BOULGER DEMETRIUS CHARLES

THE LIFE OF GORDON, VOLUME I

Demetrius Boulger

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Boulger D.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

As so many books of a more or less biographical nature have been written about General Charles Gordon, it is both appropriate and natural that I should preface the following pages with a statement of a personal character as to how and why I have written another.

In the year 1881 I told General Gordon that I contemplated describing his career as soon as I had finished writing my "History of China." His laughing reply was: "You know I shall never read it, but you can have all my papers now in the possession of my brother, Sir Henry Gordon." My history took a very long time to write, and the third volume was not published until April 1884, when General Gordon was hemmed in, to use his own words, at Khartoum.

For over two years General Gordon's papers and letters remained in my custody, and they included the Equator and Soudan correspondence, which was so admirably edited by Dr Birkbeck Hill in that intensely interesting volume, "Colonel Gordon in Central Africa." The papers relating to China and the Taeping Rebellion were freely used in my history. To them I have the privilege of adding in the present volume an authoritative narrative of the events that followed the execution of the Taeping Wangs at Soochow, and of thus rendering tardy justice to the part taken in them by Sir Halliday Macartney. Among the contents of the large portmanteau in which all these documents were stored, I noticed a thick bundle of letters, in somewhat faded handwriting, and an examination of their contents showed me that they were of the deepest interest as relating to the important events of the Crimean War, and to the first seven years of Gordon's service in the Army. I at once went to Sir Henry Gordon, who honoured me with his friendship and confidence in no less a degree than his distinguished and ever-lamented brother, and begged of him permission to publish them. He at once gave his consent, which was ratified by the late Miss Augusta Gordon, the hero's favourite sister. The letters appeared in July 1884, under the title of "General Gordon's Letters from the Crimea, the Danube, and Armenia." In the proper place I have told what Kinglake, the historian of the war, thought of them and their author.

In the rush of books that followed the fall of Khartoum, no favourable opportunity for carrying out my original purpose presented itself; and, indeed, I may say that the anonymous biographical work I performed during the course of the year 1885 would have filled a large-sized volume. Moreover, the terrible events of the fall of Khartoum, and the failure of the relieving expedition, were too close at hand to allow of a just view being taken of them, and it was necessary to defer an intention which I never abandoned. It seemed to me that the tenth anniversary of the fall of Khartoum would be an appropriate occasion for the appearance of a Life claiming to give a complete view and final verdict on the remarkable career and character of the man, with whom his own friendly inclination had made me exceptionally well acquainted.

In 1893, therefore, I began to take steps to carry out my project, and to the notification of my intention and the application for assistance in regard to unpublished papers, I received from several of the principal representatives of the Gordon family encouraging replies. But at this time both Sir Henry Gordon and Miss Gordon were dead, and I discovered that the latter had bound her literary executrix, Miss Dunlop, a niece of General Gordon's, by a promise not to divulge the bulk of the unpublished papers during her lifetime. I am happy to say, however, that Miss Dunlop, without accepting any responsibility for what I have written, has with the greatest possible kindness read these pages, and assisted me to attain complete accuracy in the facts, so far as they relate to family and personal matters, but excluding altogether from her purview all military and political topics. For that

co-operation, unfortunately restricted by the condition of the promise to Miss Gordon, I avail myself of this opportunity to express my grateful thanks; and I am also indebted to Miss Dunlop for the youthful unpublished portrait of Gordon which forms the frontispiece of this volume, and also for that of the house in which he was born.

When I was first confronted with the difficulty that the unpublished papers would not be accessible to me, I contemplated the abandonment of my task; but a brief consideration made me conclude that, even without these documents, I had special knowledge, derived from Sir Henry Gordon and many other sources, that would enable me to deal with all the more important passages of General Gordon's life. The result must be judged from the Life itself; but I have not sought to make any partisan attack on anyone, although, when I have felt compelled to criticise and censure, I have done so with a full sense of responsibility as well as with reluctance. I may be pardoned the confidence I express when I say that I am sure nothing in the unpublished documents will affect the main conclusions to which I have come on the Khartoum mission, its inception and disastrous close.

I am permitted by the courtesy of the proprietors of *The Times* to reproduce in these pages the several articles and letters which originally appeared in the columns of that paper.

It is a personal matter, of no interest except to myself, but I should like to state that the work would have been out much sooner but for a long and serious illness.

DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER

29th August 1896.

CHAPTER I.
BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

Charles George Gordon was born on 28th January 1833, at No. 1 Kemp Terrace, Woolwich Common, where his father, an officer in the Royal Artillery, was quartered at the time. The picture given elsewhere of this house will specially interest the reader as the birthplace of Gordon. It still stands, as described by Gordon's father in a private memoir, at the corner of Jackson's Lane, on Woolwich Common.

The name "Gordon" has baffled the etymologists, for there is every reason to believe that the not inappropriate connection with the Danish word for a spear is due to a felicitous fancy rather than to any substantial reality. There is far more justification for the opinion that the name comes through a French source than from a Danish. The Gorduni were a leading clan of Cæsar's most formidable opponents, the Nervi; a Duke Gordon charged among the peers of Charlemagne; and the name is not unknown at the present day in the Tyrol. The "Gordium" of Phrygia and the "Gordonia" of Macedonia are also names that suggest an Eastern rather than a Northern origin. History strengthens this supposition and entirely disposes of the Danish hypothesis. The first bearer of the name Gordon appeared in Scotland at far too near a date to the Danish descents upon that country to encourage the view that he was a member of that most bitterly hated race. Nowhere were the Danes more hated or less successful than in Scotland, yet we are asked to believe that the founder of one of the most powerful families in that kingdom belonged to this alien and detested people. The silence itself of the chronicler sufficiently refutes the idea that the first Gordon was a renegade or a traitor, as he must have been if he were a Dane.

In all probability the first Gordon, who helped Malcolm Canmore, and received in return a large grant of lands in Berwick, which became known as the Gordon country, was one of the many Norman knights attracted to the Court of Edward the Confessor. Accepting for the occasion the popular legendary version of Shakespeare, rather than the corrected account of modern historians, he may be supposed to have found his way north to the camp of Siward, where the youthful and exiled Scotch Prince had sought shelter from Macbeth, and it is no undue stretch of fancy to suggest that he took his part in the memorable overthrow of that usurper at Dunsinane, and thus obtained the favour of his successor. The growth of the Gordon family in place and power was rapid. To the lands on the borders was soon added the Huntly country on Deeside, where Aboyne Castle now stands, and in a very short period the Gordons ranked among the most powerful and warlike clans of Scotland. As Sir Walter Scott wrote of Adam Gordon, in words which might be appropriately applied to the subject of this biography:

> "'Tis a name which ne'er hath been dishonour'd,
> And never will, I trust – most surely never
> By such a youth as thou!"

Be its remote origin what it may, no name has appeared more prominently or more honourably in the British Army Lists during the last century and a half than that of Gordon. One of the most famous of our regiments bears and has nobly upheld the name. In honourable and friendly rivalry with the equally numerous and equally distinguished clans of Grant and Cameron, the Gordons have figured on every battlefield from Minden to Candahar, thus establishing at the same time the political wisdom of Chatham, who first turned the Highlanders from a cause of danger into a source of strength, and the military ardour and genius of their own race. Thus it came to pass that the spirit of remote warlike ages was perpetuated, and that the profession of arms continued to be the most natural one for any bearer of the name Gordon. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the practice of his nearest relations, as well as the traditions of his race, marked out Charles Gordon for a soldier's career.

Passing over an uncertain connection with the General Peter Gordon, who rose high in the Russian service under Peter the Great, the nearest direct ancestor of whom we can speak with absolute confidence was Charles Gordon's great-grandfather David Gordon, who served as a lieutenant in Lascelles' regiment of foot – afterwards the 47th Regiment – at the battle of Prestonpans. Although the majority of the clans were still loyal to the Stuarts, it seems from this that some of them had entered the Hanoverian service probably in that most distinguished regiment, the First Royal Scots, which a few years before Culloden had fought gallantly at Fontenoy. At Prestonpans David Gordon had the bad fortune to be made prisoner by the forces of Charles Edward, and he found on the victorious side the whole of the Gordon clan, under the command of Sir William Gordon of Park, a younger son of the Earl of Huntly. As he was able to claim kindred with Sir William, David Gordon received better treatment than he might have expected, and in a short time was allowed to go free, either on an exchange of prisoners or more probably on his parole. This incident is specially interesting, because, after making every allowance for the remoteness and vagueness of the old Highland custom of cousinship, it seems to bring Charles Gordon's ancestry into sufficiently close relationship with the main Gordon stem of the Huntlys. After his release David Gordon does not appear to have taken any further part in the war which terminated at Culloden, and he emigrated shortly afterwards to North America, where his death is recorded as having taken place at a comparatively early age at Halifax in the year 1752.

That he came of gentle blood is also proved by the fact that the Duke of Cumberland stood sponsor to his son, who bore the Duke's names of William Augustus. This second Gordon, of the particular branch that has interest for us, also entered the army, and held a commission in several regiments. The most memorable event in his life was his taking part in Wolfe's decisive victory on the heights of Abraham. In 1773 he married a lady, Miss Anna Maria Clarke, whose brother was rector of Hexham in Northumberland, and by her had a family of four daughters and three sons. Of the latter, two died at an early age, and only the youngest, William Henry, born in 1786, survived to manhood. He is especially interesting to us, because he was the father of General Gordon.

Like his father and grandfather, William Henry Gordon chose the profession of a soldier, and entered the Royal Artillery. He saw a great deal of active service, being with his corps in the Peninsula and at Maida, commanding at a later period the Artillery at Corfu and Gibraltar, and attaining before his death in 1865 the rank of Lieutenant-General. He was also connected with the Woolwich Arsenal as Director of the Carriage Department. He has been described as an excellent officer if a somewhat strict disciplinarian, and his firm character of noble integrity lived again in his sons. He married, in 1817, Elizabeth, the daughter of Samuel Enderby, a merchant whaler, one of those west country worthies who carried on the traditions of Elizabeth to the age of Victoria. It would not be possible to present a complete picture of Gordon's mother, and therefore none will be attempted here; but all the available evidence agrees in describing her as a paragon of women, and as having exercised an exceptional influence over her children. Gordon himself bore the most expressive testimony to her virtues and memory when, long years afterwards, he closed an exordium on the filial affection due to a mother with the outburst – "Oh! how my mother loved me!"

