

“ A REVIEW OF THE TROOPS BY THE KHEDIVE AT ASSOUAN.

THE ANGLO-EGYPTIAN ARMY.

BY ALURED GRAY BELL.

Photographs by Lekegian and Co., Cairo.

THE Anglo-Egyptian Army was born on the 20th December, 1882, in scorn; bred, till midnight the 12th March, 1896, in contempt; blazed, till the 2nd September, 1898, the cynosure of every eye; and has again lapsed into that chasmic oblivion reserved for every vital limb of the British Imperial body not actually threatened with amputation. Some day amputation will again threaten, and the difficulty, now experienced, of obtaining British officers for the “Gippy Army” will give way to a fresh clamour for service up the Nile. The present Sirdar, Sir Francis Wingate, may yet add to his laurels a campaign more serious than that of Kitchener against the Omdurman Dervishes. True, as the eye scans the map of Eastern Africa, one can imagine no possible serious enemy except Abyssinia; and Menelik is now our very good friend. But the unlikely at Downing Street is the probable on the outskirts of the Empire; and this particular contingency will no doubt suffice to keep the Anglo-Egyptian Army at fighting pitch for this and some subsequent generations.

On the 20th December, 1882, Lord Wolseley having comfortably crushed the Arabi rebellion some weeks previously, and Great Britain having commenced her protracted occupation of the Land of the Pharaohs, the Khedive Tewfik issued a decree. The decree was short: it said, “The Egyptian Army is disbanded.” It was a case of “The King is dead, long live the King!”

for simultaneously a new Egyptian Army was ordered at the national stores, and Major-General Sir Evelyn Wood, with the rank of Sirdar, or Commander-in-Chief, was authorised to raise, equip, and organise the new army. This was to consist of 6,000 Egyptians, or *fellaheen*, 26 British officers, and 20 British non-commissioned officers. It had been suggested, in view of the alarming military rebellion from which Egypt had just emerged, that Turkish troops or a mixed European army would have suited the case better; but such panic-prompted counsels were wisely overruled, and the *fellah*, the much-despised Egyptian peasant, was given another chance. Besides the Sirdar, the roll of officers contained the now well known names of Kitchener, Chermiside, Grenfell, and Rundle. The first review of his new army was held by the Khedive three months later, on the 31st March, 1883, and the raw recruits elicited favourable criticisms, mixed, of course, with not a little ridicule.

Meanwhile, there was yet in existence a portion of the old Egyptian Army which the new decree either did not or could not embrace—namely, the nondescript garrisons on the Upper Nile. The Mahdist storm had already burst over the Egyptian Soudan. General Hicks Pasha, of the old Egyptian Army, left Khartoum for El Obeid to crush the Mahdi. Before starting in September, 1883, he applied for four of the eight battalions of Sir Evelyn Wood’s new army.

The request was refused. Poor Hicks moved south-west with 10,000 of his nondescripts and 22 guns, and on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th November, 1883, the heroic general and all but a few hundreds of his cowardly levies were butchered at Shekaan. Speedily the victorious Mahdi accounted in turn for the remaining Soudan garrisons of the old army, and in a few weeks Khartoum alone was standing under Gordon. About the time of Hicks's request, Sir Evelyn Wood received



AN ARTILLERY OFFICER, FULL DRESS.

thirty miles from Souakim, his craven levies at El Teb, on the 5th February, 1884, flung

