, well, probably at present at Omdurman. Now the question is —How are we to get at him?"

If there was anxiety in the mother's heart, there was also joy, for the son who still lived. Neither she nor Hugh imagined the difficulties to be encountered in striving to set him at liberty; only those who were familiar with the country could realize the dealing of that extraordinary man the Mahdi, who represented, to most English minds at that time, a madman.

"He could never have done what he has done," Hugh said, "if he had not been a religious fanatic. I have been trying to get a right understanding of the man; but I do not suppose we ever shall, or that we in England can in any way even imagine his nature. In time to come we may obtain a better knowledge of him, but at present he is very mythical."

"He makes his people fight, at all events," said Mrs. Anderson. "I suppose money will buy Harold off."

"I doubt it," said Hugh. "You see what the war agents say of Slatin Pasha. He has been in the Soudan from the very first; and I hear he is a splendid officer, those Austrians are. At all events the Mahdi attaches a wonderful amount of importance to his person. I heard that before I came here. We will hope Harold may make his acquaintance, and that they will help each other in their captivity."

"If only that awful man does not kill him," said Mrs. Anderson.

"I do not suppose he will do that," said Hugh; "especially as he is an Englishman. An Egyptian, an Austrian, or a Jew would have a worse chance."

Then they reverted to Doris's letter and her story of Johnnie.

"How much he will be thought of when he does come home!" said Cecily. "Father says everybody is trying to see him at Cairo, there will be a rush after him here."

"Well, if he is worth anything he may hold his own, but if not, he will become a perfect snob," said Cousin Hugh. "You will have to guard against that, Aunt Mary."

"Poor little fellow!" said Mrs. Anderson. "What he must have gone through!"

"Yes," said Hugh; "but he has had one advantage, he has stood by the side of a good man. He will have all his life an example before his eyes, nothing can deprive him of that."

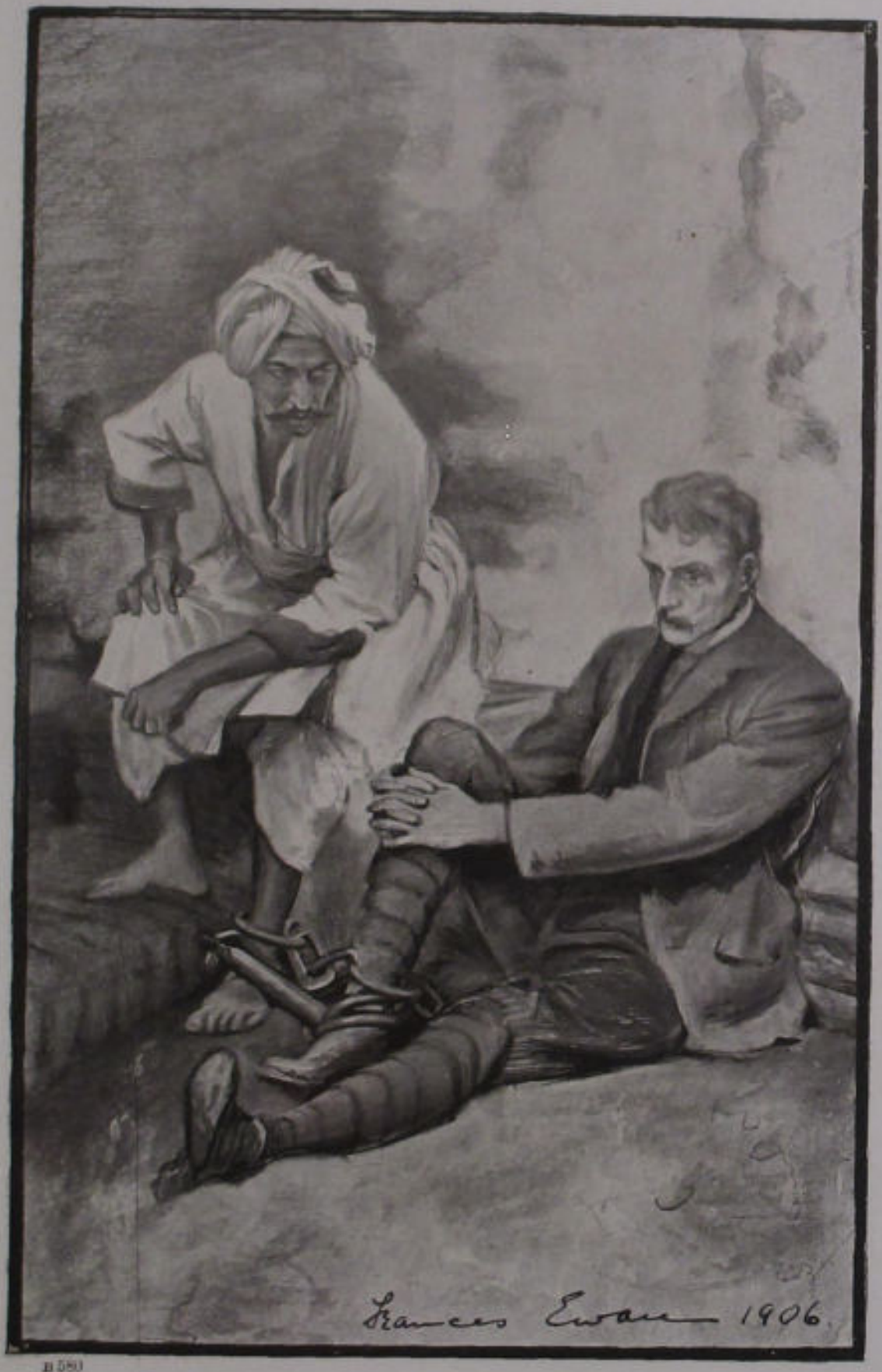
"Did you know Charles Gordon, Hugh?" asked Mrs. Anderson.

"No," he said, "I did not. Of course I knew his

name, it was on everyone's lips, and I have heard of his work at Woolwich and Gravesend. I can take my measure of the man. His tact and bravery in China is a public story."

"To think that if Sir Charles Wilson had only got there one day sooner, he might have saved him!" said Mrs. Anderson.

"Yes, that one day makes all the difference," said Hugh. "The story is not finished yet," he continued. "I think a new Soudan will arise out of the old one which is lost to us, and the name of Gordon will stand out as a light in the darkness. He was a righteous man." And the Rev. Hugh Miller's opinion was the general one throughout England.



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"TWO MEN HEAVILY LADEN WITH IRONS WERE SITTING SIDE BY SIDE"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRISONERS

IN the corner of an immense zareba, which is an Arab enclosure or camp so built round that it becomes almost a fortress, two men, heavily laden with irons, were sitting side by side. One was quite a young man, the other was older, but still in the prime of life, though he was worn and haggard, and of miserable appearance, clothed after the Mohammedan fashion, in a soiled white gibber and a skull-cap, round which was bound a cotton turban. The younger man was in European dress, tattered and soiled. His beard was of many days' growth, and his face was white and thin.

"You will have to pick yourself together," said the older man, looking at his companion, "you are not at the end of your troubles yet; but I will allow this fortnight has been the worst I have lived through during the last two years, especially since I made myself a Mohammedan."

"That I will never do," was the quiet answer.

"Well, perhaps you are right; but you see I am living, and there are those like yourself who have died in their misery. You must not do that."

"I do not intend to if I can help it," was the short answer; "there must come an end to it some day."

"That is what I say to myself if we can hold out," said Slatin Pasha; "but it is hard lines. I never knew

how hard until they brought me that good man's head wrapped in a linen cloth. I felt as if everything in me were dying too."

"And yet I am told you gave no sign," said his companion.

"Didn't I?" said Slatin. "I tell you my heart seemed to stop beating, and I heard, as if far away, the words his murderers taunted me with, 'Is not this the head of your uncle, the unbeliever?' I thought I should never get the answer out of my throat, but I did. 'What of it?' I said. 'A brave soldier, who fell at his post; happy is he to have fallen, his sufferings are over.' 'Ah!' the man answered with a laugh, 'you praise the unbeliever. You will soon see the results." And I do see them already in these chains. The Mahdi is angry with me because I corresponded with Gordon. He must have found in Khartum more than he expected. I sent private letters, besides those he knew of, entreating Gordon to further my escape and let me join him, so I have lost what little freedom I had. But what matters it—Khartum fallen, and Gordon dead—my heart is broken at times, I have no spirit left."

Harold Anderson was about to answer him, when he made him a sign. "They are coming." Walking across the zareba, accompanied by his two brothers and an escort of Mussulmans, was the Khalifa. He was reviewing the victims, speaking to them, and in some cases having their chains taken off."

"Take care how you speak to him," whispered Slatin to Harold Anderson. "Tell him you are well and contented."

"I shall never have told a bigger lie in my life, then," said Harold.

"No matter, you would have a worse fate if you told him you were not. It is all by comparison."

The Khalifa reached their corner at last, nodded to Slatin, and, addressing him in Arabic, asked: "How are you, Abdel Kader?" To which he answered in the same language, "I am well, sir."

He put a similar question to Harold, who, having caught the words, answered after a like fashion.

"You are an unbeliever still?" he said. Harold made no answer to this, but looked down.

"Talk with Abdel Kader," said the Khalifa, "he will teach you."

"I will do that," said Harold.

The Khalifa passed on. One of the emirs paused for a second beside Slatin, and pressed his hand. "Keep up your spirits, don't be downhearted, everything will come right," he said.

From this time forth their lives, which had been intolerable since the fall of Khartum, were slightly ameliorated. They had more food, and Harold was able to procure some clothes for himself. But the man's whole life was intolerable to him, and he felt at times as if he could not live, that death were preferable to this hourly misery. He had a ragged tent which scarcely sheltered him by night. He lay on the bare ground with only a cloth to cover him. The food was nauseous to him; it was brought to him by a dirty old Arab woman, and was of the worst quality, one needed to be famished to eat it.

After their removal to Omdurman he had been chained to Slatin, and Harold always thought then, and after, that this was the saving of him; he was persuaded that but for the extraordinary example of courage

and endurance this man set him he should have died. At times he would brace himself up, but at other times he would utterly collapse.

Slatin was an older man, and had led a soldier's life; he had been long in the Soudan, and was accustomed after some sort of fashion to the misery of his surroundings. But Harold was essentially a student; he had never, so to speak, roughed it. He had no soldier's discipline; and the horrors of what he saw around him, the barbaric cruelty, the disregard of the very lowest stage of civilization, revolted him.

Slatin saw all this; he saw also that there was a certain heroic power of endurance, a religion rooted in the heart of the man, which alone could help him in this dire crisis of his life. "If I can pull him through the first months," he thought, "I may save him. But there are so many I have not been able to pull through the first weeks. There was that Olivier Payne, he fretted himself to death. I do not think this fellow will, he has got more grit in him."

And though it sometimes happened that he did not see Harold for two or three days—such was the unexplained will of their tyrant—he would manage to send him a word, a slip of paper, a something to show that he carried him in his mind.

Ah, he was a grand man that Rudolf Slatin, however much some may blame him, because, to win the Mahdi's favour, he made himself a Mahdist! But he shared his pittance with those whose pittances were smaller than his, he comforted the broken-hearted, he soothed the last hours of the dying, he listened patiently to the wretched prisoners speaking to him of their wives and children, weeping before him in their misery. There

was not a thing which he could do, and did not do, for those who trod the same thorny road he trod. A few survived, many fell by the roadside; but during twelve long years this high-born Austrian officer, Rudolf Slatin, was a prisoner doing this noble work. Laden with heavy chains, dragging the burden of his intolerable life, disappointed again and again in his hopes of escape, yet ever ready to lift up the fallen, to give a cup of water to the thirsty, and to answer always when the query was put to him, "How are you, Abdel Kader?" "I am well, sir."

Surely no man won his freedom so deservedly as he did when it did come. A noble figure, he stands out in the midst of all this misery, an example of endurance and self-sacrifice, two qualities which go to the making of a noble man.

A few days later the Khalifa again renewed his visit. And this time, when asked if they were satisfied, Slatin answered: "If you will allow me to speak, I will tell you our condition. We are foreigners. I gave myself up to you. This young man is no soldier even, he has not fought against you. I have, but now I repent, and regret my misdeeds. Behold me in irons before you. I am naked and hungry. I wait patiently on the bare ground for the time when I may receive your pardon. Master, do you think it well that I should continue in this sad plight, then I pray God for strength to enable me to bear His will, and now I beg you to give me my freedom."

