



FAMOUS LADY TRAVELLERS.

II.—THE ADVENTURES OF LADY BAKER.

By EDWARD WHYMPER, Author of "The Ascent of the Matterhorn."

IN No. 255 of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, the adventures of a Peruvian lady were narrated, who was impelled to travel through sheer force of circumstances, and who set out to cross the equatorial regions of South America without expectation of encountering anything very remarkable. The adventures of Madame Godin, unlike those of Lady Baker, were involuntary. The journey which is described in the present paper is of a totally different order. It was a deliberate plunge into a region which was known to be full of dangers, and peopled by races exhibiting the worst characteristics of mankind; with the express aim of penetrating through it, into the unknown beyond, in search of the sources of the Nile. Such a journey was certain to be both arduous and perilous.

After experiencing incessant worries and continual privations, after riding on oxen, and wading through swamps, scorched by tropical heat, and drenched by tropical rain, followed by sunstroke, brain fever, and other fevers innumerable, Lady Baker was so far gone as to be given up for dead, and her people "put a new handle to the pick-axe, and sought for a dry spot to dig her grave;" yet she eventually turned up at Burlington House, at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, with a complexion which suggested Brighton more than Ethiopia, showing no outward traces of her four years' hardships in equatorial Africa, which were known to be so severe that even brigand Arabs, whom



LADY BAKER.

they met in the interior, exclaimed, in mixed wonder and admiration, "By Allah! no woman in the world has a heart so tough as to dare to face what she has gone through!"

In the beginning of 1861, Mr. Baker (now Sir Samuel Baker) determined to make an expedition to discover the sources of the Nile, "with the hope of meeting the East African expedition of Captains Speke and Grant, that had been sent from the south, *via* Zanzibar, for that object." Mrs. Baker resolved to accompany him. "It was in vain," says her husband, "that I painted the difficulties and perils still blacker than I supposed they really would be: she was resolved, with woman's constancy and devotion, to share all dangers and to follow me through each rough footstep of the wild life before me." And in his preface he says that she followed him weary and footsore through all his difficulties, led not by choice but by devotion, and that in times of misery and sickness her tender care saved his life and prospered the expedition. It is unnecessary to follow the fortunes of the expedition as a whole. The journey culminated in the discovery of the immense lake or inland sea called the Albert N'Yanza, from which the White Nile issues, and connected the explorations of Speke and Grant with the previously known portions of the Nile. Our concern is principally with the adventures of Mrs. (now Lady) Baker, whose journey right through the Soudan to the Equator is one of the most extraordinary ever performed by a lady.

The expedition started from Khartoum on December 18, 1862. Mrs. Baker had been stopping there for about six months, and her husband's observations on the place, which were written twenty years ago (of course without the least idea that public attention would ever be specially directed to the locality), are very interesting at the present time. The town, he says, stands on a point of land forming the angle between the White and the Blue Nile, at their junction, and that "a more miserable, filthy, and unhealthy spot can hardly be imagined. Far as the eye can reach, upon all sides, is a sandy desert. The town extends over a flat hardly above the level of the river at high water, and is occasionally flooded." This place, he says, at that time had about 30,000 inhabitants, of whom only about thirty were Europeans. There were neither drains nor cesspools, and should animals die in the streets they remained where they fell, to create pestilence and disgust. His description of the inhabitants is worse. Without the trade of kidnapping and murder Khartoum would almost cease to exist. "The character of the Khartoumers needs no further comment;" and he then proceeds to describe in some detail the manner in which this trade is conducted. Men get the means to form expeditions by borrowing money upon agreements to supply the lenders with ivory at one-half its market value. Having obtained the required sums, they hire vessels and engage from 100 to 300 men, "composed of Arabs and runaway villains from distant countries," and purchase guns and large quantities of ammunition, together with a few hundred pounds of glass beads. They then start, "and on arrival at the desired locality they disembark, and proceed into the interior until they arrive at the village of some negro chief, with whom they establish an intimacy." They ally themselves with him to attack some neighbouring village, and under his guidance march upon the doomed place by night, and commence the assault just before daybreak. "While its occupants are still sleeping they fire the grass-huts in all directions, and pour volleys of musketry through the flaming thatch." The men are shot down, and the women and children are kidnapped and secured, and are driven off with the herds of cattle; the women and children fastened together so as to form a living chain, the former having their heads stuck in forked poles with their hands tied before them up to the poles, and the children tied round their necks by ropes attached to the women.

