the pulpit the most popular men are amusing, either purposely or otherwise, and it is doubtful if any other nation ever had so many humorists among its legislators as we have had.

We are accused of grimness and lack of joyousness in our merry-making, but all merry-making is serious business when the observer is out of sympathy with it. One delicious late afternoon, in a town on the banks of the Lago Maggiore, six or seven years ago, I saw the pole of an acrobat set up in the street. The fellow performed some commonplace feats of agility, such as you may see on a summer's day at Rockaway when our city people, rich and poor, are airing themselves along the shore. But the Italian was jauntily dressed in colors, and aided by a clown; his two children, mere infants, were forced to perform with him, and his wife, bedizened with tinsel, showing off her meager ugliness in tights, solicited contributions by passing round a tambourine. The oldest little boy, of five years, after performing several dangerous feats, grew nervous, missed his hold, and fell heavily on his back. The father cuffed him, and he ran, hurt and sobbing, to his mother. A charming gentleman and lady from Weimar, who had crossed the Simplon in the coupé of the diligence with me, stood by; I shall never forget the indignant emphasis of this gentleman's exclamation when the poor boy fell: "*C'est abominable!*" But the crowd of people took no notice; the tumbling and contortions of the actor, and the capers of the clown, continued to excite applause. The poor mother, in her ridiculous tights and furbelows, alternately fondled her frightened children and jingled her tambourine, praying the bystanders to contribute. I do not believe that our amusements are any more grim or disagreeable than this one which gave the common people of Stresa so much delight. Even the fun of dancing on a hay-barge towed slowly through the Kill von Kull on a moonlight night— which is so common a recreation with Manhattaners of a certain class — can hardly seem drearier to the observer than the Italian street circus did to three foreigners.

Edward Eggleston.

CHINESE GORDON.

I.

It is more than twenty years since General Gordon won the strange sobriquet which has clung to him amid all the vicissitudes of a singularly adventurous career. The story, familiar enough in the East, has been almost forgotten in the West; and, notwithstanding many biographies have appeared of late, there are probably few who could explain why the Governor-General of the Soudan is always spoken of as Chinese Gordon. Yet that Gordon is Governor-General of the Soudan is due to the exploit which won for him so unique a title. Twenty-one years ago the Chinese Empire, after submitting to a peace dictated by the allied powers amid the ashes of its imperial palace, was threatened with ruin by the rebellion of the Taipings. The heart of the empire had fallen into the hands of the rebels, who, under Chung-Wang, a kind of Chinese Mahdi, had routed the armies of China and menaced the dynasty with overthrow. For five years Shanghai itself was only preserved from capture and loot by the presence of a British garrison. Repeated attempts were vainly made by the Chinese authorities to win back their lost provinces; and as year after year passed by, it seemed as if this cancer, preying on the vitals of the empire, would eventually destroy it. At the beginning of 1863 the Taipings, numbering one hundred thousand fighting men, occupied the whole of the country stretching from Shanghai to Nankin. They held every walled city for a distance of several hundred miles to the south and west. Inflamed with fanaticism, flushed with victory, they were in undisturbed possession of the garden of China. Their head-quarters at Soochow, a strongly fortified citadel, commanded the whole province. The towns and villages were in ruins, and vast tracts of country were depopulated. It was while affairs were in this position that Gordon, then a major in the British army, was appointed to the command of the imperial forces. They consisted of four thousand Chinese mercenaries, officered for the most part by foreign sailors with a turn for filibustering, undisciplined, and demoralized by repeated defeats. In addition to this rabble, Gordon had nothing to rely upon beyond a firm base, ample munitions of war at Shanghai, and a couple of steam-tugs. The situation seemed a hopeless one, and Gordon might well have despaired. But Gordon is a man not given to despair. As was said of another whom in many respects he much resembles, "Hope shone in him as a pillar of fire after it had gone out in other men."

