

## The Three Correspondents.

AN INCIDENT OF  
THE SOUDAN CAMPAIGN.

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### PART I.

There was only one little feathery clump of dom palm in all that great wilderness of black rocks and orange sand. It stood high on the bank, and below it the brown Nile swirled swiftly towards the Ambigole cabaret, fitting a little frill of foam on each of the bowlders which staked 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 longer than their selves.

"When?" 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 tree of things dangling from you. The hotbath at Kew is excellent as a conservatory, but the hotbath at Kew is not the hotbath at Kew. I vote for a camp in the palm grove and a halt until evening."

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DOWN THE WINDING PATH THE TRAIL WAS PICKING ITS WAY.

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"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, I've been here like you don'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 Anierley. "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 Wootley's 'Soldier's Pocket-Book,'" cried Scott. "We know all about that. Anierley—and the whole 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 it, 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 outmaneuver 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 waited patiently to know the result of their outlay.

They were remarkable men, these body-servants of the press; two of them already veterans of the campaign, 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 khaki tunic and riding breeches, drab puttees, a scarlet cummerbund, and a helmet tinted to the red of a Scotch fir by sun and wind, and mottled by the mosquito and the sand fly. The other, a small, quick, treacherous-looking fellow with blue curling beard and hair, a fly switch forever flicking in his left hand—was Scott, of the Courier, who had come through many 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, 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, the more the brighter talker. 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 Shkpa, the Zulus, Egypt, Suakin; Mortimer had seen the Boer war, the Chitana, the Bulgaria 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 confessed 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 Anierley, of the Gazette, young, inexperienced and rather simple-looking. He had a drop 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 steady that they suggested an affection. A leaning toward soldiering had sent him twice to autumn maneuvers, and a touch of color in his cheeks from the heat 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 longer than their selves.

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ever, 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."

Anierley took up the slip of paper and read:

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

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

"Condensed," cried Scott. "Why, it's simply garbled. 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 style," 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 Sarra to the front, has met with considerable difficulties in the execution 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 is in his mind."

"Today being 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 his return."

"It was a brooding afternoon, and those thin frills of foam round the black gleaming necks of the Nile bowlders looked delightfully cool and alluring. But it would not be safe to bathe for some hours to come. The air shimmered and vibrated over a hoarse stretch of sand and rock. There was not a breath of wind, and the droning and piping of the insects inclined one to sleep. A horseman riding towards them as swiftly as the broken ground would permit. A messenger from the army, thought Anierley, and then as he watched the sun suddenly struck the man on the side of his head, and his chin flamed into gold. There could not be two horsemen with beards of such a color. It was Merryweather, the engineer, and he was returning. What on earth was he returning for? He had been so keen to see the general, and yet he was a hundred miles from him, and unaccompanied. Was it that his pony was hopelessly fagged? It seemed to be moving well. Anierley picked up a stone and threw it at the horse's head, and a foam-spattered horse and a weary koorash-cracking man came cantering up the center of the field. There was nothing in his appearance to explain the mystery of his return."

"Then as he watched them they dipped down into a hollow and disappeared. He could see that it was one of the usual persistent rain clouds of the river, and he waited, glass in hand, for their immediate reappearance. But minute passed after minute, and there was no sign of them. That narrow gap in the clouds, which had led to the river, and then with a curious gulp and start he saw a little gray cloud wreath itself slowly from among the rocks and drift in a long, lazy shroud over the desert. In an instant he had torn Scott and Mortimer from their slumbers.

"Get up, you chaps!" he cried. "I believe Merryweather has been shot by derisives."

"[Concluded in Tomorrow's Tribune.]

of McKinley's election is already apparent in the general feeling of security with which our domestic merchants are increasing their advertising space. The use of our columns is daily growing more valuable to some of our advertising clients, owing to its growing circulation. All branches of our business has felt the effect of renewed vigor. Are you sharing its advantages?

"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 going to tell them in a plain way 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 lot of (unpleasant) miles from home, but now they brightened, both beasts and men, at the sight of the grove and the riders 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 center of the tablecloth, without a half mile from the river, 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 pace of two miles an hour. They were now they brightened, both beasts and men, at the sight of the grove and the riders horses. 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