This, says Sir Samuel, is only the commencement of "business." "The negro ally covets cattle, and the trader has now captured perhaps 2,000 head. They are to be had for ivory, and shortly the tusks appear. Ivory is daily brought into camp in exchange for cattle, a tusk for a cow—according to size—a profitable business, as the cows have cost nothing. . . . Should any slave attempt to escape, she is punished either by brutal flogging, or shot or hanged, as a warning to others. . . . An attack generally leads to a quarrel with the negro ally, who, in his turn, is murdered and plundered by the trader—his women and children naturally becoming slaves. . . . A good season for a party of 150 men should produce about 20,000 lbs. of ivory, valued at Khartoum at £4,000, and there should also be a surplus of four or five hundred slaves for the trader's profit, worth five or six pounds apiece." The great end with these people is the acquisition of ivory and money. Women and children are worth less than cattle, and are exchanged for cows; cows are bartered for ivory, and ivory is turned into cash.

The travels of Sir Samuel and Lady Baker extended from Khartoum nearly to the Equator, a distance, as the crow flies, of about 1,000 miles, and throughout almost the whole

of this region these operations were being actively prosecuted. The volumes in which their experiences are narrated are full of stories of atrocious cruelties and abominable crimes, and contain scarcely any incidents of goodness or virtue to relieve the dismal monotony. The accounts of the habits and manners of the natives by the author show that they are saturated with iniquity; and, though he continually lays the blame of the slave trade and its attendant horrors upon the traders, it is obvious that were it not for the innate brutality and wickedness of the natives themselves, the so-called traders would be quite unable to carry on their operations in the manner he describes.

The expedition started towards the south from Khartoum on December 18th, 1862, in a Nile boat, accompanied by two noggors or sailing barges, with forty-five men as escort, forty sailors, twenty-one donkeys, four camels, and four horses. Their first stage was by the Nile to Gondokoro, and the author thus describes the river between the two places. "A fever-stricken wilderness—the water coloured like an English horse-pond; a heaven for mosquitoes. . . . I never either saw or heard of so disgusting a country as that bordering the White Nile from Khartoum to this point. . . . It is a heart-breaking river, without a single redeeming point." And of the natives he says, "the men wear upon the wrists a horrible kind of bracelet of massive iron, armed with spikes about an inch in length, like leopards' claws. . . . The chief exhibited his wife's arms and back covered with jagged scars in reply to my question as to the use of the spiked iron bracelet. . . . My monkey looks like a civilised being compared with these savages."

Gondokoro is said to have been "a great improvement upon the interminable marshes" which had been traversed on the way from Khartoum. But there was no town there. It was "merely a station of the ivory traders, occupied for about two months in the year. . . . A few miserable grass huts are all that dignify the spot with a name." This is not a very enticing neighbourhood, for the natives of the district, the Bari tribe, of whom Sir Samuel commences by speaking rather favourably, have, it appears, the unpleasant habit of shooting poisoned arrows rather indiscriminately. "Some of the arrows are arranged with poisoned heads that fit into sockets; these detach from the arrow on an attempt to withdraw them; thus the barbed blade, thickly smeared with poison, remains in the wound, and before it can be cut out the poison is absorbed by the system." A little earlier it is stated that a man came for medical aid who five months before had been wounded by a poisoned arrow in the leg, and the entire foot had been eaten away by the action of the poison. "The bone rotted through just above the ankle, and the foot dropped off." The Bari tribe is stated to be very hostile, but it is not said whether this has always been the case. The worst that is related about them (after the poisoned arrows) is that they sometimes ask "for beads as a tax for sitting under a shady tree, or for passing through the country. The traders' people, in order to terrify them into submission, were in the habit of binding them hands and feet and carrying them to the edge of a cliff about thirty feet high, beneath this cliff the river boils in a deep eddy; into this watery grave the victims were remorselessly hurled as food for crocodiles. It appeared that this punishment was dreaded by the natives," and it would seem, if this was at all a general custom, that they had some substantial grounds for their hostility.