This faith was justified by his works. In twelve months after he assumed command he

had suppressed the Taiping rebellion. With his handful of natives, reënforced as the campaign went on by prisoners captured in the field, he defeated the rebels, and stormed their fortresses one after another, until, on his recall, he left the Chinese Government in a position to overturn the last stronghold of the rebellion in the city of Nankin. Never had a victory more brilliant been achieved with forces so inadequate, and seldom had the genius of a commander been more conspicuous in the transformation which it wrought in the fortunes of war. Because he crushed the Taipings and saved China, he acquired the name of Chinese Gordon; and because he had proved his ability to do such marvels in China, he was this year dispatched to Khartoum to accomplish a task from which an army might have recoiled. It was no unfounded expectation that the man who, with four thousand unwarlike Chinese, could crush the Taiping insurrection, might be able, with the aid of the six thousand Egyptians in Khartoum, to secure the evacuation of the Soudan. To reconquer a province studded with fortresses and garrisoned with one hundred thousand men, was a far more formidable enterprise than the extrication of some scattered garrisons from the valley of the Upper Nile. Gordon, who had done the one, was confident that he would not find it impossible to do the other. That confidence was shared by his countrymen, and in that lies the secret of the justification of his mission to the Soudan.

II.

General Gordon, although but fifty years of age, has seen service the value and variety of which affords a striking illustration of the extent of the work which falls to the share of England in the government of the world. Entering the army when a youth, his first campaign was that of the Crimea, where he displayed the courage and *sang froid* which have distinguished him through life. After the fall of Sebastopol he was employed first in defining the frontier between Russia and Turkey in Europe, and then in laying down the correct limits of the frontiers of Armenia. Hardly had he finished this task, when the outbreak of the Chinese war hurried him to the further East. He took part in the operations that resulted in the capture of Pekin; and, after the war with China was over, he served for some time in the small British force that defended Shanghai from the Taipings. In 1863 he assumed the command of the imperial troops, and, as has already been remarked, he achieved a success that startled none so much as the Chinese themselves. In the series of actions that led up to the final victory, Gordon, then only thirty years old, displayed that rare faculty for organizing and inspiring irregular troops which has always been the chief secret of his success. Never was this genius for command better displayed than when Gordon organized his body-guard out of the Taiping prisoners captured on the field, and imbued every Chinaman under his command with a belief that he was both invulnerable and invincible. He always led his troops into action himself, armed with no weapon save a small cane, but the superstition of his soldiers transformed it into a magic wand of victory, and an almost perfect immunity from wounds established a belief that he had a charmed life, similar to that with which the Russian army associated the name of Skobeleff. For the next six years, from 1865 to 1871, Gordon was employed in superintending the fortifications of the Thames, a period of service which is associated with incessant activity on behalf of the gutter-snipes and Arabs of the streets of Gravesend, where legends of "the good colonel" still linger among the boys who passed through his ragged-school.

After spending six years at Gravesend Colonel Gordon was dispatched to represent the English Government on the Danubian Commission. The work was not very congenial. The Danube, the Mississippi of Europe, has an International Commission to control its lower channel. Representatives of all the great powers, and also of the riverine states, direct the engineering works necessary to keep its mouths open for navigation; and it was on this Commission that Colonel Gordon spent the next two years of his life. From the mouth of the Danube he was summoned by the late Khedive of Egypt, and appointed ruler of the head waters of the Nile and Governor-General of the Equator. After spending a couple of years in these remote regions, he was in 1877 appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, and he continued to wield absolute power for the next three years over a region considerably larger than India. Before he finally quitted the Soudan he executed a mission to Abyssinia, which was not the least adventurous of his African exploits. Returning to England in 1880, he accepted the post of Military Secretary to Lord Ripon, who was then going out as Governor-General of India. The appointment, however, was a mistake, and before work began Colonel Gordon had resigned. The next few years he spent in travel. During a visit to South Africa he was induced to undertake the settlement of the Basutan difficulty; but the

Cape Government took alarm at his frank recognition of the justice of the rebels' complaints, and the appointment was canceled.

