Kitchener

KITCHENER

ORGANIZER OF VICTORY

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

WITH PORTRAITS

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_He came at the right hour, and he was the right man.

_G. W. STEEVENS.

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CHAPTER I

FOREWORD

SELDOM has any one man stood for a multitudinous and highly complex nation with so tremendous and complete an emphasis as Lord Kitchener stood at the beginning of the war for the British nation.

He was not an incarnation of the people, he did not express the total character of the nation; but with a force hardly ever equalled in our history he became the Mood of the British people, the living expression of the Will of the entire British Empire.

During the disembarkation of our troops in France a British sergeant, talking to a newspaper correspondent, said that the British soldier is the most cheerful, humorous, and kind-hearted person in the world, “but,” said he, “Tommy can look cruel when he is roused.” At that moment a young trooper, fresh-faced and smiling, found himself in trouble with a bunch of horses; in a second he slipped from the numnah, got a short hold of the reins, and jagged the restive chargers into obedient docility. As he turned his head, his young face was flushed, his jaws were set, and his eyes had a glint of cruelty. The sergeant said to the newspaper correspondent, “See that? Well. that’s what I mean.”

It was this Mood of the Nation that Lord Kitchener so completely represented and so swiftly expressed at the beginning of the war. He was Britain looking cruel. He was the Englishman with his blood up. He was the nation suddenly jerked into the realization that everything said of Germany by even the most extravagant Germanophobes was entirely, shockingly, incredibly true. “The Day” had dawned. Honour was publicly thrown aside by the Prussian Government. Truth was openly derided by these apostles of Force. And, to complete the awakening, the natural and amazed indignation of the civilized world at broken treaties and disowned obligations was characterized by the Germans as hypocrisy.

In a moment, the blood of the Englishman was up. He realized his danger. He sprang to his feet, clenching his fists, and he looked cruel. No other man of our time could so vigorously and ruthlessly have represented this particular mood of the British people, this one aspect of the national temperament, as Kitchener of

Khartoum.

Lord Kitchener, as the reader of this little book will discover, is neither the Machine nor the Ogre of popular imagination. He is perfectly human. There is, indeed, something frank, boyish, and rough-humoured in his disposition. He is shy, and he has moments when he craves for sympathy. All the same he does not represent the British character in any of its most amiable qualities. He stands absolutely for the nation just now, but he is not the highest, the best, not even the most likeable of English types. Unroused he is the deliberate, work-loving, brusque, quite unimaginative, and very thorough British administrator: roused, he is the jaws of the bulldog.

When it was announced in the tense moments at the declaration of war, that Lord Kitchener was to take into his hands the administration of the army, the whole British nation–it is no exaggeration to say it–breathed again. His instant demand for 500,000 men did not alarm or infuriate a peace-loving nation; it spread. after the first shock, a feeling of safety. His preparation for a war of three years did not shock the national conscience; it sensibly relieved anxiety and settled people's thoughts. In "K. of K." the nation saw not only a great organizer of victory, but its own fierce mood, its own tenacious will, its own enduring strength, its own multiplied, world-flung, and historic spirit. By one of those mysterious intuitions of democracy, which sweep like lightning through myriads of people, and which are sometimes, not always, more to be trusted than the nice and careful judgments of discriminating intelligence, Kitchener stood in the confidence of the nation as the one absolute unchallengeable man for the storm which had broken with such bewildering suddenness upon the drowsiness of its domestic life.

A sketch of his character, it is hoped,–although it be a perfectly frank and critical piece of work,–will deepen and sustain that confidence through the days ahead, when the gentle and the kind, as well as the weak and the pusillanimous, are perhaps tempted to cry for too early a mercy, too hazardous a peace. Lord Kitchener may not stand for Christianity; but he does stand for the mills of God. He may not represent the sweetness and grace of British civilization; but he does represent the righteous indignation of the British people when its path is challenged by savage barbarism and a philosophical but truculent atheism. When he tells us we may let go our grip, civilization may turn from the destruction of war to the reconstruction of peace with the sure and certain hope that the heirs of Nietzsche, the sons of Treitschke, the blood-stained legions of Attila, will never

more lay upon the back of social reformation a burden of intolerable militarism and never more darken the green and pleasant fields of humanity with the shadow of hateful war. But till Kitchener cries “ENOUGH!” the British Empire–so slow to anger, so unswaggering, so peace-loving, and so un-Prussian–must strike till the dust is red.

When Kitchener relaxes the grip of his clenched hands the neck of the Prussian eagle will be broken, and only then will the great nations and the small nations be able to advance into the Promised Land of which Lord Kitchener perhaps has not even permitted himself to dream.

One sees in him, then, not only the expression of England looking cruel, but the strength, the determination, and the practical wisdom of those great and glorious nations with whom it is the honour of Great Britain to be allied. At the same time one is not conscious of any feeling towards Kitchener which could be heightened into hero-worship. He is not Civilization, but the servant of Civilization. He is not Progress, but the policeman of Progress. One employs him with admiration and rewards him with gratitude. But one does not want to be like him.

CHAPTER II

OUR ENGLISH HERO IS BORN AN IRISHMAN

AND BECOMES A FRENCHMAN

IN the “hungry forties,” a retired cavalry soldier from England happened to be in Dublin during the sale of some considerable estates in the south of Ireland. The paltry bidding at the auction of these lands tempted the hard-headed Englishman, and for a sum of £3000 he bought a number of rather neglected acres in the two counties of Limerick and Kerry.

This retired cavalry soldier was Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Horatio Kitchener. He had started life in the Foot, had seen service in India, had exchanged into the cavalry, and now was on the retired list, fairly well off, full of energy, and with a keen eye for the main chance. He was married to an Englishwoman, the daughter of a reverend doctor of divinity in Suffolk, one John Chevallier, an old and dignified family in that part of the world, but of Jersey origin, and therefore French-blooded. There was a baby among the colonel’s impedimenta when he came to Ireland, a boy named Chevallier Kitchener.

Two years after he had settled on his Irish estates that is to say in the year 1850, and on the pleasantest day of the year, to wit, Midsummer Day, the 24th of June, which is also St. John’s Day, another son was added to the colonel’s *ménage*, the first Irish-born of the family, Horatio Herbert Kitchener. In due course three other children were born in Ireland, two sons and a daughter, forming together a cheerful and comfortable family of five, the baby girl a delightful comfort to Mrs. Kitchener among her court of strapping masculinity.

Papa Kitchener was lord of that household. He had bought his estates not for pleasure and not for display. His master-thought, buzzing night and day in his cold, calculating brain, was how to turn his £3000 into a fortune. He went about this work with a methodical thoroughness which manifested itself in a somewhat mightier degree and certainly on a more glorious field when his second son took over the ancient Kingdom of Egypt. He was up early; he spent the greater part of the day in the saddle; he knew the quality of every field on his estate; he hob-a-nobbed with the farmers; he kept himself abreast of his times, in the matter of agricultural science; he studied to get on. He bought more land; reclaimed bog

and wilderness; set up a brickworks and a tile factory; took into his house a couple of pupils; worked everybody about him from morning till night; improved the breed of his cattle; cleaned his fields before he sowed them; introduced new forms of drainage and irrigation; lived hard; lived earnestly; lived usefully if not amiably; and was soon in a position to sell parcels of land at a thousand pounds apiece, and the rent of his estate for £14,000.

It may be imagined that this vigorous husbandman, his eye always on the main chance, had small time for such subsidiary considerations as the development of his sons. Mrs. Kitchener was left very much to shift for herself in a rather shabby and noisy household, while the agricultural colonel looked over the brick walls of his pig-styes, into his whitewashed cowsheds, into his sheep-pens, and into his stables, every power of his brain concentrated on the pleasant work of improving his horses, his sheep, his cows, and his pigs. The boys were to be improved, too, but no doubt Nature might be trusted in that department of the farm. They were his sons; they could not have had a better father; if they went to the wall, then, by Heaven, the wall was too good for them.

On one occasion Herbert Kitchener was brought up before his father as an incorrigible idler. He was told that if he did not work at his books he should be apprenticed to a hatter–the headgear of Papa Kitchener conveying a sufficiently grim emphasis to this infinite contempt for the hat trade. That was Papa Kitchener's part in the business of education. To the genius of a certain Miss Tucker the intellectual development of the young Kitcheners was at first committed, and when they had grown beyond the endurance of her nerves, they vexed the souls of a tutor or two for a brief period, and then were sent to a Protestant school at Kilflynn, kept by a friend of the family, the Reverend William Raymond. Those who know anything of the South of Ireland will not need to be told that the Protestant clergy of that beautiful and gentle country, whatever their other virtues, are not stars of the first magnitude in the matter of scholarship. One would not go to them for historical information or for inspiration in philosophy. However, Herbert Kitchener certainly went to church, and as certainly graced the bench of a Sunday-school class. One may conjecture that any troublesome Roman heredity derived from dead and gone Chevalliers was very effectively extirpated in the Sunday school of the Reverend William Raymond; whether the least of the elements of Christianity were taught is another matter.

But Herbert Kitchener's chief concern in those days was the open air and the

Atlantic Ocean. He loved the hedgerow, he loved the back of any old horse, and he loved the sea. Latin exercises and lectures on the popes came only as interruptions to long tramps over the fields, fine gallops across the meadows, fierce joltings, in a tumbril down the country lanes, and exulting dives from off a streaming rock into the cheerful burly of the sea.

If he did not shape like a scholar, at any rate he shaped like a man; and, tall as he was for his years, almost gawky, he was nothing of a weed, being thick-set, straight-legged, and somewhat full of face. But for a certain dignity of brow and a sharp, vital, challenging look in his blue eyes, he might have passed for a farmer's son, his future in the fields, his heaven no higher than the hunting-saddle. There was a smell of the gunroom and the stables about the Kitchener boys, but nothing bucolic in their appearance. They hung together, did not mix with the boys of the neighbourhood, and played no practical jokes with the surrounding farmers. The shyness which in after life was imputed to K. of K. for arrogance was a Kitchener characteristic. But this shyness was of the manful, steady, and inward order; there was nothing shrinking and timid in its nature: its expression was neither a blush nor a giggle. The Kitchener boys understood each other very well; they felt that they did not understand other people. When other people turned up, they looked on. When they were alone together they let themselves go, but not violently or foolishly. It is said that they took no risks in their sea-bathing, to the scorn of Irish boys in bare legs and freckles.

As a remedy for the increasing perplexities of his domestic situation. Papa Kitchener conceived the idea of bundling off his sons to a foreign country. Somehow or other he came to hear of a Reverend J. Bennett living at Villeneuve in Switzerland, who took pupils and preached the Gospel. That was enough for Colonel Kitchener. In 1863, K. of K. then being thirteen years of age, the boys were despatched to the hillside of the Lake of Geneva -good, solid, Protestant ground. Mrs. Kitchener was left with her only daughter. The colonel could now keep his eye on the main chance without distraction.

Tragedy befell this household in the following year of 1864, for Mrs. Kitchener passed away from the gentle and familiar pleasantness of mother earth to join the spirits of forgotten Chevalliers in another, stranger world. The boys worked on with their Protestant tutor, embarked on a few educational travels, and then returned to the British Isles, stopping for the first time in their lives in London, where an army crammer waited to finish them off in Kensington Square.

This gentleman was another Protestant clergyman, the Reverend George Frost, and his establishment was fairly well attended by young gentlemen of the fortunate classes. Among these lively and rejoicing colts, Herbert Kitchener was regarded as something of a clodhopper. He neither shone in the classroom nor scintillated under the midnight skies. His fellows looked upon him as a heavy, plodding, painstaking, and unilluminating oaf–a man without pleasantness or brilliance, his slow feet moving stolidly along the fixed and formidable groove which culminates in a club armchair and a pension. He did not escape the usual baiting of more irresponsible spirits. “Why don’t you go for them when they rot you?” he was asked by a fellow pupil. His answer, contemptuous enough, was this: “What do they matter?” But this baiting never came to real ragging. Kitchener might turn a deaf ear to chaff; he would not have turned, perhaps, his other cheek to the smiter.

From this tutor in Kensington Square, Herbert Kitchener passed to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in 1868, twenty years after Charles Gordon had entered “the shop” with his wonderful soul on fire for every kind of glory. Nothing in Herbert Kitchener created passionate friendships or stirred the admiration of smaller men among the cadets. He was remarkable for quickness in mathematics, but in everything else was accounted thick-headed,–a slow coach climbing the dull hill of duty which has no dazzle of adventure at the crest. He chose the Royal Engineers for his arm, and settled down to the sober and staying stride of the British sapper. He studied his textbooks with “a long persistency of purpose,” and attended lectures with a solid intention to learn what he could. No cadet ever gave less trouble to his superiors. He was one of those obstinate young Britons who mean to get on, and who triumph not by the luck of the brain-centres but by the deliberate and steadfast exercise of will-power. He made his brain do what his spirit wished to do, the one or two brilliant cells, such as the mathematical, encouraging the less gifted others to obey their master’s bidding.

[Fig. 2. HORATIO HERBERT KITCHENER

As a Cadet at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich]

Papa Kitchener was in France, married again and living pleasantly at Dinan. There came young Herbert in 1870 on a holiday visit, bringing his textbooks along with him. Of a sudden the straight road of his set purpose was dazzled by a great light–the light of adventure, the blaze of war. Prussia and France came to

grips. The set purpose dwindled, paled, went out like a match. Our Woolwich cadet found himself looking into a light that was like the glare of a furnace. The marshalling of the legions of France beat a new music in his heart. The thunder of cannon broke in upon the conned axioms of his textbooks like the banging of an iron fist on the door of a sleeper. Troops went by, trundling their guns, singing the “Marseillaise,” their standards fluttering in a glitter of bayonets….

