Gladstone’s Government consolidated victory at Tel-el-Kebir by establishing a *temporary* military occupation of Egypt (both to protect the Suez Canal and to preserve internal order in Egypt). Given the minimal size of the army of occupation, the arrangement worked conveniently within Egypt but difficulties soon arose when Egypt, on behalf of the Porte, sought to crush the rebellion launched by Mohammad Ahmed – the Mahdi, or ‘Expected One’, in the Sudan. Egypt employed a retired British officer, Lieutenant-General William Hicks, to lead an army of 11,000 men against the Mahdists, an offensive that ended in spectacular failure on the plain of Shaykan, near El Obeid (5 November 1883), where his army was annihilated with only a few hundred survivors. As the rebels threatened further towns, including Khartoum, Gladstone’s cabinet wanted to evacuate the remaining Egyptian garrisons from the Sudan. Confronting a popular outcry fanned by the influential *Pall Mall Gazette*, it responded by sending Major-General Charles ‘Chinese’ Gordon (18 January 1884) up the Nile to ‘consider and report’ on the situation.¹ In eastern Sudan, however, where the British wished to retain the Red Sea ports round Suakin (both for their commercial value and to prevent them becoming outlets for the slave trade), the Beja tribes (including the Hadendowa, Amarar, Bisharin and others) under Osman Digna commanded the trade route to Berber and besieged the garrisons of Sinkat and Tokar. The Mahdists destroyed another Egyptian relief force under Major-General Valentine Baker at El Teb (4 February 1884) and overwhelmed the garrison of Sinkat four days later as it tried to march to the coast. The slaughter of Egyptian soldiers and civilians from Sinkat, with the capture of their women and children, aroused fervent demands for intervention, not least from Queen Victoria. Gladstone, according to his private secretary, reluctantly agreed to send a British relief force to Tokar; ‘It is’, added Edward Hamilton, ‘in a small way a response to the unreasonable cries of public feeling.’²

[ 99 ]
The ensuing campaign was extremely brief, but represented the first encounter of British forces with the Mahdists and their first experience of campaigning in the eastern Sudan. Some 4,000 men, drawn from the garrisons in Egypt, Aden and India, served under Sir Gerald Graham, VC; they comprised two brigades of infantry, including a body of Royal Marine Light Infantry, a cavalry brigade under Colonel Herbert Stewart, and a naval detachment operating three Gatling and three Gardner machine-guns. Of this small force, composed of soldiers already serving overseas, relatively few wrote letters to family and friends in Britain. Newspapers were also less dependent on them, as several war correspondents had accompanied the ill-fated relief force under Baker Pasha and were ready to report on the next campaign. Given the experience and rivalry of these ‘specials’, including Francis Scudamore (Daily News), John Cameron (Standard), James Mellor Paulton (Manchester Examiner), Frederic Villiers (Graphic), Bennet Burleigh (Daily Telegraph), Alex MacDonald (Western Morning News) and Melton Prior (Illustrated London News), this brief campaign was fully reported. Burleigh gained prominence by ‘scooping’ his rivals in reporting on the second battle of El Teb (29 February 1884) and by fighting the Hadendowa in the broken square at Tamai (13 March 1884).

Soldiers who had been based in Egypt were delighted to leave a country where cholera had claimed all too many victims and to see action. They also grasped the sense of urgency that characterised the campaign. On 14 February the 1/Black Watch was issued with a new grey field kit and told that it would leave for the Sudan on the following morning, which was ‘not much notice’, Bandsman Barwood reflected: ‘All night most of us sat up drinking and singing, but dozed off towards morning.’ He consoled a disconsolate friend who had to remain behind, then left on the train for Suez between 6 and 7 a.m. At Tel-el-Kebir the train stopped, allowing the Black Watch to visit the cemetery where several soldiers took feathers out of their red hackles ‘and stuck them in our comrades graves’. After this poignant scene, the train pressed on to Suez where men and horses were crammed into troopships for the 6-day voyage to Trinkitat. The Orontes carried 44 officers and 1,169 men, but its lack of horse fittings meant that the mounted infantry, as Marling recalled, had to tie ‘the horses up to the ship’s rail, where they fought and bit one another worse than ever’.