Then the Khalifa looked at Harold, and said, "And you?"

"I have nothing to add to what Abdel Kader has said," answered Harold. "Pardon me, and grant me my liberty."

The Khalifa again turned to Abdel Kader. "From the day you came to me from Darfur I have done everything possible for you," he said, "but your heart has been far from us. You wanted to join Gordon, the infidel, and fight; you were a foreigner, and I saved your life. Now, if your repentance is real, I will pardon both you and your friend. Sair, take off the irons."

Both men were then removed from before the Khalifa, with difficulty the irons were removed; they had worn them many weeks, and they were rusty.

When taken back to his presence they were made to swear allegiance to the Khalifa, who then took them to his own house, promising that he would present them to the Mahdi.

Harold hoped he should have obtained his full freedom, but it was not to be. They were taken to the Mahdi, and were permitted to kiss his hand. Kneeling in front of him, they listened to a sort of sermon, in which he told them that his only wish was for their good, that when men are put in chains it exercised a beneficial influence on them. He then told them that many of his men were prisoners with the British at Dongola, and it had been proposed that he should exchange them for British subjects.

Harold's heart leapt. "Surely the end was coming to his misery!" But he was sensible enough to keep his eyes on the ground. He felt the Mahdi was watching him, with that side glance which was peculiar to him, and that hypocritical smile.

He was bitterly disappointed when the Madhi exclaimed, "But I have not done so, and I will not, because I love you better than my own brethren. Therefore I refused to exchange you."

With difficulty Harold restrained an exclamation of distress, but Slatin recovered his composure, saying quickly, "Sire, you have done well. The man who does not love you more than himself, how can the love proceed from his heart?"

"That is well spoken," said the Mahdi.

A sense of deadly indifference crept over Harold as to what would happen next. He found himself hardly knowing what he was saying, once more repeating an oath of allegiance.

"You have broken your first oath, you must take a second," said the Mahdi, after which they were dismissed.

"At least we can walk freely, and move freely," said Slatin, trying to cheer his companion.

"But we are no nearer the end," said Harold.

"Who can tell?" answered Slatin.

That same day Slatin was recalled by the Khalifa, and made his personal servant. "You will attend me wherever I go; you will wait at the outside door of my house, and only when I retire will you be allowed to go to the house which I shall build for you."

And Harold heard Slatin answer in his imperturbable, cold voice:

"Master, I agree with pleasure to your conditions. In me you will find a willing and obedient servant, and I hope I may have strength to enter upon my new duties."

"God will give you strength," answered the Khalifa. "May God protect you until I see you again!" And he went out.

"How can you endure it?" said Harold. "Why, you will not have a minute, or an hour, or a second to your-

self. You will be always under observation, your soul will not be your own."

"My soul has always been my own," answered Slatin. "God will strengthen me."

And so, verily, He did, for to the end this man endured with patience; always courteous, always obedient. Once he said to Harold, "What is the use of revolt? We only aggravate our master. After all, the first lesson which a soldier, a monk, aye, even a Christian, has to learn, is to suffer his will to be broken, to have no will at all, save the will of God. That is the lesson I am learning, and that is the lesson we must all learn, sooner or later. Do you remember the voice from heaven which Saul heard, when he lay upon the ground in a trance? Saul, Saul, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'"

But Harold could not force his lips to speak the words of flattery and submission which Slatin did. He revolted against it. Both the Mahdi and the Khalifa expected adoration and flattery, and Slatin gave both, vowing obedience and submission. Once or twice he remarked to Harold, "What would you have me do? I make my reservations, I must deal with these men up to their understanding. Do you think that either the Khalifa or the Mahdi believe me? Assuredly they do not. If they did would they set spies upon me, would they watch me by day and by night? If I did not speak to them as I do, my life would be less worth living than it is. I make no excuse for myself, my position is such, God understands it, and He will pardon me. I do not tell you to do likewise, but you would do well to soften your speech. I already see that the Khalifa looks at you with an evil eye. If you wish to

see your beloved ones again in this world, you must bend to circumstances. You are in a heathen land, and they do not understand the Christian mind. You are stiff-necked." He turned away and left Harold to his own reflections, which were very bitter.

He knew that Slatin was right in his estimate of his masters, and he knew that he was living in the midst of the worst class of Mohammedan, who, under the cloak of religious fanaticism, committed every moral crime, and he could not bring himself to pander to such a class of men.

"What must they think of us Christians if we thus lie to them?" he thought.

As if Slatin had divined his thoughts, which in very truth he had, a few minutes later he stood once more beside him, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said, "Courage, comrade, your heart and your soul are young and tender; it is well they should be. Shut your eyes and do not see, close your ears and do not hear, and smile on all men. I speak to you for your good, I would not have you die. The sun shines, the day is young, you have your life before you; and bad as it seems now, it is God's world, and a good world.

"Come to my hut, and eat, the old woman has brought me a mess of dhurra, we will share it."

Harold rose, and shook himself. Remembering that his limbs were free, he thanked God, drew himself up, and walked straight as an Englishman walks, to his friend's hut.

CHAPTER XIX

AYESHA'S CONFESSION

I TELL you she is deceiving you, the child is not her sister. Have you seen her face?"

The speaker was Moussa's uncle. He and Moussa were sitting on cushions opposite each other, with a table between them, upon which their coffee-cups stood, the aroma filling the whole room, and they were both smoking the long pipes called "shebuk". A chess-board stood between them, and as Mustifa spoke he deliberately moved the pawns, and then, lifting his head, looked at his nephew.

"What do you mean—Ayesha deceiving me?" asked Moussa.

"I mean that is what she is doing," answered the old Egyptian. "That child she calls her sister is no sister of hers, she is a European man's child. Have you not seen her? She is no Arab."

"Oh, is that all?" said Moussa carelessly. "She is very white, but so are many."

"Have you asked Ayesha about her?" said Mustifa.

"No," said Moussa, "when I come to think of it, I haven't. I was told she was her sister, and that they had neither father nor mother. Ayesha took my fancy, I loved her, and it was all quickly done. The child is very pretty, Ayesha loves her, and makes me a good wife, why should I trouble?"

"Well then, I tell you, she has deceived you. Ask her and you will find I am right. She has a secret. I saw the child playing in the court-yard. I looked at her, and I think you must be blind, Moussa, not to see. There are white children born of the mixed races, but they are not as white as she is. This child has the English whiteness, with pink. Where was Ayesha before you knew her?"

"At Alexandria, with an English lady; and she served her till Arabi attacked the foreigners, and killed her mistress. She was frightened, and took refuge with her little sister with a fellah and his wife, as I told you."

"You are a very foolish man," said Mustifa slowly. "Do you not see the child must have been the mistress's child, and Ayesha has been afraid to tell this for fear it should be taken from her? She loves the little one."

"That she truly does, but she should have told me," said Moussa.

"Well, you had better ask her now," said his uncle.

"I will," answered Moussa.

The following morning Moussa went to Ayesha, as she sat on a low cushion busy over some very fine embroidery, and said to her, pointing to the child, "Who is the child? You have lied to me."

Ayesha's face was uncovered, for they were in the harem; there were no other women present. Moussa still had but one wife, and he was content, for he loved Ayesha, and now she looked up at him, and her face flushed.

"Yes, I have lied to thee," she said; "I am sorry. I did not know thy goodness when I married thee, and I loved the child."

"It is a pity," said Moussa. "A woman should not lie to her husband."

"Forgive me," she answered, kneeling at his feet. "Had I known thee then as I do now, I would have trusted thee."

"Do not kneel to me, neither fear me, for I love thee." He took her hand and lifted her up. "Now, tell me the truth," he said.

"She is my mistress's child," answered Ayesha, "and when I fled with her from Alexandria, I took refuge with her in a fellah's house, and I heard him say, 'We will do away with the Egyptian girl, and I will take the child to Alexandria, and get much money for her.' I was afraid for the child, and so I escaped. Allah willed that I should find Kuku on the canal, and he took pity on me, and thought the man had been rude to me, which he had not been; but I did not undeceive him, and he took me and Isa in his boat up the river to the village where you found me; but the child fell ill, ill unto death, and she forgot all things, forgot her own language, her mother, her brother, everything in the past. She does not remember to-day that she was ever other than an Egyptian child, and my sister. So I let things be; I loved her, and worked for her, and she is dear to me."

"And what was her mistress's name?" asked Moussa.

"Mistress Cave," answered Ayesha.

Then Moussa knew at once that this child was Johnnie's sister. He put his arm round Ayesha, and said gently: "There is sorrow coming for you, little wife; but there is joy also, for if thou must part from Isa, Allah will surely give thee a child of thine own to love and cherish so thou wilt forget her."

"Thou art going to take her from me, Moussa," said Ayesha, clinging to him.

"I am afraid so," answered Moussa. "It is strange, but I have found her people."

"That cannot be, for they were killed. I saw my mistress fall pierced to the ground, and the eldest girl with her, and then the boy was struck. They are dead, Moussa; do not cast the child out."

"I will not cast the child out until thou art persuaded that I am right, Ayesha;" and he went and took the little girl by the hand, and sat down and held her before him. Then he looked up at Ayesha with a smile. "Thou hast blinded me with thine own beauty," he said, "or I should surely have seen that this was an English child. She has the same face as the boy who was with me for that long year at Khartum, and is now lying in the hospital. He and I escaped together, as thou knowest."

"It is the will of God," said Ayesha, "do as thou thinkest best;" and she knelt beside the child, who put her little arms round her neck and kissed her. But Ayesha wept over her, speaking to her sorrowfully, in Arabic, with words of love and tenderness, which are the same in every tongue to which human lips give utterance.

"Thou art a brave woman, Ayesha," said Moussa; "it will be hard for thee till the other child come to comfort thee, but thou wilt let her go?"

"Yes," said Ayesha, still weeping, but with that submissiveness which was born in her. Moussa was the master, and she was the slave.

After a time Moussa left her and went out, going straight to the hotel where Mr. Anderson was staying.

There was a large square hall in the entrance, with couches and easy-chairs, and quantities of flowers; there were little tables scattered about where people took their tea or coffee; in fact, it was a sort of public sitting-room. When Moussa arrived, Mr Anderson and Doris were taking their early coffee. Catching sight of the boatman, Mr. Anderson beckoned to him.

"Any news, Captain?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, great news," was the answer.

"You have found Harold?" said Doris quickly.

"No," he said, "I am afraid I shall not do that. We know where he is; the getting of him away will be the difficulty. But I have found somebody else."

"Not Isa, not the little girl?" cried Doris.

Moussa nodded. "Yes, the little girl."

"Oh, Father," she exclaimed, "isn't it wonderful?"

"Yes," said Mr. Anderson, "we have much to be thankful for. God is very good to us. Where have you found her, Moussa?"

"In my own house with my own wife," he said. "Ayesha was Mistress Cave's maid; she saved the child. She was afraid I should take her from her, or send her away, so she told me a lie, saying she was her sister. I did not often see Isa. I loved my wife, and had only eyes for her, and left her soon after we were married. Then there was that long year at Khartum, I did not think much about the child. Truly she is fair; but then we have fair children, Georgians and Circassians and mixed races. When I first saw Johnnie, it seemed to me I knew the face; but I did not dwell upon it, there are so many faces in the world. This morning I looked at Isa, and I saw there was no mistake; they are alike."

"Will you let us see her?" said Mr. Anderson.

"Now, directly, if you like, I will take you to my wife. You see I have no harem, and I have but one wife. Ayesha is free, like your English wives; but she conforms to the rule, and covers her face when she goes out, but not in her own house."

Doris sprang up. "We will go at once," she said to her father. "Oh, how wonderful, how wonderful!"

"What is wonderful, my little girl?" said Mr. Bennett, who was now one of Doris's greatest friends.

"Oh, Mr. Bennett, we have found Isa!" she answered. "Johnnie's little sister, who was lost at Alexandria."

"Well, I never!" said Mr. Bennett. "You are in luck's way. How have you found her?"

"Ask Moussa; there he is! I have no time to tell you, I must get my hat, we are going to see her."

"I wonder if that fellow is cheating them!" thought Mr. Bennett, as he crossed the room to where Mr. Anderson and Moussa stood talking. He did not venture to hint as much when he came up to them, but stood listening.