Such in brief were the forebears of the hero who comes next after Nelson in national veneration. To understand him and his career, it must be remembered that he came of a gallant race, with a quick sense of honour, seeing clearly the obvious course of duty, and never hesitating in its fulfilment. These qualities were not peculiar to the man, but inherited from his race, and as they had never been contaminated by the pursuit of wealth in any form, they retained the pristine vigour and fire of a chivalrous and noble age. What was personal and peculiar to Charles Gordon had to be evolved by circumstance and the important occurrences with which it was his lot to be associated throughout his military and public career, but his soldierly talent and virtue must be mainly assigned to the traditions and practice of his ancestors.

Of the five sons of General William Henry Gordon and Elizabeth Enderby, Charles George Gordon was the fourth. His eldest brother, Henry William Gordon, born in 1818, had entered the army, first in the 8th Regiment, and transferred in a short time to the 59th, when, at the early age of ten, Charles Gordon was sent off to school at Taunton. The selection of this school in the western country was due to the head-master, Mr Rogers, being a brother of a governess in the Gordon family. Little is known of his early childhood beyond the fact that he had lived, before he was ten, at Corfu, where his father held a command for some years. The Duke of Cambridge has publicly stated that he recollects, when quartered at Corfu at this period, having seen a bright and intelligent boy who occupied the room next to his own, and who subsequently became General Gordon. At Taunton Gordon remained during the greater part of five years, enjoying the advantages of one of the most excellent grammar schools in the West of England, and although he failed to make any special mark as a scholar, I find that, whether on account of his later fame or for some special characteristic that marked him out from the general run of boys, his name is still remembered there by something more than the initials cut upon his desk. If he distinguished himself in anything it was in map-making and drawing, and he exhibited the same qualifications to the end of his career. How careful and excellent the grounding at Taunton school must have been was shown by the fact that, after one year's special coaching at Mr Jefferies' school at Shooter's Hill, Gordon passed direct into the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. It is noteworthy that during the whole of the period we are now approaching, he never showed the least tendency to extravagance, and his main anxiety seems to have been to save his parents all possible expense, more especially because they had a large family of daughters. To the end of his life, and in each successive post, Gordon was the slave of duty. At this time, and during the years that follow, down to the Chinese campaigns, his guiding thought was how to save his family the smallest expense on his account, and yet at the same time to hold his head high, and to show himself worthy of his race.

Gordon entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in 1848, when he had not completed his sixteenth year, and during the four years he remained there he gave some evidence of the qualities that subsequently distinguished him, at the same time that he showed a lightness of disposition which many will think at strange variance with the gravity and even solemnity of his later years. Among his fellow-students he was not distinguished by any special or exclusive devotion to study. He was certainly no bookworm, and he was known rather for his love of sport and boisterous high spirits than for attention to his lessons or for a high place in his class. More than once he was involved in affairs that, if excusable and natural on the score of youth, trenched beyond the borders of discipline, and the stories of life at the Academy that he recited for many years after he left were not exactly in harmony with the popular idea of the ascetic of Mount Carmel.

As the reader treasures up the boyish escapades of Nelson and Clive, so will enduring interest be felt in those outbreaks of the boy Gordon, which made him the terror of his superiors. They are recorded on the unimpeachable evidence of his elder brother, and some of them were even narrated by Gordon himself to his niece nearly thirty years after they happened. Sir Henry is the writer.

> "Charles Gordon with a brother (William Augustus) more unruly than himself, finding the time hang heavily upon their hands during the vacation, employed themselves in various ways. Their father's house (at Woolwich) was opposite to that of the Commandant of the Garrison, and was overrun with mice. These were caught, the Commandant's door quietly opened, and the mice were transferred to new quarters. In after life (that is in 1879, when in the Soudan) Charles Gordon wrote to one of his nieces: 'I am glad to hear the race of true Gordons is not extinct. Do you not regret the Arsenal and its delights? You never, any of you, made a proper use of the Arsenal workmen as we did. They used to neglect their work for our orders, and turned out some splendid squirts – articles that would wet you through in a minute. As for the crossbows we had made, they were grand with

> screws. One Sunday afternoon twenty-seven panes of glass were broken in the large storehouses. They were found to have been perforated with a small hole (ventilation), and Captain Soady nearly escaped a premature death; a screw passed his head, and was as if it had been screwed into the wall which it had entered. Servants were kept at the door with continual bell-ringings. Your uncle Freddy (a younger brother) was pushed into houses, the bell rung, and the door held to prevent escape. Those were the days of the Arsenal.'"

Sir Henry continues:

> "But what Charles Gordon considered as his greatest achievement was one that he in after years often alluded to. At this time (1848) the senior class of Cadets, then called the Practical Class, were located in the Royal Arsenal, and in front of their halls of study there were earthworks upon which they were practised from time to time in profiling and other matters. The ins and outs of these works were thoroughly well known to Charles Gordon and his brother, who stole out at night – but we will leave him to tell his own story. He says: 'I forgot to tell – of how when Colonel John Travers of the Hill Folk (he lived on Shooter's Hill) was lecturing to the Arsenal Cadets in the evening, a crash was heard, and every one thought every pane of glass was broken; small shot had been thrown. However, it was a very serious affair, for like the upsetting of a hive, the Cadets came out, and only darkness, speed, and knowledge of the fieldworks thrown up near the lecture-room enabled us to escape. That was before I entered the curriculum. The culprits were known afterwards, and for some time avoided the vicinity of the Cadets. I remember it with horror to this day, for no mercy would have been shown by the Pussies, as the Cadets were called.'"

After he entered the Academy the same love of fun and practical joking characterised him. Sir Henry writes: "After he had been some time at the Academy and earned many good-conduct badges, an occasion arose when it became necessary to restrain the Cadets in leaving the dining-hall, the approach to which was by a narrow staircase. At the top of this staircase stood the senior corporal, with outstretched arms, facing the body of Cadets. This was too much for Charlie Gordon, who, putting his head down, butted with it, and catching the officer in the pit of the stomach not only sent him down the stairs, but through the glass door beyond. The officer jumped up unhurt, and Gordon was placed in confinement and nearly dismissed.

"Upon another occasion, when he was near his commission, a great deal of bullying was going on, and in order to repress it a number of the last comers were questioned, when one of them said that Charlie Gordon had on one occasion hit him on the head with a clothesbrush. The lad admitted it was not a severe blow; nevertheless Charlie Gordon was for this slight offence put back six months for his commission, which turned out well in the end, since it secured for him a second lieutenancy in the Royal Engineers in place of the Royal Artillery." This alteration in the branch of the service to which he was attached was due to his own act. He decided that, as his contemporaries would be put ahead of him, he would work for the Engineers instead of the Artillery.

Even to the end of his life there were two sides to his character. Private grief, much disappointment, and a long solitary existence, contributed to make him a melancholy philosopher, and a sometimes austere critic of a selfish world, but beneath this crust were a genial and generous disposition that did not disdain the lighter side of human nature, a heart too full of kindness to cherish wrath for long, and an almost boyish love of fun that could scarcely be repressed. If this was the individual in his quieter and contemplative moods, an energy that never tired, and a warlike spirit that only needed the occasion to blaze forth, revealed the man of action. It may be pronounced a paradox to say so, but to the end of his life the true Gordon was more of the soldier than the saint.

Even in the midst of his escapades at the Academy, something of the spirit of the future hero revealed itself. However grave the offence or heavy the punishment, he was never backward in taking his share – or more than his share – of the blame for any scrape into which he and his friends were brought by their excessive high spirits. On more than one occasion his ardour and sense of justice resulted in his being made the scapegoat of worse offenders, and it seems probable that he generally bore more than his proper share of the blame and punishment for acts of insubordination. But there were limits to his capacity of suffering and sense of guilt, and when one of his superiors declared that he "would never make an officer," he touched a point of honour, and Gordon's vigorous and expressive reply was to tear the epaulettes from his shoulder and throw them at his superior's feet. In this incident the reader will not fail to see a touch and forecast of greatness. He was ever willing to pay the penalty of youthful indiscretion, but he was sensitive to the reproach of honour, and his exuberant spirits detracted in no respect from his sense of the nobility of his profession. His earnestness saved him from the frivolity into which a light heart and good health might have led him, and compensated for his disinclination to devote all his spare time to the severer studies of his college.

On June 23rd, 1852, nearly four years after he entered the Royal Military Academy, Charles Gordon passed out with the rank of second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. Notwithstanding some remissness in his work, he had passed through all his examinations – "Those terrible examinations," as he said long years afterwards – "how I remember them! Sometimes I dream of them," – and in accordance with the regulations in force he was sent to Chatham for the purpose of completing there his technical training as an engineer officer. Chatham, as is well known, is the Headquarters of the Royal Engineer Corps, to which it stands in the same relation as Woolwich to the Artillery. There Gordon remained until February 1854, constantly engaged on field work and in making plans and surveys, at which his old skill as a draughtsman soon made him exceptionally competent. This kind of work was also far more congenial to him than the cramming at the Academy, and he soon gained the reputation of being an intelligent and hard-working subaltern. In the month named he attained the grade of full lieutenant, and on taking his step he was at once ordered to Pembroke Dock, then one of the busiest naval dêpots and most important military arsenals in the country. The war clouds were already lowering over Eastern Europe, and although all hope of maintaining peace had not been abandoned, arrangements were in progress for the despatch, if necessary, of a strong naval and military expedition to the Black Sea.

At Pembroke, Gordon was at once employed on the construction of the new fortifications and batteries considered necessary for the defence of so important a position, and in one of his letters home he wrote: "I have been very busy in doing plans for another fort, to be built at the entrance of the haven. I pity the officers and men who will have to live in these forts, as they are in the most desolate places, seven miles from any town, and fifteen from any conveyance." Seclusion and solitude had evidently no charms for him at that period. In another letter about this time he wrote expressing his relief at being "free from the temptations of a line regiment," and concluded with the self-depreciatory remark that he was "such a miserable wretch that he was sure to be led away." In yet another letter from Pembroke, written not many weeks after his arrival, he reveals something of the deep religious feeling which was no doubt greatly strengthened by his experiences in the Crimea, and which became stronger and more pronounced as years went on. In writing to his favourite sister in the summer of 1854, he gives the following interesting bit of biographical information: "You know I never was confirmed. When I was a cadet I thought it was a useless sin, as I did not intend to alter (not that it was in my power to be converted when I chose). I, however, took my first sacrament on Easter Day (16th April 1854) and have communed ever since."

