



***JOSEF
OHRWALDER,
F. R. SIR
WINGATE***

***TEN YEARS'
CAPTIVITY
IN THE MAHDI'S
CAMP 1882-
1892***

Josef Ohrwalder, F. R. Sir Wingate

Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp 1882-1892

EAN 8596547399704

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS, MAP AND PLAN.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INDEX.

PREFACE.

[Table of Contents](#)



FATHER OHRWALDER.

After the fall of Khartum in January 1885, various attempts were from time to time made to effect the release of some of the European prisoners who had fallen into the Mahdi's hands during the early stages of the Sudan revolt.

These attempts were for the most part attended with little result. The causes of their failure, and eventual success in one instance, are fully described in the following personal narrative of Father Ohrwalder.

As Father Ohrwalder is the first European who has escaped from the Sudan since 1885, I was fully occupied with him during the few days immediately following his

arrival in ascertaining, for official purposes, the actual situation in the Sudan, and that completed, we had many interesting conversations on the historical events which had occurred in these revolted districts during the last ten years.

Having but recently completed a *resumé* of these events, [A] which had been largely compiled from the statements of natives who had escaped, I was not unnaturally desirous to verify, by the independent witness of Father Ohrwalder, the accounts which they had given, and I further begged Father Ohrwalder to carefully read over the book and point out the errors. It was with considerable satisfaction that I learnt from him that the facts had been faithfully recorded; but the flood of light which he was enabled to throw on many obscure passages, and the great interest attaching to the narrative of an active participator in so many of these now historic occurrences, induced me to suggest that he should set to work, while the memory of these events was fresh in his mind, to write a personal narrative of his varied and terrible experiences, of which the general public have hitherto learnt but the bare outline.

It should be borne in mind that the circumstances under which Father Ohrwalder lived in the Sudan precluded him from keeping any written record of his life; it was therefore agreed that I should supervise his work which, I need scarcely add, it has given me great pleasure to do. Father Ohrwalder's manuscript, which was in the first instance written in German, was roughly translated into English by Yusef Effendi Cudzi, a Syrian; this I entirely rewrote in narrative form. The work does not therefore profess to be a literal translation of the original manuscript, but rather an

English version, in which I have sought to reproduce accurately Father Ohrwalder's meaning in the language of simple narration.

England and the British public in general have shown so much interest in the stirring events which have occurred in the Sudan, and in which many gallant British officers and men have lost their lives, that it is Father Ohrwalder's desire that the narrative of his experiences should be published in the first instance in England, as his modest tribute to the nation which struggled so gallantly, and so nearly successfully, to effect the relief of Khartum and the rescue of those unfortunate Europeans who, like himself, had fallen into the hands of a cruel and merciless enemy.

It seems almost incredible that such sufferings as the European captives endured did not long ago bring to them the happy release of death they so ardently longed for; but it was not to be. The door of escape, which they had thought closed to them for ever, suddenly opened, and they did not fear to risk the dangers and perils of that terrible desert journey, with scanty food and water, and the sure knowledge that they must ride for bare life; re-capture would have ended in certain death, or, at best, perpetual incarceration in a prison, the horrors of which beggar description. In spite, however, of all he has endured, Father Ohrwalder longs for the time when it may be possible for him to return to the Sudan and continue the Mission work so suddenly and hopelessly interrupted since 1882.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Walter C. Horsley for the admirable manner in which he has executed his portion of the illustrations. The remainder are chiefly from

photographs, taken by Mr. Lekegian in his photographic studio in Cairo, of Dervish prisoners captured at the action of Toski, and of refugees who have recently reached Cairo from Equatoria, through the territory administered by the Imperial British East Africa Company.

F.R.Wingate.

CAIRO, 30th July, 1892.

Footnote

[Table of Contents](#)

[A] Published under the title of 'Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan.' London: Macmillan & Co. 1891.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS, MAP AND PLAN.