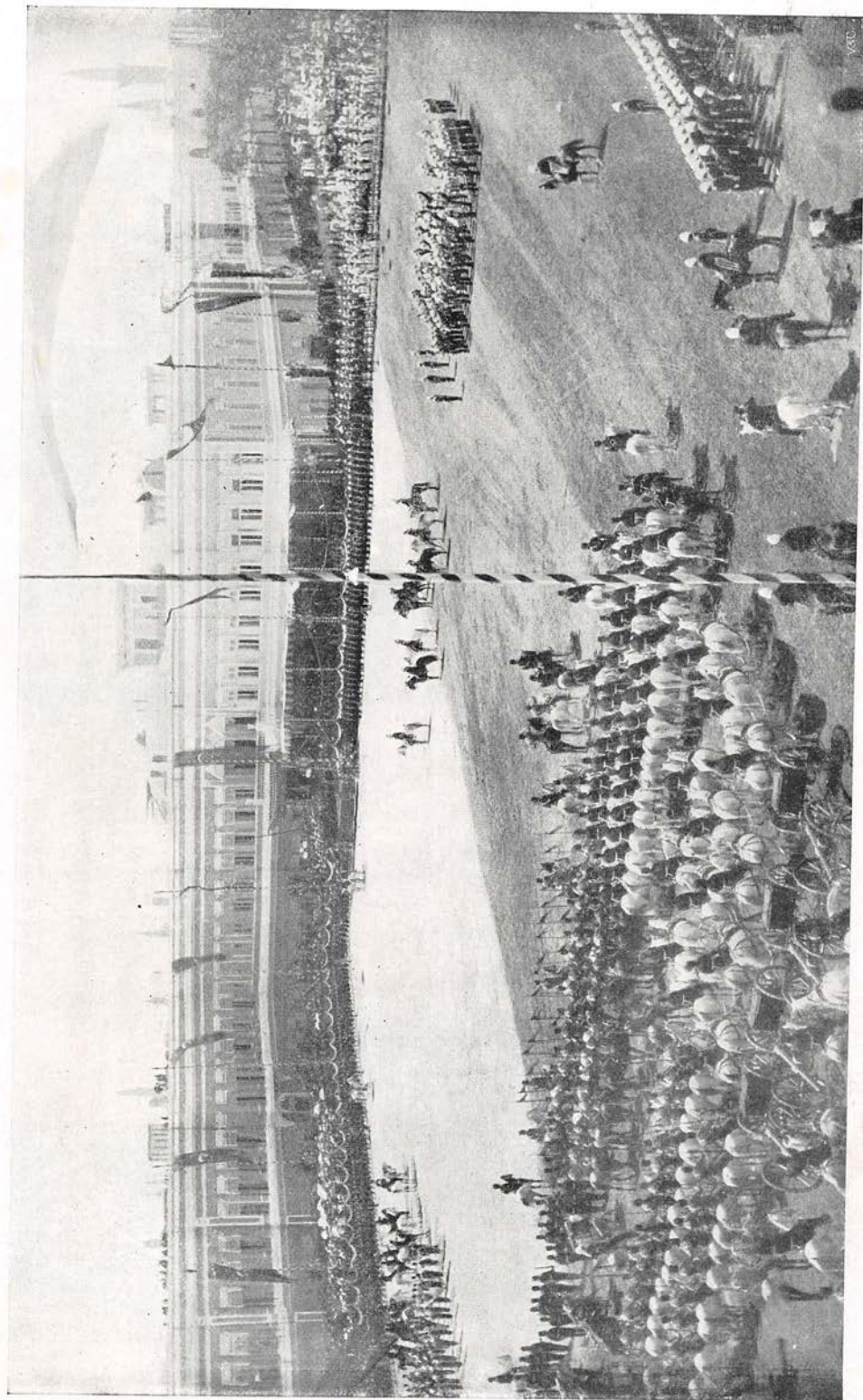


EGYPTIAN LANCER.

another—this time to assist General Baker's campaign at Souakim. British officers like Hicks and Baker, brave as lions, felt unnerved at the prospect of leading the undrilled, unpaid, unfed, unclothed, undisciplined remnants of the old army against the fanatical hordes of the new Mahdism. Hence the childlike faith in and appeal for one, even one only, of Wood's twelve months' old battalions. But Baker also was refused. More lucky than Hicks, he escaped with his life; but in the attempt to relieve Tokar,



FIELD OFFICER, INFANTRY.



READING OF SULTAN'S FIRMAN INVESTING ABBAS II. AT ABDEEN PALACE, CAIRO, 1892.
 Centre: Maj.-Gen. Sir Frederick Forestier-Walker and Staff. Left centre: Sirdar Kitchener and Staff.

away their arms, ran for dear life, and were butchered for miles to the number of 2,000, all shot or stabbed in the back. Thus summarily was the old era ejected. Room was made for the new infant that, fourteen years later, was to astonish the world with its discipline, courage, and glut of vengeance. The ultimate remnant of the old army disappeared with Gordon in the fall of Khartoum in January, 1885.



AN OFFICER OF THE CAMEL CORPS.



A PRIVATE OF THE CAMEL CORPS.

There were at first eight battalions, each of a nominal strength of 720, under Sir Evelyn Wood's command. These were all recruited from Lower Egypt, from among the *fellaheen*. They were the tan element in

our white, black, and tan army. As time went on someone suggested black, real black troops. In May, 1884, "Sambo," the equivalent of "Tommy Atkins Soudanese," was



EGYPTIAN ARMY CAMEL CORPS.

called upon, and a first battalion of blacks was raised at Souakim, to be styled the 9th Soudanese. Four more similar battalions were raised in the next four years. Unlike the Egyptian battalions, who enlisted for seven years with the Colours and nine in the Reserve and drew $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ per day, "Sambo" enlisted for life and received the lordly pay of $3\frac{3}{4}d.$, or a piastre and a half per day. He was a very glutton for fighting. He came generally from the Shillook and Dinka tribes above Khartoum, or even from such far south-western lands as Wadai and Bornu.

The chief qualities of the black regiments



EGYPTIAN FIELD OFFICER.

he has been adjudged second place on the score of courage.