Lady Baker's first adventure occurred at Gondokoro, where the escort of forty-five Khartoumers ("a greater set of scoundrels in

physiognomy, I never encountered," says Sir Samuel) took it into their head to mutiny; because their master refused to let them steal the cattle of the natives. There was no European with the party, and as the headman failed to chastise the ringleader, Sir Samuel took that business upon himself, but got the worst of it. "I had a crowd of men upon me to rescue their leader. How the affair would have ended I cannot say; but as the scene lay within ten yards of my boat, my wife, who was ill with fever in the cabin, witnessed the whole affray, and seeing me surrounded, she rushed out, and in a few moments was in the middle of the crowd, who at that time were endeavouring to rescue my prisoner. Her sudden appearance had a curious effect, and calling upon several of the least mutinous to assist, she very pluckily made her way up to me. Seizing the opportunity of an indecision that was for the moment evinced by the crowd, I shouted to the drummer-boy to beat the drum. . . . Two-thirds of the men fell in, and formed in line, while the remainder retreated with the ringleader. . . . In this critical moment, Mrs. Baker, with great tact, came forward and implored me to forgive him if he kissed my hand and begged for pardon. This compromise completely won the men, who, although a few minutes before in open mutiny, now called upon their leader to apologise, and that all would be right."

The storm passed over for a time, but it broke out again before long. It appears that there were no Europeans in the party except the travellers themselves, and that amongst the blacks there were only two who showed any fidelity. One of these was a poor, ill-used little boy named Saat, about twelve years old, who came at Khartoum when "Mrs. Baker and I were at tea, and knelt down in the dust at her feet. There was something so irresistibly supplicating in the attitude of the child that the first impulse was to give him something from the table. This was declined, and he merely begged to be allowed to live with us, and to be our boy." One morning this boy came to his protectors and said that during the night the whole of the escort had conspired to desert, and to fire their guns at their master should he attempt to disarm them. This is the next scene in which Lady Baker appears. "I immediately ordered a travelling bedstead to be placed outside the tent under a large tree; upon this I laid five double-barrelled guns loaded with buck shot, a revolver, and naked sabre as sharp as a razor. A sixth rifle I kept in my hands while I sat upon the bedstead, with Richam and Saat both with double-barrelled guns behind me. . . . I requested Mrs. Baker to stand behind me, and to point out any man who should attempt to uncover his locks. . . . The act of uncovering would prove his intention, in which event I intended to shoot him immediately, and take my chance with the rest of the conspirators." This scene was happily terminated without bloodshed, and about half the mutineers were disarmed and dismissed, but that the remnant was a nice lot is apparent from the next incident in which Mrs. Baker is concerned.

A few days later the traveller says:—"I was asleep in my tent, when I was suddenly awoken by loud screams, and upon listening attentively I distinctly heard the heavy breathing of something in the tent, and I could distinguish a dark object crouching close to the head of my bed. A slight pull at my sleeve showed me that my wife also noticed the object, as this was always the signal that she made if anything occurred at night which required vigilance. Possessing a share of *sangfroid* admirably adapted for African travel, Mrs. Baker was not a screamer, and never even whispered. . . . My hand had quietly drawn the revolver from under my

pillow, and noiselessly pointed it within two feet of the dark crouching object before I asked, "Who is that?" No answer was given, until, upon repeating the question, with my finger touching gently upon the trigger ready to fire, a voice replied, "Fadeela." Upon striking a light he found it was one of the women attached to his own party, streaming with blood, being cut in a most frightful manner by a whip of hippopotamus hide. "Hearing the screams continued at some distance from the tent, I found my men in the act of flogging two women. Two men were holding each woman upon the ground by sitting upon her legs and neck, while two others with powerful whips operated upon each woman alternately. Their backs were cut to pieces, and they were literally covered with blood. . . . Seizing the whip from the hands of one of the executioners, I administered them a dose of their own prescription."

