THE THREE CORRESPONDENTS

An Incident of the Soudan Campaign.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

CHAPTER I.

There was only one little feathery clump of dom palms in all that great wilderness of black hocks and orange sand. It stood high on the bank, and below it the brown Nile swirled swiftly towards the Ambigole cataract, fitting a little frill of foam round each of the bowlders which studded its surface. Above, out of a naked blue sky, the sun was beating down upon the sand, and up again from the sand under the brims of the pith hats of the horsemen with the scorching glare of a blast furnace. It had risen so high that the shadows of the horses were no larger than themselves.

"Whew!" cried Mortimer, mopping his forehead, "you'd pay five shillings for this at the hummums."

"Precisely," said Scott. "But you are not asked to ride twenty miles in a Turkish bath with a field-glass, and a revolver, and a water-bottle, and a whole Christmas treeful of things dangling from you. The hothouse at Kew is excellent as a conservatory, but not adapted for exhibitions upon the horizontal bar. I vote for a camp in the palm grove and a halt until evening."

Mortimer rose on his stirrups and looked hard to the southward. Everywhere were the same black burned rocks and deep orange sand. At one spot only an intermittent line appeared to have been cut through the rugged spurs which ran down to the river. It was the bed of the old railway, long destroyed by the Arabs, but now in process of reconstruction by the advancing Egyptians. There was no other sign of man's handiwork in all that desolate scene.

"It's palm-trees or nothing," said Scott.

"Well, I suppose we must; and yet I grudge every hour until we reach the force up. What would our editors say if we were late for the action?"

"My dear chap, an old bird like you doesn't need to be told that no sane modern general would ever attack until the press is up."

"You don't mean that?" said young Anerley. "I thought we were looked upon as an unmitigated nuisance."

"'Newspaper correspondents and traveling gentlemen, and all that tribe of useless drones'—being an extract from Lord Wolseley's 'Soldier's Pocket-Book,'" cried Scott. "We know all about that, Anerley"—and he winked behind his blue spectacles. "If there were going to be a battle we should very soon have an escort of cavalry to hurry us up. I've been in fifteen, and I never saw one where they had not arranged for a reporter's table."

"That's very well; but the enemy may be less considerate," said Mortimer.

"They are not strong enough to force a battle."

"A skirmish, then?"

"Much more likely to be a raid upon the rear. In that case we are just where we should be."

"So we are! What a score over Reuter's man up with the advance! Well, we'll outspan and have our tiffin under the palms."

There were three of them, and they stood for three great London dailies. Reuter was thirty miles ahead; two evening pennies upon camels were twenty miles behind. And among them they represented the eyes and the ears of the public—the great silent millions and millions who had paid for everything and who waited patiently to know the result of their outlay.

They were remarkable men, these body-servants of the press; two of them already veterans in the camps, the other setting out upon his first campaign, and full of deference for his famous comrades.

This first one, who had just dismounted from his bay polo-pony, was Mortimer, of the Intelligence—tall, straight and hawk-faced, with kharki tunic and riding breeches, drab putties, a scarlet cummerbund, and a skin tanned to the red of a Scotch fir by sun and wind, and mottled by the mosquito and the sand fly. The other—small, quick, mercurial, with blue-black curling beard and hair, a fly switch forever flicking in his left hand—was Scott of the Courier, who had come through more dangers and brought off more brilliant scoops than any man in the profession, save the eminent Chandler, now no longer in a condition to take the field. They were a singular contrast, Mortimer and Scott, and it was in their differences that the secret of their close friendship lay. Each dovetailed into the other. The strength of each was in the other's weakness. Together they formed a perfect unit: Mortimer was Saxon—slow, concientious and deliberate; Scott was Celtic—quick, happy-go-lucky and brilliant. Mortimer was the more solid, Scott the more attractive. Mortimer was the deeper thinker, Scott the brighter talker. By a curious coincidence, though each had seen much of warfare, their campaigns had never coincided. Together they covered all recent military history. Scott had done Plevna, the Shipka, the Zulus, Egypt, Suakim; Mortimer had seen the Boer war, the Chilian, the Bulgarian and Servian, the Gordon relief, the Indian frontier, Brazilian rebellion and Madagascar. This intimate personal knowledge gave a peculiar flavor to their talk. There was none of the second-hand surmise and conjecture which forms so much of our conversation; it was all concrete and final. The speaker had been there, had seen it, and there was an end to it.