Mr. Anderson turned round and greeted him. "You have heard," he said.

"Yes," was the answer, "I have heard. I hope it may prove true, but you must not let yourself be too easily persuaded."

The Egyptian frowned, and turned sharply upon Mr. Bennett. "Do you doubt me, sir? I have no object in giving this child up, indeed my wife has hidden her from me. I only learnt who she was from my uncle, Mustifa, last night, and I accused Ayesha of having lied

to me this morning. She acknowledged she had, and wept bitterly. I left her weeping over the child, because she cannot bear to part from her."

"If it were anyone but you, Moussa, I might doubt, it is so wonderful," answered Mr. Bennett; "but you have the reputation of being an honest man."

"Thank you, sir!" said Moussa, mollified. "General Gordon trusted me."

At that moment Doris appeared. "I am ready, Father," she said; "let us go."

"Good luck go with you, my little girl!" said Mr. Bennett.

The news had somehow spread, and the inhabitants of the hotel came crowding round Doris and her father, congratulating them; but Doris was anxious to escape, and, laughing and nodding, ran down the steps into the street.

"Gently, gently, Doris!" said Mr. Anderson. "You will outrun us, and we shall be losing you next."

"Oh, I am a bad penny, Father; I am sure to turn up all right!" she answered, laughing in the joyousness of her heart.

Mr. Anderson sighed. He could not help it, thinking of Harold and the hopelessness of his position.

"Still he is alive," he repeated to himself, "and whilst there is life, there is hope."

Down the narrow streets Moussa led the way, until he came to the door of his uncle's house. He ushered them through the flowered court-yard into the saloon, a great bare place. Piles of cushions placed up against the walls, a few little tables here and there, and Persian rugs thrown over the polished floor, completed the furniture of the room.

"I will see my wife, and tell her you are here. Wait for me," said Moussa, and he left them.

There was a high window in the room jutting out into the street like our bay-windows, but too high up to allow of anyone looking out into the streets below, so Doris let herself fall upon a pile of cushions, and sat there, impatiently tapping her foot upon the floor.

"It will be extraordinary, Doris, if this comes true," said her father.

"Of course it will come true, Daddy; there is no reason why it should not," said Doris. "You see we did well to come to Cairo ourselves, or we should never have met Johnnie Cave, we should never have known Moussa, and we should never have found Isa. I wonder what she will be like?"

She had hardly uttered the words when the door opened, and Moussa came in with a tall, slight woman, clad in the loose white tob, of fine linen, reaching to the ground. The upper part of this garment, which is called the "burko", was ornamented with pearls and small gold coins; her face was unveiled, but a silk kerchief, woven with red and yellow, was bound round her head. The sleeves of the tob were thrown over the head in such a fashion that the wearer could, if she chose, hide her face, all except the eyes. She wore handsome ear-rings, necklaces, and bracelets, and her feet were shod in red morocco shoes slightly turned up at the toes. She was leading a little girl dressed like herself, except that her ornaments were red coral and her little face was uncovered; she had only a kerchief of white silk bound round her head, from beneath which the fair curly hair clustered about her little face. It was chubby and fair, with large blue eyes; there was

no mistake, the likeness to Johnnie was remarkable, except that she was blooming with health and happiness, and he was white and weary-looking.

Doris sprang up, and went quickly across the room to meet Ayesha and her charge, but the child shrank away from her, hiding herself in Ayesha's clothes, and speaking in quick, sharp Arabic words.

"This is the little one," said Ayesha. "I have taken good care of her. The mistress told me to take her away, and afterwards, well, I loved her so, I did not trouble."

She said these words in a sort of broken English, which was barely comprehensible, and Doris did not in the least know how to answer her. She only said, "Oh, thank you! Will you not come to me, Isa?"

Ayesha bent down and spoke to the child, who looked shyly up, peering with one eye at Doris, who held out her hands to her.

"Your husband has told me how it all happened," said Mr. Anderson, speaking to Ayesha. "You have been very good to the child, and we are sorry that you will have to part from her; but you understand, it is necessary."

Ayesha shook her head. She did not quite comprehend what was said to her, therefore her husband told her, and she answered: "Yes, yes, I know; she must go back to her own people. But she has forgotten everything. I have tried to teach her little English words, but she laughs and will not learn." Then stooping, she pointed to the little gold chain and cross which hung round the child's neck.

"Ah, that is it, that is Mother's cross, Father; do you not recognize it?"

"Yes," he said, "I do. I am sure we are not making a mistake, but it will be better for Johnnie to see her. He will be able to get up in a few days now, then we will bring him here. In the meantime I see nothing for it but to leave the child with Ayesha."

Doris's face fell. "Oh, Father, may we not take her with us?"

"What would you do with her, my child? We must find someone to take care of her, at present she would be a great trouble to us. I need not ask you, Moussa, if your wife will keep her until we have arranged something, and until Johnnie has seen her."

Doris had thrown herself on the ground beside Isa. She had taken off her hat, and the masses of golden hair seemed to attract the child.

"Come to me," said Doris coaxingly; "come to me, Isa."

But she did not budge, she only looked at her.

"Won't you come? We will go and see Johnnie."

A puzzled expression was gradually creeping over Isa's face.

"Johnnie—don't you remember Johnnie?" Doris repeated.

But still no light seemed to come to the child. She began to talk quickly in Arabic, and stretched out her little hands to the string of blue beads round Doris's neck.

She quickly took them off and gave them her

Again Ayesha bent to her and spoke something in Arabic, which Doris would have given worlds to understand, and the child laughed.

Doris looked up at her father. "If you and Moussa would go away and let me stay, I am sure I should tame

her." And then speaking to Ayesha, she said, "Take me to your own rooms, and let me stay with you. She must learn to know me."

Ayesha smiled.

"I will take you," she said, "into the harem-room. There is only the old woman who takes care of us; Moussa has only one wife."

Doris rose.

"I will go, Father," she said.

"Very well," said Mr. Anderson. "I will come and fetch you in two or three hours, meanwhile I will go and tell Johnnie."

"I am sure it will help to make him well," said Doris.

Then she rose from the ground, and turning mischievously to Moussa said, "You will have two ladies in the harem to-day;" then taking Isa's hand, she tripped out of the room with her and Ayesha.

"She will win the little one, she will make her glad," said Moussa; "but my wife will weep."

"Yes," said Mr. Anderson, "it will be hard upon her. What is joy to one is sorrow to another in this world."

"Will you not see my uncle and smoke a shebuk with us?" asked Moussa.

"Certainly I will," said Mr. Anderson.

Moussa conducted him to his uncle's private room, where the old man was seated, as usual, smoking.

"Peace be unto you!" he said, as they entered.

"Unto you be peace!" answered Moussa, placing his hand on his heart.

Then he signed to Mr. Anderson to take a seat, and, clapping his hands, a servant appeared, and brought

coffee in small cups, placed in outer cups of fine gold filigree, studded with precious stones; for Mustifa was a rich man, proprietor of many of the boats which ran up and down the Nile, besides being a merchant and master of some of the biggest stores in the Cairo bazaar. Moussa was his only near relative, and he treated him as his heir; at the same time he expected him to do his full share of work, bringing in profits, and Moussa was ready and willing.

"It is not well to count on dead men's shoes," he would say. "I will earn my own living. If more comes to me, so much the better."

He had mixed a great deal with Europeans, and had therefore broader ideas of things in general than an ordinary Egyptian. He was dapper and clean in his appearance. Different from the dirty, fusty old man, sitting on a heap of pillows smoking.

"You would rather smoke a cigarette than one of our pipes," said Moussa to Mr. Anderson. The latter acquiesced, and then, turning to Mustifa, he said, "Do you speak English?"

"A little, just a little," he said.

"He understands perfectly," said Moussa, also sitting down, preparing to smoke.

"Is it the child you looked for?" asked Mustifa.

"Yes," said Mr. Anderson; "I think there is no doubt of that. But as soon as he is well enough, I am going to bring Johnnie to see her, and that will settle the matter. It is a strange story, and a strange coincidence."

"Ah!" said old Mustifa, "it is fate, destiny. Allah is good, and the child's angels have taken care of her."

"Assuredly they have," answered Mr. Anderson.

He smoked the cigarette, drank the delicious coffee, and tried to converse with the old man. Then he rose, bade them both farewell, promising to return in a couple of hours to fetch Doris, and see how she had got on with Isa.

"I shall not remove the child for a few days," he said, "until she has got accustomed to us."

"The longer you leave her, the better pleased my wife will be," answered Moussa. And so they parted

CHAPTER XX.

A MOTHER'S HEART

SHEETS upon sheets of letter paper lay on the dining-room table at Berkhamstead Vicarage, and Mrs. Anderson, Cecil, and Hugh Miller held council together.

"Of course they must be brought home as quickly as possible," said Mrs. Anderson.

"That is what my uncle proposes," said Hugh; "in fact, I should not be surprised if they were on their way already. When he has seen Prince Hasan he is to decide. He can do Harold no material good by staying. The princes will use their influence, if they have any; which, with such a man as the Mahdi, is doubtful. And there is the Austrian agency, and the English consulate; my uncle's presence in Cairo will neither mend nor mar. I do not say that some of us will not be obliged to go over from time to time, but at present Uncle can certainly come home."

"And leave Harold to his chance," said Mrs. Anderson.

"No, not at all," answered Hugh. "You see from his letter that my uncle has taken Moussa into his service. He seems to be a very decent sort of fellow, and this devotion of his wife to Isa, and the family in general, is a tie; besides, we can afford to be generous and make it worth Moussa's while to keep his eyes open."

"And how long do you suppose it will be before Harold gets his liberty?" asked Mrs. Anderson.

"That is impossible to say," said Hugh. "It is chance; it may be months, it may be years." He looked steadily at his aunt as he uttered these words. Cecily burst into tears, but Mrs. Anderson turned only a shade paler. She had altered very much during the last few weeks. The anxiety had told upon her, and from the fresh, happy woman, her face had grown thin and sad.

Hugh was very sorry for her. "You see, Aunt," he said, "it is no use my deceiving you. Rudolf Slatin has already been years in confinement. There are the mission sisters, and Father Orwalda, and one or two other fathers, and unless they manage to escape they will never be free. The risk of escaping, or rather, of failing to do so, if attempted, is very great, and the cruelties visited on the unfortunate creatures who are recaptured are too awful to tell. It is better Harold should lie quiet until there is at least a chance of his getting away successfully. My uncle says Moussa can manage that small supplies of money shall reach him from time to time, and the Austrian agency have promised the same; we can do nothing more. The Mahdi has refused an exchange of prisoners. The last few lines we received from Harold told us that he was in fair health, that they had been removed to Omdurman, that Slatin was in the service of the Khalifa, and had a house of his own; and that Harold, fortunately, had not been put in the great prison, the Saar, which is apparently an awful place, but has been sent to live in a hut in the Muslimanian[1] quarter, near the fathers and the sisters, and is allowed

[1] Unbelievers.

to do carpentering, for which you know he has a natural talent, and by which he is able to make a small sum of money. It is a great thing that he should be comparatively free. We must make the best we can of the whole thing."

"Of course we must," said Mrs. Anderson, calmly. But it was evident that her heart was fit to break.

Cecily could relieve herself by tears, but Mrs. Anderson did not weep; the sorrow lay too deep down in her soul. The weariness in her eyes told of sleepless nights, and Hugh was beyond measure anxious that Mr. Anderson should return as quickly as possible. He was only waiting now for Johnnie to be strong enough to return; he had left the hospital, and was in the hotel, being fed up and nursed.

Isa was still with Ayesha, but she was fetched every day to be with Johnnie; and she and Doris were now great friends, so that the break for the child would be less difficult.

"Indeed," Doris wrote, "I am quite sure she is beginning to remember, she is picking up English words very quickly. Johnnie has great influence over her; she will do anything he tells her. She is so pretty; we have got her a little European frock, and are gradually coaxing her to do many things like other children. She is not at all wild, and Ayesha, from her training with Mrs. Cave, has really brought her up very well. She is a very good child, and when she understands obeys directly. She is rather afraid of Father, and nothing will persuade her to go to him. You see, she has not seen many men, and those she has were very different in dress and appearance. The black clothes and un-

covered head seem strange to her. But it is only a matter of time. I shall be so glad now to be at home.

