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## LITERATURE.

'83 to '87 IN THE SOUDAN.\*

WHEN we first met at Jeddah (in February '74) Mr. Wylde, the son of an old and valued friend, he had already begun life as a planter in Ceylon; and, at the port of Meccah, he was domiciled with MM. Oswald and Betts (not to mention eleven varmint terriers, with a pronounced taste for native legs) in a Bachelor Hall, which was as jolly as jolly could be. He presently ('75) removed to Abyssinian Sawákin—which he had already prospected—with the view of developing trade; and, since that time, his life has been of the most energetic and eventful. He filled a variety of posts—as first vice-consul for the Red Sea, Head of the Intelligence Department, and Commandant of the Abyssinian Scouts, besides acting amateur surveyor for the Sawákin-Berber R. R., and volunteer guide and Shikári to the Adowa Mission and to a host of minor *Ausflugs*. In '75 he met at Sanheit (i. 17) Gordon Pasha and accompanied him to Khartúm, whence he rode back through the desert to Sawákin, and again forgathered with him ('79) in Abyssinia, where the governor of the Equatorial Provinces was virtually a prisoner. Gordon's letters (ii. 258-60) show that the two were on the best of terms, and the junior ever speaks of the senior with respect and reverence—a tone which is falling out of fashion. The plans for the railways being now completed were laid ('80) before that "empty-headed demagogue," Arabi Pasha. In '81, Mr. Wylde returned to England for the third time, and during the next year he visited Bombay and Karáchi with the object of extending commerce in the Red Sea. He was again at Sawákin ('82) when Europeans were being massacred at Alexandria, and he is grateful to the gallant tribesmen for pro-

tecting their strangers against the Egyptians. In '83, when his book begins, Mahdism had become a fact; and presently by our mismanagement and craven policy it was allowed to ruin the Arabian trade, reduce Jeddah to a mere *comptoir*, and threaten Sawákin with capture and massacre.

Mr. Wylde has, therefore, a right to speak *ex cathedra* concerning the Soudan and the Soudanese, and his speech has no uncertain sound. His two volumes should be earnestly read and carefully considered by the "authorities," who will, however, do nothing of the kind. They have been shown up as model incapables, and the charges against them can be met only by countercharges. A more damning record of incompetence and mal-administration it will be hard to find in the annals of this century. A gallant and noble race of negroids, fighting for freedom and striving to cast out the Egyptian task-master and the Turkish tax-gatherer, has been wantonly attacked and uselessly slaughtered by Englishmen in the pay of Egypt, once more become the "basest of kingdoms," by a friendly nation whose sons were known only as "the men who came to shoot big game." And even the process of slaughtering was not carried out without manifold disasters to the slaughterer. Verily, England is not a success in Africa, north or south. Ill-chosen and incompetent commanders, under whom even the bravest soldiers will run like hares, have made the records of "Caffre Wars" a national disgrace; but it is a far cry to the Cape, and Europe has not yet learned the dishonouring details. The Nile expedition, even in the pleasant pages of Count Gleichen (with the Camel Corps, &c.), when soldiers carried in their kits "goggles, veils, prayer-books, and spurs" (to use upon camels!) reads like a lecture upon how not to do it, and a warning, as the Arabs say, to whoso will be warned. Egypt would seem ungovernable to the Anglo-Saxon as Ireland. In the former case the cause does not lie very deep, but deep enough to escape the shallow eye of administration. Cavour, the one master politician of the nineteenth century, so packed the cards that Italy may lose as many campaigns as she pleases but still she must gain ground and weight. We have so mismanaged matters in Egypt that whatever happens we cannot win, we must lose. The various positions which have been occupied from the beginning by the "civilian home clerks who govern England," the "official nobodies who now to her cost rule our country," is the prime cause of our failure. Every man of sense knows that we ought either to have taken the Nile Valley or to have left it stewing in its own juice, without aid from the French or the Turks. But we did neither one thing nor the other; and the slippery base of a temporary occupation accounts for all our lapses and *laches*, including the short-sighted and pusillanimous policy of abandoning the Soudan.