[Table of Contents](#)



	PAGE
Father Ohrwalder, Sisters Venturini and Chincarini, and their servant Adila (<i>Frontispiece</i>).	
Zubeir Pasha	8
A native woman of Dongola	65
Hicks Pasha	74
Colonel Arthur Farquhar (Chief of Staff)	80
A Baggara emir, present at the	89

annihilation of the Hicks Expedition, and afterwards captured at Toski	
Father Ohrwalder's interview with the Mahdi at Rahad, concerning religion	107
The gold medal struck by Gordon to commemorate the siege of Khartum	122
A Dervish emir present in the attack on Khartum, and afterwards captured at Toski	136
An Egyptian Harem woman	156
"Many a time did I turn round to look back, until Bonomi disappeared from view in the wood"	181
A slave woman from Equatoria	209
Abyssinian dancing girls	243
An Arab sheikh of Upper Egypt	255
Bishir Bey, sheikh of the Ababdeh Arabs	259
Wad en Nejumi (from a photograph of a drawing made by an Egyptian officer of the great Emir, as he lay dead on the field of Toski)	264
A native woman of Makaraka, the wife of one of Emin Pasha's officers, who reached Egypt from Uganda in June 1892	270
A trophy of arms, banners, and drums,	305

captured from the Dervishes	
Charles Neufeld	354
A slave girl from Equatoria	382
A Baggara woman	398
The Arab guides who effected the escape of Father Ohrwalder and the Sisters	409
"We had scarcely gone twenty paces from the river, when suddenly we heard the sound of a camel"	435

Plan of Omdurman.

Map of the Nile Basin, showing route taken
by Father Ohrwalder.

Sketch Map showing correct Position of
I.B.E.A. Co's Forts & Boundary of Uganda.

TEN YEARS'

CAPTIVITY IN THE MAHDI'S CAMP

1882—1892



INTRODUCTION.

[Table of Contents](#)

FATHER OHRWALDER'S JOURNEY TO THE SUDAN.

Description of Kordofan and Dar Nuba—The Mission Station at Delen.

I left Cairo on the 28th of December, 1880, as full of bright hopes for a happy future as any young man could wish to be. I had no thought of the miserable fate which was so soon to overtake me.

Our party consisted of Bishop Comboni, two missionaries, Johann Dichtl and Franz Pimezzoni (these three have long since passed into eternity), and several sisters. We embarked at Suez, and spent the first day of 1881 on the Red Sea. On the 4th of January we landed at Sawakin. At that time the governor of the town was Ala ed Din Pasha, who subsequently accompanied General Hicks as Governor-General of the Sudan, and was eventually killed with him. After a journey of twenty-eight days and travelling *viâ* Berber, we reached Khartum; here the pleasant gardens and shady groves of date-palms impressed us most favourably. Standing on the high river bank, just in front of the Mission gardens, were the various members of the Mission, headed by Father Alois Bonomi, also the Austrian Consul Hansal and the Italian Consul Legnani, who gave us a hearty welcome. The whole city was *en fête*, to celebrate the return of the Governor-General Rauf Pasha from Gedaref. After landing, we walked through the lovely garden towards the Mission buildings, and here, in the principal parlour, were collected Rauf Pasha, Giegler Pasha, Gessi Pasha, who had just returned quite worn out from his campaigns in the Bahr el Ghazal; the courageous Slatin, fresh from Darfur; Marcopoli Bey, Doctor Zurbuchen, Marquet, the African traveller Jean

Maria Schuver, and many others who had come to welcome Bishop Comboni on his arrival.

On the 15th of March we celebrated the fiftieth birthday of Bishop Comboni with general rejoicings: in the evening the European colony dined at the Mission, and then followed a *soirée*. Little did we think of the terrible fate that was in store for the majority of those gathered together on that happy evening!