"Mr. Bennett wanted to take me for some excursions round Cairo, Father is always so busy with the princes, and with Moussa and the Austrian agency, trying to get in communication with Harold, so that he really has no time; I cannot leave Johnnie, he is just strong enough to be carried into the general sitting-room for an hour or two a day, that is all. However, I have seen the Pyramids. Father said I must, and so we went, but I do not think I care much about them. All the time I was wondering what Johnnie would be doing; and, as it happened, people were too kind to him, and he had so many visitors, that when we came back we found him in high fever, and he had to remain in bed all the next day. So you see, Mother, it will be much better for us to come home, for you to take care of us all, dear little Mother! How I wish we could have brought Harold with us! But there is no chance of that, Father says, no chance at all. Father is looking very tired and very careworn. I think it would have been better if you had come instead of me, I seem to be able to do so little to help him. Johnnie is a very nice boy, and is beginning to be quite cheery; but you must not speak to him of Khartum, he cannot bear it. He has General Gordon's picture over his bed, and I see him looking at it sometimes until the tears come into his eyes. I told him one day that I should take it away if I found it made him cry; that he ought not to be so very sorry for him, because, after all, he was a great hero, had done his duty nobly, and God had taken him home.

"'I know all that,' he answered, 'but you can never

know, Doris, how I miss him. I would give anything, sometimes, just to see his smile, and to hear his voice say 'Well done, Johnnie, my man!'

"Now you know all about us, Mother dèar, and I hope it will not be long before I have your arms round me, then I shall feel safe again. It is a strange thing, but I have never felt quite the same since I left you. There has been such a terrible want down low in my heart.

"Love to Cecily and Cousin Hugh.

"Your loving little daughter,

"DORIS."

"Poor little girl!" said Mrs. Anderson as she read it, "she has begun to feel the responsibilities of life. It is rather much for her."

She gathered the letters up with a sigh, saying, "Now we must be about our own work, the world will not stand still for our trouble. Come, Cecily, my daughter." And she put her arm round the girl.

There was a wonderful strength of sweetness in this woman, who, until lately, had never been tried. But the years of her happiness had ripened her; she had not allowed the gladness of her home-life to make her indifferent to the troubles of other people. The power of giving sympathy is a great gift, and Mary Anderson had possessed it from her earliest girlhood.

In her own home, and later, in her husband's large parish, wherever there was sorrow, wherever there was trouble, she was sure to find her way, and to minister, as only a true woman, with her instincts of love fully developed, can minister. Now it seemed as if those years of training had so fortified her that she was able

to brace herself up in this hour of her own adversity. She would not allow her faith to fail her; she had a source within her of secret comfort, the certainty that God's will was the right will; and though she could not see a step before her, though she had a vision of her son in chains, a prisoner suffering many ills, she still said: "It is the will of God. It will come right, it must come right."

And no word of impatience escaped her; she trained herself. Once she said to Hugh: "It is hard to bear, but how can I complain. Think of the many years of happiness I have had, unalloyed happiness, husband and children. I have no right to complain." And he agreed with her.

And so after those long letters they took up their lives, their daily work, their little tasks sufficient for their needs; and though people said she was looking ill and careworn, she denied it. "I am not ill, I am not careworn," she would say. "I am a little anxious, that is all; I shall be all right when my husband comes home."

It was a lovely spring morning, the garden was bright with crocuses and narcissus, the old vicarage was flooded with sunshine. Mrs. Anderson and Cecily were in the breakfast-room, the former sitting before her davenport doing village accounts. Cecily, with her hat on, was waiting for her mother's commissions to go down the village. Turning round suddenly she saw the railway boy coming up the gravel path.

"A message, Mother; I am sure it is a telegram!" and throwing open the window she ran down to meet the boy, and, receiving the inevitable blue paper, she ran back with it.

Mrs. Anderson snatched it from her and read, in a trembling voice: "Safely landed, Marseilles. Shall take the through rapid to Calais, no stop."

That was all, but it meant so much: they would be home the following day! Not that there were many preparations to make, for all was done that could be done with loving hands and forethought; and yet, as everyone hurried about the house, there seemed so much to do, so much that had been left undone. When Hugh came in with the curate to lunch they agreed that it would be impossible for the travellers to arrive till the afternoon.

"They will be at Charing Cross to-morrow morning," said Hugh. "Would you like to go up, Aunt Mary?"

She hesitated one moment—the temptation was great—then she said: "No, I would rather wait for them at home. You go, Hugh."

"Very well, I will go to-night, and be at Charing Cross to-morrow morning to meet them." And so it was settled.

"If Easter had not been so near," said Mrs. Anderson, "I should have ventured to write to the headmaster to let Bertie come to see his father, but I suppose I had better not."

"No, certainly not," said Hugh; "it is only a week or two, and the examinations are on. You must let Bertie alone."

Never had a day and night seemed so long! Maids and mistresses were up betimes the following morning. Again and again Cecily and Mrs. Anderson went into Doris's room to see that nothing was missing.

Cecily had been promoted to a room of her own, and Doris was to share hers with Isa.

The two little white beds were close together. The white curtains with blue ribbons, the lace coverlets and dainty toilet-table, with vases of spring flowers and a perfume of sweet lavender, made an ideal chamber.

"How Doris will enjoy it," said Cecily, "after her musty old hotel at Cairo!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Anderson; "and I am afraid we shall find, Cecily, that Doris is much older than she was. She has just touched the rim of life. How old is she?"

"Just sixteen, Mother. You know she wanted to be home for her birthday, but it could not be managed."

"And you are eighteen, then, Cecily?"

"Eighteen-and-a-half, Mother."

"All growing up," said the mother, almost regretfully. "I am afraid we shall spoil this little Isa between us all; she will be our baby."

"Yes, won't it be nice?" said Cecily. "I suppose she is not more than six, Mother."

"No, she cannot be. Well, I am glad she has not been lost. I shall love my little god-daughter dearly. Your father says Johnnie is a nice boy. Very forward in some ways, but backward as regards his education."

"Oh, that does not signify!" said Cecily, "he will soon pick things up. Shall you send him to Winchester with Bertie next term?"

"I think not," said her mother. "Hugh and I were talking about it. He will be scarcely fit for a public school; but Hugh and your father will settle that. The great thing is, having found them; their mother would have been so glad to know they were safe with us."

"Do you think she does not know, Mother?"

"Ah, Cecily, that is a very difficult question! 'Peace, perfect peace.' How are they to have that in the other

world if they are troubled with what is going on in this world?"

"I have thought of that also," said Cecily.

"If they do know," said Mrs. Anderson thoughtfully, "they must have that perfect faith, that perfect knowledge of God's dealings with men, that they are content. It is our lack of faith which makes us trouble so much, Cecily."

"And yet, when we think of Harold and the dreadful life he is leading, what can we do but trouble?" said the girl, tears filling her eyes.

"Look beyond," said Mrs. Anderson, her voice trembling. "He is having a great training, which may make of him a better man than if his life had fallen in the easy lines we desired for him. No, Cecily, I will not trouble. I battle against my heartache by day and by night, because I am sure all is well."

And the uplifted look in her beautiful blue eyes struck Cecily with awe. There was a something in her mother's face which she had never seen before, a spirituality, a light of the soul, which comes only to those who have communed with God.

"So my little girl," she said gently, "my Cecily, we will strive to make home happy for them all, you and I, so that they may not feel the passing cloud, which, for a little while, must still overshadow the sunshine of our home."

"Yes, Mother, we will," answered Cecily, and she spoke in a very different tone of voice and with a very different manner from what she would have done a few months before.

"Shall we go down to the station to meet them, Mother?" she asked.

"I shall not go, Cecily, I shall meet them here. Someone must welcome them home."

"Then I shall not go," said Cecily, and she smiled up into her mother's face.

Mrs. Anderson knew that her daughter's soul was nearer to hers than formerly, that from henceforth they would think and feel together, and she was strangely comforted. Surely if God had taken something away from her, He had given her many compensations.

When the carriage rolled up to the vicarage porch, and Mr. Anderson sprang out, he thought his wife looking younger and sweeter than when he left her; and Cecily, well, Cecily was like her mother; and as he clasped them in his arms he thanked God for the love and joy of that home-coming.

CHAPTER XXI

GATHERED INTO THE FOLD

SHOUTS of merry laughter, a running to and fro on the green lawn, boys' and girls' voices answering each other in those young, fresh tones which strike the ear like music, balls tossed high in the air and caught again, such was the scene which gladdened the vicar and his wife as they sat in easy-chairs watching the young ones. They were having a lovely Easter, it seemed as if the whole parish had vied in their efforts to welcome the vicar back.

The church on Easter morning had been radiant with flowers, it had truly been a thanksgiving service. Hugh Miller was still with them. "Mr. Anderson wanted a rest after his travels," he said, "and could not part with him." Isa had quite forgotten to be frightened of the black coats and bare heads, her shyness had all disappeared; there she was in their midst, with her sunny hair and pretty white frock, running to and fro, talking a most wonderful lingo, half Arabic, half English.

The game of ball had been got up by Doris for her benefit. Big and little had joined in it; it was the merriest game that had ever been played on that lawn. Bertie was there, a strong, sturdy boy, up to every imaginable prank, catching Isa in his arms and carrying her off to hunt for the ball in the shrubbery, and then

galloping back with her into their midst, and tossing it so high that even Hugh protested that it was no game at all at that rate.

Johnnie was playing too, but more soberly. The boy had grown immensely during his illness. "He is like a May-pole," Mr. Anderson said; but he was very white and thin, and languid, extremely nervous, shrinking from strangers, only content when he was with Mrs. Anderson or Doris. Even now he was standing apart from the others, and Mrs. Anderson looked at him anxiously.

"He had better come and rest, William," she said. "He is not fit to romp with our big Bertie."

Even as she spoke, Hugh had gone over to Johnnie, and putting his arm round his shoulder said: "You and I have had enough of it, I think;" and gently, talking to him all the while, he brought him up to the terrace where Mr. and Mrs. Anderson were sitting.

"That's right, Hugh," said Mrs. Anderson, smiling. "Come and sit by me, Johnnie;" and the boy sank into a chair beside her, his face, which had been sad before, brightening up.

"It is so pretty to see them," he said; "look at Isa."

There she was, still perched on Bertie's shoulder, he galloping with her across the lawn, and round the shrubbery, Doris after him.

"Where is Cecily?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"She went into the village, she is to be back to tea," said Mrs. Anderson. "Ah, here she comes!"

And walking quickly, Cecily, so dainty in her fresh spring gown, came up behind her father.

"They are having a fine time of it," she said.

"Yes, you ought to have been with them," he

answered, taking the hand which she had laid on his shoulder.

"Oh, Daddy, I am too old!" she said, laughing.

"Why, Hugh has been throwing the ball," said her father.

"Has he? Well, I am glad to hear it, for he is a hard task-master."

"Is he?" said her father, his eyes twinkling. "Has he overworked you, Cecily?"

"Well, he would if he could, but I have not let him. Fortunately, I am lazy by nature," she said.

"Oh, she will never overdo it!" said Hugh; "she can work well, but she can dawdle well too. I caught her in the village yesterday nursing the babies instead of being in school at the afternoon sewing-class."

"I was not really wanted there," said Cecily. "Miss Wilson manages quite well without me."

"Since you have been going, Cecily, they have done much better work," said Mrs. Anderson. "They were getting very slack, and your dropping in has given them a spurt. I don't say you need always be there every week, but now and then it is good."

"Oh yes, I don't mind it!" said Cecily; "I am giving them prizes. You are quite right, it is good. Now, here comes the tea. Will those young people stop playing?" she said, as the two maids brought a table out upon the terrace with all the paraphernalia of that happy meal—afternoon tea.

Cecily clapped her hands.

"Coming, coming!" answered Doris; and up came Bertie at a huge gallop, and to Isa's delight he deposited her on Mrs. Anderson's lap.

"Oh, how hot you have made her, Bertie!" she said,

taking off the white linen hat, which had indeed fallen on her shoulders, and pushing back the curly hair from the little damp forehead. And the child threw herself back in her arms and laughed up at Bertie, as if to challenge him to play again.

"Shall I make tea, Mother?" asked Cecily.

"You may as well," said her mother.

