

# The Sirdar And His Realm

The Governor-General of the Sudan Talks of His Country and Its Future.

(Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

**K**hartoum.—I am just back from the palace, where I have had a long talk with Sir Francis Reginald Wingate, the sirdar of the Egyptian army and the governor-general of the Sudan. The sirdar is the ruler of the Sudan, a country one-fourth as large as all Europe, and four times the size of any principality in it excepting Russia. He has more power than the czar, and he has almost everything at his command. One of the chief officers in the wars with the mahdi and the khedive, he won decoration after decoration for his bravery and military skill. He is a man of this part of Africa. He has been in the Sudan since 1898. It was in that year that he took possession of the country as sirdar and governor-general, and since then he has been bringing order out of the chaos of this part of Africa. He has pacified the warring tribes, has turned their lances and guns into plowshares and shepherd's crooks, and is now creating civilized conditions where there have always been barbarism, injustice,

as the region I have referred to is called, has hardly been touched. Indeed, the plain between the White and Blue Niles is so rich that, if water is run upon it, it will produce four or five crops every year, and that for many years in succession. We have millions of acres of such soil, and they only wait the hand of man to bring them into the world's markets as live commercial factors.

## CORN AND WHEAT BELT OF THE SUDAN.

"What kind of crops can be raised in that country, your excellency?" I asked.

"Almost anything that is now produced in Egypt," was the reply. "The Gezireh is already growing a great deal of wheat, a millet whose seed forms the chief food of the natives. It produces an excellent hard wheat and also sorghum. As it is now, that plain is the chief granary of this part of the world. It raises so much that, when the season is good, the crops are more than the people consume, and as such times the grain is stored away in great pits. I have seen durra pits 40 feet deep

**An Undeveloped Empire in Central Africa Which Promises to Outlive Egypt—The Gezireh and its Vast Possibilities in Cotton, Corn and Wheat Raising—Kordofan, The Land of Cattle and Camels—New Railroads Proposed—How the Natives Have Increased Since the English Took Hold—A Mighty Baby Farm—Labor Questions—New Mineral Regions—A Land of Copper, Iron and Gold—American Traders are Welcome.**

adverse to going away from home to work."

"Can Caucasians live here?"

"Not as day laborers to work out of doors summer and winter. They might act as overseers and in positions where they will not have to endure the heat of the sun. There are some places where they seem to thrive. Here in Khartoum we have had many Italians, and they do not seem to be any the worse for it. The Italians serve as mechanics. The chief labor will probably always be furnished by the Africans."

## THE MARCH OF CIVILIZATION.

"Do you see many changes in the condition of the natives since the British occupation?"

"Yes. They are doing far better than

ing people. Every tribe has its herds, and many tribes are nomadic, driving their stock from pasture to pasture. North of latitude 12, the camel country begins and one finds camels by the thousands. The country seems to be especially adapted to them."

"What is the nature of the land west of Kordofan?"

"I suppose you mean Darfur. That country is ruled by a sultan who pays tribute to us. It is a hilly land traversed by a mountain range furnishing numerous streams. It is well populated, and was for a long time a center of the slave trade. The natives there are comparatively quiet at present, although every now and then a war breaks out between some of the tribes. This is likewise so in Kordofan. The people are brave and proud, and they have frequent vendettas. The chief want of Kordofan is railway communication, and we hope to supply that as soon as we can."

## THE MINERALS OF THE SUDAN.

I have asked the sirdar to tell me something of the mineral deposits recently discovered in this part of the world. He replied:

"We have not prospected the country as yet, although we are beginning to do so. We expect to make a thorough geological survey and have begun by placing some of the provinces and drawing maps which show everything in connection with them. I refer to maps like these."

The sirdar then showed me careful sketches of the several provinces, reduced to a small scale, and much like

those which our geological survey is making of the United States. As I looked over them he went on:

"Our surveys, at present, are chiefly devoted to the topography of the country and to data as to its resources and people. We have not done much in the way of mineral investigation. We know, however, that some of the provinces contain iron and copper. This is so of the Bah-el-Ghazal, where the people use iron and steel implements made from the native ore. They have been mining copper there for a long time. It is generally believed that there is gold in the different parts of the Sudan, and we have issued a number of concessions to mining syndicates. They have their men out prospecting, but so far no valuable deposits have been discovered."