Whether the voyages were enjoyed, as Captain A. O. Green, RE, later claimed, paying numerous tributes to the entertainment by the Black Watch band on board the Orontes, or were ‘very miserable’, as remembered by Private Peter McRae (1/Gordon Highlanders) on board the Thibet, moments of anxiety recurred. These included immediate con-
cerns as the ships travelled slowly, often stopping, in the shallow coastal waters south of Suakin (the Neera foundered); longer term fears that Tokar could fall before the troops landed; and the practical difficulty of disembarking troops, horses and stores over the coral reefs at Trinkitat. Green and his sappers had to erect a suitable pier and then construct troughs and tanks to hold the 13,000 gallons of water, condensed from the Red Sea, which soldiers and animals required on a daily basis. Marling saw the water coming into ‘the canvas horse
troughs so hot that although the horses were almost mad with thirst we had to take them away for ten minutes to let it cool’.10

As the soldiers began to disembark on 21 February, the first news of Tokar’s surrender came via an exhausted Egyptian soldier. He was de-briefed by Green for the intelligence department and was then ‘examined and cross-examined’ as he was rowed out to the Orontes. Confirmation of the garrison’s fall was passed on to London by 23 February when Graham had the bulk of his army ashore.11 Sir Evelyn Baring [later the Earl of Cromer], who was the British agent and consul-general in Cairo, now found himself pressed by senior military officers to continue the campaign. Although he doubted that further action (beyond leaving a secure garrison round Suakin) would serve any purpose, the Government could not contemplate the political costs of a precipitate withdrawal. As Lord Granville, the foreign secretary, deliberated whether a march to El Teb might be feasible to protect the fugitives and bury the European dead or, if Suakin was threatened, to mount an offensive from Trinkitat or Suakin, it soon became too late to prevent an advance by Graham.12

Soldiers were none too impressed by their first few days in the Sudan. They had to work from morning until night unloading vessels and had ‘nothing here to cover us’, as McRae noted, ‘but the sky and a blanket’, a combination that had to withstand tropical downpours every night for a week.13 If strictly rationed to one bottle of water per day, they could at least bathe in the sea each morning and were spared the extremes of heat – Green confirmed that over ‘four days the signallers have not been able to utilise the heliograph from absence of sun . . .’.14 On 25 February the Gordons marched ahead with the Irish Fusiliers, an artillery detachment, a squadron of the 19th Hussars and mounted infantry to establish a forward base at Fort Baker, some 3 miles distant. McRae described how they ‘had to march up to the knees in mud and then through prickly bushes which scratch our knees terrible’; the fort built by Baker’s Egyptian troops was, however, impressive: as Private John Morrison [Black Watch] commented, ‘it is a very strongly fortified place indeed’.15

As ever in colonial warfare, the first priorities were base security and logistical supply. Once the engineers had erected a wire entanglement, soldiers were able to bivouac in and around the earthwork, whereupon they laboured to bring stores, artillery and, above all, supplies of fresh water across the marsh. ‘Everyone had been crying out for everything simultaneously’, wrote Green, but packing casks, tanks and miscellaneous water containers onto camels and then sending them to Fort Baker was his priority; by 27 February he had some 8,000 gallons stored at Fort Baker. Graham completed his base defences by leaving a com-
pany of Riflemen, ‘all sick and weakly men’ and the departmental
details at Trinkitat, and another three companies of Riflemen with a
Krupp gun and two bronze guns at Fort Baker.\(^{16}\)