Charles Gordon was still occupied on the Pembroke fortifications when war broke out with Russia on the Eastern Question. His father was at the time stationed at Gibraltar in command of the Royal Artillery, and was never employed nearer the scene of hostilities during the war. But his two elder brothers were at the front – the eldest, the late Sir Henry Gordon, at Balaclava, where he served

in the Commissariat, and the next brother, the late General Enderby Gordon, with his battery under Lord Raglan. At the battle of the Alma, fought on 20th September 1854, Enderby Gordon specially distinguished himself, for he worked one of the two guns of Turner's Battery, which exercised such a decisive influence on the fortunes of the day. Readers of Kinglake's "History" will remember that it was the flank fire of these two guns which compelled the Russian battery of sixteen guns on the Causeway to retire and thus expose the Russian front to our attack. It is a little curious to find that while one brother was thus distinguishing himself in the first battle of the war, another was writing from Pembroke Dock as follows: " – says there were no artillery engaged in the battle of the Alma, so that Enderby was safe out of that." Enderby Gordon also distinguished himself at Inkerman, where he acted as aide-de-camp to General Strangeways. He subsequently earned the reputation of a good officer during the Indian Mutiny, and when he died he had, like his father, attained the rank of Lieutenant-General, and received besides the Companionship of the Bath. One characteristic incident has been recorded of him. As he commanded a column in India, he had only to ask for promotion to obtain it; this he declined to do, because he would thus have stepped over a friend.

In General Gordon's own letters from the Crimea there are frequent references to his eldest brother, Henry Gordon, a man of whom it may be said here that the best was never publicly known, for during a long and varied career, first in the combative branch of the army as an officer of the 59th Regiment, and then as a non-combative officer in the Ordnance Department, he showed much ability, but had few opportunities of special distinction. In several of General Gordon's transactions Sir Henry was closely mixed up, especially with the Congo mission; and I should like to say, of my own knowledge, that he was thoroughly in sympathy with all his projects for the suppression of the slave trade, had mastered the voluminous Blue Books and official papers, from the time of Ismail to the dark days of Khartoum, in so thorough a manner that the smallest detail was fixed in his brain, and had so completely assimilated his brother's views that an hour's consultation with him was almost as fertile a source of inspiration as it would have been with the General himself. I believe that the original cause of Sir Henry's influence over his brother was that he disclaimed having any, and that he most carefully avoided any attempt to force his advice on his younger brother, as so many of our elders deem to be their right and prerogative. General Gordon was a bad listener to advice at any time or from anyone. He acted almost entirely on his own judgment, and still more on his own impulse. His first thoughts were his best thoughts, or, perhaps, as Tennyson says, "his third thoughts, which are a maturer first." Sir Henry knew the ingrained and unalterable character of his brother, and adapted himself to it, partly through affection and partly through admiration, for in his eyes Charles Gordon was the truest of heroes. No man ever possessed a truer or more solicitous friend than General Gordon found in him. Sir Henry was thoroughly devoted to him and his interests, and carried out all his wishes and instructions to the very letter.

Having said this much about the relations between Gordon and his brother, it would be an inexcusable omission to pass over the still more striking sympathy and affection that united him with his sisters. From his first appointment into the service he corresponded on religious and serious subjects with his elder sister, the late Miss Gordon, who only survived her brother a few years, with remarkable regularity, and as time went on the correspondence became more, rather than less constant, and in his letters to her were to be found his most secret thoughts and aspirations. Most of the letters from the Crimea were addressed to his mother; but, in an interesting volume published in 1888, Miss Gordon presented the world with the remainder of her brother's letters, spread over thirty active and eventful years. One of General Gordon's most cherished objects, resembling in that, as in other respects, Lord Lawrence, was to add to the comfort of his sisters, and when he left England on his last fatal mission to Egypt, his will, made the night before he left for Brussels, provided that all he possessed should be held in trust for the benefit of his well-beloved sister, Mary Augusta, and that it was to pass only on her death to the heirs he therein designated. It is not necessary to enter into fuller particulars on this subject, but it may be proper to say that his affection for his other sisters was

not less warm or less reciprocated. Of his six sisters, of whom two alone survive, it is only necessary to refer here (in addition to Miss Gordon) to the youngest, who married Dr Andrew Moffitt, who was not merely head medical officer with the Ever Victorious Army, but Gordon's right-hand man in China. Dr Moffitt was a man of high courage; on one occasion he saved Gordon's life when a Taeping attempted to murder him in his tent, and an English officer, who served with the Force, has described him in these two lines: "He was imbued with the same spirit as his future brother-in-law; he was a clever Chinese scholar and an A1 surgeon." Dr Moffitt, who received a gold medal and order, besides the Red Button of a Mandarin, from the Chinese Government for his brilliant services against the Taepings, died prematurely. To say less about these family relations would be an omission; to say more would be an intrusion, and they may be left with the reflection that as no one who knew him will dispute the depth and the strength of General Gordon's sentiments as a friend, his feelings towards the members of his own family cannot well be impugned.

Some account of the personal appearance of General Gordon will be deemed necessary, and may be appropriately given at this stage, although the subject is a dangerous one, because so very few people form the same impression about any one's appearance. There has been much discussion as to General Gordon's exact height, and I have been to much pains to obtain some decisive evidence on the subject. Unfortunately no such records as to height, etc., are kept about officers, and my search proved fruitless, more especially as the records at Woolwich for the period required were destroyed by fire some years ago. The best evidence I have obtained is that of General Gordon's tailors, Messrs Batten & Sons, of Southampton, who write: "We consider, by measurements in our books, that General Gordon was 5 ft. 9 in." As he had contracted a slight stoop, or, more correctly speaking, carried his head thrown forward, he looked in later life much less than his real height. The quotations at the end of this chapter will show some difference of opinion. His figure was very slight, but his nervous energy could never be repressed, and he was probably stronger than his appearance suggested. The suggestion of delicate health in his look and aspect, arising, as he was led to believe, but erroneously, from *angina pectoris*, or some mysterious chest pain, may have induced a belief that he was not robust, but this seems to have been baseless, because throughout his life, whether in the trenches of Sebastopol, the marshes of the Yangtse delta, or the arid plains of the Soudan, he appears to have equally enjoyed excellent health.

The only specific mention of serious illness was during his stay in the Soudan as Governor-General, when the chest pains became acute. These were at length traced to an enlarged liver, and perhaps the complaint was aggravated by excessive smoking. In the desert, far removed from medical aid, he obtained much relief from the use of Warburg's Tincture.

In his ordinary moods there was nothing striking about the face. The colour of the eye was too light – yet the glance was as keen as a rapier, and, as the little Soudan boy Capsune, whom he had educated, said, "Gordon's eyes looked you through and through" – the features were not sufficiently marked, the carriage of the man was too diffident and modest to arrest or detain attention, and the explanation of the universal badness of the numerous photographs taken of him at all stages of his career is probably to be found in the deficiency of colouring and contrast. Everything in his appearance depended on expression, and expression generally baffles the photographer. Perhaps the least objectionable of all these portraitures is the steel plate in Dr Birkbeck Hill's volume on "Gordon in Central Africa," and that not because it is a faithful likeness, but because it represents a bust that might well be imagined to belong to a hero. It was only when some great idea or some subject in which he was interested seized his imagination that one could perceive that the square jaw denoted unshakable resolution, and that the pale blue eye could flash with the fire of a born leader of men. In tranquil moments no one would have been struck by a casual glance at his face, but these were rare, for in congenial company, and with persons he trusted, Gordon was never tranquil, pacing up and down the room, with only brief stops to impress a point on his listener by holding his arm for a few seconds, and looking at him intently to see if he followed with understanding and interest the

drift of his remarks, lighting cigarette after cigarette to enable him to curb his own impetuosity, and demonstrating in every act and phrase the truth of his own words that "inaction was intolerable to him." Such was the man as I recall him on the all too few occasions when it was my privilege and good fortune to receive him during his brief visits to London of late years, and to hear from him his confidential views on the questions in which he took so deep an interest. One final remark must be hazarded about the most remarkable point after all in General Gordon's personality. I refer to his voice. It was singularly sweet, and for a man modulated in a very low tone, but there was nothing womanish about it, as was the case with his able contemporary Sir Bartle Frere, whose voice was distinctly feminine in its timbre. I know of no other way to describe it than to say that it seemed to me to express the thorough and transparent goodness of the speaker, and the exquisite gentleness of his nature. If angels speak with the human voice, Gordon's tone must have borne affinity to theirs.

In completing this subject it may be appropriate to quote a few of the more important and interesting descriptions of his personal appearance, contributed by those who had opportunities of seeing him.

An officer, who served with General Gordon in China, describes his first interview with him in the following words: —

> "C – introduced me to a light-built, active, wiry, middle-sized man of about thirty-two years of age, in the undress uniform of the Royal Engineers. The countenance bore a pleasant frank appearance, eyes light blue, with a fearless look in them, hair crisp and inclined to curl, conversation short and decided. This was Major C. G. Gordon."

General Sir Gerald Graham who, to use his own words, was Gordon's "school-fellow at Woolwich, his comrade in the Crimea and China, and for many years past a more or less regular correspondent," has put on record the following interesting description of the hero, and it should not be forgotten that, excepting his companion, Colonel Donald Stewart, and Mr Power, General Graham was the last Englishman to see General Gordon in this world.

> "Not over 5 feet 9 inches in height, but of compact build, his figure and gait characteristically expressed resolution and strength. His face, although in itself unpretending, was one that in the common phrase 'grew upon you.' Time had not streaked with grey the crisp, curly brown hair of his youth and traced lines of care on his ample forehead and strong clear face, bronzed with exposure to the tropical sun. His usual aspect was serene and quiet, and although at times a ruffling wave of uncontrollable impatience or indignation might pass over him, it did not disturb him long. The depth and largeness of Gordon's nature, which inspired so much confidence in others, seemed to afford him a sense of inner repose, so that outer disturbance was to him like the wind that ruffles the surface of the sea, but does not affect its depths. The force and beauty of Gordon's whole expression came from within, and as it were irradiated the man, the steady, truthful gaze of the blue-grey eyes seeming a direct appeal from the upright spirit within. Gordon's usual manner charmed by its simple, unaffected courtesy, but although utterly devoid of self-importance he had plenty of quiet dignity, or even of imperious authority at command when required. With his friends he had a fund of innocent gaiety that seemed to spring from his impulsiveness, while his strong sense of humour often enabled him to relieve his impatience or indignation by a good-natured sarcasm."

