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Egyptian Soudan.
The recent announcement in the House of Commons that Egypt, under the guidance of Great Britain, is about to attempt the reconquest of a portion of the Egyptian Soudan, has aroused considerable interest in that territory, whose inhabitants have made for themselves a reputation as fighters which the bravest troops may envy.

The Soudan, or Sudan (Country of the Blacks), comprises the region of Africa south of the Sahara and bounded west and east by Senegambia and Abyssinia respectively. But it is with the eastern portion alone that we are at present concerned. Egyptian Soudan, as it is usually termed, comprises the States of Darfur, Kordofan, Senaar, Taka and the Equatorial and Bahr-Gazal provinces. These former dependencies of Egypt have an estimated area of 760,000 square miles, with 11,000,000 inhabitants. As the name Soudan shows, the people originally belonged entirely to the negro race, but the Arab tribes pushed down from the north and have gradually spread over and occupied most of the Egyptian Soudan.

The attention of Europeans was first called to this country in 1870 by the appointment of Sir Samuel Baker as Governor-General of these provinces, which he was commissioned to subdue for the Khedive, the object of the undertaking being the suppression of the slave trade. Baker soon returned to Europe and was succeeded by Col. Gordon, familiarly known as "Chinese Gordon," who added fresh lustre to his name by his administration of affairs in the Soudan.

Egyptian authority and European civilization were introduced into the country and appeared to be taking root when, unfortunately, Gordon was recalled. At once disorder and ill-feeling reappeared, and the slave dealers, who had been kept in subjection, came again to the front. The provinces were ripe for revolt and only needed a leader when El Mahdi appeared on the scene.

This Arab fanatic was a native of Dongola. He was originally employed in the capture of wild beasts for European menageries. After he was grown up he learned to read and write, and started in as an interpreter of the Koran. He became a dervish, and by the austerity of his life and the fervor of his devotions soon gained a high reputation and a considerable following. The troubles and misgovernment in the Soudan soon furnished him with opportunity for starting a revolution in favor of his creed.

In 1881, thinking that a favorable time for the realization of his plans had arrived, Mahomet Ahmed, as he had hitherto been called, proclaimed himself El Mahdi, or "The Prophet," and invited every Mahometan leader to join him. An expedition sent against him was massacred and his prestige steadily increased. The revolt of Arabi Pasha strengthened him still further. An Egyptian army was defeated; he extended his power to the Red Sea, waged war with Great Britain, and besieged and took Khartoum, killing Gen. Gordon, who had been sent thither by the English government.

El Mahdi died in 1885 and was succeeded by Abdullah, his chief lieutenant throughout the campaign which ended in the fall of Khartoum. All those who have been brought in contact with the present Mahdi agree in describing him as a man who in point of vigor, will courage and power of inspiring the Soudanese with fanaticism is a worthy successor of the first Mahdi, who by a proclamation recognized the rights of his lieutenant to become Khalifa or ruler of the country. The campaign which the English have decided to undertake will certainly be a very different one from the recent bloodless Ashanti expedition. The news of the Abyssinian victory will incite the Soudanese and render their subjugation still more difficult. At the best of times the task of conquest would not be an easy one. The Soudanese are Mahometans, not in the sense of the modern Turks, who are half sceptics. The religion of the Soudanese burns with a fierce flame; no doubt of Mahomet or of the doctrines he promulgated has ever crossed their brain. His religion was one of the sword and their belief is firm that death on the battlefield insures forgiveness for all sins or crimes and instant admission into paradise. They are also fatalists, believing that life or death is predestined. The courage which such a creed inspires renders them soldiers to be feared by any enemy. They are raised for the time above all ordinary considerations, for there is no concern for the future.

Their religious feelings are still further excited by the presence of the dervishes, a class of people who resemble in many respects the monks of Christendom. They are highly venerated by the people, over whom they exercise great authority. These dervishes are to be found foremost in the battlefield, urging on the fight by precept and example and calling on Mahometans to fight for the Mahdi, the prophet and deliver of Islam, foretold by Mahomet.

Given a restless and warlike people fired by such a creed and angered by attempts to suppress the trade in slaves which formerly brought them wealth with little labor, it is small wonder if the Khalifa intends, as is reported, to make a descent on Egypt to regain a port there and so resume the slave trade with Arabia. This, at least, is the English explanation of the projected movement for the reconquest of the Egyptian Soudan.

The French theory is different. They are bitterly opposed to the military expedition, regarding it as an excuse for prolonging the English occupation of Egypt and silencing for years to come all clamor for the evacuation of the country. The Italians hail the expedition with delight, regarding it as a friendly diversion in their favor, while, as it tends to strengthen the hands of the weakest member of the Dreihund, Germany for the moment forgets her growing hostility to England. The expedition will consist of 8,000 English and Egyptian troops, but remembering the size and bravery of the troops they are to encounter, it may well be questioned if adequate provision for a decisive campaign has been made. Certainly judging by the past the Soudanese will give a good account of themselves, and some hard fighting is to be looked for. They are reported as saying since the reverse of the Italians in Abyssinia that if an army of Christians can be defeated with such ease there is no reason why they should not take Egypt and expel the English.—New York World.

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Cleveland And Cuba.

WASHINGTON, March 31.—Does President Cleveland favor the annexation of Cuba? Eight years ago, during his former administration, he favored this policy, provided annexation could be obtained peaceably by purchase or other honorable means.

The fact that the President held this view at that time comes from men who have occupied peculiar and close relations to the President, but who are not in position to speak authoritatively as to his present purposes. He may have changed since then, though the signs point to the contrary.

If President Cleveland follows the bent

of his mind, the policy now will be in favor of annexation. Secretary Olney is not in favor of anything like immediate annexation, although he is understood to favor Cuba independence.

President Cleveland is credited with having uttered an epigram recently which may mean much or little. The story goes that he had been discussing the Cuban situation with one of his intimate friends who had stated that in his opinion the proper policy for the government to pursue toward Cuba was first to make every effort to secure the independence of the island, guaranteeing the same, and bringing it entirely within the sphere of American influence by the establishment of absolute free trade with the island and exercising a proper degree of care that the island should be "Americanized" as rapidly as possible. When that was accomplished, and public sentiment for the movement, the United States should annex it. President Cleveland smiled and replied: "Keep her a ward in chancery until she becomes of age, and then marry her. eh? Not a bad idea."



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