Kitchener went off and offered his services to the French. There he stood before them, a solid twenty years of hale manhood, well over six feet, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, straight-legged, and hard as steel, the face of him brown as sand, his carriage resolute, his brain already versed in war science, his body already disciplined, his spirit clamorous for a fight. Well, they did not think twice.

CHAPTER III

KITCHENER BECOMES A FRENCHMAN,

BUT IS PRUSSIANIZED BACK INTO PERMANENT ENGLISH

SOME men enter the army for its social pleasantness; some because the chance of a fight is the hunger and thirst of their souls; some because it has a pension at the end of it. Kitchener went to Woolwich because his father wished him to be a soldier, because he himself thought it offered a field for conscious ambitions, and because it had the certainty of a pension at the end. War no more entered into his calculations at that period than swagger. He wanted to see the world, he wanted to do things, and he wanted to be safe for the future. K. of K.‘s master-passion,, hardly to be called a passion because it is so cold, so bloodless, so impersonal, and so empty of self-seeking, is ambition. As soon as he had got his feet in youth, as soon as he perceived that life is a struggle for existence, as soon as he knew vitally that a man must work if he is to conquer, Kitchener set himself to get on, and told his brothers he meant to get on. But this desire for success was impersonal in the sense that he did not want to amass wealth or to win popularity or to live with the thought of Westminster Abbey in his soul. He wanted success because he wanted power. He wanted power because it was his nature to exercise power. His will had mastered a slow brain, forcing it to the strange and uncongenial labour of book-learning; his will was now forcing him towards power because that was its native direction, because without power his life would be a frustrated life.

But here on the threshold of his life, our passionless and deliberate young man was confronted by glory, and he threw everything aside to run and embrace this temptress of youth, flinging his textbooks aside, careless of pensions, careless of life, longing only for the one splendid elation of danger and the hazard of battle. It was his first deviation from the set path, and I know of no other in the years that followed.

He entered the French Army, and was with the troops that pushed up towards beleaguered Paris under General Chanzy. If his sudden desire for glory had been a substantial part of his character instead of a mere ebullition of youth, it might have been suppressed, perhaps torn up by the roots, in the first few months of his

campaigning. For he was surrounded on all sides by the most valorous and passionate troops in Europe, troops whose songs on the march tell of glory and immortality, troops whose patriotism is like a consuming fire, and whose onslaught in battle is like a whirlwind. The young English volunteer serving with these fine and fervorous troops, serving, too, under as brave and debonair a general as ever wore the French *képi,* saw little on that march towards Paris except the cold and merciless destruction of glory by the hand of something called science. Vain the valour of the French, vain the superb clan which swept them forward: something quite cold and–depressing, something quite passionless and deadly, something without patriotism and without war-songs., waited for these children of glory and crushed them, devastated them, wiped them out of the ranks of life. Thus at the very dawn of his existence the young Kitchener took his cold *douche* at the hands of science, and never afterwards permitted his mind to stray from the set path leading through dullness and unsparing labour to the exercise of power.

War had made him a French soldier, but war as the Prussians conducted it prevented him from becoming a Frenchman. He saw that there was no straight and certain road on the field of glory, and went back from the ravaged battle-ground of France to his textbooks at Woolwich, his mind Englished once again. his ambition revived, his will in supreme command. They say that he came in for a wigging at the hands of the Duke of Cambridge for having dared to serve under the tricolour; and the old Duke, so constant a worshipper at St. Anne’s, Soho, was not a pleasant person to face, particularly on a gouty afternoon, in the gloom of the old War Office. If Kitchener really did come in for that dressing-down, we must think that it hurt, particularly as he returned from the stricken field after a sharp attack of pleurisy. M. Clermont Ganneau, a companion of his after years, says that K. of K. stood up to the old Duke and said, “I understood, sir, that I should not be wanted for some time; I don’t like being idle; and I thought perhaps I might learn something.” We wonder!

Whether he stood up to the Duke, and whether he ascended in a French balloon during the war, one thing at least is certain, that he learned a lesson in France which was a lesson for life. He learned the value of science, the superiority of purpose and precision over emotion and rapture; and, this lesson chiming with his natural disposition, he returned to Woolwich in good heart for the future and worked like a dray-horse till he had passed his examination and become a commissioned sapper. This was in January, 1871, five months before he came of age.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAREER IN BRIEF

IT has been said by an American, to whom the present writer doffs his cap, that the method of Lord Kitchener may be expressed in the phrase, “Silence and work and silence –and then the end.”

One may add that the silence is justified by the character of the work, for the work to which Lord Kitchener has mostly laid his powerful and patient hand belongs to the order of labour about which humanity is excusably incurious. Many things have to be done in this world which are of infinitely more service to the progress of the human race than the work of poet and composer; but it is impossible to rhapsodize about these beneficent services, hard enough to be transiently interested in their existence. I have often wondered what an engineer from the Sudan or a soldier from the Khyber Pass must think of the fluttering excitement in a London drawing-room when some popular actor, or some notorious lady who has acquired “the habit of the divorce court,” makes an imposing entrance. But one learns after painful experience that the actor and the lady are really and truly more interesting than the engineer and the soldier–worse still, one often yawns when the engineer is talking and wishes the soldier at Tipperary before he has got his second wind.

Kitchener’s work has been dull. He was a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1871, and himself found the performance of those duties so tedious that in 1874 he went surveying in Palestine. Here one might hope for romance, and here indeed he was twice in peril of his life, but on the whole he spent four years in drawing maps, and you may draw the most accurate and monumental maps in the world without inspiring any contemporary poet to sing your praises to posterity.

Then Kitchener went to Egypt, and began to organize a force of native cavalry. Dull work again–dull, plodding, unexciting work, work over which the world gladly draws the curtain of silence, with no desire to peer behind the scenes. Then he took in hand the delimitation of some tiresome boundary, and was presently appointed Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral–a title which very successfully warns off public interest. Then he built railways, raised armies,

organized the business side of war, and presently discharged victorious cannon at the gates of Khartoum.

That was “the End.” Silence girded up its loins and skedaddled for its life. The world was filled with the clamour of one man’s name. Editors tumbled over each other in their eagerness to find out everything they could concerning this extraordinary person who at the age of forty-eight had done something which reached back in time for its historical basis to the days when Joseph stood before Pharaoh and Moses crowed in his cradle among the reeds of the Nile. Here was a new Pyramid in Egypt. And–when the editors came to ask questions–a new Sphinx. No: silence and work and silence–and then the end, with silence falling once more upon the man who by dull and wearisome work had rendered possible the firework set-piece of the End.

Kitchener, with Lord Cromer, enjoys the splendid fame of standing godfather to modern Egypt. By his measured preparations, his dogged perseverance, and his incessant hard thinking in a straight line he struck that sudden and shattering blow at Khartoum which gave to Lord Cromer and those who came after him an Egypt of almost infinite promise. The end is so splendid that to, regard it only in passing, as a sore-footed tourist regards a masterpiece on the long walls of the Pitti Palace, is to find one’s self dazzled and blinded. Modern Egypt is one of the wonders of the world, and Kitchener’s hand is dusty and bruised and blood-stained with the labour of that sublime resurrection.

After a brief visit to London, where he donned a peer’s robes, swallowed a deal of turtle soup, listened to columns of poor rhetoric, and snubbed innumerable scintillating lion-hunters, Kitchener returned to his work. He wanted a Gordon College and a Christian Cathedral at Khartoum, and work of that kind pleased him better than being bored by the intensely interested and overwhelmingly admiring *mondaines* of London. No young subaltern ever hurried home from India to the sweet shady side of Pall Mall so furiously as K. of K. turned his face to the sand of the desert and the stars of the Arabian waste.

He finished his dull work in Egypt, and in a year was setting people’s minds at rest in England by taking over the staff of Lord Roberts in South Africa. With Roberts and Kitchener to take charge of that dreadful and rather sordid war–a war consecrated only by the heroism of the warring troops on either side, and redeemed only by the superb act of statesmanship which gave to the Boers not merely their freedom but the idea of a democratic destiny–with Roberts there to

strike swiftly and with Kitchener there to organize carefully, no one in England doubted the end.

After the work in South Africa, Kitchener was for some time almost the war-cry of a party in the House of Commons, not by his own fault, but much to his damage. There are people in England who would gladly hand over to Kitchener's will the entire machinery of the British Empire. There are others who think that his mind is so exclusively the mind of an autocratic organizer that he would be the ruin of any empire in which the civil power was not absolutely paramount. In Germany I think he would be the Chancellor, if the Emperor's feelings towards the divine nature of his position would admit a man of really commanding genius to stand in the shadow of the throne. In England no man doubts that Kitchener could carry to a successful issue anything to which he put his hand. And so "Kitchener" became a war-cry, a battle-ground of dispute, his too hurried apotheosis by one party encouraging the opposing party to suggest the fallibility of this otherwise very useful and capable servant of the Crown.

Kitchener went to India. His dull work was resumed, and silence fell upon him again until for a brief moment an official altercation with the Viceroy, Lord Curzon,–in spite of Kitchener's sincere and noble friendship for the beautiful Lady Curzon,–set people talking to the same tune: Kitchener, they said, ought to be recalled and put in sole charge of the British War Office with an absolute discretion to do what he would for the defence of the Empire.

From India he returned to Egypt, and from Egypt he went to the War Office–one of the most obstinately and obtusely conservative of men becoming the colleague of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill.

Here we may leave him for the moment, only remarking to our readers, as we proceed to relate a few stories of his career, that once again Kitchener takes up the burden of dull, laborious, unexciting work, while men of quicker mind and more heroic qualities, like Field Marshal French and General Smith-Dorrien, cover themselves with glory on the field of battle.

Nevertheless, it is the grim and scowling face of Kitchener streaming on its beam of light to the sheet of the cinematograph–not the face of French or Smith-Dorrien–which fills the picture-palace with the loudest, fiercest, and most grateful cheers.

CHAPTER V

STORIES OF THE CAREER

ONE of Lord Kitchener's cousins, a member of the Staffordshire Education Committee, has spoken of the field marshal's military beginnings.

He managed to scramble into Woolwich; he was not high in the lists; and no one thought anything about him. After leaving Woolwich he got his commission in the Royal Engineers; and still no one thought much about him. He got his first move up in the world when he was appointed on the Palestine Survey, and here he learnt how to manage native soldiers, and acquired a great deal of that command over men which to-day distinguishes him. He got that, his first appointment, because some one was wanted to go to Palestine and take photographs, and it was this knowledge that gave Lord Kitchener the lift up.

So far as I can discover this is the sole reference in the documents to Kitchener as an amateur photographer.

M. Clermont Ganneau, an archaeologist who served with Kitchener in the Palestine Survey, describes him as "a good fellow in the fullest acceptance of the word … capable of headstrong acts … a frank and most outspoken character with recesses of winsome freshness. His high spirits and cheeriness formed an agreeable contrast to the serious grave character of some of his comrades." After this blow at the popular idea, M. Ganneau proceeds: "Kitchener's ardour for his work astonished us. He drew up excellent maps, but he did not confine himself to cartographic labours. Gradually he began to take an interest in archaeological discoveries, and acquired in these matters a marked proficiency."

This last sentence is useful to the student of Kitchener's career; M. Ganneau enables us to see that Kitchener from the first was a laborious and pertinacious worker. He *gradually* took an interest in the real object of the mission, and *acquired* in this entirely new field for his energy a proficiency which even an expert remarks.

Kitchener is said by another acquaintance of those days to have been an ambitious young officer who enjoyed the adventure of foreign service and "could not understand how any young fellow in the army could settle down into

the humdrum life of a home station."

Just as he went to Woolwich a rather stupid boy, but sticking to his books managed to pass the rather difficult examinations, so, arriving in Palestine as an amateur photographer in search of adventure, he discovered the interest of archaeology and settled down to make himself an efficient student. The high spirits and cheeriness which M. Ganneau appreciated as a contrast to the gravity of the others were by no means the main characteristics of this tall young Englishman who had come to Palestine neither to make merry nor to meditate, but to get on.

It is extremely interesting, we think, to observe how slowly, how quietly, and how growingly this central passion of ambition manifested itself. He came to Palestine with a camera; he made some excellent maps; he became interested in his work; he acquired influence and power over other men; and he became in time commander of the expedition.

[Fig. 3. KITCHENER AT TWENTY-EIGHT]

A few extracts from the young officer's reports are worth quoting, though one may read all he has written without discovering a sentence of real self-revelation. The following passage is perhaps his nearest approach to autobiography:

On the 28th I received a telegram to the effect that war had been declared between Turkey and Russia. I hope this sad news will not interfere with the successful completion of the survey of Galilee.

That is how "H. H. Kitchener, Lieut. R.E., *Commanding Palestine Survey,"* concludes his report on April 30, 1877, to the Palestine Exploration Fund Committee. In the light of his subsequent career, it is the most piquant passage in the volume of the "Quarterly Statements " in which it is to be found.

This volume (1877-78) is the only one which contains many of Lieutenant Kitchener's reports, though he had been engaged on the work with Lieutenant C. R. Conder, who achieved so great a fame in Palestine exploration, since 1874. The first is dated from Haiffa March 6, 1877, and describes among other interesting incidents his first meeting with the famous Abd-el-Kader at Damascus.

The reports are simple, straightforward bits of writing, succinct and to the point. They contain very little in the way of self-revelation. They embody some excellent descriptions of historic ruins and archaeological discoveries, and are, of course, full of precise and valuable information on the physical geography of the country. A feeling for scenery reveals itself here and there in allusions to the beauty of valleys “now carpeted with flowers and green with the growing crops.” The best views of the Sea of Galilee, he tells us, are from the distant heights. “Thus seen in the evening it is particularly lovely. Deep blue shadows seem to increase the size of the hills and there is always a rosy flush in the sky and over snow-clad Hermon.”