There was some talk at one time of appointing him President in Zululand when the late King Cetewayo was restored, but it came to nothing. Gordon spent some time in the Seychelles, where he believed he had discovered the tree of forbidden fruit; and ultimately, after visiting England, he settled for a time at Jerusalem. Here he was speedily absorbed in the identification of historical sites and in dreamy speculations concerning the future of the East, in which texts of Hebrew prophecies supplied clews for the elucidation of the problems of European diplomacy. He was at Jerusalem when the summons came from the King of the Belgians which indirectly led to his return to his old post at Khartoum.

III.

THE Soudan, or the Black Country, is a vast and undefined region stretching south of Egypt to the equator. The greater part of it is desert, and although its area exceeds that of India, its population is not three times that of the State of New York. Along the river, however, there is a strip of verdure, and in the southern and south-eastern provinces, especially in the country between the two Niles and that near the lakes and the source of the White Nile, the soil is very rich. Khartoum, the capital of the whole region, and situated at the junction of the two Niles, is an important commercial center. Egyptian government in the Soudan was a mere matter of periodical pillage, accompanied by the torture of men and the ravishing of women. Its only redeeming feature was that it prevented internecine wars; and when occasionally a good governor-general was appointed, the Bashi-Bazoukery was reduced to a minimum, and the force of the Egyptian Government was exerted for the repression of the slave-trade, which is the staple industry of the Soudan. But the system of government was essentially Turkish. When General Gordon was appointed Governor-General, he informed Ismail, the late Khedive, thrice over that his appointment would be fatal to the continuance of the old system. "Nevermore," said he, "will Egypt be able to govern the Soudan in the old Turkish or Circassian fashion after I have resided there long enough to teach the people that they have rights. If you send me, you must continue my system or lose the Soudan."

Ismail was deaf to the warning. He sent Gordon. His successor did not continue Gordon's system, and the result is before us. Egypt has lost the Soudan exactly as he predicted. To attempt to restore the Circassian system, with its corruption, its bastinado, its pillage, and its Bashi-Bazoukery, among people who for three years had been governed on English principles by an Englishman so upright and inflexible as General Gordon, led to a widespread revolt. "I laid the egg," said General Gordon to me at Southampton, "which the Mahdi has hatched. I taught the people that they had rights. Everything has sprung from that."

To a population familiarized for the first time with justice and right, the return of the old régime, with its Pashas and Bashi-Bazouks, must have been insupportable. Popular discontent was not long in raising its voice, and, after a while, in finding a head. That head was the Mahdi. For three years he has been struggling with more or less success against the attempt of the Egyptians to reassert their supremacy in these regions. Several battles, more or less bloody, and fought with varying success, led up to the complete annihilation of Hicks's army, which had been dispatched, in spite of the plaintive entreaties of its commander, into the revolted province of Kordofan. Prior to that disaster the English Government had refused to interfere with the policy of Egypt in the Soudan, but now it abandoned its attitude of indifference, and dictated to the Egyptian Government the entire evacuation of that country. The English Government at first does not seem to have troubled itself much as to how the policy of evacuation was to be carried out. Public opinion was tranquil because uninformed, when suddenly, as a voice out of the sky, General Gordon was heard asking what was to become of the garrisons. "There are some twenty-five thousand soldiers in the Soudan whose only offense is loyalty to their sovereign. Are you, in return for their fidelity, going to abandon them to massacre?"

That was the question put by General Gordon in the ears of the whole nation. Ministers hesitated. There was a delightful simplicity, to say nothing of economy, in the formula, "Let the garrisons be speared," which commended itself to some at least of the ministers. But the nation did not hesitate. It revolted against the cynical cry in favor of evacuation by massacre, and the Ministry, bowing to the storm, sent for General Gordon, and asked him to undertake the evacuation of the country with the least possible risk to life and property, and to arrange for the safe removal of the Egyptian employees and troops. His own opinion was distinctly adverse to the abandonment of Khartoum. "Defend Khartoum at all hazards," was the watchword of

