NEW PUBLICATIONS.

AFRICAN TRAVEL.

THE WILD TRIBES OF THE SOUDAN; AN ACCOUNT OF TRAVEL AND SPORT CHIEFLY IN THE BASÉ COUNTRY. By F. L. JAMES, M. S., F. R. G. S. New-York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 8vo, pp. 292.

Books of African travel are numerous; but if any apology were needed for adding another to the list, the fact that this work deals with a region and people very little known and is plainly the fruit of much keen observation, would supply sufficient excuse. Mr. James, the author, is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, who finds scientific pleasure in travel which is undertaken more for the sake of the hunter's sport than of exploration. His narrative is plain and unpretending, but none the less attractive on that account, and is often relieved by a pleasant vein of humor. The book is the record of three winters' experiences among the Basé, or Kunama tribe inhabiting the Soudan, which lies toward the western portion of the track known vaguely in the geographies as Nubia.

The Basé tribe is the most uncivilized to be found in that part of Africa. They are much nearer the pure negro type, both in color and other characteristics, than their neighbors. The only travellers that preceded Mr. James into this country had been surprised and killed by the Basé, who have always had the reputation of being treacherous. Under these circumstances, it required some courage to penetrate that region, especially as all the warnings which came to the party were against the duplicity of the natives. But the narrative shows that there was little trouble when a little discretion and diplomacy served to convince the Basé that they came with peaceable intentions. The book is illustrated with about forty engravings from photographs taken by Mr. William James, the author's brother. These add greatly to its interest by reproducing striking features of the scenery and the life in this portion of Africa.

The start for the interior was made from Sonakim on the Red Sea. On the way the party, which consisted of seven, attended by about the same number of servants, came across several bands of pilgrims returning from Mecca. Mr. James narrates several strange instances of the barbarous indifference to suffering to be found among the people:

Among the Takrooris who had joined us soon after leaving the coast, were two women, one of whom was rather lame. As she could not well trudge along with the rest of the party, they simply left her behind to die in the desert; although her husband was with her, it appeared that he was perfectly satisfied to do so. Unfortunately we knew nothing of it, until so long after she had been left behind that it was impossible and quite useless to send after her. She could quite well have ridden on one of our camels; but such is the callousness to suffering, and total disregard of life, among these people, that no one of the drivers had thought of asking her to do so.

A similar event took place when we were crossing the Great Nubian Desert from Korosko, four years before; then it was one of the camel-drivers that had been left behind to die. We knew nothing of it for several days after; and, when we expressed our horror at what had happened, they considered they had behaved in a really generous manner by leaving him a small quantity of water and *d'harra*-flour.

At Cassala they enjoyed the hospitality of the Governor in this wise:

One evening we dined with the Governor, in Turkish fashion, eating with our fingers instead of using knives and forks,—a not very delectable form of entertainment. The dinner was served on a large brass tray placed on a circular table, round which all sat, including some Egyptian officers who had just arrived after a long march, and apparently had not fed for a considerable time. Behind us, immovable as statues, and holding lamps above their heads, were some five or six White Nile slaves. The sweet and meat courses alternated throughout dinner, a rather trying ordeal for the European palate; but on the slightest symptom of flagging on our part, the hospitable Bey immediately insisted that we did not like our fare, upon which we were obliged to renew our efforts. We were provided with an immense number of dishes, twenty-five courses all told, including the inevitable sheep roasted whole, head and all. Once, when assisting at a similar entertainment, the attentive host gouged the sheep's eye out with his thumb and finger, and was anxious to put it in my brother's mouth, a mark of attention he had some difficulty in resisting.

The first Basé encountered were in great terror of the invaders and fled at their approach. They were much blacker than the Arabs even up to that time, had very negro-like features, and their sole clothing consisted of a piece of skin fastened round the waist. They not only inspired terror in the hearts of their neighbors, but were evidently in dread of every one else. They have a curious method of resting, quite common among many of the tribes on the White Nile. They place the sole of the right foot against the left knee, "a mode of repose which to a European seems most uncomfortable and almost impossible." Mr. James gives a picture of two Basé, calmly standing like storks, and says that the men "had no idea at the time that they were being taken, so that position is a perfectly natural one." The women were particularly shy. "All wore beads and cowrie shells, if they had little else; a few wore anklets made of the skin of some wild animal; one carried a skin cross-belt." The party were generous with little gifts, in order to conciliate the people. "I offered one woman some needles and thread; a gift she declined, saying very sorrowfully that they were useless to her, as she had no clothes." Her remark was almost literally true. The description given of the eagerness of the Basé to swoop down like vultures upon any prey of the hunters, tearing the body in pieces, devouring all parts with equal relish, and cleaning the bones as smoothly as jackals might have done, shows a real savage type.