In July, 1877, we find the Committee, at their Annual General Meeting, expressing “their high sense of Lieutenant Kitchener’s ability and zeal.” They speak of his reports as “careful and intelligent” and note with much satisfaction that ” his monthly accounts show a due regard to economy”–a premonition of one aspect of his later fame in Egypt and the Sudan: ” He has hitherto managed to conduct the survey for a monthly sum less than that which the Committee gave him as a maximum.” In due course, in a letter from Jerusalem dated October 2, 1877, we find our modest young explorer declaring himself “very much gratified” by these commendations.

While engaged in repairing Jacob’s Well in Nablus he was stoned by a mob of boys and subjected to various indignities at the hands of friendly officials, but apart from one or two such incidents he seemed to have met with no untoward adventures. His final contribution to the volume is a reprint of a paper read before the Geographical Section of the British Association, in which he gives a connected account of the Survey and announces that the great map of Palestine from Dan to Beersheba on the one-inch scale (on the model of the Ordnance Survey of England and Ireland) has been completed and is in the hands of the publishers. Here is a passage which illustrates effectively the kind of unlooked-for obstacle that beset the surveyor’s path: —

During our triangulation we found some little difficulty from the natives, who thought we were magicians, with power to find hidden treasure under the ground and that our cairns were marks to remember the places by. It was an unfortunate idea, as the result was that in the night-time our cairns often disappeared and the natives groped through any earth to the rock below, hoping to forestall us. After making the offenders rebuild the cairns on one or two occasions, these annoyances ceased.

Dishonest guides were another trouble and Lieutenant Kitchener's methods with them are worth noting.

As these people are peculiarly susceptible of sarcasm, the offenders were not happy when they were laughed out of camp for not knowing their country as well as we knew it.

Another incident furnishes the young soldier with an opportunity for descriptive writing: —

One evening about eighty Bedouin Arabs with their wives and families arrived. Their chief's son had been ill and they had taken him three days' journey to the tomb of the famous prophet Joshua; this was supposed to have cured him and they were now returning joyful after their pilgrimage. I had a goat killed in their honour which made us the best friends, and they kept up dancing and singing round fires in front of our tent all night. The men went through the usual wardance, imitating the attack and defeat of an enemy, to the accompaniment of clapping hands; but what was more curious was later in the evening, when two of the prettiest women were called by their husbands and went through a peculiar and very graceful dance with swords; they were unveiled and looked quite handsome by the firelight. Having rewarded them with lumps of sugar, I left them singing songs in our honour. Next morning they were all gone, having left pressing invitations for us to visit them. Two days later the chief came to thank me for the medicine I had given his boy.

A war correspondent, Mr. John Macdonald, who was in Egypt when Kitchener went there in 1882 to help in the making of an Egyptian Army, has described the first encounter of the young soldier with his material. Colonel Taylor, of the Nineteenth Hussars, Kitchener's commanding officer, was present on this interesting occasion: —

I remember Kitchener's gaze at the awkward, slipshod group as he took his position in the centre of a circular space round which the riders were to show their paces. "We begin with the officers," said Taylor, turning to me: "We shall train them first, then put them to drill the troopers. We have no troopers just yet, though we have 440 horses ready for them." And now began the selection of the fellah officers. They were to be tested in horsemanship. The first batch of them were ordered to mount. Round they went, Indian file, Kitchener, like a circus master, standing in the centre. Neither audible nor visible sign did he give of any

feeling aroused in him by a performance mostly disappointing and sometimes ridiculous. His hands buried in his trousers pockets, he quietly watched the emergence of the least unfit…. In half an hour or so the first native officers of the new fellah cavalry were chosen. It was then that Kitchener made his longest speech–"We'll have to drive it into those fellows," he muttered, as if thinking aloud.

How he drove it into those fellows all the world knows, and the Egyptian Army certainly owes to Kitchener a considerable debt for his devotion to its efficiency. He did not himself do very much of the "driving," but he selected the very best officers for that purpose and spared no pains in keeping them up to the mark.

Another war correspondent, Mr. William. Maxwell, has referred to this care in the selection of officers and to Kitchener's invincible pertinacity:

His industry, patience, and perseverance are phenomenal, and earned for him on the banks of the Nile–as I often heard in the last Sudan campaign–the title of "Master of the Fatigue Parties." Nothing escaped his sleepless eye–not even the ice-machine which the Guards tried to smuggle on the way to Omdurman. His impatience of red-tape and official reports was shown in Egyptian days by the fact that his office stationery consisted of a few telegraph forms which he carried in his helmet.

Not less characteristic is his dislike of "influence" in the selection of his officers. To every kind of cajolery and social recommendation he presents an adamantine front, and his success has been due in a great measure to his wise choice of instruments. Yet no general has ever been more independent of help. Sir Ian Hamilton, who served as Lord Kitchener's chief of staff in South Africa, declared that he had nothing to do but smoke his pipe and write his brief official despatches. Even Sir Archibald Hunter, his sword-hand in the Sudan, confesses that he never knew his chief's plans until the moment came for enforcing them.

… " Sorry to report the loss of five men by explosion of dynamite," is said to have been the anxious message of a subaltern, to whom relief came with the reply: "Do you want any more dynamite?"

… When his native standard-bearer, envious of the battle-worn standard of General Hunter, managed to have Lord Kitchener's standard shot through and torn to rags, the ruthless chief smiled grimly and ordered a new one. I remember

hearing him in India, when some one complained of the malicious and false reports of the habits of a great personage, say without a quaver: “What does it matter? Why, they say even worse things about me.”

It was after many heroic but baffled attempts on the part of English generals to reconquer the Sudan for Egypt, that Kitchener settled down to what must have seemed to him his life’s work. He determined that he would avenge Gordon and fly the British Flag at Khartoum. Instead, however, of picturesque excursions into the desert, he set himself to raise an immense army and to carry that great army right across the desert by means of steam power. It was during his preparations for this great task that he became something that at least resembles the Kitchener legend. “His eyes,” said a private soldier, “are like the bloomin’ Day of Judgment.” Never a talkative man, he became taciturn and preoccupied.

To find men for his purpose, men who would sacrifice everything to the business in hand, was his initial difficulty, and to get rid of men who were either incompetent or liable to human weakness was his second difficulty,–easier than the first, but not so easy as the Kitchener legend would have us believe.

Now I venture to say that this taciturnity and severity of Lord Kitchener were in the first instance the result of anxiety if not actual misgiving. Here was a man, not a soldier in the fighting sense, at the head of an expedition which was to penetrate a waterless desert, conquer hordes of fanatical Dervishes who had already beaten army after army, and to avenge the murder of a British hero whose death had stirred the whole civilized world. From the year 1882, when he went to Egypt as second in command of Egyptian cavalry,–he was then thirty-two years of age,–to the great and culminating year of 1898 when he broke the Dervish power and restored the Sudan to Egypt, what anxiety, what fears, what misgivings must have visited his brain. The story is told that after the victory of Atbara, George Steevens visited the headquarters of the army and congratulated Kitchener on his success. “Thank you,” said Kitchener, shaking his hand; and then, the smile leaving his face, he exclaimed, “My God, if I had failed!”

We can understand, then, the hardening of the man, and make allowance for his severity with incompetent officers. We can understand, too, that he would gradually acquire a terrible manner, and that the constant problems presenting themselves to his laborious mind would oust the gentler motions of the human spirit. The effect of his presence has been well described by an officer in Egypt as one of “extreme discomfort.” He described the unexpected emergence of “the

great man” from his tent, and the feeling that instantly communicated itself to those in the vicinity: —

I flinched, although I was doing nothing wrong; the subaltern stopped talking to me as though caught in a theft; a soldier who was driving in tent-pegs dropped his tools and began to fumble at his buttons; upon all sides there was an instant of extreme discomfort until the great man went in again.

A lady of quality visited Cairo after this campaign and asked that Kitchener should be presented to her. “Do you like Cairo?” he asked her, after an awkward pause, and when the lady had talked for a considerable time of her impressions and adventures, he said, “I am glad of that,” and retired with a bow. The lady, reporting this encounter, ended up with the judgment, “I never met so stupid a man.”

In October, 1910, Lord Kitchener spoke of the difficulties which confronted him after his conquest in the Sudan.

He well remembered the difficulty of the problem how best to evolve, out of the ruins left by the Dervishes, a practical reconstruction of Khartoum on sanitary lines. First careful consideration had to be given to the susceptibilities of a naturally uneducated foreign population, to whose conservative minds most modern regulations were repugnant. No trouble of that kind had, however, arisen, and the natives had agreed to the propositions, and there was no doubt that the reasonable regulations enforced meant increased length of life and increased prosperity. Those who knew Khartoum in the old days would recognize that a revolution had been effected.

The old Khartoum was an African pest-house in which every tropical disease thrived and ran rampant. Last year there were only eleven cases of malaria in a population of 50,000. He did not think such results had been achieved in any other British dependency, and they were a proof of the thorough efficiency of the country.

… In 1899, the year after the culmination of the Nile campaign, the revenue for the whole of the Sudan was estimated at only £8000, which showed a state of destitution for a country nearly as large as Europe. When this was compared with the present revenue of over £1,000,000, the progress made was apparent. Municipal steam tramways were running in Khartoum from the central to

outside districts. It was anticipated that the city would ultimately extend to the west and to the south, and, as this was Government land, it seemed assured that the extensions would be made in accordance with the existing system of planning. A suburb might also be built at Burri to the east of the waterworks.

In the following year, 1911, when he asking the public for money, the “Daily Chronicle” published the following characteristic anecdote:

Lord Kitchener’s present appeal for £4000 to complete the Anglican Cathedral at Khartoum, on which £24,000 has already been spent, recalls a story told of him by Mr. G. W. Smalley in connection with “K. of K.‘s ” similar appeal for £100,000 to build a Gordon Memorial College. But it was some little time before he could decide to issue an appeal for such a large sum, seeing that, as he said, “I should not like to fail, and, if they gave me only part of the amount, to have to return it.” Large sums were offered there and then,–at Mr. Ralli’s dining-table,– but still he hesitated. At last one of the company said, “Well, Lord Kitchener, if you had doubted about your campaign as you do now about this, you would never have got to Khartoum.” His face hardened, and he replied: “Perhaps not; but then I could depend on myself, and now I have to depend on the British Public.”

His real work in South Africa only began after Lord Roberts had taken the Boer capital of Pretoria. To catch the slippery De Wet and to stamp out the last smouldering embers of rebellion was the rather dull, exasperating, and yet most essential work which fell to his charge. He. is said to have been annoyed by the too humane tactics of Lord Roberts, and according to some people he would have ended the war very much sooner if he had been in supreme command. We only know that he did the work entrusted to him with a slow and rather lumpish thoroughness, “wiping up De Wet,” making the way of rebels extremely hard, and establishing the army in South Africa in a manner which made further rebellion a thing not likely to tempt wise and reflective men. It seems to me that a kind of contempt characterized Kitchener’s work in South Africa, and that he was glad to get out of a country which had for him neither the glory of the East nor the comfort of home.

It is said that a “Boer Delilah” who tried to captivate Kitchener reported of him after her experiment: “This is the most dangerous man in Britain. I feel as if I were within the shadow of death when I am near him. He is a man for men to conquer. No woman can reach him to use him. He would read me like an open

book in an hour, and I believe he would shoot me as he would shoot a Kaffir if he caught me red-handed. I will try all other men, but not that living death's-head. No wonder he conquered in Egypt. I think he would conquer in Hades." No doubt the temperament of the lady, which accounts for this lurid language, also accounts for the effect which she supposed Kitchener to have made upon her. Her subjective Kitchener–if she ever saw him–was not the objective Kitchener, however alarming that gentleman may be. But the story is interesting as a manifestation of the growth of the Kitchener legend. It was in South Africa that he refused to hold a conversation with a highly explosive general over the telephone. "He would fuse the wires," said Kitchener.

Of his work in India there is little to he said and few stories to be told. I asked a very energetic and enthusiastic British officer in the Indian Army to tell me what Kitchener had done for the army in India, and he replied as follows:

His presence in India was enough. A feeling pervaded the whole army. We never knew when he might descend upon us. It was as if we were invaded by an enemy. Every man worked harder simply in case Kitchener might suddenly appear in that particular district. And I will tell you how he handled the situation. He gave an order quite careless of whether it could be carried out, and when objection was raised, however reasonable, he merely repeated his order. In this way I have known things to be done never before attempted in those localities. Men set themselves to perform the impossible and made it a fact. In this way throughout the whole of India there was a new spirit, a fresh efficiency. Some of Kitchener's reforms, such as examination tests for promotion, seemed to me excellent; but it was not by any of these reforms that he most benefited the army. It was simply by his presence, the knowledge of his severity, and the faith in his justice which most men entertained.

[Fig. 4. LORD KITCHENER WITH HIS STAFF, IN INDIA]

One story I was told which is worth repeating. Kitchener suddenly came to inspect a regiment of Rajputs. The young officer commanding this regiment was delighted by the commander-in-chief's evident satisfaction. To the general who accompanied him, Kitchener said: "It's a pleasure to inspect a regiment the faces of which are on a level with one's own, after looking down for weeks on the tops of British helmets." When they came to inspect the new barracks, Kitchener asked the commanding officer whether he had any complaints to make. "Yes, sir," returned the young colonel; " the windows are too many and too big; they'll

let in far too much heat in the hot season; I've complained about the matter, but without any effect; you know what Engineer officers are like, sir; it's quite imposs–" He stopped abruptly, Kitchener's eye upon him, and remembered when it was too late what should have been present in his mind from the first. "Well, Colonel Dash," said Kitchener, "in me and in General Blank you behold two Engineer officers who are open to reason." And he saved an awkward situation by a not unkindly smile.

