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Literature.

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ETHIOPIA.

From the various circumstances of our day, the impression is powerfully made upon intelligent men in Europe, that some extraordinary change is about to take place in the general condition of mankind. A new ardour of human intercourse seems to be spreading through all nations. Europe has laid aside her perpetual wars, and seems to be assuming a habit of peace. Even France, hitherto the most belligerent of European nations, is evidently abandoning the passion for conquest, and beginning to exert her fine powers in the cultivation of commerce. All the nations of Europe are either following her example, or sending out Colonies of greater or less magnitude, to fill the wild portions of the world. Religions hitherto utterly neglected, and even scarcely known, are becoming objects of enlightened regard; and mankind, in every quarter, is approaching, with greater or less speed, to that combined interest and mutual intercourse which are the first steps to the true possession of the globe.

It is remarkable that Africa, one of the largest and most fertile portions of the globe, remains one of the least known. Furnishing materials of commerce which have been objects of universal desire since the deluge—gold, gems, ivory, fragrant gums, and spices—it has still remained almost untraversed by the European foot, except along its coast. It has been circumnavigated by the ships of every European nation; its slave trade has divided its profits and its pollutions among the chief nations of the eastern and western worlds; and yet, to this hour, there are regions of Africa, probably amounting to half its bulk, and possessing kingdoms of the size of France and Spain, of which Europe has no more heard than of the kingdoms of the planet Jupiter. The extent of Africa is enormous:—5000 miles in length, 4600 in breadth, it forms nearly a square of 13,430,000 square miles! the chief part solid ground; for we know of no Mediterranean to break its continuity—no mighty reservoir for the waters of its hills—and scarcely more than the Niger and the Nile for the means of penetrating any large portion of this huge continent.

On the afternoon of a sultry day in April, Major Harris, with his gallant and scientific associates, embarked on board the East India Company's steamship Auckland, in the harbour of Bombay, on their voyage to the kingdom of Shoa, in Southern Abyssinia, in the year 1841. The steam frigate pursued her way prosperously through the waters, and on the ninth day was within sight of Cape Aden, after a voyage of 4680 miles. The Cape, named by the natives Jebel Shemshan, rises nearly 1800 feet above the ocean, is frequently capped with clouds, a wild and fissured mass of rock, and evidently intended by nature for one of those great beacons which announce the approach to an inland sea. On rounding the Cape, the British eye was delighted with the sight of the Red Sea squadron, riding at anchor within the noble bay. The arrival of the frigate also caused a sensation on the shore; and Major Harris happily describes the feelings with which a new arrival is hailed by the British garrison on that dreary spot, their only excitement being the periodical visits of the packets between Suez and Bombay. In the dead of the night a blue light shoots up in the offing. It is answered by the illumination of the block ship, then the thunder of her guns is heard, then, as she nears the shore, the flapping of her paddles is heard through the silence, then the spectral lantern appears at the mast-head, and then she rushes to her anchorage, leaving in her wake a long phosphoric train.

The coast of Arabia has no claims to the picturesque: all its charms, like those of the oyster, lie within the roughest of possible shells. Its first aspect resembles heaps of the cinders of a glass-house—a building whose heat seems to be fully realised by the temperature of this fearful place. England has a resident there, Captain Haynes, named as political agent. That any human being, who could exist in any other place, would remain in Aden, is one of the wonders of human nature. An officer, of course, must go wherever he is sent; but such is the innate love for a post, that if this gallant and intelligent person were roasted to death, as might happen in one of the coolest days of the Ethiopian summer, there would be a thousand applications before a month was over, to the Foreign Office, for the honour of being carbonated on the rocks of Aden.

Aden's reputation for barrenness is an old one—"Aden," says Ben Batuta of Tangiers, "is situate upon the sea-shore; a large city without either seed, water, or tree." This was written five hundred years ago; yet the ruins of fortifications and watch-towers along the rocks, show that even this human oven was the object of cupidity in earlier times; and the British guns bristling among the precipices, show that the desire is undecayed even in our philosophic age.

The Arab is still the prominent person among the native population of this territory. Major Harris describes him well. The bronzed and sunburnt visage, surrounded by long matted locks of raven hair; the slender but wiry and active frame, and the energetic gait and manner, proclaimed the untameable descendant of Ishmael. He nimbly mounts the crupper of his now unladen dromedary, and at a trot moves down the bazar. A checked kerchief round his brows, and a kilt of dark blue calico round his frame, comprise his slender costume. His arms have been deposited outside the Turkish wall; and as he looks back, his meagre, ferocious aspect, flanked by that tangled web of hair, stamps him the roving tenant of the desert. It is curious to find in this remote country a custom similar to that of the fiery cross, which in old times summoned the Celtic tribes to arms. On the alarm of invasion, a branch, torn by the priest from the *nebek*, (a tree bearing a fruit like the Siberian crab,) is lighted in the fire, the flame is then quenched in the blood of a newly slaughtered ram. It is then sent forth with a messenger to the nearest clan. Thus, great numbers are assembled with remarkable promptitude. In the invasion under Ibrahim Pacha, sixteen thousand of

these wild warriors were assembled from one tribe. They crept into the Egyptian camp by night, and, using only their daggers, made such formidable slaughter, that the Pasha was glad to escape by a precipitate retreat.