There was a certain languor about Mrs. Anderson, her face had not recovered its usual colouring. Her husband watched her anxiously. Even now he knew that in the midst of all this brightness and joy she was thinking of the prisoner far away, with the blazing African sun pouring down upon him, hungry and thirsty, perhaps, and the mother's heart was yearning over him. But still, she bore up bravely. He had never heard her murmur, only—"how can we help him?"—it was her one thought.

They had had one letter from Moussa since their return, in which he said that he was making use of an Arabian merchant whom he could trust, and who was going down to Berber; that he was sending money by him, and the letters which Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had sent him to get transmitted to Harold. He hoped to be successful, but of course there was a chance that they might never reach Harold. With that they had to be satisfied.

Tea was a merry meal, and when it was over the young people dispersed again, Doris coaxing Johnnie to come with her and Isa and pick primroses in the neighbouring field. So Hugh, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson were left alone.

"What do you think of the boy?" asked Mr. Anderson suddenly.

Hugh did not answer immediately, and husband and wife watched him anxiously, for they had great faith in his opinion. He had had considerable experience with boys, in fact he had devoted himself in his parish work to the young men; he was thoroughly in touch with them, and very popular.

"I think," he said, "that there is the making and the marring of a good man in that boy, but he will require most especial treatment, simply because he has not had the training of other boys. He must always have been a sensitive lad, highly nervous, easily strung up, and equally easily collapsing. I cannot quite see what you can do with him, at least for the present."

"I cannot see what I am going to do with him at all," said Mr. Anderson; "his health is by no means satisfactory, these attacks of fever pull him down terribly; he himself is most anxious to begin work, he says he knows he is so far behind other boys; he listens to all Bertie says, and I can see he winces. I cannot possibly send him to Winchester; he is not prepared for the schools; he would take no place, and he would be utterly miserable."

"He has not the physical health," said Mrs. Anderson.

"I suppose I shall have to have a tutor for him," said Mr. Anderson; "I have not time myself to overlook his studies, and then I am old-fashioned. Times have changed, I should not be up to the present curriculum.'

"No," said Hugh. "Besides, it would not do; the boy must have change and interests. He is far too inclined to dream, which is the worst thing for him."

"Have you got anything settled for yourself, Hugh?"

"Yes, I am going to Liverpool. I want to see the

working of a provincial city," Hugh answered, "and so I have accepted a curacy at Fairfield, just out of Liverpool, you know."

"I suppose you don't think you could manage with the boy?" said Mr. Anderson. "The air up north would be better for him than down here, and you are accustomed to boys. I wish you would think it over."

"I should like it beyond all things," said Hugh; "but, you see, I shall be a great deal out, and I must consult my vicar. I like the boy very much; he wants new interests, he wants movement and life. To send that boy at his age to school to compete with other lads would be cruel. Give him a year or two of free English life, and you will not know him."

"I am sure you are right," said Mrs. Anderson, "and I am sure you are the man to do it, if you can manage it."

"I certainly will try," said Hugh, "it is such an exceptional case. A boy of his age, who has seen so much of life, and passed through such extraordinary experiences, will require peculiar treatment; he must be made to forget it all, and to look forward to the future. Do you notice he never speaks of it, and seems even to shrink from any allusion to it?"

"Yes, I have noticed that," said Mrs. Anderson.

"Well, I think we will stop at that idea," said Mr. Anderson; "pecuniarily I will make it worth your while, Hugh, though I know that will not influence you in your decision."

"Oh, it will have its advantages!" said Hugh frankly; "but, of course, I would not do it if I did not see my way clearly, and feel assured that it was the best thing for the boy himself."

"Of course you wouldn't," said Mr. Anderson, and there they let the matter drop.

Life went on as usual at the vicarage. It was holiday-time, and everyone was at home, in the bright spring weather. The vicarage became such a centre of attraction that Mrs. Anderson declared they were becoming quite dissipated. Tennis-parties, long walks, cycling, and then the parish work; the days seemed too short to those happy young people.

"Doris is getting quite spoilt," said Mrs. Anderson to her husband, "how shall we ever make her settle to work again? She has but one idea, the mothering of Isa."

"Oh well, you must insist upon it for a few months more," said Mr. Anderson, "and then I think she may be let free. I will give her a course of reading, and she will have music lessons, and drawing lessons, and anything you like, from professors. I think we must dispense with a governess, though Miss Moran has been very nice. Still, when girls begin to sigh for freedom, it is best to give it them. Are you not of my opinion, Mary?"

"I think I am," said Mrs. Anderson. "In Cecily's case, most certainly. But Doris has never worked much, I am afraid she is far below the average girl in general knowledge."

"She has plenty of good sense," answered Mr. Anderson, "and plenty of woman's wit. She will be all right, Mary; give her a few more months in the school-room, and then let her loose."

So it was agreed that after midsummer there was to be no school-room for Doris. Her joy was exuberant.

"I will read, I will practise," she said; "I promise,

Mother. And I will teach Isa every day; no one shall teach her but myself, and if she gets on too fast, then I shall have to learn myself."

"To see those two together is the prettiest sight in the world," said Mrs. Anderson to her husband. "Doris was a child when she went to Egypt, she is a little woman now. Isa will be the making of her; the little girl looks up to her, and adores her. Ah, we have only one cloud in our sky, William!"

"And that will break some time, wife," he said, "don't be afraid."

"No, I am not afraid," she said; still the tears welled up in her eyes.

Mr. Anderson put his arms round her and kissed her. "Brave little woman!" he said gently.

Ten days later, Hugh and Mr. Anderson were walking together. "I have heard from my vicar," said the former.

"I am glad of it," said Mr. Anderson. "I was waiting for you to speak to me, for Bertie's holidays are very nearly over, and something must be settled for Johnnie."

"The vicar has no objection at all to my having a pupil, but, as he says, I shall be very much occupied. The parish is large, and I am more than anxious to understand the workings of the large mercantile towns. I do not think it would be right to leave Johnnie alone for so many hours a day."

"Do you think not?" said Mr. Anderson.

"He needs more than lessons. I consider he requires to be taught to forget, and to live a normal English life. Of course I could very often take him with me," continued Hugh. "I was speaking to him the other day, and he told me that if he could only properly fit himself

for it, he would like to be as his father and mother desired he should be, a missionary."

"There is no man who is better able to prepare him for that than you," said Mr. Anderson, "and afterwards he can go to college."

"You are willing to do that for him?" said Hugh.

"Quite," answered Mr. Anderson. "I am not a rich man, but my wife and myself have enough and to spare. If we had had three sons, we could have brought them up. Johnnie is my third son, and I shall do for him as I would for one of my own."

"Have these children no relations?" asked Hugh.

"An old grandmother and an aunt in very poor circumstances. Mrs. Cave herself was an orphan. They are only too thankful we should take charge of the children. I am going to send Johnnie to see his grandmother as soon as he is strong enough."

"I would not hurry him," said Hugh; "he is so sensitive, the very fuss she will make over him will hurt him."

"I know that," said Mr. Anderson; "that is why I have said nothing about it so far, but, of course, he must go. Well then, you won't have him?"

The young man looked at Mr. Anderson. "Sir," he answered, almost as if he had been speaking to a stranger, "there is one combination which I hardly like to propose, and yet, sooner or later, I should have done so—at least I think so.''

"What is it?" asked Mr. Anderson.

Bluntly, without any preparation, Hugh answered: "If she will have me, will you give me Cecily?"

Mr. Anderson stopped short. "I did not reckon upon that, Hugh,"

"No, I am sure you didn't," said Hugh; "but she and I have been thrown together a great deal lately, and—well, I love her. I never thought about it," continued Hugh, "until now I am leaving her. She has been to me like a younger sister. I have scolded her, and not been over gentle with her."

"Which was just what she wanted," said Mr. Anderson. "We have all spoilt her."

"The result is, I feel I shall be very lonely without that occupation," continued Hugh.

"Do you think it is quite wise?" said Mr. Anderson. "Of course I would trust her to you, personally, rather than to any other man. Have you spoken to her?"

"No," said Hugh. "I would not disturb her equanimity either to say yea or nay until I had consulted you."

"I will think about it, I will speak to her mother," said Mr. Anderson; "but I honestly say, I wish it had not been. She is very young."

"Then let the matter drop for the present," said Hugh, "perhaps Cecily herself may give a sign. I do not think she has awakened at all to the fact that I care for her in any unusual way."

"Very well, if you will be patient we will let her awaken," said Mr. Anderson; "and if she does show any sign, we will discuss the matter. You will not speak to her, Hugh?"

"No, I will not," answered the young man.

"And I will not even tell my wife—at least I will try not to," continued Mr. Anderson, laughing; "but, you see, Mary and I have never had a secret one from the other."

"I am not surprised at that," said Hugh. "Aunt

Mary is so intensely sympathetic, she seems to read every man's heart. I half suspect her of having read mine."

"In the meantime take Johnnie with you to Fairfield, and do the best you can for him. I see nothing else to be done. We must start him in life," said Mr. Anderson, "and we must make a man of him."

"I will do my best," said Hugh.

So the matter was decided. Johnnie was well satisfied. He had evidently been troubling about himself, as these solitary units in the world do trouble; and to find that it was all settled for him, and that he was going to be the companion of a man whom he reverenced, made him pull himself together as nothing else had done.

Doris was, naturally, his principal confidante. He lost all his shyness with her, and the day before he left, as he strolled about the garden with her, he opened out his heart.

"I wish I could go somewhere where it is not known I was at Khartum," he said to her.

"Why?" asked Doris; "everyone thinks so much of you because of that."

"Just so," said Johnnie, "and it hurts me. People pat me on the back and treat me as a hero, and I did nothing, absolutely nothing. I just stood by my dear general, ran his messages, listened to him when he talked to me, and nothing else. There was no hero at Khartum but Gordon himself.

"'We must tighten our belts, Johnnie,' he would sometimes say, as if it were nothing at all. He was starved more than we were, for I have often had bread when he had none, or would have had none, if Moussa and I had not saved ours, and, when he was not looking,

slipped it before him. You have no idea, Doris, how he helped us; he never rested by day or by night, thinking what he could do for this people given into his charge. He never believed, no, not even to the last, but that the English would come in time to save us."

Doris's eyes filled with tears. "It was terrible," she said; "I shall never forgive them for failing him."

"I have felt like that," said Johnnie. "I do so still sometimes. Once I said as much to the general, and he answered me, 'They would come if they could, Johnnie. We cannot blame them, for we cannot know what hinders them on their way.'"

"I have heard it said that they could have made greater speed, that help ought to have been sent sooner," said Doris, "but I do not think that in England anyone had a clear knowledge of your pressing needs. It seems very hard," she continued, "that such a good, great man should die, and then all the people of Khartum. It does not do to think of it, Johnnie. You know some men are sent into the world as examples, and they suffer and die, even as Christ suffered and died, our Great Example. We must try and think your dear general was one of these, and you must grow up like him. You have had your training. You know what to do, and how to bear; that is the great thing," said the girl teacher.

But she spoke so simply, so spontaneously; Johnnie felt that they were talking together like friends.

"Yes," he said, "I must do him honour, for no one was with him as I was, and no one loved him as I loved him." And the boy brushed his hands before his eyes to prevent the tears from falling.

The morning they were leaving, Johnnie, finding himself alone with Mr. Anderson, said: "It is awfully good

of you, Uncle, to do so much for me; I promise you I will do my best to be a credit to you."

"I am sure you will, my boy," answered Mr. Anderson; "and remember you are my boy, and Aunt Mary's. We shall make no difference between you and our own children. What I do for Bertie I shall do for you."

If Aunt Mary did not say as much, the care she took for his outfit, the many little comforts she provided, proved it to him more than words. Courage came back to him, a desire to live, which had almost failed him. It was a bright and happy face which looked out from the railway-carriage upon Mr. Anderson as he and Hugh started north.

CHAPTER XXII

JOHNNIE CLAIMS HIS RIGHTS

"THE Mahdi is dead!" The news spread rapidly throughout the world, and struck a note at Berkhamstead Vicarage.

"Will it be of any good to Harold?" was what they all asked each other, and no one could answer.

It was impossible they should, for no one in England knew the extraordinary influence of the life and surroundings of this man, who had risen to be a terror in the land. Would this sudden death mean the breaking-up of that fanatical religious association which was fast driving the Europeans out of the Soudan, and reducing once more a country, into which light and civilization had been creeping, to utter darkness and sin.