Of his famous dispute with Lord Curzon, widening into a personal quarrel, nothing more need be said than this, that, while Kitchener stoutly denied a wish to set the military power above the civil, most people are disposed to think that he did not fight his battle in a manner to convert his critics. Kitchener declares that he only wanted to be rid of "that worst of military faults–a division of authority," and said that he wished to make the Indian Army an efficient whole instead of "an accidental planless thing, having no relation to any possible or imaginable emergency." But his obstinacy and his method of attaining these ends resulted in the resignation of Lord Curzon; and very soon after Kitchener left India his successor, Sir O'Moore Creagh–nicknamed "No More K"–did away with many of the innovations which Lord Kitchener had taken such elaborate pains to introduce.

Before he returned to England in 1910, after travelling some seventy thousand miles during his command in India, he visited China, Japan, America, New Zealand, and Australia. He astonished the Japanese by his silence, and delighted the Australians by his praise of their troops. On his return to England he became the centre of a political dispute. Unionists wanted to see him at the War Office; a Liberal Government, satisfied with the very excellent work being done at the War Office, offered him the post of High Commissioner of the Mediterranean. Kitchener accepted this appointment, but resigned it before taking office. Tory and Radical barked at each other over this incident for a number of rather tiresome weeks.

In 1911 Kitchener was made British Agent in Egypt. His work there has been to carry on the Cromer tradition, but he has instituted several reforms which have contributed very materially to the prosperity of the Sudan. He has shown little sympathy to the Nationalists of Egypt, ruling by the power of the Big Stick, and he is in consequence more unpopular with Egyptian politicians than any of his predecessors. It is a pity that lack of imagination has marred his otherwise most remarkable contribution to the prosperity of modern Egypt.

He was in England at the time when Germany, was beginning her fateful challenge of the world. Immediately the Unionists clamoured that he should be appointed to the War Office, then in charge of the Prime Minister, but the Liberals made no move in this direction. The clamour grew louder the more the menace of Germany came home to men’s minds. And at last the.: Government yielded. Why they yielded we shall say in the next chapter. Lord Kitchener, who was staying with his cousin, Mr. Mullins, Squire of Ringwood, near Kingsdown, was actually motoring to catch the steamer at Dover when the message came which called him to the War Office.

CHAPTER VI

THE KITCHENER LEGEND

IT was by the work of a very brilliant newspaper correspondent, the late G. W. Steevens, that the name of Kitchener became suddenly familiar to British democracy, and it was by the work of the same writer that the Kitchener legend took possession of the public mind.

In a series of very dramatic and sometimes brilliant articles, which appeared in a popular London newspaper, George Steevens described the famous march to Khartoum, filling the grey commercial atmosphere of London with the rich colours of the East, with the exciting adventure of war, and with the still more exciting sensation of anxiety. And, like a wise story-teller, Steevens gave his readers a hero in this brave tale of adventure. In one brief article he thrust Kitchener before the roused attention of the British public and made not only the title of “The Sirdar” but the personality of this particular Sirdar a permanent possession of the British mind.

Here was the picture of the outward man: —

He stands several inches over six feet, straight as a lance, and looks out imperiously above most men’s heads; his motions are deliberate and strong: slender but firmly knit, he seems built for tireless, steel-wire endurance rather than for power or agility…. Steady passionless eyes shaded by decisive brows, brick-red rather full cheeks, a long mustache beneath which you divine an immovable mouth; his face is harsh, and neither appeals for affection nor stirs dislike.

From this we pass to the essential fact, the man himself, the spirit of Kitchener. “He has no age,” we read, “but the prime of life, no body but one to carry his mind, no face but one to keep his brain behind.” His precision “is so inhumanly unerring, he is more like a machine than a man.” He is “The Man Who Has Made Himself a Machine.” And the writer concludes that Kitchener “ought to be patented and shown with pride at the Paris International Exhibition. British Engine: Exhibit No. 1, hors concours, the Sudan Machine.” [_With Kitchener to Khartoum_. By G. W. Steevens (William Blackwood & Sons).]

Thus the legend of Kitchener was created. You can imagine the delight of the Londoner as he opened his newspaper every morning to follow the great march across the desert with so new, so unexpected, and so unlike-himself a hero as this Man Who Had Made Himself a Machine. The average Briton is a creature of domestic habits, fond of his fireside, easiest in carpet slippers and an old coat, calling the wife of his bosom "Mother," and regarding his olive branches with open pride and indulgent affection. To such a man, then, Kitchener suddenly appeared as a heaven-sent distraction. He found himself contemplating a hero who contradicted all his British notions and yet in some strange fashion braced the softening fibres of his soul. And as the mighty army moved across the desert, the Briton in his armchair smiled easily, wagged his head knowingly, and said: "That young Kitchener will make no mistake. The Sirdar will crush the Dervish once and for all."

But this new hero of England was the very antithesis of the Englishman. He was said to hate women. He was said to be merciless and without pity. He would allow no officer on his staff to get married. He broke every man who failed to carry out his orders. He was tyrant, despot, brute. He was everything the average Englishman dislikes….

Perhaps it was this very antithesis which attracted the popular imagination. England was beginning to be made aware that she had many enemies in the world and scarcely a friend. One of her statesmen was to coin the phrase of "glorious isolation." The sudden rise of a new Caesar, a new Napoleon, gave a sense of security to the domesticated Englishman. War with France might come at any moment; Russia had her eye on India; the Balkans would presently burst into flames; Germany would take advantage of the death of the Emperor of Austria;–well, what matter? Kitchener would be there to see that no harm came to us.

One admires in another the quality he most lacks in himself, and admiration multiplies and intensifies that quality until it becomes greater than it is. In this fashion the domesticated Englishman created the Kitchener Goliath–the inhuman, heartless, but unerring giant–The Man Who Had Made Himself a Machine.

Everything in Kitchener's career has tended to confirm the whole world in this first delusion. He not only pulverized the Dervishes, but smashed the Mahdi's tomb. He came home only to snub lion-hunters and to hasten back to duty. He

went to South Africa and prevented Lord Roberts from being too tender with the Boers. He took over the army in India and not only rendered it amazingly efficient, but humbled the most powerful Viceroy of modern times. He returned to Egypt and brought rebellion to a better mind. He installed himself at the War Office and immediately broke the back of the German's advance on Paris. And now the million men drilling in Great Britain are "Kitchener's Army," and with that army Kitchener will utterly destroy Prussian militarism.

So the world reads the story of this man, starting from the first wrong premiss of G. W. Steevens, and thinking of him not as a fallible human creature, but as a machine that cannot err.

Now, the really fundamental and essential characteristic of Lord Kitchener is not "unerring precision," but tenacity, and this tenacity is little more than the obstinacy of a very slow and laborious mind. All the qualities which go to the making of a brilliant intelligence are entirely lacking in him, so entirely lacking that he is said by those who have studied him closely to be unconscious of his own dullness. He is the bulldog, and given plenty of time he is unbeatable; but the intuitions of genius never visit his brain; he never sees truth in a flash of inspiration, and unexpected interruption of his plans comes to him as crisis or disaster. Further, he is by no means bloodless. It is quite a mistake, as we shall show presently, to regard him as a woman-hater. He has tastes and occupations entirely outside the narrow circumference of war. He is so little like a machine that he can enter into the trivial fun of a house-party. And he makes mistakes.

But we may say that on the whole Kitchener's career, as the public knows it, has justified the delusion which began in the Sudan. He has always succeeded. And he has never sought popularity. Always something of a mystery, he has gone about his business in silence and never once has he publicly betrayed his humanity or given the nation reason to question the Kitchener legend. What would have happened if he had married, I do not know; and how the public would have borne the news that he had become a father I do not dare to speculate. As it is, the real Kitchener has not " given away " the false Kitchener, even in domesticity, and so convinced is the public of the false Kitchener being the real Kitchener, that I feel there is no danger in the world in telling the truth. I shall convert no one.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE WAR OFFICE

WHY did the Government yield to popular clamour and appoint Lord Kitchener to the War Office?

For myself I regard this surrender as almost the most decisive proof of the imaginative power of the Prime Minister. It was necessary to present a unanimous front to the enemy; it was necessary to give the public a sense of security. By placing Lord Kitchener at the War Office, Mr. Asquith satisfied the entire British nation, and with this satisfaction a wave of enthusiasm for the war rose in every part of the country, and swept the whole nation forward in a settled determination to see the business through.

But Mr. Asquith knew, every member of the Cabinet knew, that under the administration of Lord Haldane preparations had been made for the crisis which now visited the empire. All the marvellous organization which carried our gallant army to France, without the loss of a man or a bundle of hay, had been planned years before by the Staff College under the administration of Lord Haldane. Every perfection of that immense machinery was an established fact. The men were there, the commissariat was there, the medical service was there, the transports were there, and the railways were thoroughly prepared for their task. Without hitch of any kind the most highly organized army in the world left these shores, passed to the fighting-line, and never once has lacked for food or blanket. All this had been thought out, planned for, and prepared in every minutest detail by Lord Haldane.

One thing, however, was lacking.

In the supreme moments of a nation’s history, the personality of a man who has the confidence of the people is a possession of almost incalculable value. Mr. Asquith, who had been the object of a pitiless partisan attack for some years, and Lord Haldane, who was actually accused of pro-German sympathies, could not, in spite of their obvious merits, arouse the enthusiasm of the entire nation. One man alone was able to do that, and this man was a Tory of Tories, whose views about Liberalism, of course, were very well known to the Government. Nevertheless, Mr. Asquith decided that Lord Kitchener should be called to the

War Office. By that decision he relieved the tension of a very critical situation, and made it plain to all who could understand that he was a statesman of imagination. Was there ever a more telling and more ironical stroke? The wonderful legend of Kitchener, in a moment of the gravest danger, acted upon a practical nation and a great empire with a force not to be equalled by the reality of a greater man.

In this sense it may truthfully be said of Lord Kitchener that “he came at the right hour, and he was the right man.” In the opinion of a singularly able politician, Mr. Lloyd George, with his swiftness of thought, his impatience of red tape, and his willingness to delegate authority, guided by young military opinion, would have made an incomparably better Secretary for War than the real Lord Kitchener. But this same observer sees very clearly that the better administration of Mr. Lloyd George would nothing like so splendidly advantage the nation as the personality of Lord Kitchener. It was the personality of Lord Kitchener, the great Kitchener legend, which gave to the awakened and rather startled people of Great Britain, at the outset of Germany’s challenge, that sense of confidence and security which has since characterized the nation’s attitude through every hour of the conflict, even the darkest and most bitter; and it is this same personality, this same legend, which is still inspiring the Optimism of a nation absolutely convinced of victory.

If we leave out of count this psychological value, it might almost be argued that scarcely any soldier of importance could be less fitted in a moment of crisis for the post of War Secretary than the great Lord Kitchener. For Lord Kitchener is a man who does not easily get into a new saddle; he takes time to look about him before he is sure of his surroundings; and he moves slowly until he is perfectly acquainted with the road ahead of him. Moreover, he has spent by far the greater part of his life in the East, and is not only ignorant of European conditions, but frankly out of sympathy with modern democracies. Few men living, I imagine, are more completely out of touch with the England of the present time than this heavy and ponderous man who at a single stroke became the national hero. Further, he is no longer Steevens’s Sirdar, “slender but firmly knit … built for tireless steel-wire endurance.” He is sixty-four years of age, bulky and heavy-shouldered, with a fatherly and benignant aspect, wearing spectacles, his hair turning grey, his large red face expressing something more than a shield for his brain. In fact Lord Kitchener bears at the present day no resemblance at all to the legendary Kitchener.

But if any man in England were to suggest that General Baden-Powell should go to the War Office he would very certainly be laughed to scorn, and if any man were to call for Lord Kitchener's resignation he would assuredly be denounced as a German spy. And yet, if it had not been for Lord Haldane's work at the War Office, those very champions of Lord Kitchener who are now most loud and ridiculous in his praise might be choosing the lamp-post on which to hang him. For Lord Kitchener, I think, could not possibly have reorganized the War Office and got the army safely over to France, in the time at his disposal, without chaos and disaster.

Providentially for us, providentially as history may say for the whole world, Kitchener came to a War Office thoroughly reformed and perfectly equipped for its tremendous responsibilities. And, providentially again, the work that fell to his hands was just that very work at which he excels, the work of making new armies. Instead of finding excitement and disorder he entered a War Office that was working with so smooth a precision that one might have thought no crisis had arisen. Into this calm atmosphere, conducted by a smiling and agreeable Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener came only to inherit routine which could not be improved upon. But something was waiting for him to bring into existence, something foreseen and partially prepared for by other men, but something to which the magic of his fame could bring an almost irresistible wizardry. As I have already stated, his first call for 500,000 men, while it took away the nation's breath for a moment, steadied the national mind and prepared it for a long and laborious war. Then when we learned that this new army, and even the splendid troops from the Dominions, were to be well drilled before being sent to the front, we realized that however great the crisis there was no immediate danger, and felt that Kitchener would see us safely through all dangers.

Is it possible to exaggerate this psychological value?. Those who remember the early days of the war will testify that the announcement of Kitchener's appointment to the War Office was like a victory after days of most dread and terrible anxiety. And at the present moment are we not all living in the faith that Kitchener–the terrible, silent, ferocious, and merciless Kitchener–will hold on to the end and will never loose his hold until the enemy is beaten?

So completely has the Kitchener legend taken possession of the national mind that it is perfectly safe to discuss the matter, even as I am discussing it now, with no fear in the world that England will waver in her confidence. And one need not be concerned with German interest in our discussion, since the work to which

Kitchener has now set his hand, the work most fatal to German ambition, is just the work which Kitchener does excellently well. The first critical months are over–the months when swiftness of decision and brilliance of initiative might have hastened the end; and we can now look round about us, talk with a degree of freedom impossible during those first months, and gossip more or less to our heart's content. Moreover, it should rather increase than lessen the confidence of Great Britain to learn that she owes her great achievement in Europe not to one elderly man, but to a body of young and brilliant staff officers, who under Lord Haldane's wise and stimulating headship set the British War Office in such amazing good order.