Surrounded by such scenes of brutality as this, and unaccompanied by a single man upon whom they could rely, it would not have been surprising if they had turned back. "We were utterly helpless," writes the traveller, "the whole of the people against us, and openly threatening. For myself personally I had no anxiety, but the fact of Mrs. Baker being with me was my greatest care. I dared not think of her position in the event of my death amongst such savages as those around her." Yet they decided to go forward. It is not possible to relate the whole story; let it suffice to say that there were none but slave-traders at Gondokoro, who opposed progress as far as they could. A Turkish party of these, headed by a person named Ibrahim, started in the direction they wished to take (which was now on land), and dared them to follow; stating that he would not allow any of the natives to serve them, and "would give orders to the great chief of Ellyria to prevent them passing through his country." This chief, it is stated, had formerly massacred one party of one hundred and twenty persons, and enjoyed the reputation of being formidable, which was partly owing to his living in a mountainous country that could only be passed through by traversing rocky defiles, in which it was easy to lie in ambush. The travellers endeavoured to outwit the Turks by marching past them in the night, and actually arrived soonest in the ravine; but they were then caught up and their rivals got into Ellyria first. "One by one, with scowling looks, the insolent scoundrels filed past us within a few feet, without making the customary salaam. Their party consisted of 140 men armed with guns. . . . It appeared that we were hopelessly beaten. . . . At length their leader, Ibrahim, appeared in the rear of the party, riding on a donkey. . . . I never saw a more atrocious countenance than that exhibited in this man. . . . As he approached he took no notice of us, but studiously looked straight before him with the most determined insolence. The fate of the expedition was, at this critical moment, retrieved by Mrs. Baker. She implored me to call him, to insist on a personal explanation, and to offer him some present in the event of establishing amicable relations. I could not condescend to address the sullen scoundrel. He was in the act of passing us, and success depended upon that instant. Mrs. Baker herself called him. For the moment he made no reply; but, upon my repeating the call in a loud key, he turned his donkey towards us and dismounted. . . . 'Ibrahim,' I said, 'why should we be enemies in the midst of this hostile country?'"

The Turk was bribed into friendship, and soon told them to beware of their own people, as they intended to desert on the first opportunity; and this they would

have done, had not Sir Samuel prevented them in his characteristic manner. Shortly afterwards the party arrived in a district called Latooka, where the *coiffure* of a man is not completed in less than eight to ten years! During this time they are training and trailing, binding, weaving, and thatching their hair into a sort of helmet. Their dress is indescribable, for the simple reason that there is none. The wife of the chief was introduced to Lady Baker, and told her that her appearance would be much improved if she would extract the four front teeth of her lower jaw, and wear red ointment in her hair, according to the fashion of the country, where, it may be remarked, woman is valued by cows. "The price of a good-looking, strong young wife, who could carry a heavy jar of water, would be ten cows; thus a man rich in cattle would be rich in domestic bliss, as he could command a multiplicity of wives. However delightful may be a family of daughters in England, they are nevertheless costly treasures; but in Latooka they are exceedingly profitable. The simple rule of proportion will suggest that if one daughter is worth ten cows, ten daughters must be worth a hundred, therefore a large family is a source of wealth; the girls produce the cows, and the boys milk them."