It seemed that such must be the case, and yet it was not to be. It was a master-mind which had created the new kingdom of the Mahdists, and it was a reflex of the same mind which continued to uphold it, for a time at least. It is marvellous that the faith of these fanatical Arabs did not fall to pieces when the Mahdi died. He had boasted that it had been revealed to him by the Prophet that he should conquer Mecca and Jerusalem, and, after a long and glorious life, he should die at Kufa; and yet when death came he was at Omdurman. Still, the faith of his followers was not shaken. In his last extremity he named Abdullah Khalifa his successor, and made all those round his bed swear

allegiance to him. "For he is of me, and I am of him," he said. "As you have obeyed me, so shall you deal with him. God have mercy upon me!" These were his last words.

Abdullah had long governed with almost as much power as the Mahdi himself. He was feared beyond measure, and it was now fully believed that the mantle of the Mahdi had fallen upon him. Therefore he met with no resistance. He had his spies everywhere, he was himself a spy; and at the least suspicion of treachery he did not so much as wait to verify whether it were true or not, but he struck, cutting down the offenders wholesale. This he did to the tribe of the Batahin, a race to the north of the Blue Nile. He accused them of disobedience. The tribe was dispersed and destroyed, but sixty-seven men were brought to Omdurman, into the market-place. There they were divided into three parties—one to be hanged, a second to be decapitated, a third to lose their right hands and left feet. It was a hideous spectacle through which Harold Anderson, Slatin Pasha, and others had to follow the Khalifa. The courage with which these Arabs faced their death was more than heroic. They vied with each other in giving proof of their courage.

"Death is ordained for everyone," said one man.

"See, to-day is my holy day," said another.

And as Harold passed, one, about to be decapitated, shouted: "He who has not seen a brave man die, let him come and look here."

It was truly an object-lesson, but most terrible. And so through fear the Khalifa ruled, with even more power than the Mahdi had done.

A corner of the mosque had been set apart for the

Muslimanians[1], and every night they were obliged to appear there for worship. Thus their numbers were counted, and if a man were sick or ill, or otherwise detained, it had to be reported. One evening Harold was on his way thither, when he felt another man rub up against him. He saw that it was an Arab merchant, from beneath the sleeve of whose gibber a hand was thrust into his with a scrap of paper, then the man passed on, and Harold hid the precious thing—for he knew it was precious—in his bosom. He had to be wary. He waited till he left the mosque, and got back to his own hut, then he read: "A man from Berber will meet you to-morrow morning in the market-place. He will have an ass with him, laden with skins. He brings you money and letters. When he has given you the parcel, pass on, and take care you are not seen."

No need to say that that night Harold did not sleep. During these months of captivity he had altered greatly. His erect figure had become bent, and in his brown hair there were threads of silver. Fortunately, he was by nature a strong, healthy man, having lived a sober life, and notwithstanding all the uncleanness and immorality around him he still strove to do so. When it was possible, he would lie outside his hut at night to avoid the closeness of the atmosphere within; and with Father Orwalder and the sisters, strove to keep a certain amount of cleanliness in and around their habitation. But it was hard work. Typhoid and small-pox were raging at times in Omdurman. The stench in the streets was overpowering, for they were never cleaned Animals were slaughtered or fell dead; there they lay until they rotted. Only when the Khalifa desired to

[1] Unbelievers.

travel from one part of the city to the other, the order was sent to clear the road; but this meant simply throwing the refuse and impurities out of sight.

Hardly a day passed but there were deaths amongst the prisoners. Harold, with Slatin Pasha, had made friends with one or two other prisoners, amongst others a young Frenchman called Payne, who belonged to a French newspaper, and had come to the Soudan out of curiosity. He was treated as a prisoner. He had left a young wife and children behind him in Paris, and was in despair. He made a hard struggle for life; he even professed himself a Mohammedan, but it served no purpose. Slatin Pasha had striven to procure his liberty, but had failed. He lost courage, the fever took him, and he died.

The same fate awaited another of their friends, Lupton, who had been governor-general of the province of Gaza, and had been obliged to capitulate. He was treated with every indignity. He had virtually been sold to the Mahdists. He, too, made a hard fight for life. Months he was kept in irons, and deprived of food; indeed, he was almost entirely dependent upon Slatin Pasha for the absolute necessaries of life. The money which was sent by his friends from Europe seldom reached him, or in such driblets that it hardly served to mitigate his misery. He had been a handsome, black-haired man when he was made prisoner; when Harold knew him, though still young, his hair was white as snow, but still he hoped for liberty.

Harold went to him one morning, and found him lying sick and ill. He fetched Slatin Pasha to him, and they sat together beside that miserable bed, talking of home, and of the day when the end of all this misery would and must come. Lupton grew more cheery. The next

day he received two hundred dollars through a merchant from Cairo. It was the same day on which Harold had received his parcel, so they compared notes and discussed the possibilities of escape.

Harold had learnt how his father had come to Cairo, how Johnnie had been found, and how everything had been arranged with Moussa to render his escape possible at some time or other. Moussa himself wrote: "I am on the watch, do not fear, keep up your courage".

"How often have I heard those words!" said Lupton, when Harold read them to him; "how often have they failed me!"

Slatin Pasha was obliged to go back to his service with the Khalifa, but Harold remained with Lupton, who, towards evening, grew worse, became almost unconscious, muttering strange, incoherent words of home and country, and so he died. They buried him that same day. He had been much beloved in the little colony, and so they all followed him to his last resting-place in the cemetery, Belt-el-la. And each man returned to his place, questioning which would be the next to go, grieving for the friends they lost, but not pitying them, because of the miseries of the living.

Days and months went by, and Harold waited, almost losing count of time, sick with hope deferred. What kept him alive was the occasional letter which might come to him, or sometimes only a scrap of paper from Moussa. It is marvellous upon how little a man can live, if only the flame of hope is fanned, and the spark kept burning.

It was this same hope which kept life in Mrs. Anderson. In due course of time Bertie went to college, Cecily married Hugh, and, until he went to college, Johnnie lived with them. All that Mr. Anderson could

have hoped for him came to pass. Hugh's care of him, his love for him, worked wonders. He lost that diffidence, that weakness of character, which had not been natural to him, but which was the result of the terrible scenes he had witnessed, and the sorrow which had come to him, at an age when a boy should hardly know what sorrow means.

His mental capacities were extraordinarily good. Once started on the right road, Hugh was surprised at the rapidity with which he acquired knowledge. It was no trouble to him, and yet he possessed what is seldom granted to clever boys—a love for learning. No difficulty stopped him; he was like a good huntsman, who leaps his fences with exuberant delight.

It was two years after he went to Fairfield before Hugh again asked Mr. Anderson for Cecily's hand; but this time he came armed with her desires, and both father and mother felt they could not refuse their consent.

Johnnie had from the first interested himself in the mission work in Liverpool, and all his spare time was spent under Hugh's direction amongst the workmen and the factory hands, whose needs are so great. Indeed, Hugh's vicar was wont to say: "I have two curates instead of one".

After Hugh's marriage it was the same; he continued to live with them. He went to the University of Oxford somewhat late, because he insisted upon taking scholarships.

"Why should I be a burden on my uncle" (for he never called Mr. Anderson anything else), "when with a little exertion I can help myself? It is not right, I will not do it."

Therefore, not out of any pride of learning or glory

for himself, Johnnie carried off scholarships, and made himself an independent man before he went to the university.

"As soon as I leave college," he said to Hugh the night before he left him, "I shall go to Egypt. I will not rest until I have brought Harold home to his mother. It will be my thank-offering for all they have done for me."

"You will wait to be ordained?" asked Hugh.

"No, for then I should not feel myself free," answered Johnnie. "We cannot serve two masters, you know."

"You are trying to live up to the mark, Johnnie. Charles Gordon would not be ashamed of his pupil," answered Hugh.

"I trust not," said Johnnie.

"You are right," answered Hugh, pressing his hand.

Except for the coming and the going of Bertram and Johnnie, the vicarage party dwindled down after Cecily's marriage. Doris and Isa only remained, but they, Mr. Anderson declared, were a host in themselves.

Doris retained all the brightness of her early girlhood, and Isa followed in her footsteps. They had a peculiar knack of filling the vicarage with people and with life. Once emancipated from the school-room, Doris had not, like Cecily, required to have work meted out for her; she found it inside and out of the home. She had said that to teach Isa she would have to learn herself; and she did learn, and she did teach Isa, so well and so thoroughly, that Mrs. Anderson declared "no trained governess would have done better; Isa knew more than Doris did at her age".

"But Isa is so quick, Mother, she is just like Johnnie," said Doris.

There was never a cloud between those two, no one could tell which loved the other more; they were never seen apart, they worked together, and neither father nor mother was allowed to feel the lack of someone ready at hand to help them.

Bravely she fought against it, but as time went on Mrs. Anderson's health visibly failed. She was not an invalid, no one could tell what ailed her, she was only always "tired". Her husband knew what it meant, but they never spoke of it. Harold to them was always coming home. A letter from Egypt was a red-letter day.

"Ah, he will be here soon now!" Mr. Anderson would say. And Mrs. Anderson would re-echo his words.

"Yes, it cannot be long now."

And so six years passed by, and the mother's heart was strained. She never willingly gave up any of her duties. She would write and work by her husband's side, she would go amongst her poor; she would arrange with Doris all the feasts and festivals of the village, but unwittingly she left Doris and Isa to do the working-out thereof.

Doris was tall and fair, as she had promised to be. Perhaps her face was a shade more serious than it would have been but for the trouble which hung over them all. It was a very good face, strong and gentle, with that tender smile which lights up eyes and lips, and a voice, of which Isa said, "It is the sweetest voice I ever heard; there is such a happy note in it!" And others heard it and rejoiced.

Mr. Anderson knew no pleasanter sight than to see Doris and Isa with their baskets on their arms cutting flowers in the garden.

The child was not unlike her "little mother", as she called her. She had the same fair face, and golden hair,

and all Doris's home-ways. When their baskets were full, they would come across the lawn, and adorn the house with beauty and sweet perfumes.

Then there were the holidays, the home-coming of the boys. Ah! that was a glorious time, to which the two looked forward from the day they went away till the day they came back again.

When the four were together their one thought was "Harold".

"You see," said Doris, "Mother is just living, but only just. I wonder how long she will hold out. You will soon be ready, Johnnie?"

"Yes, I shall soon be ready now," he said. "Next term will be my last. I must do great things, Doris."

"Yes, you must do great things, Johnnie. You must come out first, and then you will go."

"I ought to go," said Bertram, "but Mother would never hear of it."

"Of course not," said Johnnie. "You are her only son, you must remain near her till Harold comes home. Besides, I know Arabic. I have taken care to keep it up, I had a professor at Liverpool. And I know something of the country. It is really my work, Bertram, not yours." And they all agreed that it was so.

"Nevertheless I envy you," said Bertram. "The joy of bringing him back will be so good."

"And if I fail?" said Johnnie.

"Oh, you will not, you cannot!" said Doris.

"I hope not," answered Johnnie, seriously.

Johnnie kept his word, as Doris knew he always did and would. He took the very highest degree there was to take, and he was offered a fellowship at his college, but this he refused.

"I have other work to do," he said, "I cannot tie myself down." And so he came back to the vicarage to lay his laurels at Mrs. Anderson's feet.

"Aunt Mary dear," he said, putting his arm round her as they stood together alone in the breakfast-room the morning after his return, "I am going to Egypt next week."

She turned and put her arms round his neck. "Oh, Johnnie," she said, "you will bring him back!" and for the first time for many a long year she broke out into tears. He held her in his arms, and soothed her as he would have soothed his own mother.

"Don't cry, Aunt Mary," he said; "don't cry, dear, it will soon be over now. A little more patience, and you will have your son back again."

"Do you think so, Johnnie? Do you really think so?" she said.

"I am sure," he answered; "as sure as a man can be of anything. You know he was well last time we heard from him."

"Yes, he was well," she answered. "But shall I be alive to see him? I am failing, Johnnie."

"Nonsense!" he said. "You must—you will—pull yourself together. Think what it would be to all of us if he came back and found you gone!"

"I know," she answered; "but it has been so long, Johnnie."

He put her into the arm-chair, and knelt beside her. "For all our sakes, Aunt Mary," he said, "try to live."

