

A Nubian Chief in Battle.

A GLIMPSE AT NUBIA.

MISCALLED "THE SOUDAN."

BY CAPTAIN T. C. S. SPEEDY.

THAT portion of Africa which the Mahdi rebellion has brought so prominently into notice, extending from Egypt on the north to the sources of the Nile on the south, should not, properly speaking, be called the Soudan, its correct name being Nubia.

The Soudan proper lies between Senegal on the west and Nubia on the east, and is inhabited exclusively by negroid races.

Soudan is an Arabic word signifying "the country of the black ones," and was given by the lighter-colored Arab invaders who overran the whole of northern Africa in the seventh and eighth cen-

turies to the darker races of the interior, whom they conquered and proselytized.

The Nubian Desert is a series of vast plains divided by ranges of rugged hills which sometimes rise to a height of two thousand feet and upwards, while huge granite bowlders, piled one above the other, crop up at intervals in isolated spots. The soil is for the most part hard clay, occasionally covered with basaltic pebbles interspersed with quartz and flint, or with large tracts of fine sand. The climate is remarkable for its dryness, and consequently, in spite of the great heat, is not unhealthy, except during the rains, when decaying vegetation gives rise to

malarious fevers. From October to February inclusive the weather, for a tropical climate, is comparatively cool, the thermometer not exceeding 85° Fahrenheit in the shade at noon, and sinking to 40° at night. During the hot season, however, which commences in April, the temperature rapidly rises, the register not unfrequently being 120° in the shade and 160° in the sun.

The Nubians consist of four distinct races, viz., those of Ethiopian, Nouba, Bijja, and Arabian descent; and these races are again subdivided into tribes.

The Ethiopian comprises the Habab, Teklis, and others, occupying the hilly country between Suakin and Massowa; the Nouba, now known as the Hadendoa, Bishareen, and Ababdeh, between Suakin and Berber; the Bijja, more familiar as the Beni Amer and Halleuga, roams over the district westward of Abyssinia, of which Kassala is the capital; while those of Arabian descent are found south of Khartoum, between the Blue and White Niles. These races still retain their own languages, speaking respectively Ethiopic, Nouba, Bijja, and Arabic; and, having kept perfectly distinct and stood aloof from one another, they have no language in common, though, as all profess the Mohammedan faith, and many from each tribe make the devotional pilgrimage to Mecca, a knowledge of Arabic is spreading among them.

The Egyptian Soudan extends from the White Nile westerly to about longitude 24° east, and the black troops of Egypt, being freed negro slaves from this region, are rightly termed Soudanese.

Nubia, which from time immemorial had been tributary to Egypt, was at the beginning of the present century annexed by her, and, until the outbreak in 1881, formed the larger portion of that country. Egyptian administration, however, in this territory related chiefly to taxation, the people being allowed to settle their own differences and adjudicate their petty crimes, their laws being based on those of the Koran. Every tribe is divided into septs, each of which is governed by its own hereditary sheik, and from these sheiks one is elected as supreme head, under the title of "Sheik Moshâiek"—Chief of Chiefs.

In appearance the Nubians are a fine race. Their color varies through all shades of rich brown to a clear ebony.

The face is oval, with features assimilating to the Caucasian type, and bearing for the most part a proud and independent expression. The eye is dark hazel, the white being clear, and not, as in the negro, of a yellowish hue; the nose is well bridged, often approaching the aquiline, with clear-cut nostrils, and the lips incline in a slight degree only to fullness. The men are well built, lithe, and active, averaging five feet ten inches in height, and their limbs, though not muscular, are strong and sinewy. Their skin is fine and soft, and in this particular presents a great contrast to that of the negro, which is rough and coarse, proving that the delicate texture of the Nubian is an inherent quality, and not attributable to the use of unguents, which both races apply lavishly.

Water, as a rule, being scarce in that part of Africa, both sexes have recourse to a cleansing process which perhaps may, by courtesy, be called a bath, and which is carried out in the following manner:

The recipient of the luxury lies at full length on a piece of palm-leaf matting, and is well rubbed from head to foot with mutton fat—their simple and only soap—which, however, has been previously scented with musk, pounded sandal-wood, and odoriferous plants. The "bath" completed, the whole body is then manipulated or massaged—this treatment and term, now so universal, having been adopted by the French from the Arabic custom, and word "masseh," to knead.