In the meantime Slatin Bey had been appointed Governor-General of Darfur, and he considered it his duty to proceed as soon as possible to take up his new post. Our bishop accepted Slatin's proffered invitation to travel together as far as El Obeid, and on the 29th of March we embarked on a steamer placed at our disposal by Rauf Pasha and proceeded to Tur el Hadra. We were accompanied thus far by Marcopoli Bey, Dr. Zurbuchen and Marquet, and here, mounting on camels, we made a rapid march across the Kordofan deserts, arriving at El Obeid on the 5th of April. No sooner had we dismounted, than two telegrams were handed to us: one announced the sudden death, on his return to Khartum, of Dr. Zurbuchen, and the other described the death of the Czar Alexander of Russia at the hands of the Nihilists.

We remained at El Obeid while Slatin was making arrangements for his journey to Darfur. Bishop Comboni then made a tour through Jebel Nuba, returned to El Obeid and subsequently to Khartum, where he died on the 10th of October. God, in His mercy, took him away so that he should not behold the terrible events in the Sudan which followed soon after his death.

I left El Obeid on the 28th of November, 1881, and reached Delen in Dar Nuba on the 5th of December. I was most favourably impressed with the Nuba country. Whilst Kordofan is merely an extensive plain with little change of scenery, Dar Nuba presents an entirely different aspect. Here chains of picturesque hills, running in various directions, rise out of the plain, interspersed with numerous watercourses. Jebel Delen, on which our Mission station was situated, is one of the smallest of the hills. The other principal groups are Naïma, Kurun, Dobab, Dair, Kedaro, Tagalla, Gedir, and Tira, in which gold is found, besides a number of smaller hills. It is estimated that in all there are upwards of one hundred inhabited mountains.

The intervening plains and valleys are rich in vegetation of every description; trees of colossal dimensions are found, more especially in the khors (the beds of perennial streams), and the thick luxuriant growth is so dense that the rays of the sun cannot penetrate. The soil is exceptionally fertile and rain abundant, consequently for six months in the year the density of the undergrowth makes it almost impossible to traverse these rich valleys; but when the rains are over and the grass becomes dry, it is generally fired, and thus the plains and valleys become passable again. A quantity of the rain from these hills flows into Lake Birket, some passes also into the Khor Abu Habl, which becomes lost in the sand before it reaches the White Nile. The rain from the southern Nuba hills finds its way into the Bahr el Arab. The plains abound with quantities of deer, giraffe, antelope, and wild boar, whilst the woods contain myriads of birds of lovely plumage, and apes and monkeys of every

description. During the winter season, elephants were frequently to be seen in the neighbourhood of Delen, which also abounds with snakes, amongst which the boa-constrictor is not uncommon.

The population of Dar Nuba, which at one time was considerable, does not now exceed 50,000; the scattered sub-tribes of Baggara, who roam the plains with the Bederieh and Ghodiat Arabs, have decimated the Nubas, and forced those that are left to fly to their mountain recesses, where they eke out a wretched existence, their protection being the inaccessible nature of their retreats.

I found the Nubas a pleasant and well-disposed people; indeed, they have the reputation in the Sudan of being the best of all the negroid races; they cultivate only sufficient quantities of corn, sesame, and beans to serve for their livelihood; whilst the wild fruits and vegetables of their country are so plentiful as to furnish almost sufficient food for their maintenance should they be unable to cultivate. They possess numbers of goats and cattle which supply them with milk and butter; they are much addicted to drinking marissa (a kind of beer made from dhurra), and great quantities of this beverage are consumed at their feasts, principally at the feast known as Zubeir. On this occasion men and women drink and dance together; but notwithstanding this unusual familiarity, I never saw anything which might be considered an outrage to society. With the exception of the Khojur, of whom I shall presently speak, and the head sheikh, monogamy is practised.

The Nubas are governed entirely by their own traditional laws and customs, the Khojur only intervening in case of

necessity. The Khojur is in reality a sort of religious chief, whose power over the people depends entirely on his skilfulness and sagacity. During the time I was in this neighbourhood the Khojur was a certain Kakum, known as "Kakum of Delen."

Only a short time had elapsed since the Egyptian Government had made a settlement at Delen. A company of Sudanese soldiers, under the command of a captain who was appointed for the suppression of the slave-trade, had been recently quartered there, and they were also charged with the protection of our Mission station.