It must not be imagined, however, because one no longer believes in the Kitchener legend, that the real Lord Kitchener is only a figurehead to the ship of state in its hour of dirty weather. He is an entirely different person from the legendary Kitchener, and at the present day he is no longer the real Kitchener who laid a railway across the desert and broke the savage power of the Dervishes. But he is still an obstinate, slow-thinking, and tenacious organizer, still a man who knows the right person for a particular undertaking, still a man who yields to no social pressure in the sphere of patronage, and still a man who is an absolute terror to the grafter and the fool. He has set himself to raise immense armies in England, and he is determined that nothing shall make him despatch these new troops to the front until they have acquired something of the discipline and smartness which are such distinguishing marks of the regular British Army. A weaker man, or let us say, a man less obstinate, might have been tempted to send these green armies to France and to Belmonths of the war. Kitchener was like a rock in this matter. And he was like a rock, and remains like a rock, in another matter, the matter of war correspondents. The Cabinet at one time were very nearly of the same opinion as the newspapers, and in their discussions of this question attempted to bring Lord Kitchener to their way of thinking; but he stuck obstinately to his guns, refused to budge, and brought the Cabinet to see the reasonableness of his judgment.

It may be said at this point that Lord Kitchener's relations with the Cabinet, which might have been somewhat difficult, are in truth of a quite cordial and cheerful character. One can imagine that in any animated discussions he would play a minor part to such quick and vigorous thinkers as Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill, and this, indeed, is true; but it seems that Lord Kitchener has not resented this intellectual superiority of his colleagues. On the contrary. he has listened to many arguments which must have been entirely new to him,

the early sullenness and rather grudging acquiescence, natural in the circumstances, giving gradual place to a half-humorous and as it were tolerant acceptance of the position. For Mr. Asquith he entertains a great and real respect, and it is pleasant to know that he has introduced into the Cabinet a wise military habit, always addressing his chief as “Sir.” He is not an easy man to convince, and he has occupied places of almost autocratic power too long to be comfortably at home in a council chamber. It says very much for his capacity, I think. that he has been able to accommodate himself to this unfamiliar position, and, in the company of men inspired by principles which must be entirely foreign to his own notions, has adapted himself without any blunder to the circumstances of the times.

Many stories are told of his Cabinet experiences, but few are true. One story, which happens to be true, and which very well exemplifies both Lord Kitchener’s acquiescence and his good humour, cannot, unfortunately, be publicly told. There is, however, a true story of his War Office experiences which may be related in print. Mr. Lloyd George called one day upon Lord Kitchener to explain to him that recruiting in Wales would be far quicker if the men were told that they would form a Welsh army and serve under a Welsh general who understood their traditions and spoke their language. “But where is your Welsh general?” demanded Kitchener, who does not greatly like to be bothered with details of nationalism. “We had better discuss that with Colonel Owen Thomas, who has come with me, and is now in your waiting-room.” Kitchener rang his bell and gave orders for the visitor to be admitted. As soon as he saw him he said, “You were in South Africa?” “Yes, sir,” replied the colonel. “Well, you’re now Brigadier-General commanding the Welsh army; you’d better go and get to work at once.”

This swiftness of decision has not been usual with Lord Kitchener of recent years, but on occasion, when his mind is settled about a thing, he makes other men move more swiftly than is altogether comfortable. It is said that he has created dissatisfaction at the War Office by ruthlessly discharging men who have not immediately responded to commands something too peremptory for pleasant obedience. He is more sensitive to certain forms of criticism than the Kitchener legend would lead us to suppose, and woe betide the official through whose mistake or neglect the War Office comes in for public attack.

Sensational stories are told of Lord Kitchener’s visits to France since the outbreak of war. It is said–and for a long time I believed it–that, after General

Smith-Dorrien's brilliant rescue of the British Army from almost certain annihilation, Kitchener went over to France and had one French general shot and two French generals thrown into prison. There was some ground for this exciting story, but as it is told it is entirely untrue. What Kitchener has done–and he deserves the highest praise for it–is to secure greater and more friendly cooperation between the chiefs of the two armies. At the beginning of such a war, friction between the heads of armies in alliance is almost certain to occur, even when the troops themselves are in the most hearty and affectionate relation with each other. Some such friction arose in this instance, and, by a timely visit and very wise diplomacy, Lord Kitchener was able not only to remove the causes of friction, but to bring the generals in question into quite cordial relationship. It is not true, however, if my information is correct, that Lord Kitchener has been to the front. I understand that the French War Secretary, whom he met in Paris, convinced him that it would not be wise for him to pay that visit.

[Fig. 5. LORD KITCHENER LEAVING THE WAR OFFICE.]

If one were asked what Kitchener has done at the War Office to earn the gratitude of the nation, keeping one's self entirely to the field of military administration, it would be extremely difficult. to name even one achievement. His greatest service has been the contribution of his legendary personality, for even in the field of military administration this tremendous reputation has had a certain effect. Tommy swears by him. But beyond this I do not know what credit the critical British officer would give to the new Secretary for War. The delay in clothing and equipping the men of what we call Kitchener's first army has been prolonged to a point which cannot escape censure, and there are sound judges who hold that this tiresome and irritating if not dangerous delay might have been sensibly abridged if Lord Kitchener, the autocrat, had. been more open to suggestions and more willing to depute authority. He has not succeeded, so far as I am able to discover, in speeding up the work of the War Office, and he has certainly introduced no new and far-reaching changes which a bolder, more brilliant, and less obstinate man, in so pressing a necessity, might have ventured his own reputation upon for the good of the army.

In spite of this, it remains to be seen whether these new armies will not surprise Lord Kitchener's critics when they take the field. Slow and laborious as the War Secretary's administration may be, it is nevertheless inspired by his dogged and unswerving passion for absolute efficiency. Sooner or later the uniforms and boots will appear, the rifles and bayonets be handed out, and the troops, which at

the time of writing are drilling in mufti with obsolete rifles, will make their appearance as a marching army.

Not till then shall we be able to judge rightly of Lord Kitchener's administration. And one must certainly bear in mind that the lack of rifles and uniforms is the fault of Kitchener's predecessors, and take into our consideration the undeniable fact that the War Office never contemplated the raising of so prodigious an army.

If Kitchener has not speeded up the war machine as we could have wished it to be speeded up, at least he has not fussed and fumed, and this, in the circumstances, must be counted to him for a virtue. From the very first he has exercised a calming authority. Never once has he betrayed the least symptoms of hysterics. When the German war machine unmasked itself and the whole world stood at gaze before a mechanism so perfect and gigantic that to east and west of its frontiers it could fling out irrefragable hosts of disciplined fighting men, Kitchener, having despatched Great Britain's very small but very perfect expeditionary force, calmly sat down behind the still unbroken shield of the British Navy to raise an army of half a million men. Then as the war proceeded, shivering to atoms most of the theories of the experts, Kitchener asked for another 500,000 men; and now the War Office speaks of an army exceeding 2,000,000 men. Throughout this most trying and difficult period., Lord Kitchener never once, by anything he said or did, spread the feeling of panic. His very slowness helped excitable people to keep their heads and to see the crisis in its true proportions. I am not at all sure whether a more brilliant and imaginative Secretary of State for War might not have acted unhappily on the nation's nerves.

But Kitchener's fame remains in Egypt. He added very little to his reputation in South Africa and has left no such monuments in India as were left by Lord Roberts along the Himalayan frontier. And at the War Office, in this supreme crisis of our national life, he has really done nothing. He has really done nothing, attempted nothing, which by the wildest reach of imagination could be called a master-stroke of genius. He is nothing more at the War Office than a gruff and most dutiful official, sparing himself no pains, sacrificing his days and nights, struggling with all his powers and with all his strength to fulfil his trust, but without vision and without inspiration.

It is said that in every discussion which has taken place about the defence of the country, in such instances as discovered a difference between him and his

colleagues, he has always been handsomely beaten in argument. Mr. Winston Churchill, who is soldier and sailor, too, and who has a brain which absorbs information and a mind which seizes upon conclusions with singular rapidity, easily bewilders, confuses, and converts the very much slower and wholly unoriginal brain of the War Secretary. Lord Kitchener lives upon his reputation, but he is still a man of such iron tenacity that he is able to prolong this existence with a pretty good grace. And it is possible, for he is a modest and listening man in the company of his equals and superiors, that his experience of a very remarkable Cabinet may modify some of his worst prejudices and enlighten his mind where it is most dark.

But he will be a very indifferent historian who, pronouncing judgment on these parlous times, dismisses Lord Kitchener as a dry and tedious official who did nothing for the nation in its hour of trial. Lord Kitchener contributed his personality, his reputation, and his name at the very moment when the whole empire was hungering and thirsting for a Man. This psychological service, as we must again insist, was and in a lesser degree continues to be of value to the state. Kitchener was, indeed and beyond all question, the right man who came at the right hour; and although it is good for the nation to learn that it does not depend upon any one man for its safety, good for it properly to appreciate the principles which make the system of its government independent of the individual, still, for the masses, a hero is always a necessity and for the state is sometimes an advantage.

Moreover, as I hope has been made quite clear, while Lord Kitchener is neither demigod nor heaven-sent genius, he is by no manner of means a bad Secretary of State for War. He might be quicker, he might call to his side the great organizers of commercial life, he might in twenty different ways delegate his authority; but when everything has been urged against him he still remains at his post as the quiet, unruffled, pertinacious, and plodding administrator, who, refusing to be hurried and refusing to be turned from his path , keeps his eyes steadily fixed upon one goal, and that goal the honour and the safety of his country.

The soldier believes in him, the public believe in him, and his immediate staff are ready to make any sacrifice he demands of them. Such a man may not dazzle the world, but, give him time, and with such troops as the empire places at his disposal, he will assuredly wear down the enemy.

CHAPTER VIII

KITCHENER'S BATTLES

[This chapter is written by a student of war and summarizes as briefly as possible the chief engagements with which Lord Kitchener has been connected. It gives, I think, a very useful synopsis of his work in the field.]

LORD KITCHENER'S association with Egypt began in 1882, when he was appointed to a cavalry command in the Egyptian Army, and in January, 1885, in the Gordon Relief Expedition, he accompanied the Desert Column to the Gadkul Wells. He was actively employed during the anxious period that followed the fall of Khartoum, and in the subjection of Osman Digna in the Eastern Sudan, of which province, towards the close of 1886, he became Governor-General. While still holding this office, he joined the troops in the field, and was wounded in an unsuccessful fight with the Dervishes outside Suakim. As a result, he was warned that in future he should not, while holding this appointment, take part in such operations, but he commanded a Sudanese brigade in the defeat of Osman, and was then left with a garrison of 9,000 men to defend the place.

The great invasion planned by Wad-en-Nejumi in the spring of 1889 brought Kitchener into new prominence, and after the fight at Argin, when the Dervish power seemed threatening, it became necessary to supplement his force. Two Egyptian battalions, a mule battery, and some cavalry were despatched to him in haste at the front, and these forces, with a Sudanese battalion, were under his command in Sir Francis Grenfell's victory over the Dervishes at Toski, August 3. Handling his troops with great skill, he made a detour with his mounted troops, and cut off Nejumi's retreat, thus forcing the battle, in the decision of which, with much desperate fighting, he took a leading part. Nejumi was killed, and Mahdism received a blow from which it took years to recover. The brave Dervishes had, of course, little chance, for their fanatical courage was met by trained and disciplined troops, British, Egyptian, and Sudanese, directed by very skilful generalship. Kitchener rendered great services in the subsequent fighting, as well as in administrative work, and came to be recognized as the man of the future in Egypt.

[Fig. 6. LORD KITCHENER AS SIRDAR

(Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army)]

In April, 1892, he succeeded Sir Francis Grenfell as Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, and his influence soon inspired the policy of the Government. There had been many evidences of renewed Dervish activity. Kassala was threatened, and the Italians had been severely defeated at Adowa. The moment seemed favourable for an active policy, both with the object of relieving the Italians, and of seizing a moment in which the Dervishes were weakened by their efforts elsewhere. The Sirdar had all ready, and about 9000 troops well organized and trained were under his own command. An advance was also desirable because the race between the Powers for possession of the region of the Upper Nile had begun. It was therefore determined to move on Akasheh and then on Dongola, but the decision of the British Government was arrived at suddenly, and the story is told that the Chief of the Egyptian Staff was aroused by stones being thrown at his window in the middle of the night (March 12, 1896) to hear the intelligence, and that no one was found bold enough to awake and inform the Sirdar, who therefore received the welcome news in the morning.

The river, the desert, and the wells are the three great strategic factors in Egyptian campaigning, and the Sirdar soon proved himself a master in the use of them. In the fighting at Ferket, June 6, he despatched a river column under command of Colonel Hunter, afterwards General Sir Archibald Hunter, which marched up the east bank of the Nile, with Egyptian irregulars on the other bank to prevent any escape of the Dervishes across the stream. At the same time a desert column under command of Major Burn-Murdoch was to operate on the east, and prevent escape in that direction also. The Dervishes, who were under command of Emir Osman Azrak, could not avoid the action, and the engagement developed exactly as the Sirdar had planned. The march of the river column was irresistible, and when the Dervishes sought to escape eastward, the desert column, which had been skilfully led in the darkness, blocked the way. The Dervishes fought with the utmost courage and resolution, but they were utterly defeated, and the Nile Valley was cleared of them for a distance of fifty miles, while the only organized army of the Khalifa was destroyed.

During subsequent months the railway was carried onward to Kosheh, the gunboats were taken up the river and supplies were pushed forward. The weather was intensely hot, heavy rainstorms swept the valley, and cholera, which had been coming north, reached the troops and inflicted severe losses. In addition, the Nile rose late and the dragging of the gunboats over the Second Cataract was

delayed. But in September the advance was resumed, and the force was so overwhelming and so well dispersed that the Dervishes fled, and Dongola was occupied, every Dervish flying from the pressure. It was a triumph of skilful administration and management and the troops were well supported in the advance of the gunboats under Commander Colville, RN, afterwards Admiral the Honourable Sir Stanley Colville.

