

**LETTERS OF GENERAL  
C. G. GORDON, TO HIS  
SISTER M. A. GORDON**

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Letters of General C. G. Gordon, to His Sister M. A. Gordon by C. G. Gordon

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Gordon, Charles George

LETTERS

OF

GENERAL C. G. GORDON

TO HIS SISTER

M. A. GORDON

*"Warrior of God, man's friend, not laid below,  
But somewhere dead far in the waste Soudan,  
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know  
This earth has borne no simpler, nobler man."*

TENNYSON

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TO  
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY  
THE QUEEN

THESE LETTERS OF  
CHARLES GEORGE GORDON

ARE BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

MOST HUMBLY DEDICATED.

"He being dead yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."—  
1 COR. xii. 27.

"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the  
image of the heavenly."—1 COR. xv. 49.



## PREFACE.

IN placing this selection from my brother's letters before the public I have been moved by two reasons: one, the often-repeated request of many friends—both known and unknown—to have more “of his own words.” For though many—perhaps too many—books have been written about him, little is really understood of his religious life. The fact of his faith and trust in God is indeed known, and many sects have claimed him as belonging to themselves; but he acknowledged none, looking beyond, to the foundation of all, Jesus Christ; and taking for his guide his Bible with the “traditions of man” stripped off. The other reason is the hope that many may derive from the perusal of these letters some of the comfort and help that I have gained from them; for it does not seem right that I should keep to myself what may cheer a fellow-pilgrim on his way. If any hearts are comforted, or if any readers are led to study the Bible from seeing what it was to General Gordon in his life of difficulties and of toil, I shall indeed be well repaid for having “unearthed my jewels”—and precious jewels have they been, and still are, to me.

The selection is made from a large number of letters in my possession. Some may think I have included too much, and there may be some things which it would have been better to have omitted; but it is difficult to weigh every word, or to select quite judiciously. No two persons think alike, and what suits one mind might not be acceptable to another. General Gordon himself says: “I am not wise

in my words or writing ; I write from my heart . . . which is not good." "I do not claim that what I say is always true, but to me it appears so. I see this or that, another does not see it ; I can say no more." He wrote just as he felt, and according to the mood he was in at the moment—sometimes in the flesh, sometimes in the spirit, often apparently contradicting himself. When this was brought to his notice he, being fully aware of his own weakness, would answer : "No man in the world is more changeable than I am." He often remarked that if he went by his *first* impressions all was right with him, but that if these opinions were altered by the arguments of others he failed ; so it was far better for him to be left to himself. The key to much—inconsistency, shall I call it?—is to be found in the opposition of the two natures which exist in every man : the one human, the other divine (see Romans vii.). He, like all mankind, had to contend against the flesh, which was wholly evil, whilst the indwelling of God enabled him to sustain that conflict which ended only in the death of that flesh. Now the real man is with his much-loved God.

Many have asked me about my brother's first religious impressions, and I have therefore commenced the series with portions of two letters written at Pembroke in 1854. But, with this and a few other exceptions, I have for various reasons excluded his earlier communications, and have selected my material principally from letters dating from the period when he began a regular correspondence with me, in which he recorded the spiritual, as well as the material, life he was leading. The series is printed in chronological sequence, and, as far as possible, dates have been given ; but it sometimes happened that one subject was carried on from letter to letter : in such cases the first date has been deemed sufficient.

Many passages in these pages may seem disjointed : this fault proceeds from General Gordon's habit of writing

whatever struck him at the moment. His religious thoughts were always with him—not as a separate thing, but his life. I know also that there are repetitions; but, when such occur, I think the reader will find that it is not repetition only, but that some fresh thought has been added. My aim and desire is to give my brother's own words and thoughts as he wrote them. Would that I could give his looks and the expression of his countenance when he spoke earnestly on those subjects nearest his heart! They had a great charm; and his eyes would sparkle with real delight, as, after speaking on some of God's great truths, he would exclaim, "Is it not lovely!"

It was part of my original plan to omit all the letters written between 1874 and 1879, as so large a portion of his correspondence during that period has already appeared in *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*, edited by Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill. But to have done this would have caused a blank; the steps and stages by which God taught him would, as it were, have been wanting. *Those* letters were published to show the *man's* work in the Soudan; *these*, to show the Spirit of God working *in* the man. For the same reason I may have repeated some parts of the letters written to me and published in *Reflections in Palestine*.

It is far from my intention to write anything like a memoir of General Gordon in these few introductory pages, but how kind and thoughtful a brother he was will be partly seen by his letters; and I think that some of his remarks will help to show him as he was, though, as a friend of his, Colonel folliott, writes: "To understand properly what has been written [of General Gordon], in fact what he has written himself, requires a personal acquaintance with him; for your brother was so unique, so utterly unlike any one else, that a personal friendship was necessary, to understand fully the greatness and goodness of heart that moved all his actions, even the smallest."