

**GENERAL GORDON'S LETTERS
FROM THE CRIMEA, THE DANUBE,
AND ARMENIA; AUGUST 18,
1854, TO NOVEMBER 1858**

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General Gordon's letters from the Crimea, the Danube, and Armenia; August 18, 1854, to November 1858 by Charles George Gordon

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CHARLES GEORGE GORDON

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FROM THE CRIMEA, ETC.

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FROM

*THE CRIMEA, THE DANUBE,
AND ARMENIA.*

AUGUST 18, 1854, TO NOVEMBER 17, 1858.

EDITED BY

DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER,

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF CHINA," ETC., ETC.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL,
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1884.

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I DEDICATE,
WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE,
THE FOLLOWING LETTERS
TO THE BROTHER OF THEIR AUTHOR,
SIR HENRY W. GORDON, K.C.B.,
IN WHOM
THE QUALITIES OF A GREAT CHARACTER
ARE EQUALLY CONSPICUOUS,

"PAX SOBILE FRATRUM."

INTRODUCTION.

THE following letters represent the earliest correspondence of General Gordon with members of his family after the commencement of his military career in the service of the Queen. In point of time, it is not probable that they will ever be superseded. When the first note was written from Pembroke Dock he was only a few months over twenty-one; when the last letter was sent from Constantinople he was still two months short of his twenty-sixth birthday. During that period of four years and a half he was constantly employed, with one interval, in connection with events of dramatic character, and the correspondence covers the whole of an epoch important in history and famous in our national annals.

There is a certain appropriateness as well as use in supplying fuller details of the first part of a public career which was destined to reveal so many picturesque and heroic incidents; and those details cannot be supplied in a clearer or more ample manner than in the young engineer officer's own words, though they were set down in all the haste and weariness of bodily exertion and mental fatigue in the trenches of the Crimea, amid the innumerable difficulties and annoyances of rapid travel in such a region as the Danubian principalities were and still are, and on the desert heights of the Armenian border lands. The reader can feel sure that he receives the impression as it took form under the pen of General Gordon; and although there is never a pretension to style, the language is always clear and direct, and no one can doubt that the writer reveals his true mind.

These letters are not without their use also. When General Gordon arrived in the Crimea, in the first days of the year 1855, the more striking events of the campaign had taken place. The thin red line had carried the heights of Alma, the immortal charge of the light brigade had

vindicated the reputation of at least English cavalry, and the attempted surprise of the position of Inkerman had resulted in the rout of the Russians. The winter troubles were in full progress. General Gordon himself was one of the arrivals from England destined to convert those troubles into the hopes of the spring, the waning expectations of the summer, and the long-anticipated triumph of the early autumn. The Historian has duly recorded and described the progress of events up to the period at which General Gordon's Crimean experiences began; but he has not yet reached that point at which the narrative of events to be found in the following pages really commences. They have, therefore, an intrinsic value apart from that given them by the name of their author. The letters from the Danube and Armenia, which will perhaps be considered the more interesting, are important as giving us from the best possible source the particulars of those two frontier commissions which by the energy of the English Government alone did impose limits for a time to the encroachments of Russia by compelling the Czar to relax

his hold on a cherished province in one continent, and on conquered fortresses in another.

But I think the general agreement of the reader will be with me when I say that their greatest importance is that they throw another light on the character of the man who, in the midst of innumerable tokens that an English Government fears its responsibilities, and shrinks with a craven spirit from discharging its part as the exponent of the tradition and mission of England, is affording by his courage and devotion to duty a much needed proof that Englishmen are not yet given over to the cruel and cowardly persuasion that they have but to enunciate some fine moral principle, or to demonstrate their logical consistency as political partisans, in order to escape the guilt of having produced unnecessary rebellion and useless slaughter by a course of action which has for four years put off the decision until the morrow which is always too late. In these pages may be seen the clearness of vision, the promptitude of resolve and action, the steadfast courage, the unswerving devotion to duty, the implicit belief in his own country, which, if remarkable when