The hair of the Nubians is perhaps the most striking feature of their appearance. It is worn in an immense mass on the top and sides of the head, giving the appearance of a huge beehive rising from the shoulders, and this mop is carefully dressed with the only pomatum they know—pure and unadulterated suet, fresh from a newly killed sheep.

A party of the friends of the dandy about to be adorned squat in a circle on the ground, and chew in succession large lumps of the above-named suet, these being passed from mouth to mouth as each jaw becomes fatigued, until the specialty has become cleansed of all obnoxious particles. Meanwhile the tresses to be thus fragrantly scented are being combed, or rather raked out, either with a horn or a wooden skewer—in each case ten inches or more in length—after which the finishing smear is freely applied.

These races are, without exception, nomads, and subsist principally on the milk of their cows, goats, and camels, varied occasionally by the flesh of their herds and wild animals taken in hunting. They prepare also from millet a porridge called "lugma"; and the richer people, who have slaves to cook for them, bake a sort of bread, called "kisra," which is a spongy cake about two feet in diameter and quarter of an inch thick. There being no mills in the country, the millet, which has been previously soaked, is crushed on a slab of granite by rubbing a rounded stone backwards and forwards over it until it is reduced to a pulp. In twelve hours this pulp has become slightly sour, when it is poured on to a stone or clay griddle over a quick fire, a slave deftly spreading it with the palm of her hand equally over the whole surface. It is then covered with an air-tight lid, made of closely woven grass, and in three minutes is baked to the consistency of a pancake, and served with a thick sauce. Another form of this sour bread is "abret," but this is as thin as a wafer, prepared and baked in a manner similar to kisra, and then sun-dried till crisp. "Abret" is stored in goat-skin bags, and used chiefly on a foray or march, where there are no appliances for cooking; in water its slightly acid flavor forms a refreshing drink, while the moistened pulp serves for food. During the rainy season, when grass is plentiful, milk is abundant, and is given away lavishly. I have often arrived at a Beni Amer camp with a dozen or more men, and each member of the party has immediately been presented with at least a gallon. A superstition prevails that were money taken the cows would at once become dry; so payment is never accepted, though a gift on the departure of the traveller is not declined.

In each herd there is always "the lucky cow," which is held in great reverence; and it is only as a mark of special favor that a stranger is permitted to taste the milk of this idolized animal, a stipulation being made that it must be consumed the same evening, and neither poured into a different vessel from that into which it was milked, nor taken away from the camp, lest the loss of milk from the whole herd should ensue.

The natives themselves seldom drink milk when fresh, preferring it either fermented or sour; in the former case it re-

sembles koumiss. Curds are a favorite dish; but the bowl, alas, never presents the smooth inviting surface we are familiar with—for, spoons being unknown, the stout forefinger of the swarthy hostess has, with much consideration, been employed to break it into lumps for the greater convenience of the hungry guest!

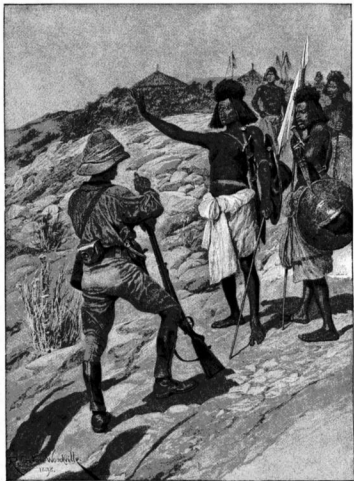
Nubian villages are generally circular in form, surrounded by the strong, thorny hedge now so familiar as a "zeriba." They consist not only of houses, called "tukuls," which are permanent residences, but of tents of palm-leaf matting, which they take with them to the various grazing-grounds. The "tukuls" are made of long coarse grass, woven into a framework of stout branches, with thatch nearly a foot thick of the same grass, and, though having neither window nor chimney, are remarkable for coolness.

The furniture of these abodes is meagre in the extreme, consisting merely of a primitive bedstead of strips of ox-hide stretched on a wooden frame, half a dozen goat-skin bags for carrying goods, an earthen-ware pot for cooking "lugma," the granite slab on which grain is crushed, and a few milking-baskets. These baskets are a unique feature of the country, so ingeniously and closely woven that they are completely fluid-proof, devised by the people to combine lightness and durability, and thus suit their migratory habits.