In spite of their friendship there was the keenest professional rivalry between the two men. Either would have sacrificed himself to help his companion, but either would also have sacrificed his companion to help his paper. Never did a jockey yearn for a winning mount as keenly as each of them longed to have a full column in a morning edition whilst every other daily was blank. They were perfectly frank about the matter. Each professed himself ready to steal a march on his neighbor, and each recognized that the other's duty to his employer was far higher than any personal consideration.

The third man was Anerley, of the Gazette—young, inexperienced and rather simple-looking. He had a droop of the lip which some of his more intimate friends regarded as a libel upon his character and his eyes were so slow and so sleepy that they suggested an affectation. A leaning toward soldiering had sent him twice to autumn maneuvers, and a touch of color in his descriptions had induced the proprietors of the Gazette to give him a trial as a war special. There was a pleasing diffidence about his bearing which recommended him to his experienced companions, and if they had a smile sometimes at his guileless ways, it was soothing to them to have a comrade from whom nothing was to be feared. From the day that they left the telegraph wire behind them at Sarras, the man who was mounted upon a 15-guinea 34 Syrian was delivered over into the hands of the owners of the two fastest polo-ponies that ever shot down the Ghezireh ground.

The three had dismounted and led their beasts under the welcome shade. In the brassy yellow glare every branch above threw so black and solid a shadow that the men involuntarily raised their feet to step over them.

"The palm makes an excellent hat-rack," said Scott, slinging his revolver and his water-bottle over the little upward-pointing pegs which bristled from the trunk. "As a shade tree, however, it isn't an unqualified success. Curious that in the universal adaption of means to ends something a little less flimsy could not have been devised for the tropics."

"Like the banyan in India."

"Or the fine hard-wood trees in Ashantee, where a whole regiment could picnic under the shade."

"The teak-tree isn't bad in Burmah either. By Jove, the baccy has all come loose in the saddle-bag! That long-cut mixture smokes rather hot for this climate. How about the baggies, Anerley?"

"They'll be here in five minutes."

Down the winding path which curved among the rocks the little train of baggage-camels was daintily picking its way. They came mincing and undulating along, turning their heads slowly from side to side with the air of self-conscious women. In front rode the three Berberee body-servants upon donkeys, and behind walked the Arab camel boys. They had been traveling for nine long hours, ever since the first rising of the moon, at the weary camel drag of two and a half miles an hour, but now they brightened, both beasts and men, at the sight of the grove and the riderless horses. In a few minutes the loads were unstrapped, the animals tethered, a fire lighted, fresh water carried up from the river, and each camel provided with his own little heap of tibbin laid in the centre of the table-cloth, without which no well-bred Arabian will condescend to feed. The dazzling light without, the subdued half-tones within, the green palm-fronds outlined against the deep blue sky, the flitting silent-footed Arab servants, the crackling of sticks, the reek of a lighting fire, the placid supercilious heads of the camels, they all come back in their dreams to those who have known them.

Scott was breaking eggs into a pan and rolling out a love-song in his rich deep voice. Anerley, with his head and two arms buried in a deal packing-case, was working his way through strata of tinned soups, bully beef, potted chicken and sardines to reach the jams which lay beneath. The conscientious Mortimer, with his notebook upon his knee, was jotting down what the railway engineer had told him at the line end the day before. Suddenly he raised his eyes and saw the man himself on his chestnut pony, dipping and rising over the broken ground.

"Hullo, here's Merryweather!"

"A pretty lather his pony is in! He's had her at that hand gallop for hours by the look of her. Hullo, Merryweather, Hullo!"

The engineer, a small compact man with a pointed red beard, had made as though he would ride past their camp without word or halt. Now he swerved, and easing his pony down to a canter, he headed her toward them.

"For God's sake, a drink!" he croaked. "My tongue is stuck to the roof of my mouth."

Mortimer ran with the water-bottle, Scott with the whisky flask, and Anerley with the tin pannikin. The engineer drank until his breath failed him.

"Well, I must be off," said he, striking the drops from his red mustache.

"Any news?"

"A hitch in the railway construction. I must see the general. It's the devil not having a telegraph."

"Anything we can report?" Out came three notebooks.

"I'll tell you after I've seen the general."

"Any dervishes?"

"The usual shaves. Hud-up, Jinny! Good-by."

With a soft thudding upon the sand and a clatter among the stones, the weary pony was off on her journey once more.