The first experience of actual war vouchsafed to the new army was in Lord Wolseley's Soudan campaign of 1884 and 1885. At Sir Evelyn Wood's request, four battalions were here employed to guard the British lines of communication between Assiout and Korti, while small detachments were actually under fire at Abu Klea and Kirebkan, and behaved with exemplary steadiness. In April, 1885, Sir Evelyn Wood

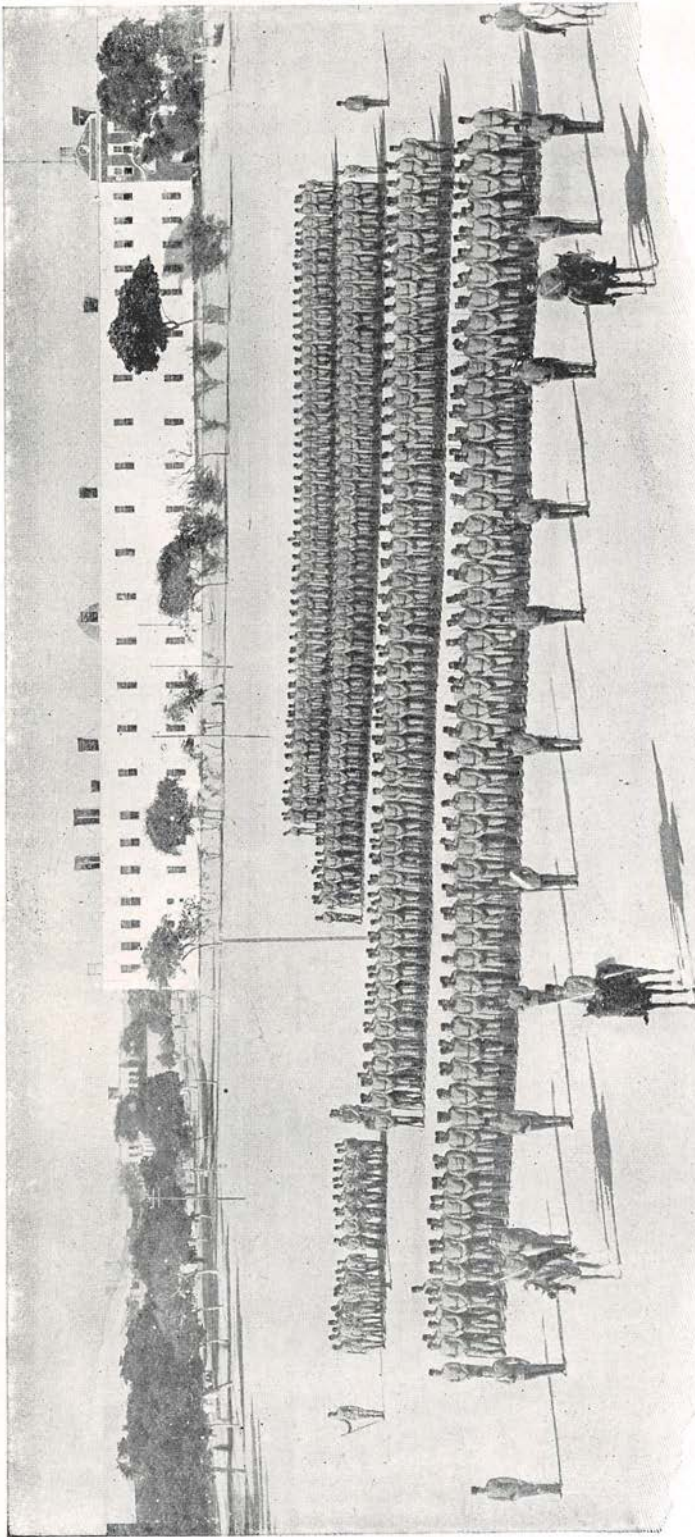


EGYPTIAN CAVALRY OFFICER.

are their savage love of fighting, their devotion to their British officers, and their insistence on having one wife at least in every frontier post they occupy. To stop a black battalion from indiscriminate blazing of rifles and to prevent it from instantly charging the enemy wherever he was located was at first the greatest tax on the commanding officer. It is now allowed that in the hands of the British officer the Soudanese regiments of the Egyptian Army deserve to rank with the finest fighting material in the world. The *fellah* makes as smart a soldier, is infinitely more intelligent, and generally of better physique; but, rightly or wrongly,



EGYPTIAN STAFF OFFICER.



12TH SOUDANESE BATTALION PARADING.

resigned his command, and Sir Francis Grenfell, his Adjutant-General, became Sirdar. Khartoum had now fallen; Gordon was dead; the evacuation of the Soudan had been partially effected. In the summer of 1885 the British army was withdrawn from Dongola, and a new Frontier Field Force, composed of equal numbers of British and Egyptian troops, was formed under the new Sirdar. Six months later, on the 20th December, 1885, the battle of Ginniss was fought by British and Egyptian troops, to check the presumptuous Dervishes pressing upon the heels of evacuation. Here the native battalions showed such steadiness that it was decided to reduce still further the British garrison. The frontier was fixed still further north, at Wadi Halfa, and in April, 1886, its defence was confided solely to the Egyptian Army. A small British force was retained at Assouan till January, 1888, when this, too, was withdrawn. Henceforth, outside of Alexandria and Cairo, the defence of Egypt

was held to be within the competence of Egypt's own army. Ten years were to elapse from 1886 before the offensive was resumed; ten weary years for men like Kitchener, Rundle, and Hunter, who fretted for war and glory.

