

**ENGLISH MEN OF  
ACTION. CHARLES  
GEORGE GORDON**

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English Men of Action. Charles George Gordon by Sir William F. Butler

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**SIR WILLIAM F. BUTLER**

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English Men of Action

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CHARLES GEORGE GORDON





CHARLES GEORGE GORDON

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# CHARLES GEORGE GORDON

BY

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM F. <sup>Francis</sup> BUTLER,  
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## CHAPTER I

THE NAME AND THE CLAN—ANCESTORS—BIRTH—EARLY  
DAYS—ENTERS ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY

GORDON—"Spear," the first weapon shaped by man to aid his fight with nature, and give him dominion over the wild things of plain and forest: the emblem of highest rank among the old Norse gods, held in the right hand of Odin: the weapon of sacrifice among those dim Celtic tribes whose existence is all but lost in the dawn of history—a name that goes back beyond history and beyond even tradition, into days when man began to chip the stones of primæval river-beds into leaf-shaped sharpened flints: a name full of strange significance in our history, whether borne in Norman, Saxon, or Celtic sound, in simple or compound form by priest, poet, or soldier, by Breakspeare, Shakespeare, Byron, or Gordon, by those whose words and deeds have stirred men's blood as none other in our history have done.

An old race, this Gordon, and a stout one: fierce fighters, true soldiers, hard-striking, hard-dying men, whose names crop up wherever fighting is found in their country's history: holding their own, and often their

neighbours' lands and chattels, with a tight grasp, yet ever prodigal of blood and gold for clan and king: smiting Mackays, Crichtons, Sinclairs, Forbes, Camerons, Lindsays, and Macintoshes through the wild straths and glens of Banff, Caithness, and Sutherland until they and their enemies disappear backward into time, amid an unresolvable mist of conflict, where the writ of history does not run.

And downward, into the broader light of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we see these Gordons steadily falling into grander groups, where the issues are faith and king, and the rewards are the prison and the block; their names standing out in times of political storm like guiding lights that tell us, without further need of search, where the old landmarks lie.

He is a Gordon who rallies round him whatever is left in Scotland of loyalty and honour, when the preaching of Knox, the intrigues of Cecil, and the murders of Murray have upset the throne of Mary Stuart, and all but brought Scotland under the dominion of Elizabeth.

A Gordon is the first to raise the royal standard for Charles, and one of the last to lay his head on the block at the Market Cross of Edinburgh, telling his enemies that "the only regret he has in dying is that he had not been the first to suffer in a cause which made death so sweet to him;" and also telling the Covenanting ministers, who came at the last moment to pester him with offers of their absolution if he would acknowledge his "treason" to them, that "as he had never been accustomed in life to give ear to false prophets, so now he did not wish to be troubled by them at his death."

The Marquis of Huntly, whose spirit neither disaster