"Nothing serious, I suppose?" said Mortimer, staring after her.

"Deuced serious," cried Scott. "The ham and eggs are burned! No—it's all right—saved, and done to a turn! Pull the box up, Anerley. Come on, Mortimer, stow that notebook! The fork is mightier than the pen just at present. What's the matter with you, Anerley?"

"I was wondering whether what we have just seen was worth a telegram."

"Well, it's for the proprietors to say if it's worth it. Sordid money considerations are not for us. We must wire about something just to justify our kharki coats and our putties."

"But what is there to say?

Mortimer's long austere face broke into a smile over the youngster's innocence.

"It's not quite usual in our profession to give each other tips," said he. "However, as my telegram is written, I've no objection to your reading it. You may be sure that I would not show it to you if it were of the slightest importance."

Anerley took up the slip of paper and read:

"'Merryweather obstacles stop journey confer general stop nature difficulties later stop rumors dervishes.'"

"This is very condensed," said Anerley, with wrinkled brows.

"Condensed!" cried Scott. "Why, it's sinfully garrulous. If my old man got a wire like that his language would crack the lamp shades. I'd cut out half this; for example, I'd have out 'journey,' and 'nature,' and 'rumors.' But my old man would make a ten-line paragraph of it for all that."

"How?"

"Well, I'll do it myself just to show you. Lend me that stylo." He scribbled for a minute in his notebook. "It works out somewhat on these lines:

"'Mr. Charles H. Merryweather, the eminent railway engineer, who is at present engaged in superintending the construction of the line from Sarras to the front, has met with considerable obstacles to the rapid completion of his important task'—of course the old man knows who Merryweather is, and what he is about, so the word 'obstacles' would suggest all that to him. "He has to-day been compelled to make a journey of forty miles to the front in order to confer with the general upon the steps which are necessary in order to facilitate the work. Further particulars of the exact nature of the difficulties met with will be made public at a later date. All is quiet upon the line of communications, though the usual persistent rumors of the presence of dervishes in the eastern desert continue to circulate.—Our Own Correspondent."

"How's that?" cried Scott, triumphantly, and his white teeth gleamed suddenly through his black beard. "That's the sort of flapoodle for the dear old public."

"Will it interest them?"

"Oh, everything interests them. They want to know all about it; and they like to think that there is a man who is getting a hundred a month simply in order to tell it to them."

"It's very kind of you to teach me all this."

"Well, it is a little unconventional, for after all we are here to score over each other if we can. There are no more eggs, and you must take it out in jam. Of course, as Mortimer says, such a telegram as this is of no importance one way or another except to prove to the office that we are in the Soudan and not at Monte Carlo. But when it comes to serious work it must be every man for himself."

"Is that quite necessary?"

"Why, of course it is."

"I should have thought if three men were to combine and to share their news, they would do better than if they were each to act for themselves; and they would have a much pleasanter time of it."

The two older men sat with their bread and jam in their hands, and an expression of genuine disgust upon their faces.

"We are not here to have a pleasant time," said Mortimer, with a flash through his glasses. "We are here to do our best for our papers. How can they score over each other if we do not do the same? If we all combine we might as well amalgamate with Reuter at once."

"Why, it would take away the whole glory of the profession," cried Scott. "At present the smartest man gets his stuff first on the wires. What inducement is there to be smart if we all share and share alike?"

"And at present the man with the best equipment has the best chance," remarked Mortimer, glancing across at the shot-silk polo-ponies and the cheap little Syrian gray. "That is the fair reward of foresight and enterprise. Every man for himself, and let the best man win."

"That's the way to find who the best man is. Look at Chandler. He would never have got his chance if he had not played always off his own bat. You've heard how he pretended to break his leg, sent his fellow-correspondent off for the doctor, and so got a fair start for the telegraph-office."

"Do you mean to say that was legitimate?"

"Everything is legitimate. It's your wits against my wits."

"I should call it dishonorable."

"You may call it what you like. Chandler's paper got the battle and the others didn't. It made Chandler's name."

"Or take Westlake," said Mortimer, cramming the tobacco into his pipe. "Hi Abdul you may have the dishes! Westlake brought his stuff down by pretending to be the government courier, and using the relays of government horses. Westlake's paper sold half a million."

"Is that legitimate also?" asked Anerley, thoughtfully.

"Why not?"