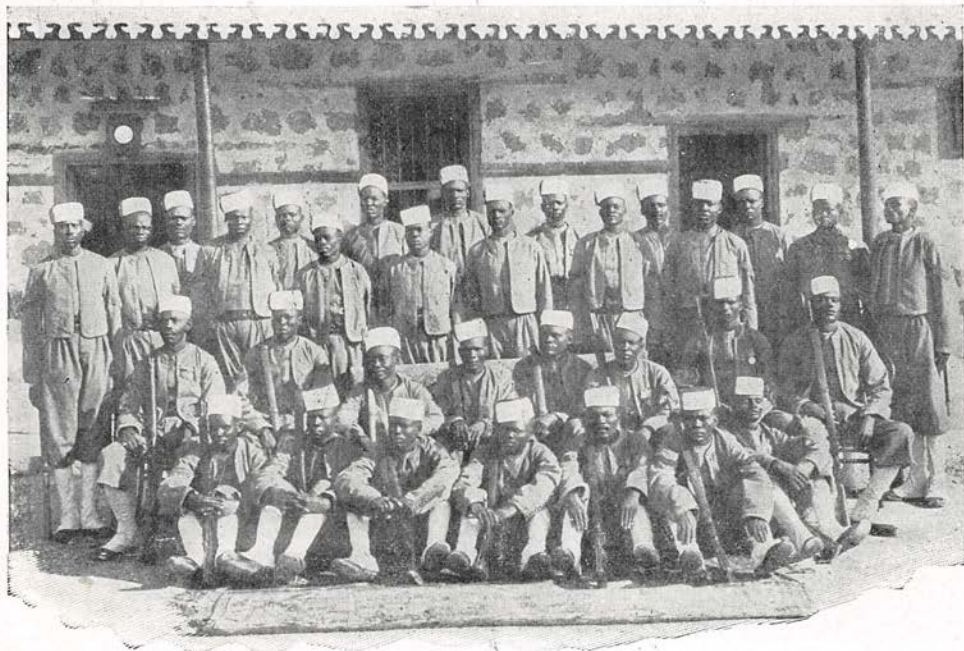
As now constituted the Egyptian Army consisted of twelve battalions of infantry, each about 700 strong; eight squadrons of cavalry, eight companies of camel corps, and three batteries of artillery, distributed between Alexandria, Cairo, Souakim, Assouan, and Wadi Halfa. The original number of twenty-six British officers had increased to sixty. All arms carried the Martini rifle; the cavalry adding to lance and sabre the Martini carbine. Battalions one to eight were composed of native Egyptians; battalions nine to twelve of Soudanese. Battalions five to eight had no British officers; the other Egyptian battalions had three British



LANCERS.

officers apiece, while four were allotted to each black battalion, as requiring more instruction and more control.

It has been said by someone that Evelyn Wood forged the sword of the Egyptian Army, Grenfell tested it, and Kitchener wielded it. Sir Francis Grenfell's command dated from April, 1885, to April, 1892. Under Grenfell the army was increased in all arms to a total establishment of 12,902 officers and men, and 160 guns of all kinds. This, for a population exceeding 7,000,000, was not



CORPORALS, 12TH SOUDANESE.

excessive, and its annual budget of £500,000 was equally reasonable.

The history of the army from 1886 to 1896 is not exciting. Defensive tactics never are. In the Souakim district intermittent fighting with the famous Osman Digna continued till the action of Afafit, on the 19th February, 1891, when the then Governor of Souakim, Colonel Holled-Smith, inflicted a final check on the Dervishes in that quarter. Previously to this Governor Kitchener, though advised from Cairo to continue on the defensive, had attacked Osman Digna's camp at Handoub on the 17th January, 1888, and in the undecisive engagement had received a bullet in the jaw, which he spat out at lunch some years later. What Afafit did for the Red Sea Littoral the battle of Toski did for the Nile Frontier at Halfa. The Mahdi was dead; and much surprise had been evinced that his successor, the Khalifa



ARTILLERY OFFICER IN REVIEW ORDER, SUMMER DRESS.