his policy. "Whatever you may decide about evacuation, you cannot evacuate, because your army cannot be moved." But when the Government informed him that it was their irrevocable decision to "cut the dog's tail off," *coûte que coûte*, as he phrased it, he bowed to the inevitable; but he added *sotto voce*, "I may cut it off, but I cannot hinder its growing again." The Soudanese, in his opinion, were better than the Egyptians; he exulted in the prospect of liberating them from the Bashi-Bazouks, and although this entailed as a natural corollary the recognition of the slave-trade,— because the Soudan for the Soudanese is only another formula for the Soudan for the slave-dealers,—it was better, in his opinion, to have the slave-trade minus the Egyptian Government than the Egyptian Government and the slave-trade as well. It was in that spirit that he undertook his mission,—a mission of liberation,—purposing as soon as it was accomplished to leave for the Congo, there to found, in the Niam-Niam country, a native empire under his own sovereignty, with a standing army of liberated slaves, by whose aid he would cut the slave-trade of Central Africa up by its roots.

IV.

General Gordon was asked to go to the Soudan at three o'clock in the afternoon on Friday, the 18th day of January. He left at eight o'clock that night, and reached Khartoum in exactly one month. Mounting a fleet dromedary, he rode forth from Korosko to Abou Hamad, and, like Cæsar, the fortunes of the English Government rode with him through the desert. If he had fallen, the Cabinet would not have long survived. Fortunately he got through alive, and the first success of his mission enabled them to defeat the attack of the opposition. The popular manifestations of enthusiasm which had accompanied his course culminated in his triumphal entry into Khartoum. He had dispatched a telegram on his way to the terrified garrison: "You are men, not women. Be not afraid. I am coming." And when he arrived he told the thousands who came to kiss his feet and hail him as the savior of the Soudan: "I come without soldiers, but with God on my side, to redress the evils of the Soudan. I will not fight with any weapons but justice. There shall be no more Bashi-Bazouks." The scene that followed his arrival was dramatic. The books recording the debts of the overtaxed people were burnt publicly in front of the palace. The kourbashes, whips, and other implements of torture, were all placed on the burning pile. The jail was demolished and the prisoners were set at liberty. At night the town was in a blaze of illumination, and the negroes indulged in a display of fireworks to mark their appreciation of their deliverer. The next day General Gordon began the work of evacuation. Natives of the Soudan were appointed to the command of all the most important posts. Colonel de Coëtlogon, who had commanded the garrison, was sent home. "I consider Khartoum as safe as Kensington Park," wrote General Gordon. The fellah troops were ordered to Egypt; two thousand women and children were sent down the river to Berber. General Gordon recognized the Mahdi as Sultan of Kordofan, and issued a proclamation announcing that, as henceforth the Soudan and its Government had become independent, it would look after its own affairs without interference by the Egyptian Government in anything whatever. They could do as they pleased about slaves and the slave-trade. The petition-boxes were reëstablished, and all men were allowed free access to the palace. Over the throne of the Governor-General they read: "The hearts of men are in the hands of God." The first part of his mission had been brilliantly accomplished.

V.

What, then, was the task which General Gordon rode forth into the desert to accomplish? His mission was pacific, but he has been fighting round Khartoum. The inconsistency is solely on the surface, and that there should be even an apparent inconsistency is due alone to the extent to which General Gordon's action has been trammeled by orders from home. The main end of the policy he was dispatched to carry out was to withdraw from the Soudan the garrisons of 20,000 Egyptian troops, as well as the employees, native Christians, women, and children, who could not remain with safety when the country was evacuated. There were from 10,000 to 15,000 of the latter non-military class in Khartoum alone. General Gordon was informed that the Egyptian Government was "earnestly solicitous that no effort should be spared to insure the retreat both of the civilian population and of the garrison without loss of life." In order to secure their safe retreat he was left to act on his own discretion, both as to the most opportune time and the best method; and he was given full discretionary power to retain the troops for such reasonable period as he might think necessary, in order that the abandonment of the country might be accomplished with the least possible risk to life and property. Before retiring he was to hand over the country to the repre-

sentatives of the different petty sultans who existed before its conquest, and to attempt to form a confederation of these potentates. In accepting the duty thus imposed upon him, General Gordon asked what should be done "if the Mahdi's adherents attack the evacuating columns? It cannot be supposed that they are to offer no resistance." And he went on to say that it would be reasonable in such a case to allow them to follow up the Mahdi to such a position as might insure their future safe march. He would, he said, carry out the evacuation to the best of his ability, with avoidance, as far as possible, of all fighting. "I would, however," he added, as if anticipating the storm of misrepresentation that would be launched against him, "hope that Her Majesty's Government will give me their support and consideration should I be unable to fulfill all their expectations."