Kitchener's policy was to advance slowly, and to consolidate and prepare everything as he went onward. Therefore Dongola was put in order, the railway was pushed on towards the. place, and advanced posts were established.. Whether it would have been possible to make an immediate move forward it is unnecessary now to inquire. The Khalifa expected it, and immediately set about fortifying Omdurman. But it was not until the next year, 1897, that the reconquest of the Sudan was determined upon. England had compelled the Egyptians to abandon that province, and it was announced on the part of the British Government that responsibilities had been incurred, which must be fulfilled, and that the crumbling away of the "baleful rule of the Khalifa" made the time opportune to act.

But Kitchener had come to the conclusion that to carry forward the railway in the direction of Khartoum was inadvisable, the country being difficult. The Nile between Wady Halfa and Khartoum makes a double curve like the letter "S," and the railway abandoned would have crossed the southern curve of the "S" from Dongola and Debbeh to reach Khartoum, whereas the Sirdar now thought it advisable to strike across the northern curve from Wady Halfa to Abu Hamed. Fortunately there was at the head of the railway service an engineer officer of first-rate merits, Colonel Girouard, who pushed the line on from Wady Halfa at the rate of a mile and a half a day. This could, no doubt, have been done many months earlier, but the importance of the Dongola province made it necessary first to subjugate it, and in that province were now the friendly Jaalins, who had been exasperated by the cruelties of the Khalifa, who had decimated them, and they were guarding the right flank of the new advance.

So successful was all this preparation and organization directed by the Sirdar, that when the new railway had reached Abu Hamed, and that place had been captured after a stiff fight by Colonel Hunter, an immediate advance was made, and Berber, which is about a hundred miles farther up the river, fell without a blow, on September 6.

The Dervishes were strangely inactive. If the Emir Mahmoud, who had 10,000 men at Metammeh, which is about a hundred miles up-river from Berber, had moved, the Sirdar would have had a far more difficult task. That place was shelled, chiefly by way of reconnaissance, by the gunboats under Commander Keppel, afterwards Vice-Admiral Sir Colin Keppel. The irrepressible Osman Digna, who had appeared again in force in the Eastern Sudan, also retired into obscurity, having quarrelled with Mahmoud. Progress was made with the railway, which very quickly advanced to Abu Hamed and on to Berber.

The Atbara falls into the Nile a few miles above Berber, and on one of its affluents, about three hundred miles above that place, is Kassala, on the borders of Abyssinia, which the Italians had defended against the Dervishes. It was now to be restored to Egypt, and the Sirdar, by this time Major-General Sir Herbert Kitchener, went to Suakim and Massowah to arrange the conditions of the transfer, and the place was occupied by Egyptian troops on December 25, 1897.

Early in 1898 it became known that Mahmoud, who had now made a pact with Osman, was intending at last, with 20,000 men, to move against Berber. British troops were therefore hurried up from Alexandria, and Egyptian forces were concentrated to meet the threatened attack. On February 10, Mahmoud began to pass his troops across the Nile to Shendy preparatory to the advance, and his boats and rafts occupied a fortnight in the operation. It seemed to many observers that in the midst of this business of transport Mahmoud's troops were given into their enemy's hands. An ideal opportunity presented itself of destroying one half of them before the others could come to their aid. But nothing was done, and the explanation given was that it was the Sirdar's plan to get Mahmoud out of his strong position at Metammeh and into the open ground.

The great danger was of a frenzied Dervish rush, which it might be difficult to stop with existing means. Therefore "dum-dum" bullets were served out for the Lee-Metford, while the "dumb dumb" methods applied by the Sirdar against the press correspondents were to some extent withdrawn, concerning which one critic said that the general in the field, who restricts the press too much, lays himself open to the remark that, like Caesar, he prefers "to write his own Commentaries."

Mahmoud's object was to cross the desert from the Nile, and pass over the bed of the parched Atbara, in order to strike at Berber from the east. The Sirdar had now about 13,000 British and Egyptian troops, and the main body was

concentrated at El Hudi, which place is a few miles up the Atbara from its confluence with the Nile. Mahmoud was now in a difficulty. He saw that his prepared advance on Berber was checkmated, and that a retirement on Omdurman would be perilous. The position for the Sirdar's forces was not easy. They were supplied by camel transport, the heat was punishing them severely, and dysentery and enteric fever appeared. It was imperative to make a move, and on April 4 the camps were struck and the advance begun. General Hunter, on the next day, tried to draw the Dervishes by advancing with eight squadron of cavalry, eight maxims, and a battery of horse artillery. Large bodies of Baggara horsemen thereupon came out, and Hunter had to make a skilful withdrawal.

It was on April 8, that the battle of the Atbara was fought. The enemy was not to be caught in the open, as the Sirdar had hoped. He was fortified in a zeriba formed of cut mimosa bushes, backed with strong palisades, and behind an encircling trench, with earthworks, crosstrenches, and shelters. But twenty-four guns were brought to bear, the palisades were blown away, and a rocket battery set the Dervish shelter in furious conflagration. Only a few Baggara horsemen appeared, and were swept away with maxims. After the position had been pounded for an hour and a half with shell, the advance began, the Sirdar watching the development of his plans from an advantageous post nine hundred yards away.

The pipes of the Highlander, the bugles of the other British regiments, and the bands of the Egyptian battalions playing inspiriting tunes gave a fine military spirit to the long line which advanced with fixed bayonets. General Gatacre and his aide-de-camp were the first men to reach the Dervish outer defences. The Camerons were to have driven a way through for the other battalions to rush into the midst of the enemy, but this was impossible, and the Camerons led, followed by other regiments. Then the hand-to-hand fighting began. The Dervishes in the trenches neither asked nor received quarter. They were armed with Remingtons, Martinis, fowling-pieces, and elephant-guns. The Egyptians, who were on the right, lost heavily, and the British had five officers and twenty-one men killed, and ninety-nine officers and men wounded. The Dervishes were soon utterly routed. They had fought bravely, but their fire was ineffective, and the mounted men were with Osman Digna and not present. It was a fine fight and a striking success, but the Dervishes were hopelessly outclassed by the well-trained forces opposed to them, who were amply provided with efficient guns and rifles. The Emir Mahmoud, slightly wounded, was captured, and brought before the Sirdar, where the following colloquy is recorded to have taken place: *The Sirdar:* "Why

have you come into my country to burn and kill?" *Mahmoud:* "As a soldier I obey the Khalifa's orders, as you must the Khedive's." The Emir also declared that he was not a woman to run away!

The battle of the Atbara was the penultimate blow at the power of the Khalifa Mustapha. Kitchener, more than a soldier, a diplomatist and searcher of the spirits of men, who had himself, disguised, speaking Arabic like a native, walked among the Dervishes in the bazaars, had prepared all well. Resourceful and strong-willed, knowing what he wanted and resolved to secure it, he would not budge an inch until he saw whither he was going, and, like an old Roman, he had built the roads his men should traverse, and so, step by step, he was advancing towards Khartoum. He had able lieutenants who did the fighting–Hunter, Gatacre, Broadwood, Maxwell, Wauchope, Lyttelton, and many more. There were risks to be run, but upon the success of this campaign the future of Egypt hung. Thinking of this,–it was after the Atbara,–as a witness recorded, there was wrung from Kitchener the exclamation, "My God! if I had failed!"

But where there is a soldier who spares neither himself nor those under him, and who carries on the administration of an army as Kitchener did, there is small likelihood of failure. It was in May that preparations for the advance on Khartoum began. At Fort Atbara three months' provisions for 25,000 men were stored, and at Abadieh an arsenal and repair-shops were established for the flotillas. A second British brigade was prepared for embarkation, and Gatacre took command of the division thus constituted. The total strength was 7500 British and 12,500 Egyptians.

The Sirdar left for the front on August 13. The flotilla rendered the utmost service as a means of transport, and successive batches of men were hurried forward. Wad Hamid was passed, and reconnaissance showed that the Khalifa had abandoned the forts at the Shabluka Gorge, which is at the southern end of the Sixth Cataract. The troops could have turned them, and the Khalifa had reserved his strength for the coming battle at Omdurman.

At that capital of the Khalifa stood the white tomb of the Mahdi, which was first seen by the reconnaissance party, who had pushed on to the island of Jebel Rogan, which is about thirty-four miles below Khartoum. It is said that Major Staveley Gordon, General Gordon's nephew, was the first to set eyes upon it. Intense heat and violent storms, with terrific downpours, marked the stages of the advance, of which El Hajir, Wady Abid, Suruab, and Egeiga were the stages,

the last-named place being only six miles from Omdurman. It was reached at about 1 P.M. on September 1, and when the cavalry rode out to the Jebel Surgham slopes, the whole army of the Khalifa, some 50,000 strong, was discovered, formed in five divisions, advancing to the attack. But this advance soon stopped, and the Dervishes were seen to be preparing their bivouacs and camp-fires. It was bad generalship, for if they had come on in force, before the Sirdar's troops could deploy, the situation would have become difficult for the latter. Meanwhile Commander Keppel had gone forward with his flotilla, and had landed a howitzer battery, which had opened fire at three thousand yards and partly destroyed the dome over the Mahdi's tomb. The night was one of anxiety in the Sirdar's camps, for the Khalifa might, with much advantage on his side, have attempted a night attack, and the men lay fully dressed on the sand, with their arms beside them. The total force with the Sirdar was then about 22,000 men.

The troops stood to their arms about an hour before sunrise on September 2, in anticipation of an attack, but the Dervishes did not move, and Kitchener resolved to advance. The bombardment from the gunboats was resumed, and then the Dervish hosts were seen to be in movement. The Sirdar's army was disposed upon a curved front, its extremities resting on the Nile, and the gunboats being on either flank. The Dervishes came on in great force and with military regularity from the left round the slopes of Jebel Surgham, to attack the centre, while a right attack, which was not pressed home, was seen developing round the heights of Kerreri.

A battery of artillery and some machine-guns inflicted great losses upon the Dervishes, but did not stop their advancing. The British infantry opened fire in volleys and independently, and a rain of lead fell upon the Dervish spearmen, who were advancing in rushes. When they came within eight hundred yards this fire became very deadly, and the ground was soon strewn with the dead and wounded. Some of them approached within two hundred yards, only to fall before the pitiless fire. There were scarcely any British casualties, until some Dervish riflemen lodged on Jebel Surgham opened fire. Then some of the British fell, but the enemy were soon driven off. By 8 A.M. the Dervish attack had slackened, and they were retiring rapidly, except that on the right the Khalifa's son, Sheikh-ed-Din, and Wad Helu attacked Colonel Broadwood in great force. There was much hand-to-hand fighting, and the position would have been serious if one of the gunboats had not opened fire and driven off these brave but unequal assailants.

So ended the first stage of the battle. The second began with a cavalry mêlée on the left, in which a lancer regiment charged a body of Dervishes, and lost both officers and men. The enemy were found in unexpected strength in a hollow place, where the British mounted men were at a disadvantage. While this was in progress the Sirdar had ordered, at 8.30 A.M., a general advance on Omdurman, but it was then discovered that the Khalifa, with about 40,000 men, was behind the height of Jebel Surgham. Macdonald's brigade was attacked by some 20,000 men, preceded by Baggara horsemen commanded by the Khalifa himself. But the horsemen were swept away, and machine-gun and rifle fire proved deadly to the close ranks of the Dervishes, whose bodies soon strewed the plain. Not a man got within three hundred yards of the fighting-line.

But now on the right other hosts were advancing, and Macdonald wheeled about, receiving reinforcements, and a pitiless fire was opened, particularly by the Sudanese, under whose hail of lead nothing could live. Macdonald had handled his troops with masterly skill, and had snatched victory from the jaws of peril. The brigades of Lewis and Wauchope were with him at this critical moment. The slaughter among the Dervishes was fearful, nearly 11,000 being killed, and as the troops advanced and cut off the retreat of the main body to Omdurman. the flight became a rout, and the fugitives escaped to the south.

This was the final triumph, which the Sirdar had won by masterly organization and preparation, and by skilfully disposing his forces. Good generalship, as we have seen, had also been found in his lieutenants. to whom the actual success in the fighting was very largely due. He mentioned them all, and many officers, very liberally in his despatches. The Sirdar described the result of the action as being " the practical annihilation of the Khalifa's army, the consequent extinction of Mahdism in the Sudan, and the submission of nearly the whole country formerly ruled under Egyptian authority." The power of modern armies had been demonstrated, and not less of the fine administration of military means, both personal and material. The Khalifa had failed as a general. If he had attacked at night, when British fire would not have been so effective, or if he had remained within his entrenchments and defences at Omdurman. he would have imposed a harder task on his assailants. The total loss in the Sirdar's army was forty-eight killed and three hundred and eighty-two wounded. The British killed were two officers and twenty-five men, twenty-one of them in the lancer charge referred to.

For these services Sir Herbert Kitchener was created Baron Kitchener of

Khartoum, and a sum of £30,000 was awarded to him.

Omdurman was occupied, the Khalifa's European captives were liberated, and the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted at Khartoum. The Khalifa had fled with the remnant of his followers, the fighting was done, and nearly all the British troops returned to Cairo.

Reference may now be made to the Fashoda incident. On September 7, one of Gordon's old steamboats, which was in the Khalifa's service, returned to Omdurman, but to find a new flag flying there. Her captain surrendered and reported that at Fashoda, on the White Nile, he had been fired on by a party of white men. This was the expeditionary force of Major Marchand and his Senegalese. The Sirdar thereupon proceeded to Fashoda, and told the French officer, who said he was acting under the order of his Government, that the presence of a French force was an infringement of the rights of Egypt by the French Government. A very strained feeling arose out of this incident between the British and French Governments, but after a long diplomatic correspondence the matter was amiably settled, and Major Marchand and his troops returned to France.