On 28 February the relief force congregated at Fort Baker, with the
1/Yorks and Lancs, who were the last to arrive from Aden, crossing the
bog at night. Graham and his staff then deployed his force in a ‘rectan-
gular parallelogram of 400 x 250 feet’, leaving the men in full kit
through another night of rain (albeit fortified by tots of rum).\(^{17}\) By 8.15
a.m. on the following day, the relief force was ready to assume the
offensive, and a sailor claimed: ‘The 750 mounted troops looked splen-
did, and . . . [the] pipers of the 75th and 42nd Highlanders played some
of their old stirring war-marches as the force moved over the rough
ground’\(^{18}\). The rain-sodden ground, ‘thickly dotted with scrub . . . about
2½ ft. high’\(^{19}\) ensured that the first 2 miles were very arduous, particu-
larly for the gunners and sailors dragging their guns by hand. As the
fierce sun compounded the fatigue (even if it eased their marching over
firmer ground for the final 2 miles), there were frequent halts en route.
Near El Teb cavalry scouts crossed the battlefield where Baker Pasha’s
forces had foundered: ‘It was a frightful sight’, recalled Private C.
Stream (19th Hussars), ‘nothing but dead bodies . . . They had been
lying there for over a month. The stench was something frightful.’\(^{20}\)

By about 10 a.m. those scouts found their enemy counterparts and
reconnoitred the Mahdists’ position, including shallow earthworks,
riple pits and fortified buildings in front of the village and wells of El
Teb. Graham, who estimated that the enemy numbered 6,000,
marched his formation to the right in the hope of turning the enemy’s
left but, by 11.20 a.m., his forces came under fire from the rifle pits and
two Krupp guns captured from Baker Pasha’s expedition. To Private
Morrison’s relief, the infantry were ordered to lie down while the
artillery and naval machine-guns returned fire and ‘soon silenced the
enemy, upsetting their guns. We continued to move steadily up to
them, fighting our way, and succeeded in capturing their guns, and our
artillery turning upon them soon made sad havoc.’\(^{21}\)

Effectively the left face of the Yorks and Lancs, supported by Royal
Marines, composed the firing line, with the Gordons and Black Watch
on either flank. Private W. G. Martin, a Welsh Gordon Highlander,
described how they

started at a very slow rate. We halted in front of the first fort, where they
came down upon us in thousands, but we kept them at bay. The rebels
are a lot of brave men. They would come right up to the point of the bay-
onet when we were firing a storm of bullets into them, and they would
not retire, so they all fell by bayonet or shot.\(^{22}\)
In the ferocious combat, a young Dingwallian was mightily impressed by the example of the senior officers: Baker Pasha was shot in the face but required a ‘great deal of persuasion’ before he dismounted to get the wound treated; Colonel Fred Burnaby was wounded in the arm but killed 10 men with 20 shots; and Captain A. K. Wilson of the Hecla, who would earn a VC, saved several lives and made ‘some dreadful havoc’ among several Arabs with the hilt of his broken sword before suffering a scalp wound.23

Close-range fire-power proved decisive as the soldiers and sailors worked their way through the defensive position. Lieutenant Denne (Gordons) testified to the ‘great stand’ made at a brick house and huge iron boiler: ‘the niggars lay in heaps round it’, and, once inside the village, ‘our infantry opened on them at close range & so did the Naval Brigade guns’. Then the Mahdists ‘threw away their rifles’ and charged with their spears: ‘Nothing stopped them till the hail of bullets & machine guns floored them mostly at the feet of the front rank of the square, one black hit thro’ the body came on & stabbed one of our men in the face before being finally shot down.’24 Marling regarded the Mahdists as ‘the pluckiest fellows I’ve ever seen’; Sergeant William Danby (10th Hussars) agreed that ‘these Arabs are the most fierce, brave, daring & unmerciful men in the world[,] they fear nothing, give & expect no quarter . . .’.25 Having lost their gun emplacements, and with the Krupp guns turned against them, Osman Digna’s forces gradually withdrew.