Here, therefore, we have the whole policy clearly defined. The country is to be handed over to its original owners; the troops, if need be, to be temporarily employed in establishing the power of the new rulers, and then withdrawn. If they were attacked on the march, they were to beat back their assailants, and, if necessary, assume a defensive-offensive. With that programme General Gordon went out to the Soudan; and to that programme he has adhered with a scrupulous fidelity. He has never fired a shot except in attempting to extricate the garrisons or to follow up the Mahdi's adherents to such a position as would insure the future safe march of the evacuating columns. One of the first steps taken by General Gordon was to recognize the Mahdi as ruler of Kordofan and to appoint Soudanese to the command of the various fortresses and provinces of the Soudan. It was only when the Mahdi's emissaries bade him defiance, when a storm of bullets was poured in upon the steamers sent to rescue the outlying garrisons, and when the Mahdi's adherents fusilladed his palace at Khartoum, that he assumed a militant attitude and stood on the defensive against the insurgents.

There is a possibility that General Gordon might have succeeded in arranging with the Mahdi for the safe retreat of the garrison and the Egyptian and Christian inhabitants. If, as soon as he had arrived at Khartoum, he could have ridden through into the presence of the Mahdi, he might have come to an understanding with him which would have prevented bloodshed. That at least was General Gordon's opinion, and upon that opinion he was prepared to act. So convinced was he as to the urgent need for coming into personal communication with the Mahdi, that he even contemplated getting himself made prisoner in order that he might be carried as a captive into his presence. Unfortunately his heroic scheme was vetoed by the home Government. His life, it was held, was too precious to be risked in that fashion. Foiled in this matter, General Gordon cast about for the best alternative policy. At Khartoum he found a general desire to have Zebehr, the king of the slave-traders, established as ruler in the capital of the Soudan. Zebehr, a man of supreme ability, although stained by much cruelty, could command a large local following, and his obvious interest would lead him to do what he could to expedite the safe evacuation of the country. One thing was certain: a pacific arrangement with the Mahdi having been rendered impossible, the retreat of the garrisons and the civilians was physically impossible, unless the tribes who alone could furnish means of transport were assured that the new ruler of Khartoum would not punish those who assisted the retiring Egyptians. A permanent friendly power must therefore be established at Khartoum, otherwise the tribes on the line of retreat would forthwith go over to the Mahdi. But when Gordon telegraphed for Zebehr, Zebehr was denied him. The Anti-Slavery Society had protested. The prejudice, well-founded and deep-rooted, against the king of the slave-traders arrayed public sentiment in England against the selection of such a ruler at Khartoum; and, despite the opposition of the most influential of the ministers, the Cabinet refused to allow Zebehr to proceed to Khartoum. Once more Gordon's plans were upset by his employers, and he was left face to face with a situation growing daily more perilous and anarchic. He had sent two thousand women and children down to Berber, from whence he hoped they could be sent on to the sea, General Graham's victories near Suakim being relied on to open the road. To secure the opening of the road and the safety of Berber, General Gordon urged that two squadrons of cavalry should be sent through from Suakim. That also was denied him; and then the Government, having vetoed in succession every plan by which his pacific mission might have been successful, telegraphed to him to desert his garrison and come home. Gordon's reply was a flat refusal. His soldiers had followed him to danger and death. "I cannot desert my garrison." So he remained at his post, and he will remain. Behind the ramparts of the beleaguered city he will stand or fall with those whom he was sent to save. If he cannot take them with him, he will die at his post.