I was very happy in Delen, where I found a variety of pursuits to occupy my time. I amused myself in collecting insects, of which I soon had a large selection. I also skinned birds and snakes. The various modes of Nuba life and cultivation were, moreover, an immense interest to me, and the presentation of a few glass beads enabled me to secure many strange objects in return. The natives used to roar with laughter when they saw me examining with interest the curious insects they brought me.

We had quite a colony of blacks in the Mission, and as the number increased, it became necessary to enlarge the accommodation, so we began to make and burn bricks; we obtained lime from the Saburi mountain (I may here say the Nubas gave us this information) and the doleb-palm supplied us with plenty of wood. Assisted by Father Bonomi, our carpenter Gabriel Mariani built a four-wheeled cart, which we drove with two strong mules. We worked along cheerfully and full of hope. We turned out some 2,000 good bricks. Our blacks were quite contented; far removed from

the corruption and temptation of the towns, they kept steadily to their work, and tilled their own little patches of ground; everything was going well, and we anticipated great results. But suddenly our tranquillity was disturbed. Early in April 1882, there were perceptible at Delen the first murmurings of the terrible storm which was to deluge the entire Sudan with blood, and to bring misfortune and calamity on the land and on our happy Mission; but these events I will describe in the following pages.



CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

THE MAHDI AND HIS RISE TO POWER.

The rise of the Mahdi—Early successes—Personal appearance—His Khalifas described—Military organization—Makes new laws—He summons El Obeid to surrender.

A few years previous to the time of which I speak, an individual who called himself a Dervish had attracted people's attention. He wandered through the Sudan in the garb of a Dervish, and strove to rouse the Moslems to religious fanaticism. He urged that reality no longer existed in the religion; faith was becoming of no account, and this religious decadence was due to a luxurious mode of life and contact with Christians. A number of influential sheikhs and merchants took up his cause, and these he made to swear to remain faithful and true to him. At this time at El Obeid there was a certain Said el Mek, who had the reputation of being a holy man, and the Dervish did all in his power to induce him to espouse his cause. Said el Mek urged that religion had not fallen into such disrepute, and that all would be well if more mosques were built; but the Dervish, with threats that if he refused to join him he would compass his destruction, extracted from him a promise to keep his plans secret. He then prepared the way by continuing his wanderings, preaching everywhere against the oppression of the Turk and the decadence of the true Moslem faith. Under the very nose of the Government he collected a small body of faithful adherents, set off with them for the island of Abba on the White Nile, and there openly declared himself.

Rumours that he intended to raise the people to revolt reached Khartum. At this time Rauf Pasha was Governor-General; he sent a noted Khartum townsman named Abu Saud to Abba, with instructions to invite the Dervish to come and see the Governor-General. Abu Saud nearly succeeded in his mission, and had it not been for the advice of one of his adherents, Ahmed Sharfi, it is probable that the Dervish would have accepted the invitation. Rauf Pasha, on learning of his refusal to obey the summons, despatched two companies of troops to Abba Island at the end of July 1881, with instructions to bring the Dervish forcibly to Khartum. The two captains of the companies had a difference of opinion, and, landing the troops in a most careless manner, they were drawn on by the adherents of the Dervish into a marshy swamp, where they were fallen upon and a number of them killed with simple sticks. Ahmed Sharfi himself told me this. Only a very few succeeded in escaping and returning to the steamer, in which they made their way back to Khartum.

This episode caused great excitement. I was at El Obeid when it happened, and Giegler Pasha, who was also there at the time, told me about it. Giegler despatched Mohammed Said Pasha to the White Nile with orders to prevent the Dervish from escaping south; but Said Pasha soon afterwards returned, having done nothing; probably he did not dare to attack the rebels. In the meantime the Dervish quitted Abba, and succeeded in reaching Tagalla in safety; thence he proceeded to Jebel Gedir, and located himself at the foot of that mountain. The natives of this district are called Kawakla, and dwell on the top of the mountain; they

are possessors of a very celebrated and holy stone, on which there is a tradition the prophet Mohammed sat and prayed. Here the Dervish Mohammed Ahmed now took up his abode, and waited to see what action the Government intended to take.