Unlike what had been experienced at Tel-el-Kebir, a Mahdist withdrawal was not a retreat, as the 10th and 19th Hussars soon discovered. Denne watched the spectacle unfold as ‘amid loud cheering the cavalry came round our right flank & charged’.26 He saw how the thick scrub broke up the close-order formation, while the enemy crouched in the bushes beneath the range of cavalry sabres and then used spears and knives like billhooks to hamstring the horses before stabbing any fallen troopers. ‘The cavalry lost very heavily’, he noted, a view confirmed by Trooper Stream:

We had a pretty hard fight at Teb with the blacks. We had a charge, both regiments that are here. The ground was very bad; we could not see where we were going to properly. When we got into their village, they were down in holes, and we could not reach them with our swords. As we went over them they cut the horses down and there was no chance for anyone whose horse fell.27

Major Percy H. S. Barrow (19th Hussars), who was severely wounded by a spear, nevertheless wrote about his ‘glorious luck’: after Lieutenant-Colonel A. G. Webster’s wing had become separated, and his
own wing became the first line, ‘and still better came upon a large mass of the enemy. The leader of the 1st line was not long in communicating his views to the Brigadier [who] you may be sure [was] not long in preparing for attack. There was no hurry or confusion. When we did go the men rode straight and well and deserve all the credit that they have received.’

In several charges the cavalry lost 20 killed and 48 wounded (out of a total of 30 killed and 142 wounded). Danby’s twelve-man section followed a ‘mad order’ to gallop back amidst ‘an enemy 400 strong’ and recover 6 fallen troopers (2 of whom died and another 2 required amputations). The sight of mutilated corpses inflamed passions further, notably the stripped corpse of Major M. M. Slade [10th Hussars] with ‘about 30 wounds from spears . . . & all his fingers broken to get his rings off’. Thereafter, explained Marling, ‘We shot or bayonetted [sic] all wounded as it was not safe to leave them as they knifed everyone they could reach.’ Overall Denne regarded the three-and-a-half-hour battle as ‘a very tough job much worse in my opinion than our great Tel el Kebir . . .’

He was much less impressed by the subsequent advance on Tokar [1 March], which was entered without a shot being fired:

The General made an ass of himself by having a sort of triumphal march with some cavalry round the town . . . It is just the sort of bunkum I should expect of him. The relief of Tokar was in fact all humbug, we were too late, the place had fallen & the guns been carried off. The enemy & Egyptians had been living on friendly terms inside together till we came up, when the enemy bolted & our friend the Egyptian remained as there was nothing to be afraid of in us . . . I imagine that the fact of our having been too late to really relieve the place will be hushed up.

Graham, nonetheless, had accomplished his mission. He had safely evacuated 600 Egyptian men, women and children from the garrison to Trinkitat and buried the dead, not only the British and some 2,000 dervish dead at El Teb but the decomposed bodies of the Europeans from the previous battle (an exhausting and nauseating burial detail undertaken by half of the Black Watch). He withdrew all his forces safety and, by 6 March, had the first of his units sailing for Suakin. For the next four days the soldiers worked from morning to night, unloading all their vessels at Suakin in temperatures that reached 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade.

Graham now planned to advance on Osman Digna’s camp at Tamai some 16 miles from Suakin, with 2 squares of infantry and 12 guns (116 officers and 3,216 men), supported by cavalry and mounted infantry (41 officers and 696 men). Major-Generals Davis and Buller commanded the two infantry brigades, and the force as a whole was to undertake
short marches (to limit the risk of sunstroke) and to protect itself by constructing zarebas (defensive perimeters about 4-feet high and 6-feet deep made out of mimosa bush) whenever it halted. Graham chose the Black Watch to lead the advance on 10 March, but on the previous day publicly rebuked the battalion for its purported ‘unsteadiness’ at El Teb, both its ‘wild firing’ and then its failure to cease fire when ordered. He declared that the battalion would be able to restore its reputation by its advanced position on the line of march. Captain Andrew Scott-Stevenson was ‘astonished’ by the speech and appalled by its demoralising effect; Bandsman Barwood was surprised that a mutiny did not follow, especially as the general closed the canteen after his speech: ‘we did not deserve it’, he added.35