It is impossible, of course, to follow the journey in detail. A few interesting incidents and observations may be quoted. Mr. James describes the intense heat in which he found himself after stalking an ostrich one day. His clothes were literally saturated with perspiration, and he sat under the shade of a tree while he took them off and dried them in the sun. He continues:

We never felt any ill effects from the heat, although constantly taking violent exercise during the hottest hours of the day; in fact, we were always better when camping out, shooting in the wilds, than when stopping in towns where there was very little inducement to take exercise. Taking plenty of exercise is the only way to keep well in a very hot climate. Although we never feared the sun, we always treated it with proper respect; our pith helmets were the very thickest that could be bought; mine, an immensely thick one, I had got four years previously at Benares, served me for two winters in the Soudan. We wore besides, down our spines thick pads of cotton wadding quilted, a good inch or more thick; these were buttoned into our coats.

The days were intensely hot, and very dry. I have seen as many as thirty-five degrees difference between the wet and dry bulb; for some hours every day the thermometer would range from 85° to 95° in the shade, usually nearer the latter than the former temperature. I had a thermometer made expressly by Casella, of Holborn, for testing the heat of the sun's rays, which, like all my thermometers, had been corrected at Kew; and I have seen it rise during the day to 164° Fahrenheit, the usual maximum being from 150° to 158°. The nights were very cold, especially in the early mornings. After dinner in the Mareb, we frequently liked to sit round a blazing fire. About dawn I have seen the thermometer go down to 37°, and night after night it would descend to 42° or 50°. We found these cold nights most agreeable, bracing us up as they did to endure the heat of the day. The dews were frequently so heavy that the ground in the morning would be as wet as though it had been raining heavily; it was impossible to know when to expect them, as the night after one, and in the same place, it would perhaps be quite dry.

Of the attractions of the Basé country to a sportsman, Mr. James says:

A country may fairly lay claim to being considered a gamey one, where elephants, rhinoceri, buffaloes, giraffes and ostriches are all seen on the same day, and where, in addition, are found seven or eight varieties of antelopes, wild boars (or rather wart-hogs), to say nothing of lions and panthers, which, though scarce in that particular part at the time of our visit, were nevertheless to be occasionally found. As for birds, there were swarms of guinea-fowl, partridges, pigeons and doves, and many birds of brilliant plumage, if any one cared to collect them. Only once did any of us obtain shots at ostriches, and then at such tremendously long ranges that it was, practically speaking, almost useless to fire. They invariably kept to the open, and were so extremely wary that we could never approach unperceived.

An interesting picture is drawn of the difficulties of caring for herds in this country of scarce water. Mr. James is near Toadelook, near the headwaters of the River Mareb. He says:

I never saw anything like the flocks and herds that were in the country. Cattle, sheep and goats were there in thousands. We were told there were over five thousand head of cattle alone, and the number of sheep and goats must have been far greater. In a country like this, the labor of watering these large flocks and herds is very great. Wells have to be dug in the bed of the *khor*, often to the depth of from ten to twenty feet, with the hands, for they possess no such implements as spades; and to prevent the soft sand from falling in, they have to be lined with boughs, palm-leaves, etc. When the wells are finished, a quantity of dry clay is brought from the banks; and after being carefully kneaded and puddled, it is finally made into huge basins with raised sides, much resembling sponge-baths. These basins are, of course, made at the mouth of the wells and filled with water. When the cattle and goats arrive, instead of rushing immediately in a body to quench their thirst, which would of course result in the trampling-down and destruction of these clay drinking-troughs, the animals are trained to approach the water in turn, no more being allowed to go at a time than can conveniently drink together. It was a most curious and interesting sight to watch; and, if I had not seen it with my own eyes, I should be slow to believe that these vast herds could be kept under such control. The Arab shepherds, instead of driving, "lead their flocks"; and all carry the proverbial crook, which in their case is used to shake down the dry pods of the mimosa, and the fruit of the *hedleek* and *nebbuk* trees, of all of which the sheep and goats are very fond.

The Basé have no religion and no God, and yet are not without customs indicating a belief in a future state of some kind. One custom narrated by a sheik, tending to show this, resembles that of the North American Indians in placing the weapons of the dead warrior in his grave, together with food for his journey to the happy hunting grounds. When a Basé dies his wife, or some other relative, places the fruit of the basket-tree or tobacco, or something of which he was fond, upon his tomb. If the wind carries it away, or it disappears through some human agency, they believe that the dead man has consumed it and perhaps shared it with his neighbors in the surrounding tombs. If these offerings disappear too rapidly, it may give rise to domestic dissensions among the surviving relatives of those buried near together. It will be charged that some are neglecting to provide for their dead relatives, and their neighbors in the tombs are compelled to take care of them.