Two further descriptions by men who served under him at Gravesend in the interval between the Taeping War and the first mission to the Soudan will suffice to complete the personal impressions that may help the reader to form some idea of the appearance of General Gordon. The first is from the pen of Mr W. E. Lilley, who brought out a special volume on Gordon at Gravesend.

> "In Colonel Gordon's appearance there was nothing particularly striking. He was rather under the average height, of slight proportions, and with little of the military bearing in his carriage, so that one would hardly have imagined that this kindly, unassuming gentleman was already one who had attracted the notice of his superiors by his courage and zeal in the Crimean War, and who had won lasting renown by subduing in China one of the greatest revolts the world had ever seen. This last exploit had gained for him the name by which he was from that time best known, viz. "Chinese Gordon." The greatest characteristic of his countenance was the clear blue eye, which seemed to have a magical power over all who came within its influence. It read you through and through; it made it impossible for you to tell him anything but the truth, it inspired your confidence, it kindled with compassion at any story of distress, and it sparkled with good humour at anything really funny or witty. From its glance you knew at once that at any risk he would keep his promise, that you might trust him with anything and everything, and that he would stand by you if all other friends deserted you."

The other impression, formed under precisely the same circumstances, is that of Mr Arthur Stannard, recorded in the *Nineteenth Century* of April 1885.

> "The next moment I was looking into Chinese Gordon's eyes. What eyes they were! Keen and clear, filled with the beauty of holiness, bright with an unnatural brightness, their expression one of settled feverishness, the colour blue-grey as is the sky on a bitter March morning. In spite of the beautiful goodness of his heart and the great breadth of his charity, Gordon was far from possessing a placid temperament or from being patient over small things. Indeed his very energy and his single-mindedness tended to make him impatient and irritable whenever any person or thing interfered with his intentions or desires… For a man of his small stature his activity was marvellous – he seemed able to walk every one else off their legs over rough ground or smooth… In Gordon strength and weakness were most fantastically mingled. There was no trace of timidity in his composition. He had a most powerful will. When his mind was made up on a matter it never seemed to occur to him that there could be anything more to say about it. Such was his superb confidence in himself!"

When Gordon had been only a few months at Pembroke Dock he received orders to proceed to Corfu, and believing it to be due to his father's request, he wrote: "I suspect you used your influence to have me sent there instead of to the Crimea. It is a great shame of you." But the Fates were to be stronger than any private influence, for four days after he wrote those lines he received fresh orders directing him to leave for the Crimea without delay in charge of huts. It seems that the change in his destination was due to Sir John Burgoyne, to whom he had expressed the strongest wish to proceed to the scene of war. On 4th December 1854, he received his orders at Pembroke, on the 6th he reported himself at the War Office, and in the evening of the same day he was at Portsmouth. It was at first intended that he should go out in a collier, but he obtained permission to proceed *viâ* Marseilles, which he pronounced "extremely lucky, as I am such a bad sailor." This opinion was somewhat qualified later on when he found that the Government did not prepay his passage, and he expressed the opinion pretty freely, in which most people would concur, that "it is very hard not to give us anything before starting." He left London on the 14th December, Marseilles in a French hired transport on the 18th, and reached Constantinople the day after Christmas Day. He was not much struck with anything he saw; pronounced Athens "very ugly and dirty," and the country around uncommonly barren; and was disappointed with the far-famed view on approaching Constantinople. The professional instinct displayed itself when he declared that the forts of the Dardanelles did not appear to be very strong,

as, although numerous, they were open at the rear and overlooked by the heights behind. On 28th December Gordon left Constantinople in the *Golden Fleece* transport conveying the 39th Regiment to Balaclava. The important huts had not yet arrived in the collier from Portsmouth, but they could not be far behind, and Gordon went on in advance. The huts, it may be added, were built to contain twenty-four men, or two captains and four subalterns, or two field-officers or one general, and the number of these entrusted to the charge of Gordon was 320. These reinforcements were the first sent out to mitigate the hardships the British Army underwent during a campaign that the genius of Todleben and the fortitude of his courageous garrison rendered far more protracted and costly than had been anticipated.

CHAPTER II.
THE CRIMEA, DANUBE, AND ARMENIA

Charles Gordon reached Balaclava on New Year's Day, 1855. He found everyone engaged in foraging expeditions, that the siege of Sebastopol excited no interest, that the road from the bay to the hill was like a morass, and that a railway to traverse it was being slowly laid down. Gordon remained about three weeks at Balaclava assisting in the erection of huts, and in the conveyance of some of them to the front. When this task was accomplished he was himself ordered to the trenches, where his work could not fail to be more exciting and also more dangerous than that upon which up to this he had been engaged.

Before following him it will be useful to summarise the leading events that had taken place in the Crimea up to this date. War between England and France on the one side, and Russia on the other, was finally declared in March 1854, the allied forces landed in the Crimea early in September 1854, and the first battle was fought on the Alma stream on the 20th of that month. In that battle 60,000 allied troops – 20,000 English, 40,000 French – attacked 120,000 Russians in a strong and well-chosen position. The result was a brilliant victory for the allies, and there is no doubt that it was mainly won by the dashing attack of the English Infantry. The losses were – French, 60 killed and 500 wounded; English, 362 killed and 1620 wounded, thus furnishing clear evidence as to the force which bore the brunt of the engagement. The Russian loss was computed to be not less than 6000, or double that of the allies.

As the allied forces advanced towards Sebastopol the Russian Army assumed the offensive. The brilliant and never-to-be-forgotten Cavalry charges on 25th October, of the Light and Heavy Brigades, under Cardigan and Scarlett respectively, at Balaclava in the valley that stretched at the foot of the hills overlooking the bay of that name, had not merely vindicated the reputation of English horsemen for dash and daring, but had done something – at excessive cost, it is true – to clear the advance for the whole army. When the Russians, assuming in their turn the offensive, attacked our camps on the heights of Inkerman, they were repulsed with heavy loss on both sides, and with the result that more than six months elapsed before they again ventured to show any inclination to attack in the open field, and then only to meet with fresh discomfiture on the banks of the Tchernaya.

The battle of Inkerman was fought in the early morning of 5th November, and again the brunt of the fighting fell on the English army. The Russian General, Todleben, subsequently stated that he reluctantly decided to attack the English camp instead of the French, because "the English position seemed to be so very weak." Here again the losses give no misleading idea of the proportionate share of the two allied armies in the struggle. While the Russian loss was put down in all at 11,000 men, the French lost 143 killed and 786 wounded; the English, 597 killed and 1760 wounded.

The opinion has been confidently expressed that if a rapid advance and attack had been made on Sebastopol immediately after Inkerman, the fortress would have been easily captured; but both before and during the siege the Russians made the best use of every respite the Allies gave them, and this lost opportunity, if it was one, never recurred. It will thus be seen that some of the most interesting incidents of the war had passed before Gordon set foot in the Crimea, but for an engineer officer the siege and capture of the fortress created by Todleben under the fire of his foes presented the most attractive and instructive phase of the campaign.

At this time the French army mustered about 100,000 men, the British about 23,000, and the Russian garrison of Sebastopol 25,000. In addition, there was a covering army, under the Grand Dukes and General Liprandi, which, despite its losses at Inkerman, was probably not less than 60,000 but the successive defeats at Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman had broken the confidence of the troops and reduced their leaders to inaction. The batteries were nearly completed when Gordon reached the

front, and a good deal had already been written and said about the hardships of the soldiers. Gordon was a man of few wants, who could stand any amount of fatigue, and throughout his life he was always disposed to think that soldiers should never complain. Writing as late as 12th February 1855, when the worst of the winter was over, he says: "There are really no hardships for the officers; the men are the sufferers, and that is partly their own fault, as they are like children, thinking everything is to be done for them. The French soldier looks out for himself, and consequently fares much better." Something of the same conclusion had been forced on him when on board the French transport between Marseilles and Athens when he wrote: "The poor French soldiers, of whom there were 320 on board without any shelter, must have suffered considerably from cold; they had no covering, and in spite of the wet, cold, and bad weather, they kept up their health however, and their high spirits also, when our men would have mutinied." And again, later on: "We have capital rations, and all the men have warm clothing, and more than enough of that. They of course grumble and growl a good deal. The contrast with the French in this respect is not to our advantage." It must in fairness be remembered that the worst of the maladministration was over before he reached the scene, and that he came with those reinforcements, not merely of men, but still more especially of supplies, which ended "the winter troubles," and converted them into the sanguine hopes and views of the spring.

Gordon was not long in the trenches before he came under fire, and the account of his first experience of real warfare may be given in his own words: —

> "The night of February 14th I was on duty in the trenches, and if you look at the plan I sent you and the small sketch enclosed I will explain what I had to do. The French that night determined to join their sentries on their right and our sentries on our left, in advance of their and our trenches, so as to prevent the Russians coming up the ravine, and then turning against our flank. They determined to make a lodgment in the ruined house marked *B* on the sketch, and to run a trench up the hill to the left of this, while I was told to make a communication by rifle-pits from the caves *C* to the ruined house *B*. I got, after some trouble, eight men with picks and shovels, and asked the captain of the advance trench to give me five double sentries to throw out in advance. It was the first time he had been on duty here; and as for myself, I never had, although I kept that to myself. I led forward the sentries, going at the head of the party, and found the sentries of the advance had not held the caves, which they ought to have done after dark, so there was just a chance of the Russians being in them. I went on, however, and, though I did not like it, explored the caves almost alone. We then left two sentries on the hill above the caves, and went back, to get round and post two sentries below the caves. However, just as soon as we showed ourselves outside the caves and below them, bang! bang! went two rifles, the bullets hitting the ground close to us. The sentries with me retired in a rare state of mind, and my working party bolted, and were stopped with great difficulty. What had really happened was this: It was not a Russian attack, but the two sentries whom I had placed above the caves *had fired at us*, lost their caps, and bolted to the trench. Nothing after this would induce the sentries to go out, so I got the working party to go forward with me. The Russians had, on the report of our shots, sent us a shower of bullets, their picket not being more than 150 yards away. I set the men to work, and then went down to the bottom of the ravine, and found the French in strength hard at work also. Having told them who we were, I returned to the trench, where I met Colonel – of the 1st Royals. I warned him if he went out he would be sure to be hit by our own sentries or the Russians. He would go, however, and a moment afterwards was hit in the breast, the ball going through his coats, slightly grazing his

> ribs, and passing out again without hurting him. I stayed with my working party all night, and got home very tired."