The travails of the Black Watch persisted on the march, where over fifty men fell out with exhaustion and sunstroke on the first day and the column had to wait until the stragglers were brought in. At ‘Baker’s zareba’ where they were due to bivouac overnight, a carelessly tossed match caused a bush fire that had to be extinguished with coats and kilts. The Highlanders then constructed a large zareba for the following convoy that Graham condemned as too large and so they had to begin again. Barwood explained that they

had to use nothing but green bush, as the black ones caught fire, being too dry; it was no easy job to get all green bush. After a good deal had been cut, we were given a rope which we had to tie to staples in the ground; besides this, we had to fill numbers of bags with sand and attach them to the rope, which was reeved into the bush . . . and then bury the bags in the earth with the rope round them, so that the bush could not be pulled away.36

After the remainder of the column reached the zareba on the following day, the advance was resumed on 12 March. Officers and men were issued with one pint of water each, which had been brought up from Suakin on camels and ‘smelt horribly’.37 They marched another 7 miles until they reached a slight hill within range of the enemy’s camp, where they built another zareba and replied to enemy shelling and rifle-fire with fire from their 9-pounders and Gardner machine-guns. During the overnight bivouac men were issued with rum, and when Barwood found his ‘fighting chum . . . insensibly drunk’, he ‘had an awful bother to get him to lie still and hold his tongue’.38 The officers had other refreshments, with Scott-Stevenson, his subaltern and Captain Rolfe [RN], consuming two magnums of champagne.39

On 13 September, after the cavalry and mounted infantry had located the enemy masses, possibly 9,000 in number, Graham launched his attack at 8.30 a.m., with the 2nd Brigade [Black Watch,
Yorks and Lancs, Naval Brigade and Marines), screened by Abyssinian scouts, moving in advance of the 1st Brigade. Within half-an-hour the Hadendowa were fiercely engaging the scouts at the edge of a gully, and so Graham, who had assumed command from Davis, ordered the Black Watch to charge. The regiment, still smarting from his previous rebuke, responded with alacrity, but the ensuing engagement proved a disaster, as graphically recounted by Captain Scott-Stevenson, whose original letter has survived, as well as many anonymous, abbreviated and carefully edited or paraphrased versions in various newspapers.\(^{40}\)

Scott-Stevenson explained how Graham had failed to order the Yorks and Lancs to charge and so a gap quickly opened on the right-hand corner of the square. On reaching the edge of the gully, the Black Watch, realised that the Hadendowa had cleared their front and were working their way round towards the right. Enfilade fire had only limited effect because the ‘smoke was too awful’ and the guns never came into action, so enabling the Arabs to pour through the gap and attack the Black Watch from the rear. Regimental survivors confirmed that a ferocious hand-to-hand combat followed; several guns, though locked, fell into the hands of the enemy as their naval officers perished; and ‘victory’, as Sergeant Connan claimed, ‘seemed to hang in the balance’.\(^{41}\) Much of Scott-Stevenson’s prose proved too lurid for publication. ‘My trusty claymore’, he wrote, ‘found its way to the hilt into several black devils. I clove a piece out of one of their heads just as one does an egg for breakfast & saw his white brain exposed. I was mad with rage and fury. . . I fought like a demon & only wanted to kill, kill, kill these awful plucky demons.’\(^{42}\) Another soldier commented more dispassionately on the retreat of the broken square:

> Our men fought as well as they could, but were too crowded. The square now collapsed into a mass, with the Marines lumped in the middle, and the 65th and 42nd, on the right and left flanks respectively, moving slowly back – the outside men nearest the enemy turning to fire and bayonet as best they could . . . The enemy had never surrounded the square, but persistently pushed it back in front and flanks – a form of tactics most favourable for their object of keeping us crowded up, narrowed, and unable to use our weapons.\(^{43}\)