## AMERICAN TRADE WITH THE SUDAN.

"Have we much to hope for in the future trade of the Sudan?" I asked.

"Why not?" replied the sirdar. "We are using many things that the United States makes, and are glad to welcome American goods and American traders. American cottons are popular with the Abyssinians, and I do not see why they might not compete with those of Manchester in the Sudan. In our development we shall need a great deal of machinery, and, if irrigation works are undertaken as they will be, we shall require drills for artesian wells, engines, pumps and other machinery of that nature. By our new road to the Red sea, ships from your country can land their goods at Port Sudan within

a short railway haul of Khartoum, and from there they can be sent almost to the heart of central Africa by river."

The conversation here took a personal turn by my asking his excellency if he would not some day write a new book on the Sudan. He is, you know, one of the leading authorities on all matters connected with this part of the world. He wrote "Mahdian and the Egyptian Sudan" 18 years ago; and a few years later published a work entitled "Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdian Camp." He also translated and edited Slatin Pasha's "The Sword in the Sudan" in 1895, and, since then, his life has been a part of the history of the country and his ex-

periences such that no man living knows all about it better than he. The sirdar replied:

"I may write another book some day, I have kept notes of things which I have observed and which have occurred from time to time, and the notes when I return may give me occasion to write. At present my chief interest is in the development of the country and I am too much occupied with that and with my duties here to find any time for literary work."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.  
Dr. J. C. Hanchett, office 206-1, McCormick Building, Residence 408 East Second South, Both 'phones.

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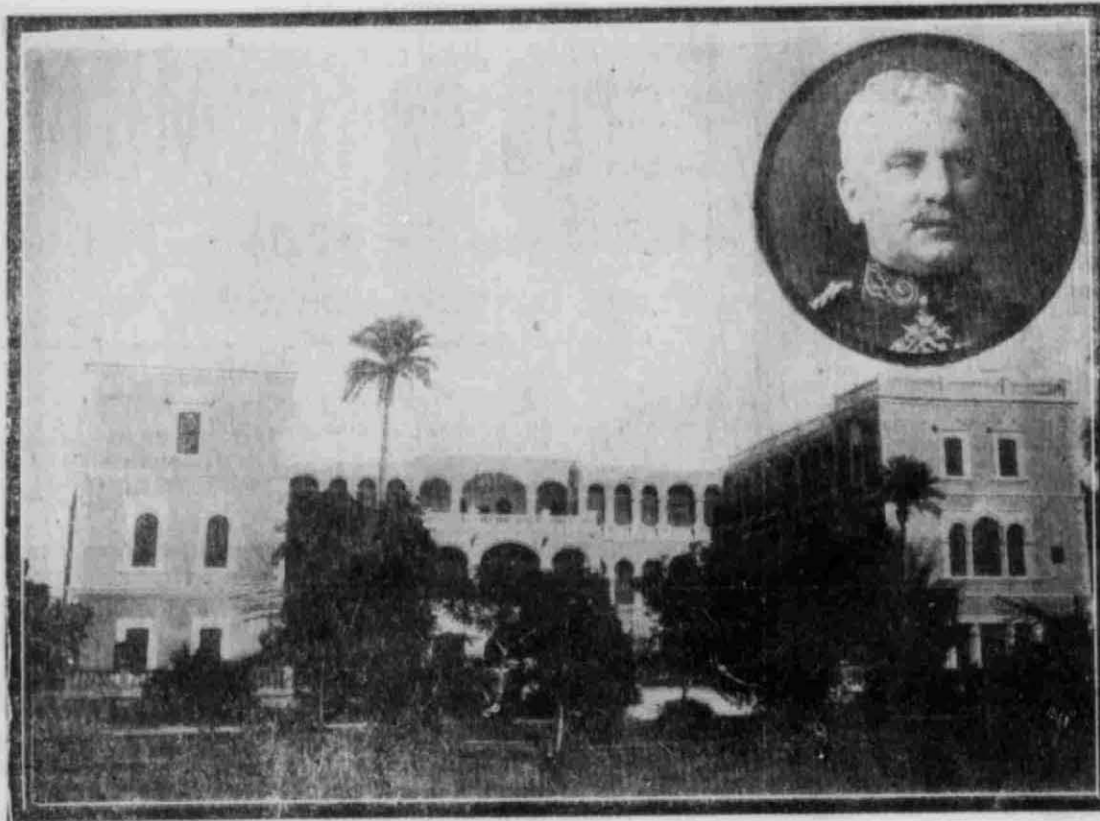