In further illustration of the confusion prevailing in the trenches at night, he mentions in the same letter that while trying to find the caves he missed his way, and "very nearly walked into the town by mistake."

This was the more surprising because Gordon's intimate knowledge of the trenches was remarkable and well known. The following testimony given by Sir Charles Staveley affords striking proof that this reputation was not undeserved: —

> "I happened to mention to Charlie Gordon that I was field officer for the day for command in the trenches next day, and, having only just returned from sick leave, that I was ignorant of the geography of our left attack. He said at once, 'Oh! come down with me to-night after dark, and I will show you over the trenches.' He drew me out a very clear sketch of the lines (which I have now), and down I went accordingly. He explained every nook and corner, and took me along outside our most advanced trench, the bouquets (volleys of small shells fired from mortars) and other missiles flying about us in, to me, a very unpleasant manner, he taking the matter remarkably coolly."

The late Sir George Chesney, a very competent and discriminating witness, gives evidence to the same effect: —

> "In his humble position as an Engineer subaltern he attracted the notice of his superiors, not merely by his energy and activity, but by a special aptitude for war, developing itself amid the trench work before Sebastopol in a personal knowledge of the enemy's movements *such as no other officer attained*. We used to send him to find out what new move the Russians were making."

The next incident of the siege described by Gordon occurred about a week after his *baptême de feu* in the caves. While the French were somewhat deliberately making at Inkerman a battery for fifteen guns, the Russians, partly in a spirit of bravado, threw up in a single night a battery for nearly twenty guns immediately opposite, at a distance of not more than 600 yards from the French. As this was made in the open ground, it was a defiance which could not be tolerated, and the French accordingly made their arrangements to assault it. Kinglake has graphically described the surprise of the French when they discovered this "white circlet or loop on the ground," and the attempt made by three battalions, with two other battalions in reserve, to capture it. A battalion of Zouaves, under the command of Colonel Cere, carried it in fine style, but the Russian reserves came up in great force, and their own reserves "declining to come to the scratch," as Gordon laconically put it, the Zouaves were in their turn compelled to fall back, with a loss of 200 killed. Encouraged by this success, the Russians gave the French another surprise a few days later, throwing up a second battery 300 yards further in advance of the first "white circlet." These two batteries, mounting between them, according to Kinglake, twenty-two guns, were finally strengthened and equipped by 10th March, and although the French talked much of storming them, nothing was done, much to Gordon's disgust. It was while these operations were in progress that Charles Gordon had a narrow escape of being killed. A shot from one of the Russian rifle-pits "as nearly as possible did for me," he wrote; "the bullet was fired not 180 yards off, and passed an inch above my nut into a bank I was passing." His only comment on this is very characteristic: "They are very good marksmen; their bullet is large and pointed."

This was the first but not the last escape he had during the siege. One of his brothers, writing home some three months later, a few days before the assault on the Redan, wrote as follows: "Charlie has had a miraculous escape. The day before yesterday he saw the smoke from an embrasure on his left and heard a shell coming, but did not see it. It struck the ground about five yards in front of him

and burst, not touching him. If it had not burst it would have taken his head off." Of this later shave Gordon himself says nothing, but he describes a somewhat similar incident, which had, however, a fatal result. "We lost one of our captains named Craigie by a splinter of a shell. The shell burst above him, and by what is called chance struck him in the back, killing him at once."

During the three months March, April, and May, the siege languished, and Gordon apologises for the stupidity of his letters with the graphic observation: "It is not my fault, as none of the three nations – French, English, or Russian – will do anything."

At the end of May, however, there was a renewal of activity. General Pelissier succeeded to the French command, and, unlike his predecessors, made it his primary object to act in cordial co-operation with the English commander. He was also in favour of an energetic prosecution of the siege, with the view to an early assault. All the batteries were by this time completed, and 588 guns, with 700 rounds in readiness for each gun, were opposed to the 1174 in the Russian fortress. It only remained to utilise this terrific force, and at last orders were given for the commencement of what was known as the third bombardment. After nearly two days' incessant firing the French stormed the Mamelon and two advance redoubts. These were successfully carried and held, at the same time that the English stormed a position called the Quarries, close under the formidable Redan. Of this bombardment Gordon gives in one of his letters a very good description: —

> "On the 6th we opened fire from all our batteries. I was on duty in the trenches. I could distinctly see the Russians in the Redan and elsewhere running about in great haste, and bringing up their gunners to the guns. They must have lost immensely, as our shot and shell continued to pour in upon them for hours without a lull. Never was our fire so successful. Before seven we had silenced a great many of their guns, while our loss was very small – only one man killed and four wounded. I was struck slightly with a stone from a round shot and stunned for a second, which old Jones has persisted in returning as wounded. [It was, notwithstanding, a real wound.] However, I am all right, so do not think otherwise. Our fire was continued all night, and the next day until four o'clock, when we opened with new batteries much nearer, and our fire then became truly terrific. Fancy 1000 guns (which is the number of ourselves, the French, and Russians combined) firing at once shells in every direction. On our side alone we have thirty-nine 13" mortars. At half-past five three rockets gave the signal for the French to attack the Mamelon and the redoubts of Selingkinsk and Volhynia. They rushed up the slope in full view of the allied armies. The Russians fired one or two guns when the French were in the embrasures. We then saw the Russians cut out on the other side, and the French after them, towards the Malakoff Tower, which they nearly reached, but were so punished by the guns of this work that they were obliged to retire, the Russians in their turn chasing them through the Mamelon into their own trenches. This was dreadful, as it had to be assaulted again. The French, however, did so immediately, and carried it splendidly. The redoubts of Volhynia and Selingkinsk were taken easily on our side. In front of the right attack a work called the Quarries had to be taken, which was done at the same time as the Mamelon. The Russians cut out and ran, while our men made their lodgment for our fellows. We were attacked four times in the night, but held the work. If we had liked to assault, I am sure we should have taken the place with little loss, some of our men being close to the Redan. The French took twenty guns and 400 prisoners, and found the Mamelon so traversed as to have no difficulty in making their lodgment. We were driven from the Quarries three times in the night, the Russians having directed all their efforts against them. Our loss is supposed to be 1000 killed and wounded. Nearly all our working party had to be taken for fighting purposes. The

attacking columns were 200 strong; one went to the right, and the other to the left of the Quarries. The reserve consisted of 600 men. The Russians fought desperately."

A further week was occupied with a heavy but desultory bombardment, but at last on 17th June what is known as "the fourth bombardment" proper began, and after it had continued for about twenty-four hours, orders were given for the assault to be made by the French on the Malakoff and the English on the Redan on the 18th June, a date ever memorable in military annals. The silence of the Russian guns induced a belief that the allied fire had overpowered theirs, and in consequence orders for the attack were given twenty-four hours sooner than had been intended. Kinglake, in his exhaustive History, has shown how this acted adversely on the chances of the assault, because the Russian gunners had really only reserved their fire, and also especially because the Redan, which we had to attack under the original arrangement between Lord Raglan and General Pelissier, had hardly suffered any damage from the bombardment. General Gordon's long account of this memorable assault will long be referred to as a striking individual experience: —

"I must now commence my long story of our attempted assault. To take up my account from 14th June, which was the last letter I wrote to you, Seeley, my fellow-subaltern at Pembroke, arrived on the 15th, and joined the right. On the evening of the 16th it was rumoured we were to commence firing again in the morning. I was on duty on the morning of the 17th, and I went down at half-past two a. m. At 3 a. m. all our batteries opened, and throughout the day kept up a terrific fire. The Russians answered slowly, and after a time their guns almost ceased. I mentioned in my report that I thought they were reserving their fire. [If this view had only been taken by the Generals, especially Pelissier, a dreadful waste of life would have been averted, and the result might have proved a brilliant success.] We did not lose many men. I remained in the trenches until 7 p. m. – rather a long spell – and on coming up dined, and found an order to be at the night attack at twelve midnight on June 17 and 18. I was attached to Bent's column, with Lieutenants Murray and Graham, R.E., and we were to go into the Redan at the Russians' right flank. Another column, under Captain de Moleyns and Lieutenants Donnelly and James, R.E., was to go in at the angle of the salient; and another under Captain Jesse, Lieutenants Fisher and Graves, was to go in at the Russian left flank. We passed along in our relative positions up to the advanced trench, which is 200 yards from the Redan, where we halted until the signal for the attack should be given from the eight-gun battery, where Lord Raglan, Sir G. Brown, and General Jones were.

"About 3 a. m. the French advanced on the Malakoff Tower in three columns, and ten minutes after this our signal was given. The Russians then opened with a fire of grape, which was terrific. They mowed down our men in dozens, and the trenches, being confined, were crowded with men, who foolishly kept in them instead of rushing over the parapet of our trenches, and by coming forward in a mass, trusting to some of them at least being able to pass through untouched to the Redan, where of course, once they arrived, the artillery could not reach them, and every yard nearer would have diminished the effect of the grape by giving it less space for spreading. We could then have moved up our supports and carried the place.

"Unfortunately, however, our men dribbled out of the ends of the trenches, ten and twenty at a time, and as soon as they appeared they were cleared away. Some hundred men, under Lieutenant Fisher, got up to the abattis, but were not supported, and consequently had to retire.

"About this time the French were driven from the Malakoff Tower, which I do not think they actually entered, and Lord Raglan very wisely would not renew

the assault, as the Redan could not be held with the Malakoff Tower in the hands of the Russians. Murray, poor fellow, went out with the skirmishers of our column – he in red, and they in green. He was not out a minute when he was carried back with his arm shattered with grape. Colonel Tylden called for me, and asked me to look after him, which I did, and as I had a tourniquet in my pocket I put it on. He bore it bravely, and I got a stretcher and had him taken back. He died three hours afterwards. I am glad to say that Dr Bent reports he did not die from loss of blood, but from the shock, not being very strong.