Mr. James formed the impression that the Basé were the remnant of the original inhabitants of the country, being settled there before the Arabs came over from Arabia. His account of a people so little known will be found interesting and valuable.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD—MAGAZINES—MISCELLANEOUS.

[FROM THE REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]
LONDON, December 1.

Mrs. Lynn Linton has republished in two octavo volumes (Bentley & Son) the Social Essays which during many years past she has contributed to *The Saturday Review*. The one which gives its name to these volumes is one of the most successful essays of modern times, The Girl of the Period. The stir which that stinging satire made at the time has not yet been forgotten, nor is it forgotten how hotly the question of its authorship was debated. Mrs. Linton tells us in her Preface that she was twice introduced to the writer of The Girl of the Period. "The first time he was a clergyman who had boldly told my friends that he had written the paper; the second, she was a lady of rank well known in London society, and to this hour believed by her own circle to have written this and other of the articles included in the present collection." And yet it was an article, as Mrs. Linton truly says, which was much disliked by many to whom women were the Sacred Sex, above criticism and beyond rebuke; and many of her friends denounced it as a libel and an untruth. It is a pity that Mrs. Linton does not give us the dates when this and the other essays were published. The truthfulness of the picture depends on the time when it was painted, if, indeed, there were ever a time when it was true. Society, it is thought, has been going of late years from bad to worse; a certain section of society, if not society in general. And yet in reading over this too famous essay I am disposed to think it as much too highly colored as the face of the girl it is supposed to depict. There were and are such girls, and they are of the period, but they do not represent the period. They are not types; they are not the majority. Possibly Mrs. Linton's sweeping censure on them did something to diminish their number.

There are other essays in these volumes quite as well worth reading over as The Girl of the Period, —Modern Mothers, The Epicene Sex, The Shrieking Sisterhood, and many another whose title seems of yesterday. Mrs. Linton declares herself now more than ever convinced that she has struck the right chord of condemnation, and advocated the best virtues and most valuable characteristics of women. To a great extent she is perfectly right, and the service she has done in ridiculing the eccentricities of the modern strong-minded woman in pursuit of what she calls her rights deserves a hearty acknowledgment. Says Mrs. Linton:

One of the modern phases of womanhood—hard, unloving, mercenary, ambitious, without domestic faculty and devoid of healthy natural instincts,—is still to me a pitiable mistake and a grave national disaster. And I think now as I thought when I wrote these papers, that a public and professional life for women is incompatible with the discharge of their highest duties, or the cultivation of their noblest qualities. I think now, as I thought then, that the sphere of human action is determined by the fact of sex, and that there does exist both natural limitation and natural direction. This creed, which summarizes all that I have said *in extenso*, I repeat with emphasis, and maintain with the conviction of long years of experience.

There is no lack of courage or of sincerity in that. There is possibly, as there is in the essays, too much of that emphasis which mere men sometimes stigmatize as feminine, and which is, whether feminine or masculine, a rhetorical blemish. But whatever the blemishes, these essays will still be found spicy enough to please the most jaded palate. Most of them are still readable; and many of them are sparkling and original in thought and treatment.

It has been remarked before now that the magazines are usurping a function which used to be performed in a different way. Men rush to them as a ready and sure way of reaching an audience on any urgent question of the day. The Housing of the Poor question is one of the most striking instances of this new tendency toward setting up a Magazine Parliament. I have said all I need say on these articles in another letter, except that I omitted to speak of Miss Octavia Hill's contribution as it deserved. That energetic lady is always ready with new suggestions as she is with faithful work in the most disagreeable fields, and nothing she has to say can well be neglected.

Not quite in the same category comes the performance of Mr. Alfred Austen. The very oddest of all the remedies for misery yet suggested is his, in *The National Review* for December. He discourses, in that cock-sure and *ex cathedra* manner which is his specialty on Rich Men's Dwellings, explaining that he means to include under this title rich men's expenditure, their comforts, their luxury, their ostentation, in a word their general manner of living. He declares "the principal cause" of the existing social discontent to be not so much the poverty of the poor or the limited wages of the industrious, as the extraordinary and ever-waxing splendor of the rich and the astounding ostentation of the idle. And what he proposes is that a considerable number of the leaders of English society should form themselves into a "Company of Wise and Reasonable Men," should set their faces against profuse expenditure, frown upon unbridled luxury and vulgar and offensive ostentation, and impose a return to simpler and nobler ways upon their wives, their daughters, their sons, and all who are dependent on them. A saving would be the result and a surplus, and with this surplus of the Company of Wise and Reasonable Men would come the means of abolishing rookeries, buying land, and erecting dwellings to be let to laborers and artisans at a reasonable and yet sufficiently remunerative rate. And so should the interference of the State and Government Loans and all dangerous experiments in State Socialism become unnecessary. In short, there is to be a New Atlantis. Mr. Ruskin had very much the same rose-colored views when he founded the St. George's Society some ten years ago. But where is the St. George's Society? What has it done? What ever came of the splendid gifts Mr. Ruskin himself made to his own Utopia? Mr. Alfred Austen's name is all but unknown to the world in which Mr. Ruskin's had been honored long before he made his proposal. He is, however, a writer on a leading Conservative journal, and able to secure attention for whatever views he holds.