As the broken square lurched 800 yards backwards, Denne deplored the effects on the other brigade, especially the Egyptian camel drivers who mounted their animals and fled. ‘The correspondents’, he added, ‘were no better as they legged it to a man, several were stopped by the cavalry but two got straight into Suakin without drawing rein & one [Cameron] went to the admiral [Sir W. Hewett] with news of the annihilation of one square’.\(^{44}\) In fact, dismounted fire from the cavalry and mounted infantry assisted in dispersing the Arabs on the left flank.
of the retreating square, while case shot from Major Holley’s battery on the right followed by enfilade fire from Buller’s Brigade, once it had warded off an assault on itself, proved decisive on the right. ‘Our square’, wrote Denne,

stood well all the time & bowled over the niggers in style without letting them get up close . . . I thought when I saw the square coming back it was all over & it was Isandula over again, but the second square not being moved at all by the attack saved us in my opinion.45

Davis’s square was able to reform, recapture the guns and advance with the 1st Brigade to seize Osman Digna’s camp by about 11.40 a.m. Once the brigades moved on to the offensive and crossed the gully, there was little resistance, save from the flanks, and the camp was almost unoccupied when taken. An estimated 2,000 of the enemy died, though the British casualties were relatively heavy, with over 100 killed and about the same number wounded.46 The Black Watch had the largest number of killed and wounded (61 and 33, respectively), and some of the wounded had horrendous cuts to their legs. Many of their survivors blamed Graham, and most regimental comrades agreed: ‘The Black Watch’, noted Marling, ‘were very bitter about Graham, and who can blame them?’47 Scott-Stevenson blamed Graham, and also asked, in another unpublished aside: ‘Who is to blame for this? I wish old Gladstone had been in that square.’48

After burning Osman Digna’s camp, Graham withdrew his force to Suakin. Thereafter he launched some minor reconnaissance operations to Handub (10 miles north-west of Suakin), Otao (a further 8 miles westwards) and into the Tamanieb valley. On 25 March, he led his two brigades against an enemy force at Tamanieb, dispersing the Mahdists and burning the village (with the medical officers inconvenienced mainly by the number of men succumbing to the heat – 50 within a mile of Suakin and another 130 during the remainder of the operation).49 The futility of these actions was all too obvious: Marling reckoned: ‘We ought really to go right across by the desert route to help Gordon, but old Gladstone, they say, won’t let us, or buy sufficient camels.’50 On returning to Suakin [29 March], Graham was ordered to close the campaign, and, apart from leaving two battalions to assist in garrisoning the town, embarked the remainder of his force on 3 April.

Soldiers left the Sudan impressed by the enemy, if not the outcome of the campaign. Major Robert Coveny, a Black Watch veteran of the Asante and Egyptian campaigns, claimed: ‘I never saw such fellows to fight as those Hadendowa Arabs; they know not what fear is in most cases.’51 Another soldier graphically described their fearsome appearance at the battle of Tamai: ‘The half-naked black savages, having
heads huge with lumps of woolly hair on end upwards and sideways, brandishing their spears and curved sticks used as shields and clubs, dancing madly behind the retreating square looked through the smoke like real demons. Several officers, including Scott-Stevenson and Graham, also recognised the tactical finesse of these warriors – their ability to use the ground and the cover of smoke to creep up close and then attack the corners as the weakest part of square formations.

While soldiers grumbled over the issue of medals – restricted to those who had not previously served in Egypt, and those with Egyptian medals received only clasps – most were glad to leave the Sudan. Although they had avoided being lured into the desert and had twice defeated Osman Digna’s forces, the Mahdists remained in Sinkat, commanded the route to Berber and reoccupied Tokar. Understandably, soldiers dwelt less on the strategic implications of the campaign than the experience itself. A Fifer wrote:

For Britain’s honour we have fought,
And suffer’d heat, fatigue, and toil;
Defeated Osman’s swarthy host,
And made them quick disgorge their spoil.

