

able and daring man of action—as diplomat, administrator, organiser, leader. We confess we have found our best evidence that he was not merely an efficient second-rate man in his chosen walk of life, but likely to prove a first rate man, in the discovery from this volume that he possessed in a remarkable degree the faculty for expression, and was endowed with some of the best elements of the so-called literary temperament. Mr. Rennell Rodd—who, by the way, is himself a notable instance of the same blend of qualities—speaks of him as “one whose feeling for literary style was considerable;” and this fragmentary narrative, though it is printed in its first rough draft without that finishing touch which the editor says Sir Gerald would have been sure to have given it, amply bears out that statement. The gift it displays is not of the highest order; but still it is high, and indicative of better possibilities. Passages of graphic and animated description, touches of humor, touches of genuine poetry, little glimpses of strong human feeling—these alternate with passages of statesmanlike reflection expressed with a lucidity and closeness characteristic of the clarity of the writer’s thought; and the whole is infused with that impalpable tone, humane, just and chivalrous, which we can only describe as the essential belonging of a gentleman, and which is worthy of remark because it is so notoriously wanting in certain recent books of African travel. A narrative is thus constructed which, so far as it goes—and it stops halfway on its journey—it is a lively pleasure to read.

For a sample of the style, here is a bright passage instinct with feeling for beauty describing the column on its march—a picture which Sir Gerald says would have compensated them for many of the miseries of the journey: “The long line of white-clad, black-skinned porters, bearing on their heads loads of every color, size and shape slowly winds in single file along the narrow path like a brilliant and gigantic serpent, now almost dazzling to look upon under the rays of the morning sun, now gliding in dark and mysterious silence through the cool shade of a wooded valley. All around the richly clothed downs and park-like glades of pasture are dotted with clumps of mimosa thorns, interspersed with flowering shrubs of every hue, which shine like rubies and turquoises against the dark and massive background of some gigantic mango-tree; the fan-palm thrusts its bristling head high into the air; the frowning severity of the black rocks, which here and there break through the grassy covering of the hills, is softened by groves of graceful cocoa-nut palms, to whose swaying stems cling masses of the most lovely flowering orchids; while the palms, in their turn, are compelled to bend their heads in unceasing homage before the ponderous strength of the mighty baobab, which on every eminence displays a bloated and unwieldy trunk, and shaking itself clear from the festoons of creepers that try as in mockery to hide the ungainly nakedness, wildly stretches to heaven its distorted, gnarled, and leafless arms in a perpetual agony of despairing malevolence.”

The first glimpse of Kilimanjaro, the mighty giant of East Africa, whose double peaks tower 21,000 feet above the sea level, is described in a piece of writing for which we must also make room. The bards of Vigo Street might be challenged, in presence of a similar experience, to render it for us more poetically than this man of politics and statecraft. It was late in the afternoon;

“Before us opened an apparently endless vista of bold, rugged mountains piled up one behind the other till their outlines were lost in the red mist of the distance. It was with some disappointment that we selected the highest of these as being Kilimanjaro, and strove to make ourselves feel awestruck and impressed with the grandeur of this monarch of a continent. But, as though the insult of this mistaken identity were too great to be borne any longer, suddenly, just as the sun began to touch the broken line of the horizon, a hitherto imperceptible mist was rolled aside, as a curtain might be drawn back, and high above the highest of those ridges towered a gleaming mass of red-tinted snow and black rock. Frowning down upon the now humbled mountains around him, as though to reproprove them for daring thus to depreciate his majesty, the snow-clad tyrant determined to show himself in his best aspect. Against his gleaming shoulder the setting sun nestled closer and closer; above and on either side dense masses of cloud enclosed the picture, the bold, irregular outlines of their inward edges gleaming with scarlet, purple and gold, until the snow of the twin-peak caught the reflection and transformed itself into the richest mantle of brilliant velvet and satin. Near us not a sound was heard; all Nature was silent, the tongue of even a Rifle Brigade subaltern was stilled. Spellbound we gazed as, slowly tenderly, an imperceptible veil of mist was drawn before the face of the glory, gently and unwillingly shrouding it as an Eastern Aphrodite dims her beauty with the transparent yasmak; darker, heavier, grew the veil, until we gazed, as before, into a confused sea of grey mist and black peaks in the middle distance. Silently, and with a sigh of relief from extreme tension, we turned away and wondered, Was it real, this which we had seen?”