"I will," she answered; "God bless you!" And, taking his face in her hands, she added: "You are so like your mother, Johnnie." And she kissed him.

CHAPTER XXIII

A TELEGRAM

"IT must be done, Moussa, or his mother will die!"

"I am afraid you think I have not tried, sir," said Moussa, "but I have. Again and again I have sent men down to Omdurman to see if it were possible to get him out, and when out, across the desert. But the Khalifa has the eyes of a lynx; if he misses a man from his proper place in the mosque, or from any service to which he may be attached, he never stays his hand until he has hunted him down. Look at Slatin Pasha, there has been no lack of money there. Again and again men have been sent to him, and either they have been afraid to risk it, or he has. You see, sir, to escape and to be caught is to suffer something worse than death."

"And yet, I repeat, we must do it," said Johnnie. "I will not go back to England without him—aye, even if I have to make myself a prisoner in his stead. Do you understand, Moussa? All these years his father and mother have been father and mother to me, and I must repay them."

"Yes, I understand," said Moussa.

"How near can we get to Omdurman?" asked Johnnie.

"That is impossible to say. The desert is open to everyone," said Moussa, "but no one is to be trusted. We Egyptians are hated by the Arabs, even more than you are. Still, we will make another effort. Perhaps

we may succeed. I know of a merchant at Berber, who, for a good round sum of money, may choose to exert himself; but no European can venture to cross the limits of the Soudan. From the Nile to Reggafa, and east to west to Kassara, it would be courting death or lifelong captivity."

"My uncle has placed a large sum of money to my credit in the bank," said Johnnie. "As far as that goes, I will meet all expenses, and give a reward of £500 to the man who brings Mr. Anderson safely through the lines."

"Very good, sir! I will let it be known, and in a few days I will bring you the answer. This winter season is the best for the attempt, I will lose no time. You will come and see my uncle, my wife, and children. Ayesha is pining for news of the little girl."

"She is a big girl now," said Johnnie, smiling. "When all this misery is over, I may perhaps bring her to Cairo to see Ayesha. She has not forgotten her, but, curiously, she remembers nothing previous to her fever."

"She was very young," said Moussa.

"That may have something to do with it," answered Johnnie. "She has grown up a fine, strong girl."

"Ayesha will be glad to hear it." And, with a "Good-day, sir," Moussa went his way.

If he had been less anxious, less desirous of carrying out the object with which he had come to Egypt, Johnnie might have had a good time in Cairo, for he found himself the centre of a good deal of attention. The Khedive and Prince Hasan were more than courteous to him, and ready to help him in every possible way. He had come armed with letters to the different bankers,

and the Austrian and English consuls, but no one gave him much hope. At the Austrian consulate they said frankly, "We are offering £1000 to anyone who will further Rudolph Slatin's escape, and we have found no one."

After waiting two or three weeks, Johnnie went to Moussa. "Look here," he said, "there is nothing for it. We must do it ourselves. Why should not the reward be yours rather than another man's?"

All that night and all next day those two consulted together, and on the third day they disappeared out of the town.

It was Christmas-day, and Harold was sitting in his workshop sawing some planks of wood, for which he had received an order from the Khalifa. Suddenly a shadow filled the narrow doorway, and, looking up, he saw an unusually tall Arab.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"To sell my goods," answered the Arab, pointing to a bundle on his shoulder.

"You will not find much custom here," said Harold; "we have barely enough to keep life together." And he continued sawing.

The Arab came into the hut, laid a slip of paper before him, and went out again as quickly as he had entered.

Harold took up the paper, and read: "We are ready; get out of the city by the north road to-night, three hours after sunset. A man with a donkey will be there to meet you. Do not hesitate.—(Signed) JOHNNIE."

"Johnnie! Surely that cannot be the boy?" thought Harold. And then he laughed grimly. "He has had time to grow into a man," he muttered. He straightened

himself, and going to the door of the hut looked round, but the man had disappeared.

Suddenly an intuition came to him. "I believe the Arab was Johnnie himself! He spoke well enough, but it was not an Arab's voice. My God! can he have come for me—the boy!" And a strange tremulousness crept over him, a mingling of fear and hope. It was so sudden, that night, without any warning.

"Well, I must take care not to make a mull of it," he thought. "Pull yourself together, Harold Anderson—home is in sight."

Two questions presented themselves to his mind. Should he go in his old dilapidated clothes or should he go as an Arab? Should he tell anyone or should he keep silence?

He knew he could not, without suspicion, speak to Slatin before evening prayer at the mosque, but then he would try. To borrow any clothes would have led to suspicion, yet his were very tattered and torn. The only man he could trust was Father Orwalder; but he determined not to tell him, because if he were suspected of having assisted him in any way he would probably be thrown into irons and sent to prison. That had happened to another man quite lately.

So he simply went to the father's hut. He found him reading an old newspaper Slatin had lent him. "Have you a cloak you could lend me?" he asked. "I have a cold, and the nights are chilly. It is my turn to go down to evening prayer to-night."

The father looked up at him. "I thought it was my turn," he said.

"No, it is mine," answered Harold firmly. "Lend me your cloak."

The father got up, and took a long priest's cloak, worn well-nigh threadbare, from a hook in the corner, and gave it to Harold.

"There is a hood to it," he said. Then, taking his hand, he pressed it, adding, "God bless you, my son!" He turned away, and Harold went out of the hut.

He went to evening prayer in the mosque, and as they came out he managed to cross in front of Slatin.

"Good-night!" he said. There was something unusual in his voice.

Slatin looked up. Harold's lips did not move, but his eyes spoke.

"You are going to make a try for it?" Slatin asked in a low voice.

"Yes," answered Harold; "a man came to me this afternoon. I must get out of this place even if I die."

Slatin shrugged his shoulders.

"God be with you!" he murmured, and went his way.

"Three hours after sunset." How long that time seemed! But at last, through by-paths skirting the houses, hiding whenever he saw a human form approaching him, Harold reached the north road. For a second he saw nothing, for the moon was in its last quarter, and the night was unusually dark. Suddenly, from a ruined hut, which was little more than a pile of brick and stone, a donkey with a man on his back emerged.

"Quick, get up behind me!" said a voice in English.

Harold obeyed, and in a second they were riding as fast as the animal would go along the straight road. It was a bitterly cold night, and Harold was thankful for Father Orwalder's cloak. Neither of the men spoke to each other.

Silently those two rode for upwards of an hour, when they came to a group of trees.

His companion gave a long whistle, which was answered after the same manner, and immediately he jumped down, and for the first time spoke.

"Moussa is here with the camels. Come, follow me."

"I wish I knew who you are," said Harold.

A low laugh answered him. "I am Johnnie Cave."

"You've grown finely," said Harold, with an answering laugh.

They were now under the trees, and could distinguish one other man and three camels.

"Where's Kuku?" asked Johnnie.

"I left him behind at Abu Delek," Moussa answered. "Four riding would have attracted attention; three is one too many. We must make good way. We have the night before us. To-morrow we must reach Goz Rejeb."

"I thought we were to go to Kassala," said Johnnie.

"That is what everyone will think we shall do," answered Moussa; "and so, though the way is somewhat longer, I have chosen to go to Goz Rejeb."

Without further parley they mounted the camels.

Speed was the great object. They could reckon upon twelve hours, perhaps a little longer, for Harold knew his friends would screen him as long as they could, but that was all.

However, Moussa had secured the swiftest camels to be had, and they never stopped. They were joined when they had nearly reached Goz Rejeb by Kuku, Ayesha's old friend; and there, leaving their camels, they crossed the river Atbara in a boat they found awaiting them. Moussa had judged truly; it was not the usual way of

escape, and thus they gained time, and were landed in the Nile valley.

They did not venture into the town, but contented themselves by taking a short rest on the bare ground under a clump of trees, whilst Moussa and Kuku went to procure mules for the remainder of the journey. Left alone, Harold and Johnnie for the first time greeted each other, and spoke familiarly together.

"It was no use," said Johnnie; "I had to come for you, you see. Left to themselves, though Moussa is a good sort of man, he would never have done it. Every step I have taken he has warned me that I was going to my death. I told him it did not matter; that the thing had to be done, and must be done. Your mother is waiting for you, and I promised her."

"She is not ill?" asked Harold anxiously.

"She is neither ill nor well," said Johnnie; "she is just tired. She has come to the end of her endurance, and her longing for you is eating her soul away."

"Poor Mother!" said Harold. "What a big fellow you are, Johnnie, and what a brave man! I can't tell really what you are like as long as you are disguised after this fashion, but I seem to see a likeness even now to what you were."

Johnnie laughed. "I am big, but I am not noted for my bravery," he said; "I don't think I have ever got over that terror at Alexandria. But still, I can do what must be done and what has to be done, thank God!"

"That you certainly can," said Harold. "I believe you are the only European who has got safe out of Omdurman."

"Oh, you know, I have a knack of getting out of places," said Johnnie. "I got out of Khartum."

"Did you?" said Harold. "Tell me about it."

"Not now," said Johnnie. "I must put you up to what has gone on at home." And lying there, under the trees, he told him of all that had taken place whilst he was a prisoner.

"You would have done better to sleep than talk," said Moussa, coming up with the animals. "Now, we must be off again. Our next halt will be at Toka, and then Suakin."

They partook of a hurried meal of dates and bread.

"I have a steamer waiting for us at Suakin," said Moussa; "and then, sir, you may reckon yourself a free man," he added, turning to Harold, "and, believe me, not many have got away so easily as you have."

"That is because many have not got such good friends as I have," said Johnnie, "you and Kuku. We have employed no strangers." And both Harold and Johnnie shook hands with the two men, who were mightily well pleased.

It was a long journey still, and until they were on board the steamer on the Red Sea they did not feel themselves safe. But they did reach Cairo at last, and telegraphed straight to England: "We are coming".

When they received the telegram, both Doris and her father looked at each other.

"How shall we tell her?" they said. "It is a fallacy that joy never kills. The string of a bow breaks if it be overstrung." And they both knew the tension of the mother's heart-strings.

"Will she collapse?" they thought, and Doris slipped her hand into her father's.

Mrs. Anderson had grown very fragile during the last few weeks, and she had given vent to what she had

never done before, a certain irritability. The only person towards whom she never changed was Isa; the child would sit by her for hours together. She never doubted that Johnnie would come home, and bring Harold with him.

"Moussa is so clever," she would say, "and Ayesha will make him; besides, Johnnie has set his heart upon bringing him home, and he will do it."

She had seen the yellow envelope and heard its contents, and whilst the two elder ones were trembling with fear she slipped into the breakfast-room, and, going up to Mrs. Anderson, said quietly:

"I told you, Auntie, that they would come, and they are coming."

It was said so quietly, just as a matter of course.

"What do you mean, Isa?"

"What I have always said," she answered. "That they would come, and they are coming."