At the grazing camps, when the herd is away from the village, it is necessary even to boil the milk in them, and, as they cannot be placed on the fire, the difficulty is overcome by dropping red-hot stones into them until the milk boils.

A similar plan is adopted in cooking meat. A large fire is kindled, and a number of stones are thrown into it. As soon as the embers glow, the ashes are blown aside and strips of meat are laid on the heated stones, care being taken to turn them when the under side is done.

In this way the juices are retained, and the flavor equals, if, indeed, it does not surpass, that of any other method of cooking. It is not, however, every stone that will stand the fire; knowledge and experience are needed in the selection. The first time my friends and I tried the experiment in the absence of servants, we came to signal grief; the stones we had chosen exploded, for the most part with loud reports, scattering themselves, the fire-



GREETING A TRAVELLER OUTSIDE THE ZEMIRA.

brands, and meat in every direction, so that we were obliged to raze our glowing pile, and content ourselves with toasting our meat on the ends of our ramrods.

When a white man approaches a zeriba, a servant is sent forward to announce his arrival, and the head man, with some of his followers, comes out to meet him, offering his hand, and greeting him with the words, "Keif hálak, taiyibin, taiyibin?" (How art thou, art thou well, art thou well?). Mohammedans are, however, saluted with the Moslem form of address, "Salaam aleikum" (Peace be to you); and the reply is given, "Wa aleikum ess salaam" (And to you be peace). This salutation is never addressed to a Christian, the Koran forbidding it to any but "the faithful."

The preliminary courtesies ended, the traveller is conducted to the rest-house, a shed provided in every village, principally for the convenience of merchants going up and down the country; and milk, coffee, and "lugma" are at once served. Conversation ensues, but neither the name nor tribe of a Mohammedan stranger is ever asked, lest he should prove a foe.

As night closes in, the young men of the village assemble in front of the rest-house, and go through a variety of the strangest evolutions and antics, mis-called a dance, in honor of the travellers. The dance is accompanied by much clapping of hands above their heads, and loud yells and war-whoops, and never fails to call forth the unbounded admiration of their own people, however critically it may be regarded by the new-comers to whom it is a novelty.

As the grass surrounding a camp becomes eaten down, the tribe removes to a fresh pasturage. It takes but a short time for these sons of the desert to strike and pack their tents with the few above-named chattels on their camels, and the spot which an hour before was resounding with the cries peculiar to nomad life—the lowing of cattle, the wild cries of the herdsman, the booming of the village drums, the tinkling of their lyres, and the shrill falsetto song of the maidens—is left silent and deserted till the following year.

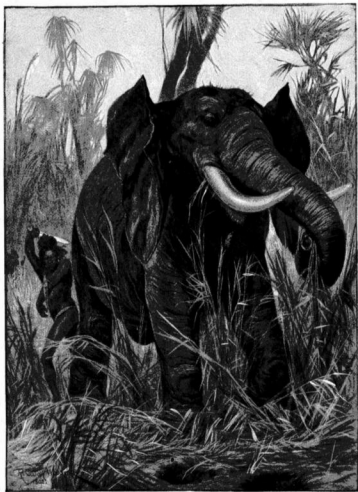
The Nubians, like many uncivilized nations, show much ingenuity in supplying the wants of every-day life from the surroundings of nature. On one occasion an impromptu boot-lace was produced

from the inner bark of the nearest acacia. The trunk was pounded with a stone for about the length of two feet, and the fine white fibre below laid bare; this was peeled off, and rapidly twisted until it closely resembled a piece of whip-cord, and served admirably as a makeshift. Their buckets, as well as the milk-baskets already described, are cleverly adapted to their wandering life. A circular piece of hide, two feet in diameter, is pierced round the edge with holes, and through these a strip of bamboo is threaded; the hide is drawn in to a third of its original diameter, the ends of the strip are fastened together, and the bucket is complete. When unthreaded, these buckets serve as kneading-troughs for making bread on a march.