Lord Kitchener was still at Khartoum, building a new city, and organizing a new administration to replace the vanished Dervish rule, of which the last fragments had been crushed by his lieutenants, when he was summoned to act as Chief of the Staff with Lord Roberts, who was about to proceed, in December, 1899, to South Africa to take up the command against the Boers, after the weary movements and strange blunderings of British generals on the upper Tugela. In the Egyptian campaigns and the conquest of the Sudan, brilliant as they were, there had been hardly any opportunities for the display of high strategy, tactical skill, or genius for command. The Nile and the railway that ran alongside it and crossed one of its great sinuosities, had been the line of approach. The strategy was always direct and frontal, for the desert protected both flanks. The great merit of Lord Kitchener had been his talent for administration, his foresight, his slow but certain progress towards his object, and the rigid economy with which he built up and maintained his army.

In South Africa the situation was entirely different. There was no narrow limitation of space or opportunity. The enemy was alert and elusive, and though the business of maintaining the army depended, in the new plans, on a single line of railway, that line was long and exposed to attack on every side. What Lord

Roberts expected from Kitchener, who had been appointed at his own request, was not brilliant and rapid strategy, but sure calculation and inflexible strength. Kitchener possessed the power of decision and distinction, and he consistently eliminated the personal factor, depending for success on energy, organization, and numbers. The staff organization of the British Army was not complete, and, as Chief of the Staff, Kitchener became Lord Roberts's right-hand man, ready to undertake any organizing work, such as the reorganizing of the transport and intelligence departments, or to implant energy where it was wanting.

As Chief of the Staff, Kitchener was not responsible for the strategical plans or the generalship, though he was not without influence on both. These plans brought about the crossing of the Orange River without fighting, the turning of the Boers' front, the threatening of their communications and of their capital, and the opening of the whole country to the British to march where they chose. There was no such impasse as had been reached on the Tugela. The Modder Drifts were seized by French and his cavalry, Cronje was driven from his lines, and Kimberley was relieved, though Cronje slipped through.

The Boers had been outmanoeuvred and captured, but the blow had not fallen. In the business of the pursuit of Cronje, General Kelly-Kenny was nominally in command, "but," said Lord Roberts, "Lord Kitchener is with you for the purpose of communicating my orders." In practice Kitchener was the driving force, and when Cronje had taken refuge at Paardeberg, Kitchener's idea was to rush his laager at once, annihilate his force, and march straight on Bloemfontein.

But Kitchener's resolution to attack has been criticized on the ground that the object would have been attained by occupying the surrounding positions, concerning which it must be observed that Kitchener did not know what Boer reinforcements might arrive. The actual attack directed by Kitchener was certainly defective, two out of four brigades being thrown away in a frontal advance without cover and on the wrong side of the river, while the flank attacks were not in sufficient force, and orders were confused. This may be ascribed to Kitchener's desperate eagerness to attack, and to his limited tactical experience. His ambiguous status in the field complicated the difficulty. The assault was abandoned, and Cronje soon afterwards surrendered. Subsequently Kitchener was charged with the duty of repairing the railway and the bridges over the Orange River.

The plans whereby Bloemfontein was occupied and Ladysmith and Kimberley

relieved were Lord Roberts's own. So, too, after a six weeks' interval, there was the rapid advance by which Johannesburg and Pretoria were occupied, the issue of the campaign being thus decided, though another leap was required which carried Roberts to Koniatipoort. Then Lord Roberts, in December, 1900, returned to England, and Lord Kitchener assumed the command. During the previous months he had been actively employed, and was concerned in Lord Methuen's pursuit of De Wet, who once came very near to capturing Kitchener himself.

In February and March, 1901, Lord Kitchener made efforts to conclude the campaign by negotiation, but President Kruger by cable counselled protracted resistance, and President Steyn adopted the same line, looking for some outside intervention. Kitchener then, with the utmost energy, set about a series of vigorous operations by which the country was to be swept from end to end, large numbers of mounted men being required, but before they arrived Kitchener had delivered some shrewd blows at the enemy. The blockhouse plan and the scheme of gathering the civil population into camps were his. He created a great organization, and the columns of Gorringe, Crabbe, Henniker, Scobell, Doran, Kavanagh, Alexander, and others carried out his plans.

It is unnecessary to describe the operations which brought the war to a close. They were prolonged and chequered, but brought about the ultimate success of British arms and the settlement of South Africa. For his services Lord Kitchener was promoted to be Lieutenant-General and General, was given a vis-county, and received the thanks of Parliament and a grant of £50,000. For great strategy the campaigns had offered no opportunities, and the occasions for generalship in command were few, but Kitchener had again proved himself a wonderful organizer and administrator in the military sphere, and he possessed the supreme merit of clearly recognizing the end, combined with a precise and detailed knowledge of the means by which it could be attained.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN HIMSELF

DULL and tiresome, brilliant and wonderful,–whichever his career may be,–Kitchener himself, Kitchener the man, the domestic unit, the poor fallible human brother, must be interesting–interesting to the gossip and interesting to the peering and appraising psychologist.

What manner of creature is this tall, heavy, fierce, and rather truculent-looking man who strides about in the popular imagination with the inexorableness of destiny and whose eyes, brooding on the confusion of human disarrangements, are mystic with the propulsive force of the Universal Will?

The little chalk-faced, mild-mannered clerk loves to relate stories of Kitchener's iron discipline and hugs himself over any incident which acquaints him with brutality of his hero's mind. The least pugilistic Sunday-school teacher adores in Kitchener qualities which in himself, beyond a doubt, would incur the everlasting torments of divine displeasure. Ascetic and charming clergymen, poets, painters, musicians, and philanthropists, editors of Liberal newspapers, Socialist lecturers, pacifists, vegetarians, and the whole company of those who compose the army of Sweetness and Light, see in Kitchener not only the Man of Destiny and the Man for "The Day," but a Man whose personality is in itself an excellence–as beguiling, enchanting, and intoxicating as forbidden fruit.

Publicly everybody is ready to acquiesce in the gospel of civilization, the gospel of Christianity, and to say that the greatest of things is love; but privately the citizen, whose furniture, larder, and salary are the acrid envy of watchful foes, is apt to consider the gospel of Christianity an experiment in idealism and to hold the sterner faith which has been so sedulously, frankly, and successfully preached in Germany for the last forty years. We must be invincible. Look to your guns!

But is Kitchener of Khartoum, in fact, the tremendous person of popular imagination? We have already suggested that he is of a milder brand.

In a man so victorious and inevitable there must be an element of Prussian sternness, if not brutality, and we may say at once that popular imagination has

something to go upon in its idea of this British national hero pro tem. We shall tell two stories which justify the public conviction. Kitchener can be excessively hard, and almost inhumanly brutal. But this by no means exhausts his character. There are other sides to him. Indeed, one may say that his brutality is rather an accident of his ambition than one of his original elements, for the man was nothing of a bully as a boy, and from youth to the present day has been naturally and profoundly shy.

Ambition was the earliest manifestation of his character. But even this distinguishing characteristic began its career modestly and tamely. He wanted to swim well and ride well, but he never risked his boy's neck at either game. In youth he made up his mind to pass an examination. As a lieutenant of Engineers his growing sense of uncommon powers led him no farther afield than map-drawing in Palestine. Here he learned to know that the management of men is not so difficult a thing as it seems to youth, and life became a pleasanter adventure than the classrooms of Woolwich had led him to suppose. Then came Egypt, and with Egypt ambition was in supreme command of Kitchener's soul.

A brother of the present writer was a cadet at the Royal Military College of Sandhurst at a time when one of Kitchener's brothers was on the staff of lecturers. It happened one day–this was in the early eighties–that my brother was walking in the grounds of the college with Kitchener's brother, and as they went along the lecturer said to the cadet, "My young brother has just got himself appointed to Egypt; he'll never come out till he's at the top." This remark amused my brother as a piece of family conceit, for he had never even heard of Herbert Kitchener; but it shows one that so early as 1884 the future Sirdar of Egypt had impressed his brother with the forcefulness of his ambition.

But there was an element of tenderness in Herbert Kitchener during those hard and toilsome years,–an element which persisted long after he was world famous and which possibly exists to the present day. Among his relations were two dear diminutive old Scotch ladies who lived in Phillimore Gardens, Kensington, by name the Misses Hutchinson, and Kitchener was no dearer to these charming spinsters than they to him. He wrote to them brightly and boyishly by almost every mail, and whenever he returned to London the house in Phillimore Gardens was not only his regular headquarters, but the first goal at which he aimed. Before he went to Egypt for his advance to Khartoum these dear old ladies presented him with a gold-headed swagger cane, and when the advance was accomplished and the photographer arrived to make a picture of the general

and his staff, Kitchener seated himself in the centre of the group with this stick held so ostentatiously that the old ladies in Kensington could not fail to recognize it when the photograph appeared in the illustrated papers. That, I think, is a charming touch in the man of blood and iron. He sent them roses from Gordon's grave at Khartoum and coats of the Khalifa from the Sudan. When he returned to London in a blaze of glory, the arrangements made for his reception would not admit of his proceeding immediately to the house of his old friends; but he wrote to them in the midst of his lionizing, explaining the reasons for his delay, and adding, "But I am coming soon, and I hope you will give me a jolly tea like the teas of old days–bread and jam, and no people." They called him Herbert, pronouncing it "Hairburrt," and they would sit one on either side of him, studying his bronzed face with their small, smiling, shrewd eyes, teasing him, chaffing him, adoring him, and giving him sound advice. In their house he was like a schoolboy, running up the stairs two at a time, whistling in his bedroom, going in and out just as he pleased, and telling them such stories of his campaign as no one else in London ever heard–stories, I am afraid, lost to the future biographer, for the Misses Hutchinson are no longer the good angels of mortality.

[Fig. 7. LORD KITCHENER]

These charming old ladies lived to see their hero's success in South Africa, and I know a story of Kitchener's setting out for the campaign which deserves to be told. The spinsters, who rejoiced in his peerage, thought it would be a fine thing to send him a riding-whip for this campaign, and they took cab to Piccadilly and ordered a very handsome whip with a gold handle ornamented with a coronet, the letter "K" and the word "Pretoria." When the whip was ready to be sent, they paid a second visit to the shop, a visit of inspection, and examined the present with minute carefulness and a slow, grudging, and canny approval. "Yes," said the humorous-minded tradesman, pointing to the coronet and the "K," 'I fancy old Kruger will be very well pleased with it when he gets it into his hand,"–a jest which. threw the old ladies into a condition of the very greatest indignation, for they were Scotch, and therefore something superstitious.

Kitchener once offered to give these faithful friends one of the many gold caskets which had been presented to him by the grateful corporations of provincial cities. The old ladies consulted together as to the acceptance of the gift. One of them asked, "Do we need it? " The other said, "No, we certainly don't need it." "What could we do with it?" asked the first. "Hum," replied the

contemplative other, “we could perhaps use it as a tea-caddy.”

Other friends have been as greatly devoted to Kitchener, and to these other friends he has been equally faithful. When he was at Simla, and at a time when he was exceedingly busy, one of his friends died at Lahore. As soon as the news reached him, Kitchener started off from Simla, not to be present at the funeral, but to comfort the widow of his friend, a woman for whom he entertained great respect and affection. The idea that Kitchener is a woman-hater is false., and has its origin only in a busy man’s natural distaste for chatter and frivolity. It is said that Queen Victoria challenged him on this question, anxious to arrange a match for the triumphant young general, and that Kitchener replied, “But I love one woman already, ma’am, and always have loved her.” Here was romance and mystery. The old Queen raised her head. “Who is she?” asked Victoria. “Your Majesty,” replied Kitchener.

Some of Kitchener’s most intimate friends are women. I suppose, for instance, that few people know more of his character than Lady Salisbury and Lady Desborough, to name only two of his friends among women. He was a great friend, as we have said already, of Lady Curzon. That he is not in any sense a lady’s man is happily true, but that he dislikes intelligent, sympathetic, and good women is entirely false. Moreover, to tell a little-known truth, he has been in love, and has proposed marriage: but in this campaign he failed to organize victory.

Two things have beaten Lord Kitchener,–a woman and a pond. Of the woman we have said enough; she is delightful, pretty, and very clear-headed; she liked K. of K., was proud of his friendship, but could not be subdued by his will. She is now married, and is one of the great hostesses of London.

With less restraint we can speak of the pond. Lord Kitchener has three hobbies; he is a collector, an architect, and a gardener. Above everything else he loves altering and improving a house or a garden, particularly a house, and he really does this difficult and delicate work very well indeed. At Simla he set about improving Snowdon, the official residence of the commander-in-chief, and succeeded in making this rather commonplace and trivial building a very fine and handsome palace. He made like improvements, but on a smaller scale, in his country house at Simla, Wildflower Hall. Here he built a fine library, and panelled the walls, embellishing the panels with the coats of arms of the great Indian princes–a fine exhibition of good taste and a telling stroke in diplomacy.

But he wanted to improve the garden of Snowdon, and nothing would satisfy him in the midst of the garden but a pond. Now Simla is high up in the Himalayas, and to make a pond in the Snowdon garden was a more difficult matter than to construct the dam at Assouan. But K. had spoken, and the impossible was attempted. Every effort failed. Kitchener came and surveyed the wreck. “Send for a buffalo,” he commanded. A buffalo was brought up from the plains below, and for a number of days walked round and round in the embryonic pond, puddling the soil. Then it fell over the khud, or precipice, and perished miserably. “Send for oxen,” said K. Oxen came and trampled the resisting bottom of the postulated but effectively expostulating pond, trampling it, trampling it, and trampling it till winter came, when they died of pneumonia. To this day the very beautiful gardens of Snowdon are waterless.