In person General Gordon is slight and short. His appearance is more suggestive of activity than stateliness, and nothing can be

more unassuming than his manner. There is a beautiful child-like simplicity about his smile, which recalls, by a certain curious association of ideas, the impression produced by the first sight of Mr. Carlyle. But there is something about his lower face suggestive of latent "hardness," of a will that can be as of iron, and of a decision that shrinks not at hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord, should the necessity unfortunately arise. In him a sympathy as impulsive and as tender as that of a woman is united with the fierceness and daring of an ancient Viking. The man is positively unique in this combination of puritan and crusader, humanitarian and soldier, revolutionist and man of order, idealist and man of affairs, that our times have seen. The diversified influences flowing from this heterogeneous conglomeration of antithetical qualities act and react upon his mind with a most bewildering result. Never was there any man so difficult to follow, or so easy to understand. "Gordon," said one who knew him well, "was created for the express purpose of confounding all newspaper editors. He never says the same thing twice or sticks to one opinion two hours together. Yet, by those who are capable of looking below the surface and clearing away the apparent inconsistencies, there will be found a clear silver thread of consistent purpose running through all his impulsive vagaries of thought and expression." To the creatures of routine and humdrum General Gordon is a sheer lunatic. To the official with his red tape and straight lace he is a *bête noire.* A man who is constantly saying and doing the most paradoxical things, whose mind is quicksilver, and whose life is dominated by a curious combination of the religious principles of Cromwell and Thomas à Kempis, is indeed an incomprehensible phenomenon to the dwellers in the well-ordered realm of commonplace. Those who have no faiths, but only habits, are naturally at a loss to account for a man of admitted genius whose convictions are the oddest jumble of enthusiasms that can be imagined. A Governor-General of the Soudan, who interrupts his administrative duties in order to try to nurse a starving little black baby back into life; the patron saint of the Anti-Slavery Society, who legitimatizes the slave-trade by a decree and resolves upon appointing the king of the slave-traders as sovereign of Khartoum, is not a man to be described by any formula; he must be classed by himself. So men who have not a tithe of his administrative genius, or his shrewd political sagacity, shrug their shoulders and say that Gordon is mad. And of course, if they themselves are the type of true sanity, they are right; but if so, then he is one of those madmen whose madness is of the nature of inspiration. Gordon's eccentricity, of which many strange stories are told, his impulsiveness, his unreasoning generosity, do not in the least impair the marvelous influence which he seems to exert on all with whom he comes in contact.

From the simple Chinese peasants, whom he converted into his ever-victorious army, to the ex-Khedive of Egypt, one of the ablest men of the century, all who have known him have felt the spell of his magnetic personality. Without an effort he imbues those around him with his own enthusiasm. He is fitful, imperious, and changeable. His mood varies from time to time, almost from minute to minute. At one moment he is in the Valley of the Shadow of Death; the next he is exulting in the conscious presence of the Eternal, his fellow-worker in the Soudan. "With the help of God I will defeat the Mahdi," said he at Korosko, when on his way to Khartoum; and during his former term of office the expression "God is the real Governor-General" was constantly on his lips. He commands the enthusiastic support of all around him because of his implicit belief in himself, not as an individual, but as the passive instrument of a Higher Power. No man could be more modest and retiring in the ordinary intercourse of life, or more audacious in his self-assertion when engaged in the discharge of his duty. Men who deny the existence of the Being the consciousness of whose presence is the sustaining principle of Gordon's existence, cannot resist the spell of his transparent sincerity. All who know him admire him, and those who know him best love him most, excepting, of course, the officials whom he distracts with his telegrams; for his personality does not make itself felt through the wire. At the present moment this unique figure has fascinated the imagination of the English people. It is as if King Arthur had come to life again, nerved with the faith of Cromwell, to serve England in the Soudan. To the mass of his countrymen he seems an ideal knight, "who reverences his conscience as his king, whose glory is redressing human wrong." And yet, with all his supreme devotion to duty, and his Christ-like self-sacrifice in the cause of the poor and oppressed and those who have no helper, he is very human. But his faults, like those of a wayward but brilliant child, increase the hold which he has upon the popular imagination; and few things are more probable than that a determination to see that he comes to no harm may yet commit England to an expedition to Khartoum which will lay the foundations of an African India.

W. T. Stead.