At Delen the news of this Dervish was very meagre, though there was much talk of his wonderful miracles, the most important of which was said to be his power to change the bullets of the Government troops into water. His repute as a worker of miracles grew rapidly, and was the cause of largely increasing the number of his adherents. The malcontents, runaway slaves, criminals evading justice, and religious fanatics, hurried to Gedir; but perhaps the bulk of his adherents were men who lived by theft and robbery, and who were the main supporters of the movement. To all, the Dervish gave promises of enormous shares of loot and everlasting happiness in the world to come. But it was to the slave-dealers that Mohammed appeared in the light of a saviour, and it was to them that he owed his subsequent success.



ZUBEIR PASHA.

From the time that Gessi Pasha put an end to the slave-trade in the Bahr el Ghazal by conquering Suleiman, the son of Zubeir Pasha, and dispersing his forces—as Gessi had often related to me—numbers of these runaway slave-dealers (as they afterwards assured me) owed their ruin to him. These men were all warriors, accustomed to every description of hardship, well trained in the use of firearms, and from their constant slave-fights well accustomed to war; they flocked in numbers to the Dervish, and he gave them elaborate promises of quantities of booty and a complete resumption of the slave-trade. Mohammed Ahmed had the power of inspiring these men with an extraordinary amount of fanatical ardour, so much so, indeed, as we shall presently see, that they would not hesitate to rush into certain death at one word from him. He would compare these men with the Government troops, and prove how far

inferior were these latter; and, on the other hand, the Government troops made the fatal mistake of underrating their enemies, and conducting their operations with a complete disregard for the wary foes with whom they had to deal. What more obvious example of this blind self-confidence can there be than in the miserable defeat of Rashid Bey, Mudir of Fashoda, who, without any instructions, advanced against the Dervishes, and was cut to pieces on the 9th of December, 1881?

Rashid Bey—so an eye-witness told me—was drawn into the middle of a forest, and there he and his men were massacred, before they could even alight from their camels, so completely taken by surprise were they. Thus the Dervishes gained an important and decisive victory, with, comparatively speaking, no loss at all. The German Berghof, inspector for the suppression of slavery at Fashoda, also fell in this fight. What wonder is it that such successes as these strengthened the belief of the people that the Mahdi could turn Egyptian bullets into water! This victory gave enormous impetus to the cause; not only was a quantity of arms, ammunition, and stores captured, but Mohammed Ahmed's moral influence was greatly increased. He was now believed in as the true Mahdi; men flocked to his standard from all parts, and were ready and willing to lay down their lives in his cause.

Mohammed Ahmed Wad el Bedri, one of the Mahdi's favourite and early adherents, told me that it was the latter's intention to proceed to Dar Fertit, and there organise an extensive revolt against the Government; but Elias Pasha, a Jaali, and former Mudir of El Obeid, urged him

against this. Elias Pasha was a bitter enemy of Mohammed Said Pasha, and of Ahmed Bey Dafallah, one of the principal merchants of El Obeid, and he took this opportunity to wreak his vengeance on them. He fully convinced the Mahdi of the inability of the garrison of El Obeid to offer any prolonged resistance, as the troops were few in number, and he could count on all the inhabitants joining him. It was this advice that caused the Mahdi to turn his attention to Kordofan.