"Well, it looks a little like horse stealing and lying."

"Well, I think I should do a little horse stealing and lying if I could have a column to myself in a London daily. What do you say, Scott?"

"Anything short of manslaughter."

"And I'm not sure that I'd trust you there."

"Well, I don't think I should be guilty of newspaper-man-slaughter. That I regard as a distinct breach of professional etiquette. But if any outsider comes between a highly charged correspondent and an electric wire he does it at his peril. My dear Anerley, I tell you frankly that if you are going to handicap yourself with scruples you may just as well be in Fleet street as in the Soudan. Our life is irregular. Our work has never been systematized. No doubt it will be some day, but the time is not yet. Do what you can and how you can, and be first on the wires; that's my advice to you; and also that when next you come upon a campaign you bring with you the best horse that money can buy. Mortimer may beat me or I may beat Mortimer, but at least we know that between us we have the fastest ponies in the country. We have neglected no chance."

"I am not so certain of that," said Mortimer, slowly. "You are aware, of course, that though a horse beats a camel on twenty miles, a camel beats a horse on thirty."

"What! One of those camels?" cried Anerley, in astonishment.

The two seniors burst out laughing.

"No, no; the real high-bred trotter—the kind of beast the dervishes ride when they make their lightning raids."

"Faster than a galloping horse?"

"Well, it tires a horse down. It goes the same gait all the way, and it wants neither halt nor drink, and it takes rough ground much better than a horse. They used to have long-distance races at Halfa, and the camel always won at thirty.

"Still, we need not reproach ourselves, Scott, for we are not very likely to have to carry a thirty-mile message. They will have the field telegraph next week."

"Quite so. But at the present moment—"

"I know my dear chap, but there is no motion of urgency before the house. Load baggles at five o'clock; so you have just three hours clear. Any sign of the evening pennies?"

Mortimer swept the northern horizon with his binoculars.

"Not in sight yet."

"They are quite capable of traveling during the heat of the day. Just the sort of thing evening pennies would do. Take care of your match, Anerley. These palm groves go up like a powder magazine if you set them alight. By-by." The two men crawled under their mosquito nets and sank instantly into the easy sleep of those whose lives are spent in the open.

Young Anerley stood with his back against a palm-tree and his briar between his lips thinking over the advice which he had received. After all, they were the heads of the profession, these men, and it was not for him, the newcomer, to reform their methods. If they served their papers in this fashion then he must do the same. They had at least been frank and generous in teaching him the rules of the game. If it was good enough for them, it was good enough for him.

(To be Continued.)

ROQUEFORT.

How This Famous French Cheese Is Made.

Roquefort cheese is made of a mixture of goat and sheep milk. The reputation of this cheese extends back into dim antiquity, and Pliny mentions it in his writings. It is made chiefly from the milk of Larzad goats and sheep and in the records in France it is stated that in the year 1866 250,000 sheep and goats out of a flock of 400,000 gave enough milk for the making of 7,150,000 pounds of cheese.

In the manufacture of Roquefort cheese the sheep and goats are milked in the evening after their return from the pastures and after they have been allowed to rest for an hour or so. The evening's milk is heated almost to the boiling point and then set aside. In the morning it is skimmed, heated to ninety-eight degrees and mixed with the morning's milk for coagulation. The curd is well kneaded with the hands and pressed in layers into moulds with perforated bottoms. A thin layer of mouldy bread is put between each layer of curd. The object of this is to hasten the "ripening" of the cheese by supplying the germs of the green mould peculiar to cheese. The bread used for this purpose is made before the preceding Christmas of about equal parts of summer and winter barley with considerable sour dough and some vinegar. When mouldy enough it is ground and sifted, moistened with water and kept from the air until wanted in the taking of the cheese.

The curd remains in the moulds for three or four days, after which the cheeses are wrapped in linen cloth and put to dry. They are allowed to remain in the drying rooms three or four days. Then they are taken to the market in Roquefort, where they are sold to the different makers of Roquefort cheese. These manufacturers continue the ripening of the cheeses by placing them in the very damp caves which abound in the precipitous walls of the limestone hills, surrounding the village. The caves which are so situated that the currents of air flow from south to north are considered to yield the best cheese. The currents of air which come from these caves are cold even in the warmest weather. The cheeses are left in the caves sometimes more than a month, during which time salt and brine is rubbed into them and they are picked frequently with long needles to let the salt penetrate and also to accelerate the mouldering.