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GOVERNOR GENERAL OF THE SUDAN AND HIS PALACE.

slavery and war. An explorer of note before he became governor-general, he has now his prospectors traveling through every part of this vast region, and is laying out and starting the railroad, canal, irrigation and other improvements which will open it up and make it one of the live parts of the world.

## THE SIRDAR IN 1907.

The sirdar is now in his prime. He has seen perhaps 50 years of hard-working life, but he does not look over 40, and were it not that his hair and mustache are mixed with silver, one would think him much younger. His face is free from wrinkles and his complexion may be said to be full of light and his whole appearance indicates health and strength. A great part of his career has been spent in the saddle. He has not only traveled over the most of Egypt and the Sudan, but has gone on diplomatic missions to Abyssinia, and now holds close personal relations with King Menelik and his leading officials. The sirdar spends a part of every year traveling by boat or on camels through the several of his far-away provinces, and he has just recently returned from a long trip in Kordofan. He talks freely about his country and he knows it so well that what he says is interesting.

## AN UNDEVELOPED EMPIRE.

During my conversation with his excellency I asked him something as to the possibilities of the Sudan, saying that most people looked upon it as nothing else than a vast desert. He replied:

"That idea comes largely from the bleak and barren sands through which the railroad takes travelers on their way to Khartoum. They have also read of the immense swamps of the upper Nile, and, putting the two together, they look upon the country as only swamps and desert. The truth is the Sudan is an undeveloped empire as to its material resources. It is a land of many climates and of all sorts of soils. The desert steps not far from Khartoum, and beyond that is a region where the rainfall is sufficient for regular crops. Still further south the country has more rain than is needed, and in the west are great areas fitted for stock raising."

"Take, for instance, the country along the Abyssinian border and that which lies between the White and Blue Niles. These regions have been built up in the same manner as Egypt, and they contain all the rich fertilizing materials which have made the lower Nile valley one of the granaries of the world. The only difference is that the Egyptian soil, by the cultivation and watering of thousands of years, has been leached of its best fertilizing elements; while the soil of the Gezireh,

and about 50 feet in diameter. They are to be found about almost every village; and, at ordinary times, are kept full of grain for fear of a famine. While the mahdi reigned and the result was that whole communities were wiped out by starvation."

## NEW RAILROADS AND IRRIGATION.

"But if the bad years eat up the good ones, where is the Sudan to get its grain for export?" I asked.

"That will come by irrigation and better transportation. As it is now the people rely upon the rainfall, which is not sure. In the future that country can be irrigated by the two Niles, and that without diminishing the supply of water required for Egypt. Then the land will have water all the year round. Improved methods of cultivation will enormously increase the crops. At present, the native merely walks over the ground after a rain and sows it up with a stick, while his wife or child comes behind dropping the seeds and covering them with their feet. After ploughing nothing is done until two months later, when the crop is ready for reaping."

"As to transportation, everything is brought to the river on donkeys or camels, which eat their heads off on the way, and it has to come down the Nile on boats at high freight. We hope to soon build a railroad into the Gezireh, which will give it an outlet to the Red sea; and there will be other roads branching off from that, furnishing transportation facilities for the whole country."

"But is the region between the White and Blue Niles the only country you have where grain can be raised?"

"By no means. We can raise grain in nearly every province. There are grain areas in the south and in the west. The Bah-el-Ghazal, an immense country on the northern edge of the Congo watershed, will raise grain, and there are many regions along the rivers in the north which will produce enormous crops when the water is put upon them."