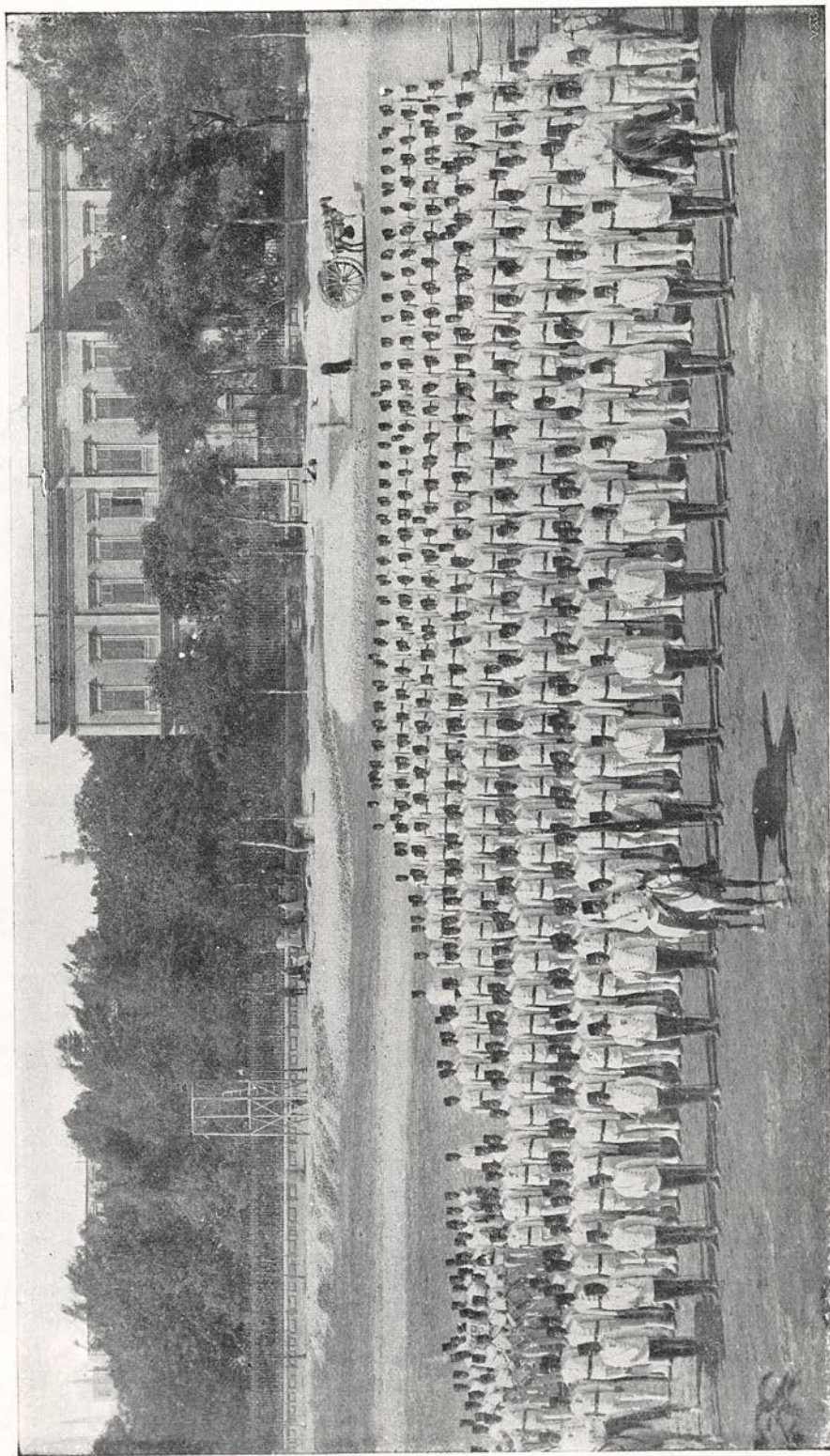


AN ARTILLERY SERGEANT.



PRIVATE,
SUDANESE INFANTRY.

Abdullah Taaishi, had never carried out his boast to invade Egypt. In 1889, however, Abdullah deputed the famous Wad-el-Nejumi, conqueror of Hicks and of Gordon, to attempt this impossible task with 5,000 braves. Like the wolf on the fold, or, if report be true, more like a Russian soldier knouted to the front, Wad-el-Nejumi came on bravely, wholly dependent for supplies on the rich country that he hoped to conquer. His army, however, soon got out of hand and, a strong detachment breaking down to the river, was routed at Argeen on the 2nd July, 1889, by an Egyptian force under Colonel Wodehouse, then commanding the Frontier Field Force. This action was the first unaided victory of the Anglo-Egyptian Army, and should have given Wad-el-Nejumi a taste of what was to come; but he kept on



4TH EGYPTIAN BATTALION PARADING IN ABDEEN PALACE SQUARE.

northwards. The Sirdar Grenfell now ordered to the front a British battalion, and on the 3rd August, 1889, came up in person with the Dervish leader at Toski and utterly routed him. Wad-el-Nejumi was killed; his army disappeared from the face of the desert; Dervish raids ceased to alarm the peasants on the Nile between Halfa and Assouan, and the frontier was pushed forward

instructions—or shall I say, for politeness's sake, the Khedive's instructions?—authorising an expedition for the recovery of the Dongola Province and directing him to occupy Akasha. The Egyptian Army had attained its majority; the day for which all intelligent people in Egypt had so long fretted—in company with Kitchener, Rundle, Hunter, Wingate, Maxwell, Macdonald, and a score of other soldiers,



BUGLER AND DRUMMER.

to Sarra's, thirty miles south of Halfa. The Khalifa Abdullah, evidently impressed, now determined to put his head in the sand of Omdurman and ignore Egypt.