During all this time the number of the Mahdi's followers was continually increasing, and the Government at length decided to send an expedition against him. On the 15th of March, 1882, Yussef Pasha Esh Shellali, formerly Gessi's second in command in his campaign against Suleiman Zubeir, left Khartum for the south, in command of some 4,000 men, a large number of whom deserted on the march. About the middle of May, however, he left Fashoda, and advanced towards Gedir. At the same time another expedition under Abdullah, brother of Ahmed Bey Dafallah and Osman, started from El Obeid. This force was composed entirely of volunteers, whom it had taken almost a month to collect, the noggara beating night and day as a summons to arms. They were badly armed, and in spite of Abdullah's well-known bravery, the expedition left with little hope of success. Besides, an event happened which filled the men with gloomy forebodings. Just as the troops were starting, Abdullah fell from his horse, and, according to Sudan superstition, such an untoward event is always a sign that the expedition will meet with misfortunes. Abdullah effected a junction with Yussef Pasha, and the combined force

reached Gedir, where they entrenched themselves in a zariba near the base of the mountain. A body of rebels, noiselessly approaching by night, succeeded unobserved in dragging away some of the thorns forming the zariba, and in the early morning the Dervishes, with fearful yells, broke in and threw themselves on the troops, who, scared by the suddenness of the attack, offered little resistance; they were soon overcome, and fell a prey to the deadly dervish spears. Abdullah alone made a gallant stand, and fought with desperate bravery, but he too fell at last. A few only succeeded in escaping to Fashoda, and Emin Bey, who was there at the time, on his way to the Equatorial Province, was the first to receive the sad news. The account of this massacre, which took place on the 7th of June, 1882, was described to us by an eye-witness.

And now the Mahdi determined to lay siege to El Obeid, a step which was hailed with satisfaction by all his followers. Large numbers of Dar Hamd, Ghodiat, and Bederieh Arabs collected at Birket, which in winter-time becomes a large lake, round which are clustered numerous villages.

In July 1882, Mohammed Said Pasha sent Major Nesim and Osman, the brother of Abdullah who was killed at Gedir, with a force of 1,500 men, with orders to disperse the Arabs. After a stubborn resistance the Arabs were defeated by Nesim, but the latter suffered heavily, and Osman was amongst the killed. Nesim afterwards returned to El Obeid.

Meanwhile the various military stations in Kordofan were falling one by one into the Mahdi's hands. In July Fiki Rahma, at the head of the Gowameh Arabs, assaulted and took Ashaf and razed it to the ground. Here terrible atrocities

were committed; not a woman was spared; even those with child were ripped open and the unborn infant impaled on a lance. On the 8th of August Shat was captured and destroyed by Wad Makashif. Fiki Minneh stormed and took Tayara, putting all the inhabitants to the sword. Bara and El Obeid were now the only towns left in the whole province of Kordofan over which the Egyptian flag was still flying; and these two places were gradually being invested, while within lurked the spirit of treachery, and the Mahdi propaganda was being secretly instilled into not unwilling minds. At El Obeid, Elias Pasha was the most active agent, and it was to him that the Mahdi had consigned the medals, watches, and other valuables captured at Gedir, with orders to sell them in El Obeid.

The Mahdi now became a man whose very name was a terror to the Egyptians. The way to El Obeid lay open before him, and when he saw how rapidly he had risen to power, there is no doubt he really believed himself to be the true Mahdi, divinely sent by God to carry out this great revolution, and the fulsome flattery of his numerous adherents must have confirmed him in this idea. Here a few remarks on the Mahdi's antecedents may not be out of place.

Mohammed Ahmed belonged to the race of people known as the Danagla—*i.e.* inhabitants of Dongola—who are notorious in the Sudan as being the cleverest and most determined of the slave-dealers. On the White Nile and in the Bahr el Ghazal they had built numerous zaribas, and it was through their means that this country became first known. In Darfur they always occupied the position of chief

ministers or vazirs to the Sultans; even to the present day the prime minister of the Sultan of Borgo is a Dongolawi. In spite, however, of their capacity, the Danagla were rather despised throughout the Sudan, and it was only subsequently that they were created Ashraf (or noble) by the Mahdi. Mohammed Ahmed's age was estimated at his death to have been about forty-five, he must therefore have been born about the year 1840. It appears that his father came into the Sudan when quite a young man, and sent his son to the Mesit or Kuran school at Kererri, and, from what I have heard, there is no doubt that the young Mohammed Ahmed showed signs of a violently fanatical nature at quite an early age. After the fall of El Obeid, his former teacher came to see him, and was received with great solemnity by his early pupil, who at once arranged that he should receive a monthly salary.