THE RETORT STONY.

Rye, exhibiting ring—What do you think of this for a stone, my boy?

Alto—M-m-m. What quarry did it come from?

HEART WEAKNESS.

MUST BE TREATED IN TIME OR ENDS IN CERTAIN DEATH.

Some of the Symptoms are Palpitation After Slight Exertion, Sometimes Severe Pains, Dizziness and Fainting Spells—It Can Be Cured.

From the Echo Plattsville, Ont.

The Echo has read and has published many statements from people who have been cured of various ailments by the timely and judicious use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, but never before have we had such personally convincing proof of their efficacy as in the case of Mrs. George Taylor, who with her husband and family reside in this village. To an Echo reporter Mrs. Taylor gave the following history of her illness and cure, and asked that it be given the widest publicity, so that others might be benefited: "I am thirty-two years of age," said Mrs. Taylor, "and in 1885 my husband and myself were living on a farm in Perth county, and it was there I was first taken sick. The doctor who was called in said I was suffering from heart trouble, due to nervous debility. All his remedies proved of no avail, and I steadily grew worse. The doctor advised a change, and we moved to Moncton, Ont. Here I put myself under the charge of another physician, but with no better results. At the least exertion my heart would palpitate violently. I was frequently overcome with dizziness and fainting fits. While in these my limbs would become cold and often my husband thought I was dying. I tried several medicines advertised to cure troubles like mine, but with no better results, and I did not expect to recover, in fact I often thought it would be better if the end came, for my life was one of misery. We moved back to the farm, and then one day I read the statement of a lady who had been cured of similar troubles by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, so I said to my husband that I would try this medicine and it seemed to me that it was my last chance. Before the first box was finished I felt an improvement in my appetite and felt that this was a hopeful sign. By the time I had used three boxes more my trouble seemed to be entirely gone, and I have not felt a single recurrence of the old symptoms. Since moving to Plattsville I have used two boxes and they had the effect of toning up the system and curing slight indispositions. To-day I am a well woman and owe my life to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and to me my restoration seems nothing short of a miracle. I was like one dead and brought back to life, and I cannot speak too highly of this medicine, or urge too strongly those who are afflicted to give it a trial."

It has been proved time and again that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure heart troubles, nervous debility, rheumatism, sciatica, St. Vitus' dance and stomach trouble. They make new blood and build up the nerves, restoring the glow of health to pale and sallow faces. Be sure you get the genuine as there is no other medicine "the same as" or "just as good" as Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. If your dealer does not have them they will be sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for $2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

BEARING A GRUDGE.

The worst effect of bearing a grudge is that it so hardens the character and makes the resentful person so unhappy. To go about carrying a grudge is to congeal one's better nature, to prevent the upspringing of gentle thoughts and purposes, to arrest the development of the best, and cause the worst principles in our nature to triumph.

After all, when one considers it, a grudge is a pitifully small thing, never worth while and simply so much useless impedimenta on the journey of life. The unforgiving person prides himself on his strength of will; he glories in his tenacity of purpose; he plumes himself on his power to take a position and maintain it. People are often very proud and boastful of their ill temper, their stubbornness, their inability to relent and overlook an offence.

But all the while their resentful and vindictive condition of mind is a sign of degeneracy, and it allies them with such animals of the jungle and the desert as have sharp claws, savage teeth, and a long memory for insult and wrong. Far higher and far lovelier is the generous ideal, the ideal of goodness and gracious kindness, the ideal of pardon shown on the first sign of penitence, of pardon ready before repentance awakens.

When we discern in ourselves the disposition to bear a grudge it is well to take the matter in hand, and consider whether we care to let the hardness o four hearts print itself on our faces. Every bitter emotion, every unkind sentiment, every harsh word or harsh thought, every unworthiness of mood or of intention records itself on brow and lips, and shows itself in our countenances. Serenity of soul can transform a face originally plain into nobility and beauty, while the unquiet mind, the angry temper, the ill-natured and jealous and malevolent mood, will, by sure degrees change beauty into ugliness.

The effect on others is of less moment to us in all bearing of grudges than the effect upon ourselves. For, day by day, hour by hour, we are making, moulding or marring our own bodies, blotting out the image of God from our souls, or lifting up our natures into closer union with our Creator. No human being can afford to go about bearing grudges, unless he is willing to lose the semblance of the Divine, which is his birthright.