In his garden, wherever he may be, Kitchener is accustomed to do a great deal of the work. Officers who come to report to him are always glad when the interview is conducted in this fashion, for Kitchener is more human in a garden, and when one walks at his side, even at six o’clock in the morning when he begins his day’s work, the nerves are not called upon to bear the strain of meeting his eyes. In his garden at Simla he has expressed to officers very close to him the pain it causes him to dismiss a man, even when the offender is guilty of a serious fault. Without compunction he gets rid of the inefficient and the studiously stupid, but it really hurts him to punish a good man who has blundered. In one particular case of which I know, it was a matter of days before he could make up his mind to dismiss such a man.

About the eyes of Kitchener it may be said without offence that the terror they inspire is heightened by a squint which has tended to grow more pronounced with age. The eyes are blue, penetrating, and full of judgment; without their irregularity they would be difficult eyes to face, but with this irregularity they fill certain men with a veritable paralysis of terror. Some one who knows him very well has described to me the effect of those eyes upon people who meet him for the first time. “They strike you,” I was told, “with a kind of clutching terror; you look at them, try to say something, look away, and then, trying to speak, find your eyes returning to that dreadful gaze, and once more choke with silence.”

Another person, a man of very great social importance, said to me, “I have never felt the least dread of Kitchener; he has stayed with me, and has been perfectly jolly and nice, entering into any fun that was going on, and being as larky and jovial as the youngest. Moreover. he tells a story very well, particularly a story

against himself. No, I have never experienced that feeling of terror which he certainly inspires in many people, men and women alike .” Then after a pause, this great nobleman said, “All the same, if he were coming to inspect my regiment I should be frightened out of my life!”

It seems to me that the man’s character is excellently suggested by a phrase which a singularly clever and observant woman used in describing to me the effect he produced upon her mind. “He sits in a chair,” she said, “as if it were a throne.” The man has natural dignity of mind, and that dignity has been developed into a distinct and sensible kingliness by the long exercise of an almost autocratic authority. He has never leaned on another man. He has never consulted and taken advice. Always it has been upon his own brain that his masterful will has depended for the victory of his purposes.

But such men are sometimes frightfully conscious of solitude; moments come to them when they are bowed and dizzied by the burden of responsibility. ” Ah, if you only knew,” he said to one of his closest friends in Egypt, “the awful strain of having to make up one’s mind in crisis after crisis, knowing that on that one decision everything depends.” Such moments have come to him, and those who look can see the marks of that tremendous strain visible in his face, which is no longer alert, eager, and lean with the pacing energy of his brain. On the whole, however, responsibility and authority have made him a greater man than his parts would have suggested to the most admiring of his friends forty years ago.

[Fig. 8. LORD KITCHENER IN HIS ACADEMIC GOWN]

“K. is a wonderful administrator,” one of his friends told me, “but he is not otherwise an able man.” This is true. Kitchener is by no means, for instance, a great general. Again, his statesmanship has never advanced out of gun range, because it is entirely without the genius which trusts humanity. In consequence he is something of a bungler, something of a blunderer. “In Egypt,” I was told, “he behaved like a great bull in a china shop. We used to call him K. of Chaos. The man was never any good except in making an army and preparing for a campaign.” I do not think this judgment altogether a true one, but it is sufficiently true to show that Kitchener is not the heaven-born genius of popular imagination. He is a slow, thorough, painstaking, laborious, and determined organizer. He takes a long time to get anywhere, but when he arrives the man on the spot knows immediately why he has come.

He is a little conscious, perhaps, that soldiers do not regard him as quite one of themselves. He is said to be much more genial and human among his civilian staff in Egypt than he has ever shown himself when holding a purely military command. It is as if the man were always on his guard with soldiers. Among civil servants, where his talents are indisputable, he unbends, although he always sits in a chair as if it were a throne. Occasionally, even among his civilians, and even at dinner, Kitchener can be ferocious. With guests in his house, a lady or two at the table, he has been known to handle a man so angrily and pitilessly that it has been an ordeal of the nerves for the women to remain.

I will now tell the two worst stories I know about Kitchener, and get rid as quickly as possible of this particular aspect of his character. One is of Egypt and one of South Africa; both are true.

It happened that Kitchener, during his Egyptian command, wanted a certain bridge to be built, and sent for an engineer to give him his orders. When the command was finished, he added, “I will inspect the bridge on—,” naming a certain date. The engineer expressed his doubt whether the bridge could possibly be finished in so short a time. He was told that on that day Kitchener would come to the spot and if the bridge was not finished there would be trouble. There the interview ended.

The engineer set off on his labour of Hercules. He was young, devoted, and ambitious. He worked by night and by day, did incredible things, and at the moment when Kitchener arrived had everything ready for the inspection. His eyes shining with pleasure. his face wet with perspiration, his hands still grimed with the anxious work of last touches, he advanced to Kitchener, saluted, and said, with a smile, “Well, sir, we’ve just managed to do it in time.” The only answer he received, the dreadful eyes fixed upon him, the voice cold with authority, was this: “Yes; but you ought not to appear before me unshaved.”

This is what I call the Prussian element in Kitchener’s character, and for myself I hate it so, much, detest it so spiritually, that I would give much to add to my story that the engineer threw the piece of cotton-waste, on which he was wiping his dirty hands, straight into K.‘s face, even if one had to record that he was subsequently buried in close proximity to his bridge. Nevertheless, I remind myself that Kitchener is a man burdened with responsibility, that the East is not good for the liver, and that perhaps something had occurred that day to put him out. But I don’t like to hear that when this story was retold to Kitchener in after

years he laughed heartily. It would have been rather nice to record that he covered his face with his hands.

The other story is this. During the war in South Africa it was necessary on a certain occasion for Kitchener to make a quick and highly perilous journey by train. A daring and high-spirited youngster volunteered to drive the engine. The journey was accomplished. The volunteer driver, delighted that he had got the great general safely through most dangerous country, said to Kitchener as the Chief of the Staff passed him standing beside his sweating engine–"We weren't very long, sir, were we?" To which K. of K. replied, scarce looking at him, "You'll have to be quicker going back."

Well, it's horrid and odious and uncivilized, but this is undeniable. that such a spirit does get things done, and without such a spirit no one man perhaps could produce efficiency over a tremendously wide and infinitely difficult field. Kitchener, I think, is not brutal by nature, but, as we have said, has acquired brutality in the course of his journey from a big job to a bigger, and from a bigger to a still bigger.

Of his personal courage there can be no question, nor of his sacrifice of himself in the public interest. If he has spared no man, never has he spared himself. If he has exposed other men to danger, he himself in the face of the most imminent death has remained calm and indifferent.

During a serious time in Egypt, only a year ago, he was sitting one evening with some friends in the courtyard of his house when a fanatic suddenly sprang through the dusk into the midst of the group and waving his right hand above his head seemed as if he were about to hurl a bomb straight at Kitchener's head. Kitchener, I am told by two persons who were present, never moved a muscle, never turned a hair. He remained exactly as he had been a moment before, occupying his chair as if it were a throne, and showing not the smallest concern for his safety. The madman, who carried no bomb, was caught and removed, and K. of K. went on with the conversation.

A German officer who accompanied the British troops in Egypt said of Kitchener: "Personal danger does not seem to exist for him, although he has nothing whatever of the braggart about him. His entry into Omdurman was madly venturesome, but there was something almost comic about his calm, when, for instance, he lit a cigarette, carefully considering which way the wind

blew, while bullets were whizzing all round him, and this, in his case, is not playing to the gallery, it is simply the man's natural manner."

The chief and distinguishing trait of his innermost character is a love of altering things, a disposition probably inherited from his land-improving father. He never quite approves of other people's work. His way is always the better way. Once in Egypt, when two great ladies from England were staying at the Agency, he took these distinguished guests to see the magnificent ball-room which he had just added to the rather mean official residence of the British Agent. A number of natives were on their hands and knees polishing the floor in unison. K. of K. regarded them for a moment or two, and then striding forward told them that their method was the wrong method and that the best way of polishing a floor was in such a fashion. The natives altered their positions, got ready to work in the new order, and then started. The next moment they were a broken and disorganized line, some of them sprawling and rolling on the floor. The two ladies laughed at this tableau. "Do it your own way," commanded Kitchener, and the scowl on his face very effectually expressed his chagrin. Certainly he disapproved of the spontaneous laughter of his guests.

In many instances his alterations have been great and valuable improvements. The hobby nearest to his heart is architecture, and on Broome Park, his place near Canterbury, made famous by Ingoldsby, he has expended infinite labour and no little money. As an evidence of his diligence in this work and his thoroughness in detail, it may be related that he spent several days with Lord and Lady Sackville at Knole–probably the most perfect house in the whole world–taking impressions of the carvings with sheets of wet blotting-paper. He would spend hours at this work, a lady standing by with water, and scarcely any words escaped his lips during the operation except the command, "More water."

He wanted to see the interior of Rufford Hall, and, staying in the neighbourhood, asked his hostess to drive him over. The lady told him that Lord and Lady Savile were away, and that for a very good and somewhat delicate reason the house was never shown. Kitchener persisted in his request, but the lady persisted in her refusal. One day, without a word to his hostess, he ordered a car, drove over to Rufford, where he found only an old woman in charge, and succeeded in forcing an entry. He told the story at dinner that night, laughing boisterously at his ruse; but the lady, need we say, did not join in his laughter.

His love for Broome is now the dearest affection of his heart. During the

alterations., which he superintends very closely, he resides in an unused gardener's cottage, among exceedingly shabby surroundings, and lives with scarcely more luxury than you find at the table of an agricultural labourer. "You don't know what it costs me to leave Broome," he said, with real feeling. the last time he went back to Egypt. The friend to whom he made this remark told me that he was like a schoolboy going back from delightsome holidays to the grind of school.

With this love of altering, extending, and improving houses and gardens, there goes the cupidity of the collector. Lord Kitchener knows a good deal about silver and china, a little about furniture, and he is a furious collector. I was told by an incomparable judge that the has knowledge but not taste. However this may be, he has, beyond all question, the passion of a collector, and will do almost anything to get possession of an object of his desire. His friends frankly tell him that he visits them chiefly for loot, and he has been told to his face, good-humouredly of course, that he is an incorrigible cadger. Many people are strong enough to ignore his hints and to refuse his beggings; but it is not so easy for those who happen to be his official inferiors to refuse him the piece for which he hints steadily and with increasing emphasis. I am told that this habit of the collector has grown with the years, is exceedingly unpleasant, and appears to be quite incurable. His collection of swords is said to be one of the finest in the world.

Lord Kitchener is neither an effective speaker nor a great writer. But he has two epigrams and one humorous remark which he is said to fire off, watching eagerly for their effect, at every fresh European visitor to Cairo. The first sententious epigram is this: "The future of Egypt is in Abyssinia." The second: "I started life as a consul: it has taken me forty years to get myself made a consul-general." The humorous remark, made to people who talk to him about Egyptian art, is as follows: "I don't think much of the art of a people who for four thousand years have drawn cats in precisely the same way."

It has been related of him–but I doubt the truth of the story–that to a man who began calling him Kitchener very soon after introduction, the Sirdar put the sudden question, "Why not Herbert, for short? "

Two other things really said by Lord Kitchener may be recorded. Speaking at a dinner of the East Anglians after his smashing of the Mahdi, he said that he was delighted to be welcomed home by brother Anglians, who evidently did not hold

the ancient belief that a prophet had no honour in his own country. “I cannot claim to be a prophet,” he continued, “but I have been engaged recently in upsetting one,–one who is now being received in his own country with a far different and perhaps warmer reception than that which I have the honour to receive to-night.” The other remark was made quite spontaneously to a man of my acquaintance. Kitchener was speaking of his early days, and of the impressions made upon him forty years ago by all the beauty, and silence, and mystery of the East. “Damascus,” he said, “made the profoundest impression; I continually see it even now, and exactly as I saw it then–it presents itself to my mind in perfect miniature as if I were looking at the city itself, but through the wrong end of a telescope.”

He does not seem to be a great reader. He has studied with fair thoroughness the curious notes of Richard Burton to the “Nights,” and he is occasionally interested by a modern novel, particularly imaginative novels masquerading as future history with the trappings of science. But he is no judge of a book, and does not seem to care a straw for the higher regions of literature.

One need not bore the reader by a summing-up. It is fairly obvious that this man, who stands just at present so totally and bracingly for the whole British Empire, is neither romantic hero nor heaven-sent genius. But also it is plain, I hope, that he is neither the absolute tyrant nor the bloodless machine of popular fancy. He is a simple, not very amiable, and occasionally a distinctly unpleasant official, who by the concentration of his will in a narrow groove, and by incessant, slow, unsparing, and plodding labour has achieved great and enormous victories. But within the man himself there is a certain dignity of soul, not white-robed and transfigured, it is true, but stiff with buckram and heavy with gold-lace, which gives a real weight, a genuine authority, to the impression he makes upon even considerable people.

Married to a woman who realized that history is spiritual progress, and that lordship, in spite of cocks’ feathers and scarlet, is only the police of civilization, Lord Kitchener might have been one of the greatest officials in modern English history. But he is a man who does not inspire the love of women, he has no spiritual ideals, no inspiration, and all his work has been characterized by so exclusive a masculinity that it is almost certain posterity will not be greatly curious about him. He will live in the shadows with Wellington, not in the sunlight with Nelson and Napoleon.

His service to his generation, however, has been nobly rendered, the living world owes him gratitude, and perhaps if the two little old ladies of Phillimore Gardens could rise to tell us all they know about him we might add to our gratitude the warmer and kinder feeling of affectionate admiration. For we know that. if Kitchener has made enemies, he has also grappled to his side one or two great and steady friends who find in him not only a powerful official and a remarkably able administrator, but a man whose friendship is a very pleasant possession.

THE END