



# Odurman (Pen & Sword Military Classics)

*Peter Ziegler, Philip Ziegler*

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The death of General Gordon in Khartoum at the hand of the Dervishes serving the fanatical Mahdi is one of the most celebrated events in the history of the 19th century. Equally dramatic and colourful, but perhaps less well-known, is the extraordinary battle fourteen years later in which Kitchener avenged the murder of Gordon at Omdurman, just across the Nile from Khartoum. General Kitchener amassed his Anglo-Egyptian troops in Cairo and set off into the desert with a motley army which, as time went on, included the Grenadier Guards, the Rifle Brigade and kilted Highlanders; the Camel Corps with 5,000 camels; infantry packed into trucks on the newly constructed railway line; and a flotilla of gunboats overloaded with cavalry and supplies. The going was often tough and the opposition from the Government in London seemed sometimes as obdurate as that provided by the Dervishes. But, in 1898 the army at last came in sight of Omdurman, capital of the Mahdi's successor, the Khalifa. The story of the battle which followed, a clash between spears, swords and frenzied courage on the one hand and the grim application of rifle and gunboat fire on the other, is breathtaking, bizarre and beautifully handled by the author. Towards the climax came the last great cavalry charge in history, that of the 21st Lancers, made memorable by one of the young officers who led it, Winston Churchill.

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