"A second after Murray had gone to the rear, poor Tylden, struck by grape in the legs, was carried back, and although very much depressed in spirits he is doing well. Jesse was killed at the abattis – shot through the head – and Graves was killed further in advance than any one. We now sat still waiting for orders, and the Russians amusing themselves by shelling us from mortars. When we appeared, the Russians lined their parapets as thick as possible, and seemed to be expecting us to come on. They flew two flags on the Malakoff Tower the whole time in defiance of us. About ten o'clock some of the regiments got orders to retire. We, the Royal Engineers, however, stayed until twelve o'clock, when we were told that the assault was not to be renewed, and that we could go. Thus ended our assault, of the result of which we felt so sure. The first plan made was that we should fire for three hours and go in at six o'clock, but the French changed it, and would not wait until we had silenced the enemy's artillery fire, and so we attacked at 3 a. m. My father can tell the effect of grape from twelve 68-pounders and 32-pounders at 200 yards upon a column; but whatever may be the effect, I am confident that if we had left the trenches in a mass, some of us would have survived and reached the Redan, which, once reached, the Highland Brigade and Guards would have carried all before them, and the place would have fallen. General Jones was struck by a stone in the forehead, but not much hurt. I believe it is said that the trenches were too high to get over. As the scaling-ladders were carried over them, this can hardly be sustained. So much for *our* assault.

"Now for the assault which was made from the left attack. General Eyre had an order given him to make a feint at the head of the creek if we were successful at the Redan; however, at five o'clock, when we had failed at the Redan, we heard a very sharp attack on the head of the creek. The 44th and other regiments advanced, drove the Russians out of a rifle-pit they held near the cemetery, and entered some houses there. The Russians then opened a tremendous fire on the houses, and the men took shelter in line, being under no command, their own officers not knowing where they were to go, or anything about the place, and no Engineer officer being with them. The men sheltered themselves in the houses until they were knocked about their ears. They then remained in different places – in fact, wherever they could get any shelter, until dusk, as, if they had attempted to retire, they would have been all destroyed. The men of General Eyre's column found lots of drink in the houses. Our losses in the four columns are – 1400 killed and wounded, 64 officers wounded, and 16 killed. The French lost 6000 killed and wounded, they say! Nothing has occurred since the assault, but it is determined to work forward by sap and mine!"

In a subsequent letter he wrote: "Remember, in spite of all the absurd reports in the papers, that our troops never once passed the abattis in front of the Redan, which is sixty yards from it, and that we have never spiked a gun of the Russians," and before closing his narrative account of the Redan, the passage in which Mr Kinglake refers to Gordon's evidence and action on this eventful day may well be quoted. It appears from his statement that Gordon lost his temper through excitement at the repulse, and even upbraided and used angry language to his old friend and comrade, Lieutenant, now General

Sir Gerald, Graham, on his coming back to the trenches. Such language, it may be pointed out, could not have been used with less justice to any soldier taking part in the assault than to the man who had carried a ladder farther than anyone else, and twice endeavoured to place it against the Redan. It illustrates the perfervid zeal and energy of the young officer, who explained in his letters home how he thought the Russian fortress might have been carried at a rush, and appropriately introduces the passage in which Mr Kinglake records his opinion of Gordon:

> "This impassioned lieutenant of sappers was a soldier marked out for strange destinies, no other than Gordon – Charles Gordon – then ripening into a hero, sublimely careless of self, and a warrior saint of the kind that Moslems rather than Christians are fondly expecting from God."

I cannot refrain from quoting here a letter I received from Mr Kinglake when I sent him a copy of my edition of "General Gordon's Letters from the Crimea," etc., as it records a somewhat more deliberate opinion on his character and career: —

> *"28 Hyde Park Place,*
> *"Marble Arch, W., 27th July 1884.*
>
> "Dear Sir, – I indeed feel greatly obliged to you for your kindness in sending me a copy of 'General Gordon's Letters from the Crimea.'
>
> "Already I have read a great part of the volume, and I need hardly say that, apart from the reasons which link me to the Crimea, I have been greatly interested by seeing what was thought, and felt, and expressed in his early days by this really phenomenal man, whose romantic elevation above all that is base and common has made him, in even these days, a sort of warlike and heroic Redeemer.
>
> "Your Preface well and ably expresses an opinion that is widely entertained as to the conduct of our Government towards Gordon, and I don't know enough of the question to be able to gainsay your conclusion, but it would seem at first glance that, considering the imperative reasons, the vast distances, the changeful condition of things, and the consequent changes of mind, the task of doing justice between the Government and this heroic envoy would be one of some complexity. With my repeated thanks, – I remain, dear sir, very truly yours,
> *"A. W. Kinglake."*

Ten days after the repulse at the Redan, Lord Raglan, the gallant soldier over whose bier Pelissier wept like a child, died "of wear and tear and general debility," as Gordon put it, and the siege again entered upon another dull and uninteresting stage. Nearly three months were to elapse before the capture of the fortress that had resisted so long, and the only incident of marked importance during that period was the battle of the Tchernaya, in which the officers in the trenches had no part. In that action the last effort of the Russian commanders to relieve the place and extricate Todleben from his peril was repulsed by the whole allied forces, for in this engagement both the Italians and Turks took part, with a loss of seven or eight thousand men. The only comment Gordon makes on the action is that "the Sardinians behaved very well." At last, on 8th September, a second general assault was delivered, the English again attacking the Redan, and, more fortunate in one sense than on the earlier occasion, effected a lodgment in the fortress, but were then driven out with heavy loss. But the French succeeded in storming and holding the Malakoff, which commanded the Redan, and the Russians retired to the northern side of the harbour during the night after blowing up their ships. The fall of Sebastopol, especially after the doubts held and expressed in July and August as to whether the siege would not have to be raised, caused the greatest excitement and widespread satisfaction. General Gordon sent home the following graphic description of this final and at last successful attack: —

"I must now endeavour to give you my idea of our operations from the eventful 8th of September to the present 16th. We knew on the 7th that it was intended that the French should assault the Malakoff Tower at twelve the next day, and that we and another column of the French should attack the Redan and central bastion. The next day proved windy and dusty, and at ten o'clock began one of the most tremendous bombardments ever seen or heard. We had kept up a tolerable fire for the last four days, quite warm enough; but for two hours this tremendous fire extending six miles was maintained. At twelve the French rushed at the Malakoff, took it with ease, having caught the defenders in their bomb-proof houses, where they had gone to escape from the shells, etc. They found it difficult work to get round to the Little Redan, as the Russians had by that time got out of their holes.

"However, the Malakoff was won, and the tricolour was hoisted as a signal for our attack. Our men went forward well, losing apparently few, put the ladders in the ditch, and mounted on the salient of the Redan, but though they stayed there five minutes or more, they did not advance, and tremendous reserves coming up drove them out. They retired well and without disorder, losing in all 150 officers, 2400 men killed and wounded. We should have carried everything before us if the men had only advanced. The French got driven back with great loss at the central bastion, losing four general officers. They did not enter the work. Thus, after a day of intense excitement, we had only gained the Malakoff. It was determined that night that the Highlanders should storm the Redan the next morning.

"I was detailed for the trenches, but during the night I heard terrible explosions, and going down to the trenches at 4 a. m. I saw a splendid sight – the whole town in flames, and every now and then a terrific explosion. The rising sun shining on the scene of destruction produced a beautiful effect. The last of the Russians were leaving the town over the bridge. All the three-deckers, etc., were sunk, the steamers alone remaining. Tons and tons of powder must have been blown up.

"About eight o'clock I got an order to commence a plan of the works, for which purpose I went to the Redan, where a dreadful sight was presented. The dead were buried in the ditch – the Russians with the English – Mr Wright reading the Service over them. About ten o'clock Fort Paul was blown up – a beautiful sight. The town was not safe to be entered on account of the fire and the few Russians who still prowled about. The latter cut off the hands and feet of one Frenchman. They also caught and took away a sapper who would go *trying* to plunder – for as to plunder there was and is literally nothing but rubbish and fleas, the Russians having carried off everything else. I have got the lock and sight off a gun (which used to try and deposit its contents very often in my carcass, in which I am grateful to say it failed) for my father, and some other rubbish (a Russian cup, etc.) for you and my sisters. But you would be surprised at the extraordinary rarity of knick-knacks. They left their pictures in the churches, which form consequently the only spoil, and which I do not care about buying. I will do my best to get some better things if it is possible. On the 10th we got down to the docks, and a flag of truce came over to ask permission to take away their wounded from the hospital, which we had only found out that day contained 3000 wounded men. These unfortunate men had been for a day and a half without attendance. A fourth of them were dead, and the rest were in a bad way. I will not dwell any more on it, but could not imagine a more dreadful sight.

"We have now got into the town, the conflagration being out, and it seems quite strange to hear no firing. It has been a splendid city, and the harbour is

magnificent. We have taken more than 4000 guns, destroyed their fleet, immense stores of provisions, ammunition, etc. (for from the explosions they did not appear to be short of it), and shall destroy the dockyard, forts, quays, barracks, storehouses, etc. For guns, Woolwich is a joke to it. The town is strewn with our shell and shot, etc. We have traced voltaic wires to nearly every powder magazine in the place. What plucky troops they were! When you hear the details of the siege you will be astonished. The length of the siege is nothing in comparison with our gain in having destroyed the place.

"We are not certain what the Russians are doing on the north side, and as yet do not know whether we shall follow them up or not. We ought to, I think. It is glorious going over their horrid batteries which used to bully us so much. Their dodges were infinite. Most of their artillerymen, being sailors, were necessarily handy men, and had devised several ingenious modes of riveting, which they found very necessary. There was a vineyard under our attack, a sort of neutral ground where no one dared to venture, either Russian or English. We found lots of ripe grapes there. The Russians used to fire another description of grape into it. One night I was working with a party at this very spot, and out of 200 men we lost 30 killed and wounded. We are engaged in clearing the roads, burning the rubbish, and deodorizing the town, taking account of the guns, etc. Nothing is stirring; the Russians fire a little into the town. We hear they are retreating, but do not believe it. The French, it seems, took the Malakoff by surprise. They had learnt from a deserter that the Russians used to march one relief of men out of the place before the other came in on account of the heavy fire; whilst this was being done the French rushed in and found the Malakoff empty. The Russians made three attempts to retake it, the last led by a large body of officers alone. Whenever the Russians commenced a battery they laid down first a line of wires to the magazine with which they could blow it up at any time."