Mr. Wylde's work consists of sport, trips, and campaigns in almost equal proportion. He is ardent after "fluff and feather," and we can complain only that he has not been more lavish of details concerning the manners and habits of the local fauna he knows so well. His visits to the tribesmen are most interesting, and prove that the Soudan is virtually a *terra incognita* whose antiquities

promise amply to reward the explorer. His notices of the battles which he witnessed are told with a reserve which we must confess to be commendable when we reflect that he must hold in reserve a most condemnable budget of follies and failures. Take this for instance:—

'It was another case of too late; everything seems to be too late with regard to the Soudan. It was too late to prevent Hicks Pasha leaving with his army from Khartoum; too late to make the Suakim and Berber Railway when it was decided on; too late for Suleiman Pasha Niazí to try pacific means with the tribes; too late sending Baker Pasha to take over affairs; too late to relieve Tokar; too late to relieve Singat, and too late to think of getting together a force to catch Osman Digna after the English troops had beaten the tribesmen" (i. 173).

But he lets out bravely when he treats of "our bureaucracy":—

"Being often in the Intelligence Department, and often asked my opinion, I could see what was going on, and I must say I do not blame the local authorities, but those at home. Had General Graham been left to do what he considered was the best, there can be no doubt that he would have let General Stewart go across the desert; but, being tied to London by the wretched telegraph wire, the policy, if any, and all instructions were issued from there, and any decision that Admiral Hewett or General Graham might have come to had to be confirmed before they could take action" (i. 175).

Here, too, is valuable testimony:—

"I have been to places where no Egyptian official has ever been, and have been treated with the utmost courtesy and hospitality, and what every sheikh and every one requires seems to be—leave us alone, don't try and re-tax us" (ii. 286).

And we end with:—

"In God's name let us have a settlement of the question and try to make some reparation for the amount of blood-guiltiness we have on our hands, and by our future behaviour strive to wash away the stain that disgraces the name of England in her dealings with the Soudan during the last few years" (ii. 266).

This policy of meddle and muddle, this ineptest interference with local administration for party purposes, is sapping the very foundation of our prosperity. And I may repeat my assertion that if India in 1750-1800 had been connected with England by steamers and telegraph-wires we should now probably be holding, as in China, a triad of treaty-towns, say Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. A great empire must (or, in our case, should) have an imperial policy; and it would be well if we followed that of our prosperous rivals, the Russians. But for the incapable Lord Tomnoddys and Mr. Slocums of the "offices" to insist upon capable subordinates becoming mere channels for the conveyance of orders is a policy so premature that, like the grand sham termed "Free Trade," it is cutting its own throat; and England, we fear, is now living upon the capital of reputation won by her sons in times gone by.

Mr. Wylde, whose experience of the Red Sea region antedates, as we have seen, that of all his rivals, has his nostrum for medi-

\* With an Account of (the late Admiral) Sir William Hewett's Mission to King John of Abyssinia | By | A B Wylde | with Map | London, Remington 1888. Two vols. 8vo. pp. 447 and 314 (=pp. 661); vol. ii. containing 5 Appendices, (1) Red Sea Track, (2) Geographical Notes, (3) Hewett's Treaty, (4) Slave-Treaty with King John, and (5) Osman Digna's family-tree. For index, we have only detailed contents of chapters—quite insufficient. The map is no credit to Mr. Stanford's well-known establishment; the negligence of the work is a constant annoyance to the student. The mapper has not taken the trouble to read the sheets—an ever-increasing nuisance—and consequently there are two sets of spelling "Zullah" (i. 46, map Sula), "Ariphale" (*ibid.* Arifale), "Lardo" (i. 55 Lado), to mention only three. This useless appendage begins, as usual, with the Nile-mouth, and runs up to S. Lat. 3°, covering far too much ground. We want a mere sketch-map of North-Eastern Africa, with detailed plans of the Sawákin and Masawwah countries. The former has been supplied by the author; but the latter, showing the route to Adowa, is conspicuous for its absence.