While for companions loved we mourn,
Struck down by roving Arab’s spear;
To Britain we will glad return,
From Afric’s deserts, dry and dear.

Characteristically, Denne was much more blunt: ‘everyone is heartily sick of this useless waste of life to bolster up government & hopes we are to have no more’. Ironically, even Gladstone admitted privately that the military operations round Suakin were a great mistake, and the ever-sceptical Baring agreed that the political and military outcomes were hardly commensurate with the lives and resources expended.

Notes
4 There are only references to eight letter-writers in Emery, Marching Over Africa, pp. 188–9; Wilkinson-Latham, From Our Special Correspondent, pp. 178–9, and R.


6 GHM, PB 173, Pte P. McRae to his aunt, 10 February 1884; BWA, 0203/1, Barwood, diary, 6 and 19 August 1883, pp. 31 and 35.

7 BWA, 0203/1, Barwood, diary, 9 May 1884, pp. 50–1; ‘The “Black Watch” and Their Fallen Comrades at Tel-el-Kebir’, Strathearn Herald, 15 March 1884, p. 4.

8 Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, p. 100; see also A. O. G. (Capt. A. O. Green), ‘From Cairo to Trinkitat with the Suakin Field Force’, REJ, 14 (1 April 1884), 75–6.

9 A. O. G., ‘From Cairo to Trinkitat’, 75–6, GHM, PB 173, Pte P. McRae to his mother, 26 February 1884.

10 Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, p. 101; BWA, 0203/1, Barwood, diary, 9 May 1884, p. 52; A. O. G., ‘From Cairo to Trinkitat’, 75; Sandes, Royal Engineers, p. 61.


13 GHM, PB 173, McRae to his mother, 26 February 1884.

14 A. O. G., ‘From Cairo to Trinkitat and El Teb with the Suakin Field Force’, REJ, 14 (1 May 1884), 99–102; see also BWA, 0203/1, Barwood, diary, 9 May 1884, p. 54.

15 GHM, PB 173, McRae to his aunt, 20 April 1884; ‘Letter from a Soldier of the Black Watch’, Falkirk Herald, 5 April 1884, p. 2; for the marching ordeal of the 10th Hussars, see NAM, Acc. No. 7003/2, Danby MSS, Sgt W. Danby to Adie, 28 February 1884.

16 PRO, WO 33/42, Correspondence Relative to the Expedition to Suakim, Graham to the secretary of state for war, 2 March 1884, pp. 43–6; A. O. G., ‘From Cairo to Trinkitat and El Teb’, 100.

17 A. O. G., ‘From Cairo to Trinkitat and El Teb’, 100.

18 ‘The Bluejackets at El Teb’, Western Morning News, 31 March 1884, p. 8; see also BWA, 0203/1, Barwood, diary, 9 May 1884, p. 58.

19 GHM, PB 64/5, Denne to his father, 6 March 1884.

20 It was slightly less than a month: ‘Letter from a Pontypridd Soldier’, Western Mail, 27 March 1884, p. 3; Col. R. S. Liddell, The Memoirs of the Tenth Royal Hussars (London: Longman Green, 1891), pp. 436–7.

21 ‘Letter from a Soldier of the Black Watch’, p. 2; see also PRO, WO 33/42, Graham to secretary of state for war, 2 March 1884, p. 45.

22 ‘Letter from Another Welsh Soldier’, Western Mail, 10 April 1884, p. 3. The 75th was an English battalion until it was linked with the 92nd and given the kilt, becoming the 1/Gordon Highlanders, GHM, PB 173, McRae to his Aunt, 7 August 1884.

23 ‘Letters from Egypt’, Ross-shire Journal, 4 April 1884, p. 3; see also ‘Bluejackets at El Teb’, p. 8.