With this final tribute to the courage of the Russian garrison, Charles Gordon's account of the siege and fall of Sebastopol closes. He took part in the expedition to Kimburn, when General Spencer commanded a joint force of 9000 men intended to dislodge the Russians from a fort they had built at that place, and also to attack a corps of 10,000 men supposed to be stationed at the important town of Kherson. The fort surrendered after four hours' bombardment by the fleet – the garrison not being "the same style of soldiers as the Sebastopol men" – but the Kherson force was never encountered, retiring as the allies advanced, who in their turn retired for fear of being drawn too far into the country. In one of several letters while on this expedition Gordon says that the Czar Alexander the Second was near Kimburn during the attack, and that he sent the Governor a telegram, "Remember Holy Russia," which the Russian General did by getting drunk. The expedition was then withdrawn after installing a French garrison in the fort, and Charles Gordon returned to his old quarters before Sebastopol. A fortnight after his arrival he was appointed to take part in the destruction of the docks, which was to signalise the downfall of Russia's power in the Black Sea. This closing episode is very well described in several of his letters written during the month of December 1855: —

"I am now, as you see, stationed in the dockyard preparing the shafts and galleries for the demolition of the docks. The French will destroy one half and ourselves the other. The quantity of powder we shall use is 45,000 lbs., in charges varying from 80 lbs. to 8000 lbs. The French do not sink their shafts so deep as we do, but use heavier charges. The docks are very well made, and the gates alone cost £23,000. We are taking one gate to London, and the French another to Paris. Our shafts are some of them very deep, and in others there are from eight to ten feet of water. There is not much prospect of the Russians leaving the north side. We can

see them hutting themselves… Our works at the docks approach completion, and we hope to blow up some portion of them on Saturday. The French blew up one last Saturday. The explosion presented a splendid appearance and succeeded admirably, not a stone being left standing. The powder for our demolition will be upwards of twenty-two tons. The Russians still (27th December) hold the north forts, and do not appear to be likely to leave this year as their huts are all built. We can see them quite distinctly on the other side… *January 20, 1856.*– We have blown up part of our docks, and are very busy with the remainder, which we hope to get over by the end of the month. I do not anticipate any movement of the army until March, when I suppose we shall go to Asia to relieve Kars, and make the Russians retire from the Turkish territory… *February 3, 1856.*– We all of us have been extremely busy in loading and firing our mines in the docks, which required all our time, as we were so very short of officers, having only three, while the French had twelve. Our force of sappers was only 150 and the French had 600. We have now finished the demolition, which is satisfactory as far as the effects produced are concerned; but having used the voltaic battery instead of the old-fashioned hose, we have found that electricity will not succeed in large operations like this, and I do not think that anyone will use it if there is a possibility of using hose. I am now engaged in making plans of the docks, and have not much time to myself. The French have done their work very well, using more powder than we, and firing all their mines with hose. I will try and get you a photograph of the docks as they *were* and as they *are*, which will tell you more than a dozen letters would. We had an alarm down here the other night about twelve o'clock. The Russians on the north side opened a tremendous fire throughout the whole line on us and on the French. We were all out under arms, expecting an attack by boats, but after being well shelled for an hour, the Russians left off, and all was again silent; but for the time it lasted the fire was terrific. I heard afterwards that it was caused by a French navy captain, who pulled over to the other side of the harbour, and tried to burn a steamer which was lying on its side. He and his companions arrived unperceived, found the steamer quite new, and were getting into it, when the Russian sentinel challenged. They answered 'Russe,' but the sentry called 'To arms,' and the Russians fired into the boat, and then continued the fire from all their guns, I suppose expecting a grand attack. Only one man, however, was hurt by a splinter on the arm. The French will blow up Fort Nicholas on Monday. They only got their order the night before last, and are obliged to make a hasty demolition of it. They will use 105,000 lbs. of powder in the demolition. The Russians had ruined this fort, but had not had time to put in the powder; the excavations were complete. It certainly is a splendid fort, mounting 128 guns, and capitally finished for barracks. It would hold 6000 men. The Russians evidently intended this to be an exceptionally strong place, and they appear to have been making a quay all the way round the dockyard creek. We have seen a great deal of the French engineers; they are older men than ours, and seem well educated. The non-commissioned officers are much more intelligent than our men. With us, although our men are not stupid, the officers have to do a good deal of work which the French sapper non-commissioned officer does. They all understand line of least resistance, etc., and what they are about. The Russians do not molest us much now. We can hear them call out and sing, especially on Sundays. We can see them drill, which they do every day. They even have the coolness to go out and fish in the harbour. We never fire, neither do the French. I do not think they purpose leaving the north side; in fact, it would not be at all wise of them to do so. We had some French engineers to dine with us the other day; they

> were very agreeable, and we learnt a great deal from them about their mining. They used to hear the Russians mining within ten feet of them, and when they did this they used to put in their powder as quick as possible and blow in the Russian mines. The Russians had two systems or layers of mines, one about ten feet below the surface of the ground and the other about forty feet. The French only knew of the higher one, and they found out after the place was taken that their advanced trenches were quite mined and loaded in the lower tier. In the Bastion du Mât there were no less than thirty-six mines loaded and tamped. I saw one myself in the upper tier when I was surveying it. They (the Russians) worked out a strata of clay between two layers of rock, so that no wood was required to keep the earth from falling in."

Soon after these letters a truce was concluded with the Russians in anticipation of the peace which was ultimately signed at Paris in March 1856. The prospects of peace were not altogether agreeable to the English army, which had been raised to an effective strength of more than 40,000 men, and was never in a better condition for war than at the end of the two years since it first landed in the Chersonese. Gordon's correspondence contains two or three remarks, giving characteristic evidence to the strength and extent of this sentiment.

In one passage he says: "We do not, generally speaking, like the thought of peace until after another campaign. I shall not go to England, but expect I shall remain abroad for three or four years, which *individually* I would sooner spend in war than peace. There is something indescribably exciting in the former."

Another comment to the same effect is the following: "Suders, the Russian General, reviewed us and the French army last week. He must have thought our making peace odd."

Gordon did not obtain any honour or promotion for his Crimean services. He was included in Sir Harry Jones's list of Engineer Subalterns who had specially distinguished themselves during the siege. The French Government, more discerning than his own, awarded him the Legion of Honour.

The letters from the Crimea are specially interesting for the light they throw on General Gordon's character. They illustrate better than anything else he wrote during his career the soldierly side of his character. The true professional spirit of the man of war peers forth in every sentence, and his devotion to the details of his work was a good preparatory course for that great campaign in China where his engineering skill, not less than his military genius, was so conspicuously shown. As a subaltern in the Crimea Gordon showed himself zealous, daring, vigilant, and with that profound national feeling that an army of Englishmen was the finest fighting force in the world, combined with an inner conviction that of that army his kindred Highlanders were the most intrepid and leading cohort. This was a far more attractive and comprehensible personality than the other revealed in later days, of the Biblical pedant seeking to reconcile passing events with ancient Jewish prophecies, and to see in the most ordinary occurrences the workings of a resistless and unalterable fate. That was not the true Gordon, but rather the grafting of a new character on the original stem of Spartan simplicity and heroism. But to the very end of his career, to the last message from Khartoum, the old Gordon – the real Gordon, the one who will never be forgotten – revealed himself just as he was in the trenches before Sebastopol.

Gordon's connection with the Russian War and the Eastern Question did not terminate with the Treaty of Paris. On 10th May he received orders to join Colonel Stanton, for the purpose of assisting in the delimitation of the new frontier in Bessarabia. He imagined that the work would take six months; it really took a year. A not unimportant principle was involved in this question, and an error in a map was nearly securing for the Russians a material advantage. At the Paris Congress it was determined to eloin the Russians from the Danube and its tributary lakes and streams. The Powers therefore stated that the Russian frontier should pass south of Bolgrad, judging from the small scale-map supplied by the Russians that Bolgrad was north of Lake Yalpukh, which opens into the river Danube. When the Boundary Commission came on the ground, they found that Bolgrad was

on Lake Yalpukh, and that if the frontier passed to the south of it the Russians would have access to the Danube; and therefore, knowing the spirit of the Treaty, the English Commissioners referred the question to the Paris Congress. A sketch was prepared by Gordon and his colleagues, to show the diplomatists its exact position, and led to the frontier being laid down north of Bolgrad and Lake Yalpukh. Austria, as well as France, Turkey, and Russia, was represented on this Commission, and Gordon's comrade was Lieutenant, afterward General Sir Henry, James, who had served with him in the trenches, and who had one day lost his way and walked into the Russian lines, as Gordon himself had so nearly done.

Gordon's letters give an interesting account of his work, and bring out with his usual clearness all the points at issue; but it is unnecessary to follow very closely the events of the year he passed in the lower Danube region. How excellent his work must have been can be judged from the fact that the Government sent him back some years later to act as British Consul at Galatz. The delimitation work commenced with a personal inspection of the frontier from Katamori on the Pruth to Boma Sola on the Black Sea, a distance of 200 miles. Then the frontier was defined on the map, and finally it had to be marked on the ground with the usual posts and distinctive marks. Thirty-two separate plans had to be prepared before the frontier could be adjusted, and the frequent bickerings and quarrels gave rise to many surmises that the negotiations might be broken off and hostilities ensue. The main point of dispute as to Bolgrad threatened to form a *casus belli* with even a new arrangement of the Powers, as France gave up the case, and thus encouraged Russia to prove more obdurate. But England and the other Powers stood firm, and Bolgrad was included in Moldavia.

The following extracts give a tolerably complete account of what was done. Writing from Kichenief on 9th January 1857, Gordon said:

> "We are now settled as to the frontier question. Russia has given up Bolgrad and received a portion of territory in exchange equal to that surrendered, both as to number of inhabitants and also as to extent of land. This mode of compensation will give us more than half our work to do over again. I had almost finished my plans, and one-half of these will have to be redrawn. However, it is a consolation to know that the thing is settled. We heard all this by telegraph from Paris, and by the same message learnt that we are to proceed at once to work on the frontier in order to get it finished by 30th March, and thus allow of the ceded territory being handed over to the Moldavians on that day. You may imagine what a hurry they are in to get this finished. The Russians pretend to believe that they have got the best of the dispute, but it will be difficult to persuade the world to be of the same opinion. Although so cold, there is not much snow, and it is beautifully clear weather, capital for sledging. The new frontier leaves Tobak and Bolgrad in Moldavia, and gives a piece of land near the Pruth in exchange to Russia… The territory will be given over in two parts. The southern consists of Ismail, Kilia, Reni, and Bolgrad, as well as the delta of the Danube. The northern part consists of the land between the Pruth and Yalpukh… We have finished our work, everything has been signed, and the total number of the plans we have made is upwards of 100. For my part, I have had enough of them for my whole life."