Mohammed Ahmed's early youth was spent in learning the Kuran; later on he led the life of a Dervish, moving about from place to place, distributing amulets, and writing on little slips of paper mysterious words, which were supposed to protect the wearer against all the ills and diseases to which human beings are liable. Through constant study, and by leading the life of an ascetic, he acquired a facility of speech which obtained for him a great reputation amongst the uneducated and superstitious classes in which he moved. Before he openly declared himself, he retired for some time to a cave, where he gave himself up entirely to prayer. His repute for sanctity was so great that sailing vessels and even Government steamers stopped to ask his blessing on their journey; in return for which he received

many valuable gifts. As I have already said, it was not till after he had prepared the ground by his itinerant preaching that he openly declared himself.

His outward appearance was strangely fascinating; he was a man of strong constitution, very dark complexion, and his face always wore a pleasant smile, to which he had by long practice accustomed himself. Under this smile gleamed a set of singularly white teeth, and between the two upper middle ones was a V-shaped space, which in the Sudan is considered a sign that the owner will be lucky. His mode of conversation too had by training become exceptionally pleasant and sweet. As a messenger of God, he pretended to be in direct communication with the Deity. All orders which he gave were supposed to have come to him by inspiration, and it became therefore a sin to refuse to obey them; disobedience to the Mahdi's orders was tantamount to resistance to the will of God, and was therefore punishable by death.

He called himself Mahdi Khalifat er Rasul (*i.e.* the successor of the Prophet), while his adherents called him "Sayid" (*i.e.* Master); Sayidna el Mahdi (*i.e.* our Master the Mahdi), or Sayidna el Imam (*i.e.* our Master the head, or one who goes in front). The Mahdi in his every action endeavoured to imitate and follow in the exact footsteps of the Prophet.

Thus he made his hejira or flight to Gedir, and there appointed his four Khalifas. The first of these was the Khalifa Abdullah, who assumed the title of Khalifa Abu Bakr, or Khalifa Es Sadik; he belonged to the Taisha section of the Baggara tribe, and it was through his influence that the

Taisha, Rizighat and Homr Baggaras were won over to the Mahdi's cause. It was agreed that Khalifa Abdullah should, in the event of the Mahdi's death, succeed.

The second Khalifa was Ali Wad Helu, the chief of the powerful Degheim and Kenana tribes, who also largely contributed to the Mahdi's success. The third was Ali Esh Sherif, a Dongolawi, and son-in-law of the Mahdi; the title of Sherif, or noble, was given to him as being a member of the Mahdi's family; he was the representative of the Gellabas (or traders), and of the inhabitants of Gezireh,^[B] Berber, and Dongola. Ali Sherif was in reality the last Khalifa, for a fourth was never appointed. The Mahdi asked the son of Sheikh Senussi, as by his influence he thought to win over Egypt, but he refused the honour, and in consequence no one else was nominated to fill the place, though strenuous efforts were made by the more ambitious adherents to secure this much-coveted position; and it is needless to add that several who sought the honour were relegated to prison as possible rivals. The Khalifa Abdullah is now about forty-three years of age, has a dark copper-coloured complexion, much marked by small-pox, an intelligent face, and is a man of great energy. He is gifted by nature with common sense, but he has had no education, and can neither read nor write. The Khalifa Ali is rather short, and if he were only a little taller would pass for a good-looking man; he has a ruddy complexion, and wears a large beard; he was educated at the El Azhar university in Cairo, and has a considerable knowledge of Islam theology. He is at present under forty years of age, and should succeed Abdullah. The

Khalifa Sherif is not at present more than twenty-one years of age.