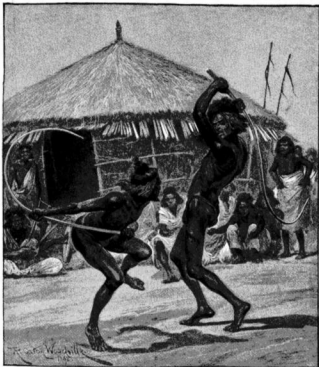
I was much amused on one occasion by the manufacture of temporary pipes. For one a hole about six inches long was bored into the river-bank to form the stem, to meet which another hole was scooped out from above for the bowl. The stem was then blown through, to rid it of dust, tobacco placed in the bowl, a light applied, and several men in turn enjoyed the luxury. Another pipe was made by thrusting the thumb into a ball of wet clay to form the bowl, which was quickly dried by a bit of glowing charcoal, and a hollow reed was inserted for the stem. Tribes of Arabian descent use pipes made of greenstone polished with emery and a leaf, which acts like sand-paper.

The method of sinking wells in the dry beds of watercourses during the hot season, and the manner in which sand is prevented from falling in, are simple and effective. A number of leafy branches of the tamarisk are twisted into a cable some five inches thick. One end of this cable is bent into a hoop about a yard in diameter, which is laid on the ground where the well is to be dug, and as the sand is scooped out the rest of the cable is coiled downwards until the water is reached. In this way wells are sometimes sunk to a depth of even thirty feet.

When the herds are about to be watered, a clay trough is made at the side of the well, and the mode of filling it is ingenious. One man descends into the shaft, straddling it, with his feet resting in the leafy coil; and having filled a bucket, tosses it to his comrade at the brink, who adroitly catches it, allowing



A NUBIAN SWORD-HUNTER.



"I AM THE BROTHER OF THE GIRLS!"

scarcely a drop to escape; and having emptied it into the trough, tosses it back to be refilled. To ensure accuracy in throwing and catching, the men chant by turns the whole time in wildly musical tones, which are weird, but pleasing.

The chants consist of endearing epithets to their animals, followed by ejaculations of praise to the Deity. Freely translated, they run as follows:

- O darling cows, come near and drink,—
God is great!
- O camels strong, so tall and swift,—
God is great!
- O lovely goats, so fair and sweet,—
God is great!

over and over again, *ad libitum*.

The Nubians have an excellent breed of riding-camels. Perhaps those belonging to the Amarrar tribe excel all others. They treat them with the greatest kindness and affection, and train them to be perfectly silent, which in a night foray is a matter of the greatest importance, and forms a striking contrast to the discordant and hideous sounds emitted by the common baggage-camel.

The cattle of the country are a small but well-shaped and hardy breed, with a hump similar to that of the Abyssinian and Indian varieties. In order to insure them to the inevitable thirst of the hot season, they are watered but once in every forty-eight hours, and with this ob-

ject are only taken home to the villages, which are always in the vicinity of wells, every alternate evening.

The mutual affection that exists between these animals and their owners is most remarkable. Although a herd in some cases numbers many hundreds, each beast has its distinctive name, to which it answers on being called. This affection engenders an obedience which is invaluable in cases of attack by inimical tribes. While the cattle are grazing, watchmen are placed on eminences, and the moment an enemy is seen approaching they give the alarm. The herdsmen in the plain below immediately strike their shields loudly with their lances, utter wild and shrill whoops, and at the same time leap with immense bounds in the direction of the village, thus attracting the attention of the animals, who rush towards them from all sides with tails almost straight on end. A stampede ensues, the men leading the way at a terrific pace till the zeriba is reached, when they dart nimbly aside behind the entrance-posts to avoid being trampled under the hoofs of the herd, whose speed prevents them from stopping until they are within the enclosure, when the cries are changed to soothing tones, and the excitement subsides.

Cattle-lifting is regarded as an honorable feat, and although tribes may be at peace with each other, raids for this purpose are often made by small bands of young men who wish to gain renown for bravery and daring. These forays are not infrequently perpetrated by day, when great stealth is displayed, an important object being to avoid coming to blows, as mortal wounds entail endless blood feuds, which, like the Corsican vendetta, descend from generation to generation, and often decimate a tribe.

The moment blood is drawn, the aggressors, as a rule, retire, though cases are on record of this admirable caution having been thrown to the winds in the indignant wrath of the sufferer and the thirst for vengeance.

The power of enduring pain exhibited by these tribes is almost incredible. This is strongly instanced in the competition by the youths of the villages for the championship of their camps.

It is a much coveted honor to be called "Akho Benât" (the brother of the girls), and the youth who attains this distinction is entitled to marry the belle.

The competition itself is a most agonizing spectacle. It commences by the maidens, on certain festivals, beating the drums to a quaint and peculiar tune, which so excites the spirits of the young men that numbers of them at once rush into the arena, each loudly exclaiming, "I am the brother of the girls! I am the brother of the girls!"