Mr. F. Marion Crawford's new novel, "To Leeward," appears to-day in two crown 8vo, volumes with the imprint of "Chapman & Hall, Limited," and the extremely misleading date 1884. The habit of ante-dating books is one which seems to be increasing among publishers, and one against which everybody with a pen in his hand should protest. So may he against that other habit, also exemplified here, of printing advertisements on the blank page fronting the title of the book; which it disfigures and from which it nevertheless cannot be torn out because the fly-title is on the same side. Mr. Crawford dedicates his present story affectionately, "To my uncle, Samuel Ward, of New-York."

I asked a bookseller lately, the most intelligent and honest of his profession, how the so-called *editions de luxe* were prospering. "Well," said he, "I should be glad to sell you the Fielding at cost price; any of the others at half price." What this means may be seen from a cursory comparison of nominal and real prices. The Dickens, for instance, was published at $150. It was quoted at $225. It cost the bookseller, I think, a little over $100. And he is now ready—nay, he would be glad—to sell it for a little over $50. And so comes to an end several ill-judged bookmaking speculations.

Apropos of prices, I see M. Gonse's "L'Art Japanais" advertised in New-York at $60 for copies on ordinary paper, $120 for copies on Japanese paper; of which latter the French publisher gives his customers to understand that but 100 copies in all have been printed for sale. The price of this book in Paris is 200 francs. With the discount the New-York importer pays certainly not more than $150 francs, or $30. The duty is 25 per cent, making the cost $37 50; leaving to him a profit of $22 50, or, if we deduct freight and other expenses, of $20, or some 60 per cent. On the Japanese paper copies it would be still more. Truly the business of book importing in New-York is one of those that leads to fortune if not to fame. A still more striking instance is perhaps supplied by the American importer of Sir William Stirling Maxwell's "Don John of Austria." Messrs. Longmans publish this book at two guineas. It costs the importer in London about $7. Duty and expenses would hardly bring the cost up to $10, but I see it advertised in New-York at $20. If the American buyer likes to pay such prices I have not a word to say. But I do assure him that by sending to an agent in London he can get books much cheaper. Only he would have to choose his agent with discretion.

The sale of the Beckford Library came to a close yesterday, the final portion having taken but four days to dispose of, and realizing £6,843. The sum received for the whole is £73,551. Interest in the sale has been kept up throughout, but there was nothing in this last portion to rival the attractions of the earlier divisions. Fine bindings and the fine condition of most of the books were remarkable, but few great prices for single volumes were obtained. The highest I have noticed was £345 for the "Vigilles des Morts, one of Verard's books printed on vellum, without date but before 1500, illuminated with thirty brilliant full-page miniatures and bound, or said to be bound, by Derome.

Mr. Pinero, I hear, feels himself so much age grieved by Mr. Labouchere's criticism in *Truth*, on his new play, that he intends to bring an action of libel against him. If he is wise he will do nothing of the kind, but he is probably too angry to be wise. Mr. Labouchere's language is certainly not wanting in plainness. He heads his article "a Comedy of Cads," and speaks of Mr. Pinero as "having been recently detected in an act of unblushing plagiarism, and painfully brought to book for pilfering the wares of a brother tradesman." This is libellous enough in the legal sense of the word. But what a pretty scene there would be in court if Mr. Labouchere should undertake, as he certainly would, to justify his charge! As for the criticism on "Lords and Commons," it is of the kind known as slashing. "Whenever Mr. Pinero has bored the audience to death with his character sketches, he calls on Mrs. Bernard Beere to act a bit, and so pull down the curtain with effect." And the critic winds up with the remark, which one hears on all sides, that if the play succeeds it will be due to the actress, "who by sheer courage forces to the front one of the least sympathetic characters in a wholly unsympathetic play." Mr. Pinero may not like this kind of criticism, nor can he be pleased at hearing a hiss from the stalls. But is a man who hisses to be sued for libel? And if he is, will it make Mr. Pinero's play more popular?

G. W. S.

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