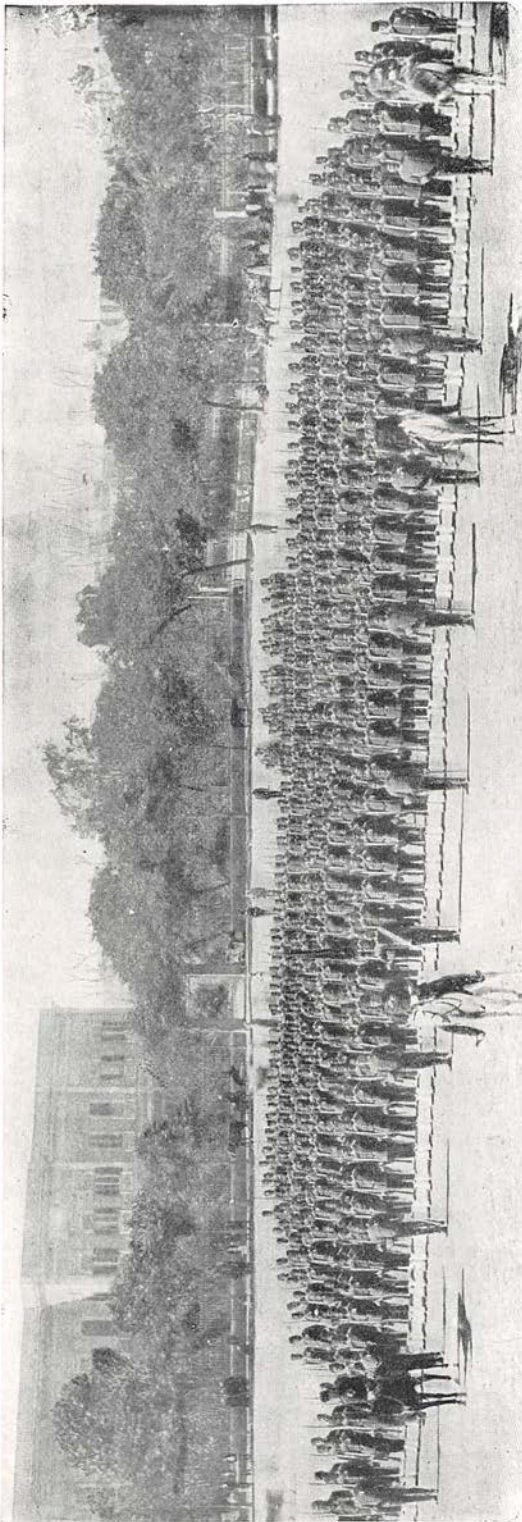
But events and the wheel of time, of which this butcher and debauchee was not master, determined in 1896 to inform him of the proximity of a day of reckoning. Shortly before midnight on the 12th March, 1896, the third Sirdar of the Anglo-Egyptian Army received Lord Cromer's in-



EGYPTIAN CORPORALS WITH BRITISH DRILL SERGEANT.



GROUP OF EGYPTIAN SERGEANTS.



5TH EGYPTIAN BATTALION PARADING IN ABDEEN PALACE SQUARE.

ancient in Egyptian service, but not in years—had come. Then arose the second clamour for service under the Sirdar. The first had occurred at the birth of the Army, but had quickly been despised by longheads in the Queen's service as ill-advised and bad form. Several good men and true, notably Colonels Wodehouse, Chermiside, and Hallam-Parr, had previously left the service, disgusted with enforced inactivity. From sub. to colonel in the British Army of Occupation at Cairo it had long been fashionable to regard the Egyptian Army officer as the next thing to a "ranker." The word *bimbashi* (major) had become a word of reproach. The British cavalry sub. would condescend to meet the Gippy Army officer at polo, but, except for the chosen few, that was the limit of his sociability. Add to all this—for six long years there had been nothing more glorious to do than to drill niggers. But now all was changed instantaneously—every *bimbashi* instantly became a "lucky fellow." The fact is, the *bimbashi* was at all times man for man the superior of his fellow in the British Army. Anybody can scrape into the King's service, given an examination-standard of brains, but admission to the Khedive's service implied the consent of an exacting Sirdar and a willingness to undertake infinite drudgery—two excellent tests, as the records of many *bimbashis* prove.