They are then paired off by casting lots, and, when stripped to the waist, a powerful, flexible whip of hippopotamus-hide, five feet in length, is placed in the hand of each combatant, and at a certain signal a flogging-match commences.

The strokes are not given at random or in haste, but with the utmost deliberation, each youth delivering his blow in turn, and keeping time to the music. The long, pliant lash descends with keen precision, cutting deep into the flesh at every stroke, while the monotonous "hwit," "hwit," "hwit," goes on unceasingly, and the red streams tell the tale of suffering which the tongues disdain to proclaim. At last the one who can endure no longer falls fainting to the ground, and is borne away by his kinsmen.

The victors are subsequently pitted against each other, till the remaining one becomes the champion, and bears the proud title of "The Brother of the Girls."

The weapons of Nubia are sword, lance, and shield. The swords are all of one pattern, and are an exact copy of the long, straight, double-edged blades carried by the Crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the hilt being in the form of a cross, which the Christian warrior kissed in his last moments.

These imitations are manufactured in Germany, and are of three sizes, varying in price from two to five dollars—according to length, breadth, and weight.

A few of those which bear every appearance of being the veritable weapons of the Crusaders are still in the possession of some of the chiefs, and are esteemed by them as priceless treasures, having been handed down from generation to generation. On questioning the owners as to where they are obtained, the unvarying reply is, "Min beyid" (from afar), and they persistently refuse to sell them.

A fine blade of this kind belonged to the chief of the Ali Bakhit, and, on my asking what sum he would take for it, he drew his hand with a proud gesture across

his throat, replying, "Kimat di" (this is the price). The lance is short, but little over five feet in length; the head varies in each tribe both in size and shape, being sometimes square, and sometimes rounded at its junction with the socket; the blades also differ, varying from one and a half to three inches in breadth. The shaft is made of the tough wood of the Kittar acacia, with a spiral iron ring at the butt. This weapon is seldom thrown, being firmly grasped and used for stabbing, but it is sometimes allowed to slip through the closed hand until arrested by the iron ring at the base. Each tribe has also its own peculiar knife—that of the Hadendoa being curved at the tip; that of the Hallenga resembling a laurel leaf; while that of the Beni Amer is a slight modification of both; and so on throughout the whole country.

The shield of the northern tribes is circular, varying from eighteen to twenty-four inches in diameter; while that of the southerners is elliptical, three feet long by one broad. Both are held in battle by a stiff leather handle at the centre of the back, but on other occasions are carried by a looped thong slipped over the shoulder. They are made from the hide of the elephant, buffalo, or giraffe; those of the last, being lightest, and yet toughest, are the most esteemed.

Another curious relic of the Middle Ages still preserved in Nubia is the chain armor, which to this day is used by the chiefs and principal warriors in battle.

This is made in India, and brought to Massowa and Suakin by merchants, the price varying from ten to twenty pounds a suit, according to the workmanship.

At a festival held in commemoration of the birth of Mohammed, I have seen fifty mail-clad Beni Amer warriors going through the evolutions of a sham fight.

The men wore steel helmets and shirts of mail, while their horses were rendered lance-proof by thickly quilted petticoats reaching almost to the ground. The stirring scene forcibly reminded me of the pictures of Norman knights as depicted on the Bayeux tapestry; though I cannot but add that there was a most comical side to the picture, as the helmets, being generally too small for the wearers, were perched on the back of the head, huge greasy tresses protruding from below in anything but knightly fashion; while the long nasal bar, being often found to in-

terfere with vociferous war-cries, was pushed to one side over the ear.

In times past the Nubians wove their own clothing; but of late years, owing to the introduction of Manchester cottons, which are more easily and even cheaply obtained, this industry is dying out, being confined almost entirely to the parti-colored robes worn by the chiefs.

A coarse cotton grows wild in the alluvial deposits along the banks of the rivers, but the best kind comes from the Abyssinian valleys. This is spun into yarn, the Nubian spindle being an exact counterpart of that used by Greek and Roman women many centuries ago, while the rude hand-loom with which the thread is woven into cloth resembles in every particular those depicted on ancient Egyptian monuments.

The Nubians are all hunters, and are habituated to the chase from youth, this exercise being regarded by them as the best training for war.