aining the Eastern Soudan. He is wroth with the "don't-care-a-fig-for-the-merchant" policy of late years, and his healing draught would consist of three ingredients. His first is a minimum of armed occupation, a small Anglo-Indian force for base on the seaboard, and a dromedary-corps of tribesmen to replace those model poltroons, the Egyptian fellah-soldiers. The second is a Sawákin-Berber, R. R. (vol. ii., chap. v.), which would bring Khartúm within a fortnight of London; and his third is represented by the resuming of mercantile intercourse with the Soudanese. The prescription is practical, and adapted to the requirements of the case. But what would become of the "offices"? whence would come the K.C.B.-ships? and, alas! where would be the plunder? It is not to be wondered at that so versatile a young gentleman, with the peculiar habit of telling unsavoury truths, should earn such distinctive titles as "the Rebel," as "Wild by name and nature," and as "that damned Wyde"; and, lastly, that his opponents pooh-pooh him as a trader who would secure a monopoly of trade. Let me suggest that if they would thoroughly silence him they could not do better than send him as Her Majesty's consul for Masawwah to succeed Plowden and Cameron.

I have no intention of criticising these volumes as a learned book, or of noticing such lapses as "Usha" for 'Ushr = Aesclepias gigantea (i. 259), "Simoon" for *Simón* (ii. 103), "Ras Harfoon" for Háfún (ii. 233), "Blue Nile" for Blue River (ii. 134), and so forth. "Sawákin" is the old survival of the Portuguese *Suanquem*, corrupted from Sawákin = the settlements; the word, however, may be local and dialectal. Nor would it be fair to take away the reader's interest in a host of minor details: such are the writer's peculiar views of the present Khedive's character and conduct (i. 182); of King John the Abyssinian (ii. 11); of the Border-chief, Ras Aloula, the *bête noire* of the Italians, and withal a fine and thoroughbred specimen of his race; of Mr. Portal's mission to the highlands, and of the "greatest hero of the century"—Emin Pasha (i. 235). He corrects many popular errors concerning the redoubtable Osman Digna, whom the Egyptians term Dakanah (of the beard, the Hebrew Dgna, Degená, so famous in the Kabbalah). Of less important matters we have *slow lou* and *spring lou* (i. 297); how African cows are treated by the milkmaid (i. 293), and how camels should be treated (ii. 94); the unsexing of Egyptian soldiers (i. 330) and of native lads (ii. 250)—an abomination now transferred to Arabia; the order of Solomon (ii. 14); coal-scuttles in Sawákin, the missionary so justly hated throughout Abyssinia (ii. 3), and the wretched Sawákin clique (ii. 19); ending with valuable notices of the neighbouring hill-stations (ii. 283) and the Tokar delta, the Biládu 'l-Amín = Land of Security, as the tribesmen term it. And, now that Sawákin is still garrisoned by those ignoble Nilotes, and is being pounded by the "rebels" who, I repeat, are fighting for man's birthright of freedom, these volumes may contribute not a little to abate the ignorance of England, and excite the sympathy of a well-meaning, but not a well-instructed, public.

RICHARD F. BURTON.

*Old-Fashioned Roses.* By James Whitcomb Riley. (Longmans.)

THOUGH this book is printed and published in London, one is not long in discovering that these *Old-Fashioned Roses* have grown where morning-glories are to be plucked as well. I have not seen the *Century* "Bric-a-Brac" of late; but, if I mistake not, Mr. Riley is one of that pleasant "nest of singing-birds."

It can hardly, I think, be denied that the average of American books of verse is higher than ours. Great books are, perhaps, as rare in the one country as in the other; but, leaving those out of consideration, one may, it seems to me, more safely rely on the American rhymers than on the English for command of his vehicle. He more rarely afflicts us with such barbarities of amateurish versification and commonplace as those to which we are here all too sadly inured. At the same time, there is a family likeness noticeable in his work which is apt to grow monotonous, a certain sensuousness, or rather lushness, in his treatment, together with a careful daintiness of phrase, which, I suppose, we must attribute to discipleship of Keats and Mr Austin Dobson. This is even felt at times in growths otherwise indigenous, as in dialect poems; with the result that one often has a feeling in reading such that they are not a genuine dialect product, but translations from a more cultivated tongue.