These three Khalifas were the commanders-in-chief of the army, of which each section had its own special distinctions, whilst the Mahdi himself had no distinctive military insignia—neither flag nor drum. Each Khalifa had his own Jehadieh, or regular troops, his cavalry and lance-bearers, all from the tribe to which he himself belongs; each had also his own distinctive flag; Abdullah's the Raya Zerga, or black flag; Ali's the Raya el Hamra, or red flag; and Sherif's the Raya el Hadra, or green flag; each Khalifa had in addition his own war-drums made of brass, and which were therefore called "nahas," in contradistinction to the ordinary drums known as "noggara," which are made of wood, over which a piece of skin is tightly stretched; the Khalifa Abdullah had also the onbaïa, a very powerful wind instrument made of an elephant's tusk, hollowed out, and which when blown has a very loud and impressive sound.

The whole of the Mahdi's troops were thus divided into three sections under their respective flags, and each Khalifa was in actual command of his section. The Mahdi and Sherif represented the Gellabas, who are known, in contradistinction to the Baggara, as Aulad-Belad (country people), and Aulad-Bahr (river people), because they dwell on the banks of the Nile; whilst Khalifa Abdullah and Ali Wad Helu represented the Baggara, *i.e.* the Arabs. The former of these two parties was the most capable as well as the most numerous, but, as we shall presently see, Khalifa Abdullah's party, through their leader's immense energy, gained the ascendancy. Each Khalifa has numbers of emirs under him,

all of whom have their different flags. These banners are quite simple and require no great labour; they are made of varied colours, and on each the Moslem creed is written, with the addition of the words: "Mohammed Ahmed el Mahdi Khalifat er Rasul" (*i.e.* "the successor of the Prophet"). This is specially directed against the Sultan of Turkey, who claims this title. Latterly flags were made to represent certain stated numbers of men; for instance, in the early days of the revolt, Abderrahman en Nejumi was designated Emir el Umara (or Emir of Emirs), because in the first instance he commanded from 2,000 to 4,000 men, and secondly, these men received a regular rate of pay, which in reality found its way into the emirs' pockets; but latterly many of the emirs command only fifty men. Each emir is assisted by several mukuddums, or under officers, and each mukuddum also has his assistant.

Thus did the Mahdi organise the force which was to conquer the Sudan. He had absolutely no knowledge or system of drill, but he had men in abundance; and taking the proverb, "Nekhrib ed Dunia wa nammir el Akher" (*i.e.* "We shall destroy this and create the next world") as his motto, he thought not of sparing the lives of his men, but rather urged that by dying they should go direct to paradise. His plan, therefore, was to attack in overwhelming numbers with wild shouts, and to be regardless of all loss. Later on, at Abu Kru in the Bayuda desert, they yelled so furiously in the hope that they would alarm the English, that their commander, Nur Angara, tried to make them desist, by telling them that if they continued shouting much longer, the English would laugh at them. In spite, however, of his

bold tactics, the Mahdi did not hesitate to practise every possible deception and falsehood—indeed, most of his early successes were secured by these means. At the commencement of the revolt the use of firearms was forbidden; sticks and lances formed the only arms, as it was the Mahdi's intention in this instance also to follow directly in the footsteps of the Prophet who had gained all his victories without firearms.

The Mahdi, however, whilst thus preparing for war, did not relax in any degree his religious fervour. His primary object was to be a religious reformer, and to preach that to him was confided the task of bringing back the religion now polluted by the Turks, to its original purity. He therefore formulated many severe orders. The use of alcoholic drinks, to which the Sudanese are much addicted, was entirely forbidden, and any infringement of this order was punished by sixty blows with the kurbash. Smoking and chewing tobacco, a custom much in vogue amongst the Sudanese, was also strictly forbidden; and the use of hashish, to which the Turks and Egyptians were addicted, was entirely prohibited; disobedience to this order was punishable by eighty lashes. Death often ensued before the punishment could be completed, but the full number of lashes was always given. If any one lived through his punishment he was considered purified both externally and internally. Any harmless word of abuse, such as "kelb" (dog), was punishable with twenty-seven lashes. This punishment went by the name of "Hakk-Allah"[\[C\]](#) (the right of God), and was also inflicted in the time of the Prophet, who, to make it a really mild punishment, ordained that the upper part of the