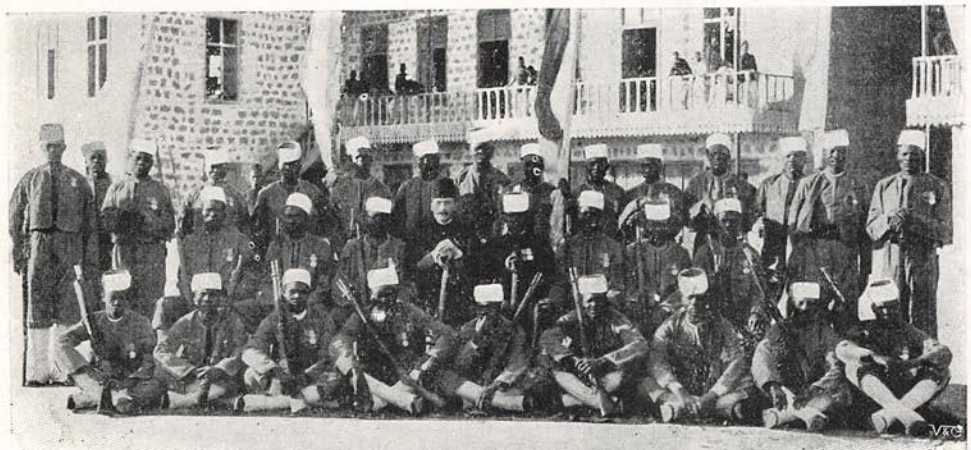
On the 16th March, 1896, Hunter Pasha, then commanding at Halfa, with Major Collinson and the 13th Soudanese, two squadrons of cavalry under Captain, now General Broadwood, two field batteries, two Nordenfelts, and one company of the Camel Corps, moved south to seize Akasha. On the 20th this was done. The exigencies of space will not allow—and, indeed, the recent date of the events do not demand—that I should give a detailed account here of the



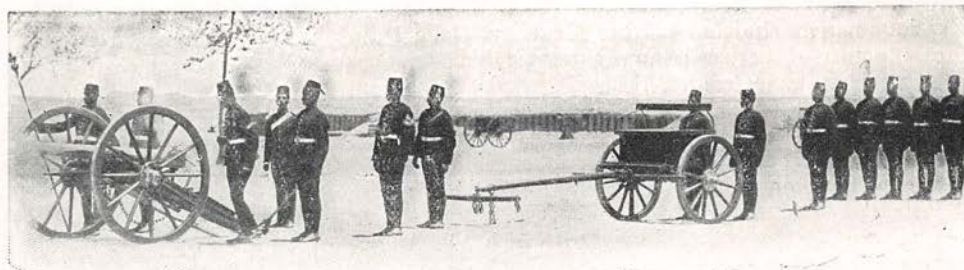
DRUMMERS AND BUGLERS, 12TH SOUDANESE.

Dongola, Berber, and Omdurman campaigns. Suffice it that the supreme command was accorded throughout to the Sirdar, Sir Herbert Kitchener, and that at Firket, 7th June, 1896, at the battle of the Atbara, 8th April, 1898, and at Omdurman, 2nd September, 1898, the Egyptian Army earned universal encomiums for discipline and gallantry, while throughout the continuous campaign of thirty-four months it surpassed even these in its endurance of hardships and capacity for labour. Towards the close, Colonel Parsons, who had assumed command of the Kassala district east of Omdurman recently ceded to Egypt by Italy, rounded up the campaign at the action of Gedaref, 28th September, 1898, and Colonel Lewis at Rosaires, 26th December, 1898, struck the last blow at the Khalifa's

remaining independent Emir. The despised Egyptian Army, alone in the first part of the campaign and stiffened by a British brigade towards the close, had asserted its claim to respect, and had accomplished in 1898 what England and Egypt had miserably muddled in 1884—namely, the extinction of Mahdism. Other times, other manners. The composition of the Egyptian force at the battle outside Omdurman was as follows:—Macdonald's Brigade, 12th, 13th, and 14th Soudanese and 8th Egyptian battalions; Maxwell's, 9th, 10th, and 11th Soudanese and 2nd Egyptian; Lewis's, 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 15th Egyptian; Collinson's, 1st, 5th, 17th, and 18th Egyptian—sixteen battalions in all. Artillery under Colonel Long, four field batteries and one horse battery of six guns and two Maxims



SERGEANTS, 12TH SOUDANESE.