All these remarks apply directly to Mr. Riley's charmingly printed and prettily attired volume. There is not a verse therein which is commonplace or other than in some way delightful, all bear witness to easy skill in versification, all are sensuous and dainty, and many of the best are in the Hoosier dialect. Mr. Riley's most winning of poems is one of the latter. I quote the first two verses:

"They ain't no style about 'em,  
And they're sort o' pale and faded;  
Yit the doorway here, without 'em,  
Would be lonesome, and shaded  
With a good 'cal blacker shadder  
Than the mornin'-glories makes,  
And the sunshine would look sadder  
For their good old-fashion' sakes.  
"I like 'em 'cause they kind o'  
Sort o' make a feller like 'em;  
And I tell you, when I find a  
Bunch out whur the sun kin strike 'em,  
It allus sets me thinkin'  
O' the ones 'at used to grow,  
'And peek in thro' the chinikin'  
O' the cabin, don't you know."

But if the seal of his tribe be upon him, Mr. Riley has none the less many fine individual qualities which are not to be derived. His fancy is quite exceptionally abundant, and there are in his work touches of that higher quality of imagination not so frequent in his school. There is, moreover, much humanity and quaint humour in his poems; and he reaches our hearts no less frequently than he charms our aesthetic sense. In "Griggsby's Station," for instance, how touching is the Hoosier parallel of Bridget Elia's famous regret!

"What's in all this grand life and high situation,  
And nary pink nor hollyhawk bloomin' at the  
door?—  
Let's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—  
Back where we use to be so happy and so  
pore!"

And how the old childhood's creepiness comes over one as we listen to "Little Orphant

Annie's" tales of "the gobble-uns 'at gits you, Ef you Don't Watch Out!":

"An' little Orphant Annie says, when the blaze is  
blue,  
An' the lampwick sputters, an' the wind goes  
woo-oo!  
An' you-hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is  
gray  
An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched  
away—  
You better mind yer parents, and yer teachers  
fond and dear,  
An' churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the  
orphant's tear,  
An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all  
about,  
Er the gobble-uns'll git you  
Ef you  
Don't  
Watch  
Out!"

The section of Hoosier poems at the end of the volume, from which these quotations are made, attracts me most, but I think it can only be from personal preference; for the qualities discovered therein are no less manifest in the earlier pages. "An Old Sweetheart of Mine" is a delightful *ruse*, for the old sweetheart on the memory of whom the poet muses in ten verses, proves, in the eleventh, to be none other than his wife, whose "living presence" he greets as the poem closes. It is, unfortunately, too long to quote—a quality in the present case nothing but grateful to the reader, though tantalising to the reviewer. The choice of "the favourite" in any pleasant volume is always tiresome, and it seems especially so here. It might be a longer one if space permitted, but one can hardly do wrong in quoting "A Life-Lesson":

"There! little girl; don't cry!  
They have broken your doll, I know;  
And your tea-set blue,  
And your play-house, too,  
Are things of the long ago;  
But childish troubles will soon pass by.  
There! little girl; don't cry!  
"There! little girl; don't cry!  
They have broken your slate, I know;  
And the glad, wild ways  
Of your school-girl days  
Are things of the long ago;  
But life and love will soon come by.  
There! little girl; don't cry!  
"There! little girl; don't cry!  
They have broken your heart, I know;  
And the rainbow gleams  
Of your youthful dreams  
Are things of the long ago;  
But Heaven holds all for which you sigh.  
There! little girl; don't cry!"

Surely this is very beautiful, and yet when, on another page, one sees "The Little White Hearse" go "glimmering by," one feels that that should have been quoted; and, indeed, the last verse shall be:

"As the little white hearse went glimmering by—  
A man looked out of a window dim,  
And his cheeks were wet and his heart was dry,  
For a dead child even were dear to him!  
And he thought of his empty life, and said:  
'Loveless alive, and loveless dead—  
Nor wife or child in earth or sky!'"  
As the little white hearse went glimmering by."

I have given no sample of Mr. Riley's "art-poems"—those of the old gold and apple-blossom type I mean—because, beautiful as they are, they have, for the most part, that family-likeness referred to above; and I preferred to utilise the space at my disposal in exhibiting his more individual qualities.