In spite of the prohibition of the Koran with regard to unclean animals, they eat the flesh of all game—elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and even the wild boar being much esteemed, their excuse for evading the law being that it does not apply to undomesticated creatures.

The tribes bordering Abyssinia are good horsemen, swift, hardy ponies from the Galla country being bought in great numbers by them at the Abyssinian frontier markets for the small sum of from ten to fifteen dollars apiece. These little steeds are used not only for pursuing large four-footed game, but also for running down ostriches, which it is impossible to capture on foot. Further north snares and pitfalls are resorted to, snares being designed for the lighter animals, and pitfalls for heavy, powerful beasts.

The snare is formed of a strong wooden hoop, to the rim of which bamboo spikes are firmly bound with sinew, the points of the spikes meeting in the centre. This hoop is placed over a hole in the ground, and is hidden from sight by twigs laid across the top, over which grass and sand are carelessly strewn to prevent suspicion.

Snares vary from six to twelve inches in diameter, according to the size of the game to be trapped, and a log of wood, proportioned in weight to the expected quarry, is attached to the hoop to act as a clog and impede its movements when caught.

An animal's legs passing over the snare slip into the hole through the bamboo spikes, which immediately pierce the flesh to the bone, when the hunter, who is probably in ambush, starts up, lance in hand, and secures his game. This form of snare is of great antiquity; Xenophon describes it, and speaks highly of its efficiency.

Pitfalls for the larger animals average twelve feet in depth, being the same size at the surface. The sides are ingeniously sloped to a point at the base, so that the animal on falling in finds itself wedged, and escape is impossible. In some cases a strong post, nine feet in length, sharpened to a point at the upper end, is firmly fixed into the ground at the bottom of the pit, in order to transfix the animal, and thereby insure its speedy death.

The surface of the pit is disguised in the same way as that in which the snares are hidden, though owing to the much wider opening to be concealed, a net is used as a foundation for the branches, leaves, and sand, which are strewn over it.

Ostrich-hunting involves good riding, and is animated sport. Having ascertained where a nest is to be found, three or four mounted men go out on the plain together, and one of them rides in the direction of the nest.

Instantly the bird sees him it starts off at a tremendous pace, the hunter following in hot pursuit, until, after running perhaps a couple of miles, the ostrich begins to circle, its object being to get back to its nest, from which it fondly hopes it has diverted its pursuer.

The other hunters, who are scattered over the plain, take up the running by turns, succeeding each other as each horse becomes spent; they are thus able to press the bird to its utmost speed, until it falls exhausted on the ground, with outstretched wings, gasping for breath.

The nearest hunter then gallops up and severs its head with a blow from his sword. Hastily dismounting, he at once seizes the bleeding stump and thrusts it into the sand to prevent the feathers from being soiled by the blood, which is spouting in all directions from the convulsive movements of the neck, even after death.

The feathers of a full-grown bird fetch from fifty to seventy-five dollars (£10 to £15) at Kassala, where they are bought by Arab traders from Cairo, but they ultimately realize treble that value in the European markets.

An erroneous idea prevails that the sword-hunters of Nubia belong entirely to the Hamran tribes, but all hunters, whether on foot or horseback, who do not snare the game, kill it by hamstringing with the sword.

When the elephant is pursued on foot, it is invariably sought in the depths of the forest, where it has retired for shelter from the noonday sun, and also for the short repose it takes during the twenty-four hours. The hunter having tracked his quarry to its retreat, is obliged to use the utmost stealth in approaching it, the elephant being a very light sleeper, and awakened by the slightest unusual sound.

The difficulty of moving through a dense thorny jungle without making any sound dissimilar to those which might be produced by nature, such as the stirring of the branches by a light breeze, or the occasional falling of a dead leaf, is greater than can be realized by any one who has not tried it.

On getting within arm's-length of his game, the swordsman slowly raises himself to an erect position and deals a slashing cut on the back sinews of the nearest foot, about ten inches from the ground, at the same time leaping nimbly back to avoid a blow from the animal's trunk. The cut, if properly delivered, bites sheer to the bone, severing the large arteries, and in a short time death ensues from hemorrhage. Gazelles are hunted by a powerful breed of hounds, in build somewhat heavier than a greyhound. In spite of being far swifter than the hound, the gazelle falls a victim from a nervous habit of constantly stopping to look back to see if it is pursued; it also expends its strength by taking great bounds in an almost vertical direction, thereby not only losing time, but exhausting itself, so that it is overtaken without difficulty.