Further examples of Sir Gerald Portal’s powers as a writer we have not room to quote. But if the reader possess the book, he may be recommended to look at the imaginative passage describing a midnight raid of the Masai (page 66); the description of a ghastly but instructive exhibition of primal savagery at the cutting up of a dead rhinoceros (page 69), with the well-told humorous incident which precedes it; the account of a weird night march through the desert (page 21); and such lighter pictures as the visit of some splendid young warriors of the Masai tribe, the terror of east Africa, to the camp, with their lordly bearings, their bold, gay, aristocratic manners, their superb caparisoning, and their fine barbaric contempt for the little half-civilized scrubs of Zanzibari infantry-men. Every passage, too, where the writer attempts to enter the native mind is worth reading, especially those excellent pages in the eighth chapter, in which he analyses the deceptive and contradictory character of the Waganda, for which he finds a parallel in the deceptive and contradictory landscapes and climate of their country. No African traveller has with simpler means managed to convey a stronger sense of the mystery of that God-forgotten continent, with its benighted, and yet not despicable races, and its hopeless, miasmatic wastes whose menace of inevitable disease seems to deride, in spite of all his powers, the advance of the white man. Sometimes the sense of mystery is given by some unexpected, startling incident breaking across the narrative; some incident typical of the place and of its life for countless ages since primeval man has been war-

ring for existence with the wild beasts and with his own kind. It is dawn upon the mountain side, the hills wrapped in a thick Scotch mist; Portal, far ahead of the column, is alone with his boy seeking to stalk game. Suddenly there is a rift in the mist, and a sight is disclosed which causes them to drop in their tracks as though they were shot, and lie prone on their stomachs in the grass. A long file of natives was crossing the hillside less than a quarter of a mile ahead at right angles with their path.

“A single glance showed us that this was no peaceful trading party; no women were visible, no sheep or goats, nobody carried a load, but we clearly saw that every man was fully armed; bright blades flashed through the mist, a long bow was in every right hand, and a quiver full of poisoned arrows hung at every back. Swiftly and silently these warriors, or mischief bent, defiled before us as we crouched on the plain; 550 men we counted, and then the long procession passed out of sight around the shoulder of a hill.”

When they had disappeared, no sooner did Portal and his boy rise to their feet than their nerves received another shock. At less than thirty paces from them, flat on their stomachs as they had been, watching them as they had been watching the native war party, were three lions, whose tales were wickedly threshing down the grass behind them as they appeared to be weighing the question of attack and retreat. There is Africa, is it not, and the earliest life of man! Sometimes the sense of mystery is suggested by the gloom which the writer feels at the thought of the antiquity of the land—geologically, Uganda is the oldest spot in the world—its rocks of the archaic period thrusting their grey, weather-beaten heads above the surface, reproachfully conveying to the traveller an oppressive sense of the æons during which they have been “silent witnesses of innumerable and untold deeds of nameless horror.”

As for Uganda itself, Sir Gerald Portal’s word for it is “a whited sepulchre”; and he does not conceal his opinion, but lets it frequently be seen that the worst of its scourges has been the white man, the recent white man with his machine guns and his “punitive expeditions.”—*The Speaker*.

FRA CUPERTINO’S PENANCE.

The spring-time was bringing warm weather to southern Italy. Fra Cupertino drew a blue cotton handkerchief from his sleeve and wiped the broad tonsure shaven on his head, as he thought of climbing all the way up to his convent on the hill.

He was a Capuchin friar out for the *questua*; and it would soon be time for him to return home if his brethren were to have any bread for their dinner.

He had been very successful with his begging that morning. From further up in the same sleeve he drew out a snuff-box and took a great pinch, now that he thought it over. Besides the row of little hard loaves, which the baker had thrust into the wallet flung over his shoulder, he had cod-fish, and a few oranges, and a great lump of goats’-milk cheese. With a sigh of content he carefully put back the snuff-box, which had also been replenished by the charity of the faithful, into his capacious sleeve, and secured it in its place with the handkerchief. Like a good friar, he had no pockets in his gown of coarse brown cloth.

He turned into another street, intending