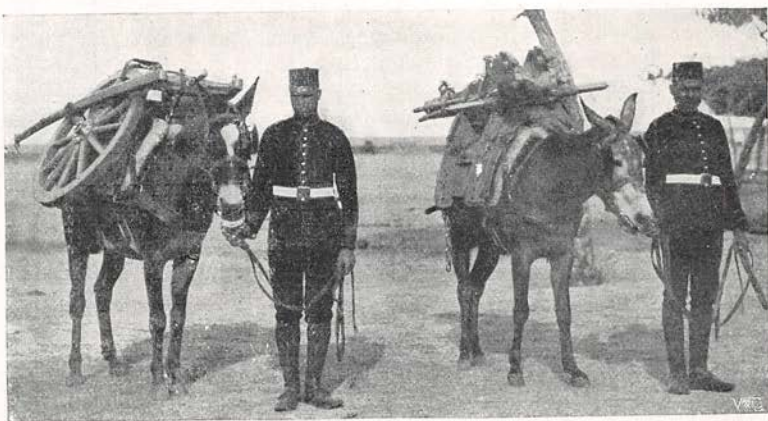


ARTILLERY AT PRACTICE.

each. Gunboats under Commander Keppel, ten. Cavalry under Colonel Broadwood, ten squadrons. Camel Corps under Colonel Tudway, eight companies—or 17,600 officers and men in all. The very last blow of all was struck a year later by Colonel Wingate and Lieut. - Colonel Mahon, at Om Debrikat, on the 24th November, 1899. Here the Khalifa Abdullah Taaishi and ten of his Emirs met their doom. Thanks to the Anglo-Egyptian Army, you can now procure a donkey in Alexandria and proceed unarmed and alone to Fashoda, a distance, if you follow the Nile, of more than 2,000 miles.

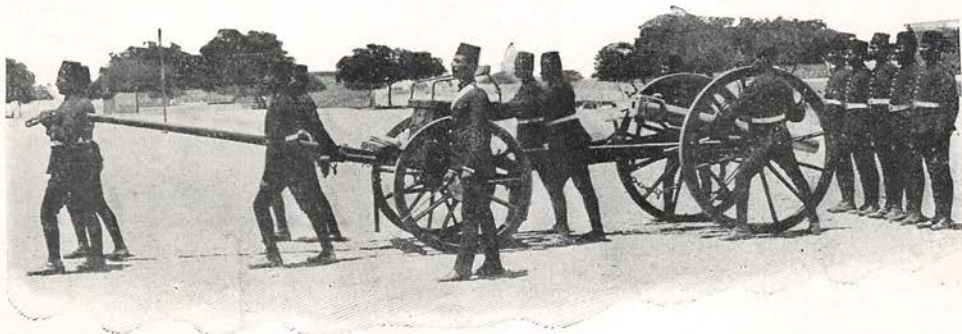
After Omdurman many of the older British officers of the Egyptian Army hastened to apply for what was now to them almost more than their well-earned honours and promotions—namely, service with the regular British Army. The Egyptian Army will know no more

of Kitchener, Rundle, Hunter, Macdonald, Maxwell, Mahon, Broadwood, Tudway, and Parsons. The last to go was, I believe, the Sirdar, now Lord Kitchener of Khartoum. He has been replaced by a man who has no enemies in or outside the service. The fourth



MULE BATTERY.

Sirdar, Lt.-General Sir Francis Wingate, has elected to remain in Egypt, although the prospect of war has been exchanged for the prospect of police duties in the Soudan. The Egyptian Army remains at approximately the same strength as at the battle of Omdurman.



ARTILLERY WITH FIELD GUN.

It recruits annually 4,700 men; has 145 British officers; and 200 native students at the Military College in Cairo. South of Berber it now garrisons Shendy, Omdurman, Khartoum, Gedaref, Senaar, Kassala, El Duem, Fashoda, and El Obeid. Never again, we may suppose, will these garrisons be overwhelmed by Dervish hordes; they contain a totally different class of soldier to the scratch rabble commanded in 1883 by Gordon, Hicks, and Slatin.

Finally, there are two duties to which the Anglo-Egyptian Army must be constant: first, its present police work between Wadai and Abyssinia, and from the Delta to Uganda and the Bahr-el-Gazelle; secondly, its staff work. This latter must fall upon its officers at headquarters, Cairo.

We may even suppose that Pall Mall has never seriously contemplated the defence of Egypt against a European army, although the idea is well within the range of possibilities. The mainstay of such defence would have to be the Anglo-Egyptian Army, and it would have to choose its positions, build its trenches and sangars in the desert, and sit tight against whole batteries of the best artillery. This, we know, is different work to the simply contrived zareba and the "square" formation of Omdurman—but has it been provided for? If not, the Anglo-Egyptian

General Staff has duties yet to perform.

"We shall never annex nor proclaim a protectorate over Egypt," said Lord Wolseley in 1886, "because by so doing we should become a

Continental Power." The portentous wisdom of this prophecy fits very badly with our present position at Khartoum, for to hold the Soudan without Egypt would be to live in a house without a roof. Having taken the Soudan, we are compelled to provide for the defence of Egypt. Therefore we will remember that very serious duties yet confront any Sirdar of the Anglo-Egyptian Army, and we may congratulate ourselves that, for the moment, these are in the keeping of that fine soldier and scholar, Reginald Wingate.



SERGEANT-MAJOR, EGYPTIAN INFANTRY.



EGYPTIAN INFANTRY.