The vegetation of the country consists chiefly of varieties of acacia, often misnamed mimosa; the best known of these are the garrad, which contains tannin, possessing at least twice the strength of that in oak; and the sant, or shittim, alluded to in Hebrew Scriptures, and from a variety of which tradition states that the "crown of thorns" was made.

The thorns of many of these acacias grow in pairs, joined at the base; those of the sant are straight and remarkable for their size, being often nine inches long; those of the garrad, and others, resemble

the spurs of a game-cock, and are but two inches long; while those of the kittar are similar in shape and size to a cat's claw.

There is but one palm in the country—the dôm. It is a fine tree, often eighty feet high, and is always found near water, its thick fanlike foliage, which grows in a dense mass at the top of the trunk, being consequently a welcome sight in the midst of the arid plain. This palm, different from all others, which throw out their foliage at the summit of a single trunk, bifurcates several times before it comes to maturity, and at the top of each division a large cluster of leaves is produced. These forks average thirty feet in height, and as each begins to grow out, the cluster of leaves from its predecessor falls off, leaving the trunk bare. From the coarser fronds, ropes and matting are made; and from the leaves, sleeping-mats, drinking-vessels, and platters. The fruit of the dôm is much relished by the natives. In size and shape it resembles a small apple, and has a dry, fibrous, but edible husk that tastes like gingerbread. This covers a nut containing a white kernel that hardens into the close-grained substance known as vegetable ivory.

The senna-bush, bearing the medicinal leaves so well known, and the colocynth gourd grow everywhere, while aloes spread like a weed in all directions.

During the rains a coarse reedlike grass, reaching six feet and upwards, grows with amazing rapidity, covering almost the whole country; but in the dry season this vast wealth of herbage is completely shrivelled, and ultimately reduced to absolute dust, so that during six months of the year there is scarcely subsistence for the flocks and herds.

The distress of the hot season is much augmented by a prevailing wind from the south, which, blowing over the desert, carries with it particles of fine sand that cause great irritation to the skin. This wind is called the "khamseen," the Arabic for "fifty," and signifies its continuance for fifty days. The khamseen often terminates in the terrible dust-storms known as "simoom," from which fatal results generally arise, not, as formerly believed, from anything noxious in the blast, but from the choking nature of the powdered clay and sand which it carries along.

During the simoom the atmosphere becomes of a murky yellowish haze, the water in the goat-skins quickly evaporates,

and impalpable dust fills the nostrils of both man and beast. The terrified camels become unmanageable, and, turning their backs to the blast, rush wildly down the wind and finally fall exhausted, when both they and their riders perish from thirst and suffocation. Numbers of the natives are in this manner annually lost.

"The rains" begin about the 1st of July and continue till the middle of September. At the commencement of this season the Nubians, to escape the deadly effect of the "tsetse" fly, move their camps from the neighborhood of the rivers to hilly districts, where their cattle are not decimated by this plague.

A few men remain in the plains to sow durra, and with the very first shower begin their work. Ploughs are unknown, and furrows never made. Two men in each district achieve the whole labor. One of them walks in a straight line for about a hundred yards prodding the ground with a staff, followed by his comrade carrying a bag of seed. Three or four grains of this he places in each hole, which he then closes by shuffling in the earth with his foot. This process is repeated in parallel rows about eighteen inches apart over the entire tract to be planted.

About the middle of October the durra is ripe. The large bushy heads are then cut off and heaped upon a threshing-floor made from the hard clay of an ant-hill, which, after being pounded and mixed with water, is smeared over a bit of level ground, and the grain is simply beaten out of the husk with a stick. There is probably no plant in the world that yields so profitable a return. A single head contains between 1500 and 2000 grains, and a ton may be bought for the value of eight shillings.

The civilized world has almost forgotten, since the unhappy revolt that has totally put a stop to trade, that the exports of Nubia were formerly of great value, ivory, ebony, ostrich and marabout feathers, rhinoceros horn, hides, gum-arabic, wax, millet, senna, aloes, and colocynth being all found there in great abundance.

No doubt exists that ninety per cent. of the inhabitants desire peace, and would be most thankful to see their commerce restored to its former status, and we have every reason to believe that the late successes of Sir Herbert Kitchener are rapidly conducing to this much desired end.