24 GHM, PB 64/5, Denne to his father, 6 March 1884.

25 GRO, D 873/C110, Marling to his father, 3 March 1884; NAM, Acc. No. 7003/2, Danby to Adie, 1 March 1884.

26 GHM, PB 64/5, Denne to his father, 6 March 1884.

27 Ibid. and ‘Letter from a Pontypridd Soldier’, p. 3.


29 NAM, Acc. No. 7003/2, Danby to Adie, 1 March 1884; GHM, PB 64/5, Denne to his father, 6 March 1884. On casualties, see PP, Further Correspondence, Egypt, C 3969 (1884), LXXXVIII, Graham to Lord Hartington, 1 March 1884, p. 121; Marquess of Anglesey, A History of the British Cavalry 1816 to 1919, 8 vols (London: Leo Cooper, 1973–97), vol. 3, p. 316.

30 GRO, D 873/C110, Marling to his father, 3 March 1884.

31 GHM, PB 64/5, Denne to his father, 6 March 1884.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid. and Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, p. 104.
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34 BWA, 0230/1, Barwood, diary, 8 July 1884, pp. 62–5, 68; PP, Further Correspondence, Egypt, C 3969, Graham to Lord Hartington, 4 March 1884, p. 140; Keown-Boyd, A Good Dusting, p. 29.

35 BWA, 0641, Capt. A. S. Scott-Stevenson to his wife, 16 March 1884; and 0230/1, Barwood, diary, 30 August 1884, p. 69; see also PRO, WO 33/42, Graham to the secretary of state for war, 2 March 1884, p. 45.

36 BWA, 0230/1, Barwood, diary, 30 August 1884, pp. 70–2.

37 Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, p. 110.

38 BWA, 0230/1, Barwood, diary, 14 September 1884, pp. 74–7.

39 BWA, 0641, Scott-Stevenson to his wife, 16 March 1884.

40 Compare ibid. with ‘The Battle of Tamai’, Scotsman, 2 April 1884, p. 7; ‘Black Watch at Tamanieb’, York Herald, 8 April 1884, p. 5; and ‘The Battle of Tamai: Description by an Officer of the Black Watch’, Sussex Daily News, 14 April 1884, p. 2.

41 ‘The Battle of Tamai in the Soudan’, Strathearn Herald, 12 April 1884, p. 2; BWA, 0641, Scott-Stevenson to his wife, 16 March 1884; ‘The Battle of Tamai’, Oxford Times, 19 April 1884, p. 6; ‘Description by a Private in the Black Watch’, Edinburgh Evening News, 4 April 1884, p. 4.

42 BWA, 0641, Scott-Stevenson to his wife, 16 March 1884.

43 ‘Notes from Egypt’, Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle, 12 April 1884, p. 5.

44 GHM, PB 64/6, Denne to his father, 15 March 1884. Burleigh, Prior and Villiers could not flee because they were in the broken square: Wilkinson-Latham, From Our Special Correspondent, pp. 182–3.

45 GHM, PB 64/6, Denne to his father, 15 March 1884; Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, pp. 111–12; PRO, WO 33/42, Graham to the secretary of state for war, 15 March 1884, pp. 76–80.

46 GHM, PB 64/6, Denne to his father, 15 March 1884; Sandes, Royal Engineers, p. 64.

47 Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, p. 112; see also GHM, PB 173, McRae to his mother, 17 March 1884, and ‘Description by a Private in the Black Watch’, p. 4.

48 BWA, 0641, Scott-Stevenson to his wife, 16 March 1884.


50 Marling, Rifleman and Hussar, p. 118.


52 ‘Notes from Egypt’, p. 5.

53 BWA, 0641, Scott-Stevenson to his wife, 16 March 1884; and PRO, WO 33/42, Graham to the secretary of state for war, 15 March 1884, p. 79.


55 ‘A British Soldier in the Sudan’, Fife Herald, 30 April 1884, p. 5.

56 GHM, PB 64/6, Denne to his father, 15 March 1884.