

THE THREE CORRESPONDENTS

An Incident of the Sudan 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 boulders 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 Dunsley'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 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 defence 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 commission 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, contentious 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, Suakin; Mortimer had seen the Boer war, the Chilean, the Bulgarian and Serbian, 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

panion, 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 scolding 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 Sarrahs, 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 biassy 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 adaptation of means to ends something a little less flimsy could not have been devised for the tropics."

"Like the banyan in India," said Scott. "Or the fine hard-wood trees in Ashante, where a whole regiment could picnic under the shade."

"The teak-tree isn't had 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 baggles, Anerley?"

"They'll be here in five minutes," said Scott. "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 Berbere 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 tiffin laid in the centre of the table-cloth, without which no well-bred Arabian will descend 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 came 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, pot-ted 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, Jinnyl 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

"Duced 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 Sarrahs 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 Sudan 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 pleasant 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 Sudan. 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 up on 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.)

SHARKS IN CAPTIVITY.

Sharks are rather delicate in captivity, and it is difficult to keep them in aquariums. Whatever care may be bestowed upon them, they do not seem to be able to stand confinement, however large the tank or pool may be. In captivity sharks swim round and round the tank, nine times out of ten taking course and never reversing. A shark has been known to keep its course for three or four months without change, and, except for food, never halting, so far as it was observed. It would keep going all day long, and would be found going in the morning just the same. If food was placed in its way, it would stop for several minutes and eat, remaining headed the same way. Presently it would start on again in the same direction on its rounds, moving slowly unless disturbed.

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WEIGH YOURSELF BEFORE TAKING THEM.

A MARKED GAIN.

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I have been a great sufferer from nervous dyspepsia, with the usual symptoms of stomach weakness, loss of appetite and flesh, accumulation of gas, sour risings, and heartburn. I used various patent medicines and other remedies without any favorable results. They would give temporary relief sometimes until the effects of the medicine wore off, but Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills overcame all these obstacles. I am better in every way now and have gained several pounds in weight.

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PAIN IN THE HEART.

Too serious a condition to neglect.

A Guelph harness maker tells how he was cured.

Mr. Wm. Dyson, the well known harness maker and harness maker of Guelph, Ont., makes the following statement: "I heartily



commend Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills to anyone suffering from nervousness or heart trouble. They are a special medicine for such complaints. For a long time I was afflicted with nervousness and pain in my heart, which was especially severe at night, often destroying my sleep. These pills cured me and invigorated my nervous system which is now strong and healthy. They restored restful sleep, removing the distressing heart pains which formerly gave me so much anxiety and trouble."

Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills at a box for \$1.25, sold by druggists or by mail. T. Milburn & Co., Toronto, Ont.

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OUR STORED-UP POWER.

Mr. Staybolt Considers Man as Built for a Compartment Plan.

"Man is, as one might say," said Staybolt, "built in series of compartments, though he may not know the fact at the outset, and he may go through life and die without realizing it, taking with him unused stores of ability and strength that he never known he possessed, simply because they were never brought to play. As to what will bring these qualities into play men differ. They are some few men who command themselves, and some who open at a word and then there are many who react only to the most urgent call. There are few men who cannot immediately be moved to action."

"This brings me, for illustration, a brief consideration of the personal quality commonly denominated 'sand,' of which, I imagine, most of us possess far more than we suspect. There are few men who finally give up and fight when they feel that they are really called upon. But our life is in compartments, and most of us, fancy, open only one and make it last through life, and we die without knowing how brave we are, unless on a great occasion, independent of ourselves, opens another compartment and shows us what we really have reserved. I might add that there are few if any revelations that come in life that give us greater pleasure or more enlarge our horizon."

"The moral of all this is that if we good qualities we should trust in ourselves without hesitation. There are qualities which easily get themselves, which it would better to leave unused, better, for ourselves and for everybody else, in compartments containing them, never opened; but as to such qualities as pluck, endurance, energy, courage and moral strength we should call on ourselves freely. We should take down with us, as otherwise are almost certain to do, stores of these valuable qualities untouched, and constantly and confidently, so doing we shall be gratified by our constant growth in strength, more than gratified with the attendant substantial rewards."

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

The human race is but a collection of dollars.

The sherry cobbler is not in the shoemaker class.

The only law against cycling is the law of gravitation.

Power is powerless unless you are conscious of your ability.

Good-natured criticism is the one man always dishes out to himself.

After a man has made his bed, let him lie in it.

Flatter a woman and she will hate you; pity her and she will love you.

Good deeds always speak for themselves when they call for their real estate.

There are tricks in all trades, the exception of the one you are engaged in.

Affection before marriage is overdone, but after marriage it is usually rare.

Railway pools may be profitable, but the stock will continue to be watered just the same.

Man was made to mourn, and man was made to see that he mourned. That's the whole story in a nutshell.

HOUSEHOLD

GOLDEN RULE.

As I lie in a quiet day, And wait for health, A bunch of bloom, Smiles at me; tufted, of gold, Glean brightly, and unfold.

I see the roadsides, green and rain, The clean bright stalks, shocks of grain, The purple haze upon the yellow, yellow stalks, and still.

I hear the cricket's drum, Through all the gold ternoon, Down in the marshy meadow, Gay clouds of white, and terflies,

The sumach's dull war, the fence, Where saucy catbirds pretence, Of scolding, where in the ranks, The purple asters nod,

Across the meadow, 'ga still green, One frost-touched flame is seen, And all sun, haze, still, ers that nod.

I see through magic, rol,

FOR EASY REF.

Many a housewife has good recipe and declares when the fact is, the more as given, were no loved.

The following measure may be found useful to kitchen for easy reference.

Four even teaspoonsful equal one tablespoonful. Three even teaspoonsful equal one tablespoonful.

Sixteen tablespoonful equal one cupful. Twelve tablespoonful equal one cupful.

Two cupfuls equal one quart. Four cupfuls equal one gallon.

Four cupfuls equal one pint. Two cupfuls solid bulk equal one cupful.

Two cupfuls granular equal one pint. Two and one-half sugar equal one pound.

One pint milk or water equal one quart. One dozen eggs should equal one-half pounds.

The following table will also be found valuable.

One teaspoonful soda molasses. One teaspoonful soda milk.

Three teaspoonfuls equal one quart flour. One-half cupful yeast make compressed yeast.

One teaspoonful extra plain cake. One teaspoonful salt flour.

One teaspoonful salt soap. One scant cupful of cupsful of flour for bread.

One scant cupful of cupsful of flour for mince.

LITTLE THINGS.

How much of life is in little things; little pleasures, little reflections of sun and dark shadows. It has a little words are the little charities that stay longest on the flukes are the stillest, and honest and little farms.

"Little books are the little songs the dearest nature would make any rare and beautiful thing—little pearls, little diamonds."

"The sermon on the last dedication of an hour. Life is made of death is what remains of it made up of little beautiful things with little sturdy living; the little heart; the little word, right time, that may be brother to once more."

Let us then be ever watchful for the little things along our path that may help us meet them half way.

The little deeds of kindness will bring us greater returns.

THINGS TOLD BY.

Hot instead of cold molasses are being marketed for the table quantity left over from the maple sugar industry.

While maple sugar is being produced that grated is a delicious hard sauce for a tablespoonful of vinegar water in which fish is cooked.

The flesh of an egg