The travellers were detained eight or nine months—the greater part of the year 1863, in fact—in Latooka and its neighbourhood. The Turkish party would not go forward, and they could not travel without them. Sir Samuel had many hunts, and sometimes went out for a walk with the baby; which was not, as one might suppose, an infant, but a monstrous rifle for elephant shooting, which carried a half pound shell, and turned the person who fired it round "like a weathercock in a hurricane." When Lady Baker heard this "baby's" scream, she hurried to her husband's assistance with a party of men with knives and axes, to assist in cutting up whatever had been shot. By the time they could move southwards again, the whole of the camels, horses, and donkeys had died, and they were reduced to riding on oxen, named "Bones," "Steaks," and "Suet." Sir Samuel's steed bolted, and he had to walk, and "a large fly fastened on Mrs. Baker's ox, just by his tail, the effect of which was to produce so sudden a kick and plunge, that he threw her to the ground and hurt her considerably." A few days later they came to a district where "there was a swamp at least every half hour during the day, at each of which there was the greatest difficulty in driving the oxen, who were above the girths in mud. One swamp was so deep that we had to carry the baggage piecemeal on a bedstead by about twelve men, and my wife being subjected to the same operation, was returned as impracticable. I accordingly volunteered for service, and carried her on my back; but when in the middle of the swamp the bottom gave way, and I sank, and remained immovably fixed, while she floundered frog-like in the muddy water."

Shortly after this they arrived at a country governed by a sable despot of the name of Kamrasi, about whom a great deal is said. At first the travellers could not get sight of him at all, and they were hindered from proceeding. Lady Baker was an object of much interest to the natives. Her husband says, "the entire crowd sprang to their feet, and rushed suddenly towards the hut where I had left Mrs. Baker. For the moment I thought that the hut was on fire, and I joined the crowd, and arrived at the doorway, where I found a tremendous press to see some extraordinary sight. Everyone was squeezing for the best place; and, driving them on one side, I found the wonder that had excited their curiosity. The hut being very dark, my wife had employed her solitude during my conference with the natives in dressing her hair

at the doorway, which, being very long and blonde, was suddenly noticed by some natives; a shout was given, and the rush described had taken place, and the hut was literally mobbed by the crowd of savages to see the extraordinary novelty."

This, however, was a less exciting scene than one which occurred a little later. After many delays, a savage was introduced to the travellers as the king, Kamrasi. He is described as a fine-looking man, "about six feet high, beautifully clean, and was dressed in a long robe of bark-cloth most gracefully folded. The nails of his hands and feet were carefully attended, and his complexion was about as dark a brown as that of an Abyssinian. He sat upon a copper stool placed upon a carpet of leopard skins, and was surrounded by about ten of his principal chiefs." A dreadful beggar, he apparently delayed the travellers in order to fleece them; and, when he had squeezed their possessions pretty well out of them, he told Sir Samuel that he might go on to the lake of which he was in search, "but," he said, "you must leave your wife with me!" "If," says the husband, "this were to be the end of the expedition, I resolved that it should also be the end of Kamrasi, and, drawing my revolver quietly, I held it within two feet of his chest, and, looking at him with undisguised contempt, I told him, that if I touched the trigger, not all his men could save him, and that if he dared repeat the insult I would shoot him on the spot. . . . My wife, naturally indignant, had risen from her seat, and maddened with the excitement of the moment, she made him a little speech in Arabic (not a word of which he understood). The woman Bacheeta" (a negro in their service) "had appropriated the insult to her mistress, and she also fearlessly let fly at Kamrasi. . . . Whether this little *coup de théâtre* had so impressed Kamrasi with British female independence I cannot say, but, with an air of complete astonishment, he said, 'Don't be angry! I had no intention of offending you by asking for your wife; I will give you a wife, if you want one, and I thought you might have no objection to give me yours!'"

Still it must have been satisfactory to place a few miles between this sable despot, and, as soon as they could go, they went. Whether purposely misguided or not cannot be told with certainty, but it was not long before they again got into a district of swamps; where streams, which had to be crossed, were covered with matted water grass and other aquatic plants, making a natural floating-bridge out of a carpet of weeds about two feet thick. "Upon this waving and unsteady surface the men ran quickly across, sinking merely to the ankles, although beneath the tough vegetation there was deep water. It was equally impossible to ride or to be carried over this treacherous surface; thus I led the way, and begged Mrs. Baker to follow me on foot as quickly as possible, precisely in my track. The river was about eighty yards wide, and I had scarcely completed a fourth of the distance and looked back to see if my wife followed close to me, when I was horrified to see her standing in one spot, and sinking gradually through the weeds, while her face was distorted and perfectly purple. Almost as soon as I perceived her she fell, as though shot dead. With the assistance of eight or ten of my men, I dragged her like a corpse through the yielding vegetation, just keeping her head above water; to have carried her would have been impossible, as we should all have sunk together through the weeds." For three days she was carried through this wild country, on a litter, speechless and insensible. "The morning broke, I was watching the first red streak that heralded the rising sun, when I was startled by the words, 'Thank God,' faintly uttered behind me. Suddenly she had