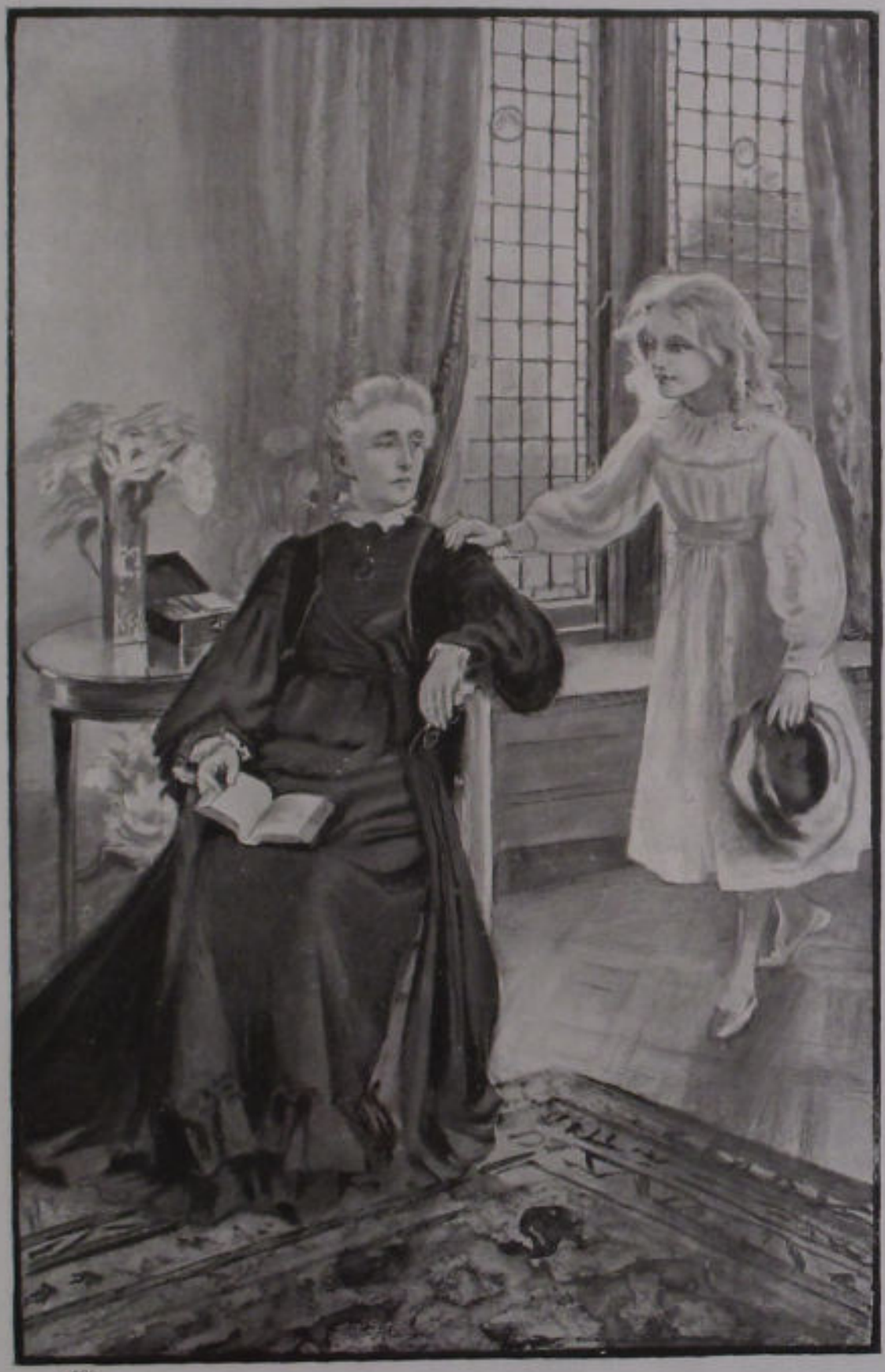
It was all so naturally done that Mrs. Anderson exclaimed:

"And I have not been told!"

"The telegram has only just come," said Isa; "and I think Doris is frightened to tell you, but I was not." And she stood up boldly before her aunt, her face radiant with delight.

Then, going to the door, she threw it open and called out:

"Now, Doris, come; Auntie knows. She is not at all surprised." And when Mr. Anderson and Doris came to the door, they were astonished to see Mrs. Anderson standing up, her face glowing with happiness, as they had not seen her for a long time, and Isa dancing between them, saying: "Isn't Johnnie a brick? Isn't he a brick?"



"I TOLD YOU, AUNTIE, THAT THEY WOULD COME,
AND THEY ARE COMING"

"Yes, he certainly is, and you are a witch!" said Mr. Anderson, laughing.

And then half tearfully, wholly gladly, he embraced his wife.

"When do you think they will be here? Shall we go up to London to meet them?" asked Doris.

"I never go to meet anyone," said Mrs. Anderson; "but you and Father can go, Doris; and Isa and I will wait at home. What do a few hours matter when we have waited years?"

And then, to Mr. Anderson's great relief, the tears came, quietly, tears of joy, which relieved the tender heart and brought with them a new stream of life.

. . . . . .

Sweetly on the spring air the bells of the parish church pealed out as Harold stepped upon the platform out of the train. Mother Church was the first to welcome her son back to his home, and Harold heard them with a thrill of reverential gladness.

It was but a little distance to the vicarage, and the villagers had turned out of their cottages, and old friends were there to greet him. The road was lined. It was a veritable ovation until they reached the vicarage gates, which opened and shut upon them, and Harold strode on alone.

No strange eye might look upon that meeting of mother and son, and no words can tell the sacred joy, the silent thanksgiving, which made of that hour a never-forgotten memory.

CHAPTER XXIV

THANKSGIVING DAY

THE parish church was crowded to overflowing the following Sunday, and Mr. Anderson had some difficulty in steadying his voice, as, standing within the altar rails, with Hugh beside him, he said: "I would ask you all to join with me in a special thanksgiving, for the wonderful and great mercy which God has vouchsafed to my family, in the deliverance of my beloved son from his long imprisonment, and the many dangers he has passed through."

There was hardly a dry eye in the church as the congregation looked towards the vicarage pew, and saw the young man who had gone forth in the high day of his youth, kneeling beside his mother, his head white, and his face aged from suffering and privation. But all that Mr. Anderson saw was that long line of children —not two sons but four, not two daughters but three. "Surely God has multiplied His blessings upon me," he thought. "What can I offer to the Lord, for all the benefits He has bestowed upon me?"

. . . . . .

"Mother dear," said Harold, bending towards her when the service was over, "you will never be able to stand going through the crowd in the churchyard."

"Oh yes, I shall, Harold!" she answered; "wait till your father joins us."

It was an ordeal, for as they came out together, those seven sons and daughters, there was almost a rush as to who should shake hands with them.

Johnnie towered high above them all, with such a happy face. He had grown to be very popular in the last year or two, and the story that he had disguised himself as an Arab to save Harold, was looked upon as a great joke in the village.

"You must show yourself to us one day, Master Johnnie," said an old man as he shook hands with him.

"Indeed I will," answered Johnnie, "and frighten you all out of your senses."

He and Doris and Isa did their best to shake off, and to make others shake off, the great pathetic note which seemed to ring through the whole proceedings. "Hugh and Cecily are inclined to take things so seriously," Isa said. "It is not good for Aunt Mary, she has had sorrow and sadness enough. Now it is the spring, the dark days are over, summer is coming."

And so she and Doris filled the house with flowers, and there was a coming and a going in what had been for so long a silent house.

Johnnie and Bertram became great chums during the next few days. They were so nearly of the same age, that it was natural that they should be together; and on that Sunday afternoon they escaped out of the house, and took a long walk through the fields and country roads, so lovely in their spring garb.

"What are you going to do now?" Bertram asked Johnnie.

"Do?" he answered. "I am going to prepare for my ordination."

"And afterwards?" asked Bertram.

"Afterwards?" answered Johnnie, and he looked at him. "Where do you think my work lies?"

"In the Soudan," said Bertram.

"Yes, in the Soudan," was the ready answer. "I am going to try and obtain an army chaplaincy, in one of the regiments which are being sent to Egypt to settle the country. The foreign powers and the Egyptian government will have to give way to England sooner or later, that is certain. When I was at Cairo lately I saw Walter Kitchener, and I spoke to him about it. He will be the biggest man in Egypt before long, and he promised me he would take my application into consideration, when the time came."

"Do you know what I have been doing since I took my degree?" said Bertram. "I have not told Father, because he would be so troubled. I thought there would be time enough when you came back. I am not going either to take orders or be a soldier, I am going to be an engineer. If we get our hand upon Egypt there will be splendid openings there for any man who chooses to work and has the talent, and I mean to be one of those men. I have been reading a great deal on the subject, and have quite made up my mind. You go as chaplain, Johnnie, I shall go as engineer. Somehow that ancient country seems to have grown so familiar to me, as if we had a special right over it," he continued, laughing.

"Well, you see, I was born there," said Johnnie. "I think yours is a splendid idea; during the next two or three years Aunt Mary will quite have recovered herself, and will have lost her terror. After all, I expect Harold will be the home bird!"

"Poor Harold!" said Bertram; "he looks awfully old

and worn. It is frightful to think what he must have gone through, and how his life is smashed up."

"You can have no idea what it has been," said Johnnie. "It will be a struggle, but the Soudan must be cleared of those fanatics; now it is cut off from the civilized world. But I think if there is a man who can open it out again, and will do so, that man is Colonel Kitchener. You know he is to be made Sirdar, and what he puts his hand to, that he will do. There is no turning back with him. I look forward to the day when I shall stand beside him in Khartum, which to me," he added, lowering his voice, "is a sacred city."

"I understand," said Bertram; "and we English do not forget that sort of thing, we honour our dead, often more than we honour our living."

They talked long and earnestly, those two young men just starting in life. The past for them sanctified the future, and made them both feel "life was real, life was earnest".

They took Hugh into their confidence, and he approved thoroughly of what they proposed doing. Of course he had never doubted that Johnnie would take holy orders, but it had been a query with them all what Bertram would do. Now it seemed quite natural that he should prepare himself to work for the welfare of a country which had grown to be almost like their own.

For several weeks there was no question of what Harold's future would be. He was subject to attacks of the fever so prevalent in the Soudan, and his privations had rendered him susceptible to it. His mother's delight at having him and nursing him was so evident, that no one thought of anything but the happiness those two were to each other.

Johnnie read hard in preparation for his ordination, and one day when he was in his room Harold came to him.

"I think I ought to do what you are doing, Johnnie," he said quietly.

"Do you really mean it?" asked Johnnie.

"Yes, I do," answered Harold. "You know, originally I was to have taken orders, but I quibbled and put it off. The pride of reason," he said; "I have had it taken out of me."

"And now you mean to take orders?" said Johnnie.

"Yes, if I can fit myself," answered Harold. "You see, you will go away, Bertie will go away, and the old people will remain alone. I think I shall stay with them."

"Oh, Harold, that will be good of you! I have thought of how once again they would be lonely, when only Doris and Isa will remain with them."

"Doris may get married," said Harold, "and Isa is only a baby. Yes, I think I will elect to be my father's curate, for a few years, at least, until I am stronger. There is work enough for me to do. Though he never complains, Father is not as strong as he was, and it is time I eased his burdens, for through me they have been as much as he could bear."

"I think Uncle William is the finest man I have ever known," said Johnnie. "He is so quiet, and yet so persistent, in all he does; he carries things through as if they were nothing. All these years he has been as quiet and as steadfast, neglecting nothing, thinking for us all."

"That is just it," interrupted Harold, "he thinks of everyone but himself. He and Doris are wonderfully alike."

"So I have thought," said Johnnie; "both of them utterly unselfish. We cannot say that of many people in this world."

"Indeed we cannot," said Harold; "and so it is my turn to think of him and my mother, and my duty to God. I do not mean to put that last," he added smiling; "of course, it ought to be first."

"If you are going to prepare for your ordination," said Johnnie, "don't you think we could study together? It would help us both."

"Rather say it would help me," said Harold; "for I have grown frightfully rusty, and you are fresh. If you will let me, I shall be delighted."

"So shall I," answered Johnnie. Thus it was settled.

It was wonderful how Johnnie crept into every heart and every life. He had almost a magnetic charm. Harold learnt when he went up to Oxford, to put himself in touch with his old friends and masters, that there had not been a more popular man in the university than Johnnie Cave, or a more straightforward and honest one. There was no humbug about him, no self-righteousness, yet he invariably held his own in the right cause.

"His great talents might have been a temptation for him to idle, his physical power might have led him to an excess in sports, but they never did; he went through his career as a man who has a fixed object before him, from which he never swerved. He came out, as you know, at the top of the list, and was as modest as if he had been at the bottom. No one was jealous of him, everyone gloried in his success."

It was Johnnie's old tutor who spoke thus to Harold. And Harold answered: "It is that very persistency which enabled him to save me when others are still languish-

ing in prison. He put his own shoulder to the wheel; and did it himself, choosing only two men whom he knew to assist him."

"And he will tell you he has not an inch of bravery in his composition," said the tutor laughing, "that he is a born coward."

"Then it would be well for this world if there were a few more cowards like him," said Harold.

"He is a highly nervous man," said his tutor, "but he has learnt so entirely to conquer himself, that he has brought both his mind and body into subjection, and that is what few young men do in these days."

. . . . . .

And thus it came to pass that Harold Anderson and John Cave were ordained together to be servants in the house of the Lord, priests of the Most High God. And Johnnie's desire was fulfilled, for in due time he stood with English officers and men, conquerors, in that town of Khartum, on the spot where his hero had died, and where now a statue has been raised by his grateful countrymen to the memory of one who knew how to wait, whose faith never failed him, who stood steadfast unto death.

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