## WHERE COTTON MAY BE KING.

"How about cotton?"

"I see no reason why the Sudan should not eventually be one of the chief cotton countries of the globe. The country is covered with it in all the provinces and are meeting with great success. The land between the White and Blue Niles might be made one great cotton plantation, and the quality of the soil would be fine. It is now we are raising excellent cotton on the Red sea near Suakin. There are about 30,000 acres planted there, and the crop is a profitable one. Plantations are being set out by foreigners near Khartoum and the cotton raised is fully equal to the best Egyptian. One of your own countrymen, Mr. Leslie Hunt, is experimenting on a large scale with different kinds of American cotton, a little north of here, near the mouth of the Atbara river. He says that the Sea Island cotton will grow there, and that he has no doubt of the future of that region as a cotton producer. Indeed, I see no reason why cotton should not be largely raised in all our southern provinces."

## THE QUESTION OF LABOR.

"But how about your labor, your excellency? Have you the workmen necessary to cultivate such crops?"

"That is a problem which only the future can solve," replied the governor-general of the Sudan. "We have all kinds of natives here, and that in all the different stages of savagery and semi-civilization. There are hundreds of tribes whose people can be taught to work and others the members of which will need many years before they can be made into such farmers as we have in Egypt and India. We have some who will work only long enough to get food and supplies for their immediate needs and who, when a little ahead, will spend their time in drinking and drinking the native beer until they become 'drunk' again. We have also a large admixture of Arabs and other races which are of a far higher character, and of these we expect much."

"Would it be impossible to import labor for the Sudan?" I asked.

"No, I think not. We may in time import some outside labor, although it is to be feared that the Africans will always do most of the work. We could use East Indians. They live in about the same latitude, and their climate is somewhat similar. Besides they are not

in the past. They wear more clothing, they have more wants, and are working to supply them. Formerly many went about in the nude, and there was no security of property and few wants, they had no incentives to save. When we came here the taxes were levied at the will of the rulers, and the rich native was sure to be persecuted. Now taxes are fairly levied, and the natives are learning that their savings will be respected. They are coming to have faith in us. Our first business was to make them realize that we intended to treat them fairly and honestly, and I believe we have succeeded. We had also to organize the country, so that it might be able to pay the expenses of its government. We are fast reaching that stage."

## A GREAT BABY FARM.

"Is your native population increasing?"

"Very rapidly," replied the sirdar. "I am surprised at the large number of children who have been born since we took possession of the Sudan. The provinces fairly swarm with little ones under seven years of age. During my recent trip through Kordofan, I carried a lot of small coin with me to give to the children. The news of this traveled ahead, and as soon as we approached a village we would be met by the babies in force. Nearly every peasant woman came forward with a half dozen or more little naked black and brown, hanging about her, and the children ran out of such tents as we passed on the way. The Sudanese are naturally fond of children, and especially so when times are good and conditions settled as they are now. They want as many children and grandchildren as the Lord will give them, and as most of the men have two or three wives it is not an uncommon thing for a father to have several additions to his family per year."

"What is your present population and its possible future?"

"We have today, I should say, at least 5,000,000 in the Sudan. As to the future I cannot prophesy that with any degree of accuracy although I can safely say that the Sudan could support 10,000,000 if its lands were properly used. It is said that there were 12,000,000 natives here before the times of the Mahdi, and there is no reason why there should not be five times as many in the future as there were then. That would give us a population of 60,000,000, and the probability is that we will some time far exceed that figure. Egypt, with a cultivable area of 12,000 square miles, has about 12,000,000. With peace, fair government and the development of our agricultural resources along modern lines, the Sudan may have a future beyond our conception."

## IN KORDOFAN AND DARFUR.

"Your excellency has been traveling on camel back through Kordofan. Is that country likely to be valuable in the future?"

"I do not see why it should not be," replied the governor-general. "It is one of the stock raising regions of this part of the world, producing a vast number of cattle and camels. Much of the meat now used in Khartoum comes from Kordofan, and camels are reared there for use throughout the Libyan and Nubian deserts. The southern half of the country is devoted to cattle, and is inhabited by stock raisers."

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