awoke from her torpor. . . . Her eyes were full of madness! She spoke, but the brain was gone!" Then came seven days of brain fever and exhaustion. She had been in violent convulsions. "It was all but over. I laid her down on her litter within a hut; covered her with a Scotch plaid, and I fell upon my mat insensible, worn out with sorrow and fatigue." This was the occasion when the "men put a new handle to the pickaxe, and sought for a dry spot to dig her grave!"

With this incident the adventures of Lady Baker come to a climax. Needless to follow her through the rest of her long journey, with its alternations of privations and comfort,

plenty and starvation. The lake was discovered; the medal of the Geographical Society was won; and after innumerable perils on water and adventures on land they arrived again at Khartoum—almost the sole survivors of the expedition. Those who wish to pursue the story can do so in the pages of Sir Samuel Baker's book, "The Albert N'Yanza," a book which is great in interest, yet deeply saddening, from the revelations which it contains of the brutal natures of the natives, the iniquity of the traders, and the horrible state of the countries which were traversed. "I shall be truly thankful," says the author, "to quit this abominable land; in

my experience, I never saw such scoundrels as Africa produces—the natives of the Soudan being the worst of all. . . . I am thoroughly sick of this Expedition, but I shall plod on with dogged obstinacy . . . grateful should the day ever arrive to see old England again. . . . I believe that ten years' residence in the Soudan and this country would spoil an Angel, and would turn the best heart to stone."

They certainly do not appear to be lands for ladies. Lady Baker is to be congratulated upon having escaped alive from such abominable countries, and it is to be hoped she will never revisit them.

SEVEN YEARS FOR RACHEL;
OR, WELSH PICTURES SKETCHED FROM LIFE.

By ANNE BEALE



ALONE

CHAPTER XIX
THE IVORITE'S FUNERAL.

CAN these be preparations for a funeral? Can this motley assemblage of people, dressed in all colours but black—this throng around what was lately Jackey Bach's cottage—be about to attend him to his last home? A week has elapsed since he died, and his spirit is now far away from the turmoils of this troublous world, but the home that still contains his mortal remains is a scene of bustle and confusion. Funerals in Wales, like weddings, are public gatherings, and this is one in every sense of the word. The deceased was an Ivorite, and the members of the club are expected to

follow their departed brother to the grave. He had belonged to this club from his youth: to it he owed his comforts in sickness, and the expenses of his funeral are to be defrayed by it.*

Rachel has left the arrangements to her uncle and Pally, and has retired to her little upstairs room to weep alone. The sun is shining brightly through the curtain that shades the window, and she feels how sadly his glorious rays strike upon the spirit when sorrow has oppressed it. The most gladsome thing in creation seems now the most melancholy, and willingly would she exchange the warm beams that give life and energy to half the world, for dark heavy clouds more in accordance with her present feelings. The sounds of voices and footsteps, too, strike heavily upon her ear, and worse, far worse, distant laughter will make itself heard, as the would-be mourners throng down the lane towards the place of

meeting. It is not that the face of any one of Jackey's old friends wears a smile on this solemn occasion—they are all decently grave; but there are many present who were never personally interested in the deceased, and who make their appearance merely to see the funeral and hear the sermon. It is from these that the half-suppressed voice of merriment proceeds, as they talk over the ordinary events of the week; but as they draw near the house they, too, become quiet, and if not serious, at least forbear a smile.

* The Ivorites are a body of men united to keep up the ancient language and customs of Wales, as well as to assist one another in times of emergency.