This wish was not to be gratified, for before Colonel Stanton's Commission was dissolved orders came for him to hand over his officers and men to Colonel – now Field-Marshal Sir Lintorn – Simmons, for the purpose of settling the boundary in Armenia, where a dispute had arisen about the course of the river Aras, the ancient Araxes. Gordon, who had now had two and a half years of foreign service without a break, did not relish this task, and even went to the expense of telegraphing for permission to exchange; but this effort was in vain, for the laconic reply of the Commander-in-Chief was: "Lieutenant Gordon must go." If Gordon had under-estimated the time required for the

Bessarabian delimitation, he slightly over-estimated that for the Armenian, as his anticipated two years was diminished in the result to twenty-one months.

He left Constantinople on 1st May 1857 on board a Turkish steamer, *Kars*, bound for Trebizonde. The ship was overcrowded with dirty passengers, and the voyage was disagreeable, and might have been dangerous if the weather had not proved exceptionally favourable. On arriving at Trebizonde horses had to be engaged for the ten days' journey across the 180 miles of difficult country separating that port from Erzeroum, the Armenian capital. The total caravan of the English and French Commissioners – the latter being Colonel Pelissier, a relative of the Marshal – numbered ninety-nine horses; and the Turkish Commissioner, being unable to obtain any money from his Government, seized the horses necessary for his journey in a manner that first opened Gordon's eyes to the ways of Pashas. He stopped on the road every caravan he met, threw off their goods, put on his own, and impounded the animals for his journey. After a brief stay at Erzeroum – which Gordon describes as a very pretty place at a distance, but horribly dirty when entered, and where there are eight or nine months of very hard winter – the Commission passed on to Kars, which became its headquarters. The heroic defence of that fortress was then recent, and it is still of sufficient interest as a military episode to justify the quotation of the evidence Gordon, with his characteristic desire to be well informed, collected on the spot while the events themselves were fresh. For convenience' sake, his remarks on Kars and the whole campaign are strung together here, although they appeared in several letters: —

> "Kars is, as you can easily imagine, a ruined city, and may perhaps never recover its former strength and importance. As far as the works of defence are concerned, they are excessively badly traced. A little pamphlet published by Kmety, a Hungarian, gives a graphic description of the siege. One thing difficult if not impossible to realise without seeing it, is the large extent of the position. Kars has been twice in the hands of the Russians during the last thirty years, Paskievitch having taken it by assault in 1829. We passed the battlefield at Kuyukdere, where the Russians in very small force under Bebutoff were attacked by a very superior force of Turks, under the direction of General Guyon, the Hungarian. By some mistake the Turkish left lost its way during the night, and was eight miles distant from the field when the right came into action. The battle was very hotly contested, but the Turks had at last to retire with the loss of several guns. Had the affair gone off as Guyon[1] intended, the Russians would have been licked. This battle, I should add, was fought in August 1854, before any English officer had arrived in this country. The Russian loss was very severe: there were 3,200 wounded alone brought into Gumri for treatment. The first day from Gumri we passed Baiandoor, where the Turks and Russians had a small battle in 1853, and where the former lost a splendid opportunity of taking Gumri, which was nearly denuded of troops. My Turkish colleague, Osman Bey (I believe this officer to be identical with Ghazi Osman, the defender of Plevna), was present, and got into Gumri as a spy, disguised in the character of a servant. The Russian army avenged the slight check they received from the Turks by taking all their artillery of the right wing."

As illustrating his professional zeal and powers of scientific examination, the following description of the fortress of Alexandropol or Gumri is a striking production from so young an officer: —

[1] Guyon was an Englishman, but one of the National Commanders in the Hungarian Rebellion of 1848. I have given a brief account of his adventurous career at pp. 148-49 of "General Gordon's Letters from the Crimea," etc.

"The fortress of Alexandropol (40° 47' N. lat., 43° long. 45' E., 4500 feet above the sea) is situated on the left bank of the river Arpatchai, which here forms the boundary between Russia and Turkey. It is distant thirty-five miles from Kars and eighty-four miles from Tiflis. The plain on which it is situated is perfectly level and very peculiar. It has a stratum of alluvial soil for the depth of one foot six inches on the surface, and then a substratum of fine uniform lava, ten to fifteen feet thick, supposed to have issued from Mount Alagos (13,450 feet), an extinct volcano thirty miles from Alexandropol. The depth of the earth allows the growth of grain, but entirely prevents that of trees, which with their roots cannot penetrate into the lava. The Russians have taken advantage of this bed of lava in the ditch of the fortress. The fortress is well constructed and in perfect repair. There are upwards of 200 guns (varying from 36-pounders to 12-pounders) mounted on the works, and about 100 in reserve, of which 30 are field-guns with their equipment wagons, etc. The garrison would be 5000 to 6000, including artillery. There are large supplies of ammunition and military stores. The ditch, twelve feet deep, of the two western fronts has not been excavated near the flanks on account of the expense. The Russians have constructed in the centres of the two curtains a *caponnière* with two guns in each flank to defend the dead angles caused by the non-excavation of the whole of the ditch. In the centre of these two fronts is a large *caponnière*, mounting ten guns in the upper tier and eight in the lower tier. This *caponnière* is on a lower level than the enceinte of the place. The counterscarp at the north-west and south-west angles of these two fronts is for the distance of twenty yards composed of a crenellated wall four feet six inches thick. This was caused by the irregularity of the ground. The bomb-proof barracks of the northern fronts mount in casemate two tiers of fourteen guns at the curtains. The flanks have five guns in casemates open to the rear, in addition to the guns on the parapet above. The lunette in the ditch is eight feet deep. The eastern front has an escarp fourteen feet high cut in the lava, and well flanked by the *caponnière* defending the entrances, mounting four guns. The bomb-proof barracks in the northern fronts have one tier of eight guns in casemate at the curtains, and three guns in each flank in casemates open to the rear. The two outworks are closed at the gorge with a loopholed wall, flanked by a small guard-house. They have no ditches, but an escarp of ten feet in the lava. The tower marked *A* in my plan is sixty yards in diameter, with a well in the centre. It has its gorge closed with a ditch and loopholed wall. It mounts fifteen guns on the top, and fifteen guns in casemate. It is proposed to connect it by a crenellated wall with the main work. The tower marked *B* has a ditch and small glacis. It mounts eight guns in casemate, and eight on the top. Its object is to flank the long ravine which runs southward from it. All the buildings in the interior of the fortress are bomb-proof. The great fault of the fortress as it is constructed at present is that it does not so much as see the town with its population of 9310. It is now proposed, however, to make a large work on the site marked *K* with a view of meeting this want. During the war in 1853, when the Turks were 35,000 strong at Baiandoor, six miles from Alexandropol, and the Russians had only two battalions in the fortress, the latter demolished all the houses which were on this ground. I think that should it ever be in our power to besiege this place (which is not likely, from the enormous difficulty of getting a siege train there), that batteries might be established on the hillocks between the fortress and the river, to breach the large *caponnière* and the tower *A* which, from the formation of the ground, would not be opposed by more fire than the direct fire of the works they were intended to breach, and which would

be limited by their circular form to about seven guns. The soil is not unfavourable on these hills. The hill on which the cemetery of the officers killed at Kars and Kuyukdere is situated is also favourable for batteries. The principal well, which is sunk to a good depth, is in the north-eastern bastion."

General Gordon's letters contain two or three interesting descriptions that, in view of more recent events, deserve quotation. Of the Kurds he thus speaks, and the description stands good at the present day: —

"We met on our road a great number of Kurds, who live as their fathers did, by travelling about, robbing, etc., with their flocks. Their children are short of clothing. In spite of the Cossacks, etc., they are as lawless as ever, and go from Turkey to Russia and back again as they like. They are fine-looking people, armed to the teeth, but are decreasing in numbers. They never live in houses, but prefer tents and caves. On the mountains we fell in with the tribes of Kurds, who live at this height during the summer months, quite isolated from the rest of mankind. I paid a visit to the chief of a tribe of 2000, and he passed a great number of compliments on the English. This Bey is all powerful with his tribe; he settles all disputes, divides the pasture land among the families, etc. Although living in such a deserted spot, they read the Turkish papers, and they asked several questions about the English war with Persia. They are very fanatical, and are much encouraged in their religious fervour by the Sultan's agents. Their houses consist of stone walls covered with camel's-hair tents, which are quite waterproof, and lined inside with capital carpets made by themselves. We encamped near them and obtained our milk, etc., from them; but, in order to let us know their habits, they stole the horse of the Russian officer's interpreter during the night. I should not mind trusting them at all, for the Bey would not allow them to take our horses; perhaps this was only from his hatred to the Russians."

He gives some particulars of the Lazes, to one of whose villages he paid a visit, and as he believed that he was the only Englishman who had ever done so, his remarks were based on special local knowledge: —

"On one side of it was Lazistan, and this part of Lazistan is peopled by the fiercest tribe of Lazes, who scarcely acknowledge even the Sultan. We had an escort of forty infantry, and were not molested. This tribe and the Kabouletians supply the Constantinople Turks with slaves, whom they kidnap from the Gourelians, who are on the Russian side. The Adjars (the tribe referred to) are most daring, and even proposed to us to bring any person we might choose out to Batoum for £40 to £120. In consequence of these kidnappings, etc., a deadly enmity exists between the two peoples, and whenever they get a chance they kill one another. During the last eighteen months sixty-two people have been kidnapped, sixteen killed, and twenty or thirty wounded on the part of the Gourelians. The Russian guards of the frontier are helpless against these people, for the latter are armed with a capital rifle and are also splendid shots, while the Cossacks have only a trumpery smooth bore. The country of the Adjars is very mountainous indeed, and quite impracticable except on foot, being covered with dense forests."

Of Ani, the ancient, once famous, and now deserted capital of Armenia, he gives the following picture: —

"We passed through Ani, the ancient capital of Armenia. This city is completely deserted, and has splendid churches still standing in it. These churches

are capitally built and preserved. Some coloured drawings on their walls are to be seen even now. The towers and walls are almost intact, but the most extraordinary thing about so large a place is the singular quietness. There are many ruined cities in the neighbourhood, and all dating from about the eleventh century. At that period Ani itself contained 100,000 inhabitants and 500 churches, which shows that more people went to church among them than with us. Before the end of that century it passed into the hands of the Greeks and Saracens. Afterwards the Mongols took it, and at last an earthquake drove out the remaining inhabitants in 1339, since which time it has been perfectly deserted. The churches of Ani were built with lava, and crosses of black lava were let in very curiously into the red lava. With the exception of the churches and the king's palace, the city is level with the ground, the foundations of the houses being alone discernible. These churches were covered with Armenian inscriptions cut on the walls."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.