The Jews form an important part of the population, as artizans and manufacturers. Feeling the natural veneration for the Chosen People in all their misfortunes, and convinced that the time will come when those misfortunes will be obliterated, it is highly gratifying to find, that even in this place of their ancient sufferings they are beginning to feel the benefit of British protection. Hitherto, through their indefatigable industry, having acquired opulence in Arabia as elsewhere, they were afraid either to display or to enjoy it; but now, under the protection of the British flag, they not merely enjoy their wealth, but they publicly practise the rites of their religion. Stone slabs with Hebrew inscriptions mark the place of their dead. They have schools for the education of their children; and their men and women, arrayed in their holiday apparel, sit fearlessly in the synagogue, and listen to the reading of the law and the prophets, as of old. It is a great source of gratification to the philanthropist to find, that wherever England extends her power, industry, commerce and peace, are the natural result. Aden, barren as the soil is, is evidently approaching to a prosperity which it never possessed, even in its most flourishing days. Emigrants from Yeman, and from both shores of the Red Sea, are daily crowding within the walls, through the security which they offer against native oppression. In the short space of three years, the population has risen to twenty thousand souls. Substantial dwellings are rising up in every quarter, and at all the adjacent ports hundreds of native merchants are only waiting the erection of permanent fortifications, in token of our intending to remain, to flock under the guns with their families and wealth. The opinion of this intelligent writer is, that Aden, as a free port, whilst she pours wealth into a now impoverished land, must ere long become the queen of the adjacent seas, and rank amongst the most useful dependencies of the British crown.

The mission having remained some time at Aden, to purchase horses and stores, sailed on the 15th May, and, on losing sight of Aden, the members of the mission characteristically took the "Pilgrims' vow" not to shave until their return.

The progress to the interior from the port of Tajura, led them over immense ranges of basaltic cliffs, where the heat of the sun was felt with an intensity scarcely conceivable by European feelings. In this land of fire, the road skirting the base of a barren range covered with heaps of lava blocks, and its foot marked by piles of stones, the memorials of deeds of blood, the lofty conical peak of Jebel Secaro rose in sight, and not long afterwards the far-famed Lake Assad, surrounded by its dancing mirage, was seen sparkling at its base.

One of the advantages of continental travel has been long since said to be its teaching us how many comfortable things we enjoy at home; and it appears that no Englishman can comprehend the value of that despised fluid, fresh water, until he has left the precincts of his own fortunate land; but it is in Africa, and peculiarly in this Abyssinian high road, that the value of a draught of spring water is to be especially estimated. "Since leaving the shores of India," says Major Harris, "the party had gradually been in training towards a disregard of dirty water. On board a ship of any description, the fluid is seldom very clear or very plentiful. At Cape Aden, there was little perceptible difference between the sea water and the land water. At Tajura, the beverage obtainable was far from being improved in quality by the taint of the new skins in which it was transferred from the only well; and now, in the very heart of the scorching Tehawa, where a copious draught of pure water seemed absolutely indispensable every five minutes, the mixture was the very acme of abomination. Fresh hides, stripped from the he-goat, besmeared inside as well as out with old tallow and strong bark-tan, filled from an impure well at Sagallo, tossed and tumbled during two days and nights under a "distilling heat" formed a drink which we should conclude to be little short of poison. However, the human throat learns to accommodate itself to every thing in time, and the time came when even this abomination was longed for.

But the worst was not yet come. It was midnight when the party commenced the steep ascent of the south eastern boundary of the lake, a ridge of volcanic rocks. "The north-east wind had scarcely diminished its parching fierceness, and in hot suffocating gusts swept over the glittering expanse of water and salt, where the moon shone brightly: each deadly puff succeeded by the stillness that foretells a tropical hurricane. The prospect around was wild,—beetling, basaltic cones, and jagged slabs of shattered lava." The path itself was formidable, winding along the crest of the ridge over sheets of broken lava, with scarcely more than sufficient width to admit of their progress in single file. "The horrors of this dismal night set all description at defiance." The hope of water, though at the distance of sixteen miles, excited them for a while; but at length even this excitement failed. And "owing to the heat, fasting, and privation, the limbs of the weaker refused the task, and after the first two miles they dropped fast into the rear. Under the fiery blast of the midnight sirocco the cry for water, uttered feebly and with difficulty by numbers of parched throats, now became incessant; and the supply for the whole party falling short of a gallon and a half, it was not long to be answered. A tiny sip of diluted vinegar for a moment assuaged the burning thirst which raged in the vitals; but its effects were transient, and, after struggling a few steps, they sank again, declaring their days to be numbered, and their resolution to rise up no more.—Dogs incontinently expired upon the road, horses and mules that once lay down were abandoned to their fate; while "the lion-hearted soldier, who had braved death at the cannon's mouth, subdued and unmanned by thirst, lay gasping by the wayside, hailing approaching dissolution with delight, as the termination of tortures which were no longer to be endured." As another day dawned, and the "round red sun" again rose over the lake of salt, the courage even of those who

had borne up against this fiery trial began to flag, "a dimness came before the drowsy eyes, giddiness seized the brain, and the hope held out by the guides, of water in advance, seemed like the delusion of a dream." In this crisis, at which our chief wonder is, that Major Harris and his explorers were ever heard of again, or had left any memorials of themselves but their bones, a wild Bedouin was seen, "like a delivering angel," hurrying forward with a large skin, filled with muddy water. This well-timed supply was divided among the fainting people: a quantity was poured over the face and down the throat of each; and at a late hour, "ghastly, haggard, and exhausted, like men who had escaped from the jaws of death, the whole had contrived to straggle into a camp, which, but for the foresight and firmness of the son of Ali Abi, (who had sent the water,) few individuals would have reached alive."

In any part of Africa a river of tolerable magnitude is an object of the most anxious interest; and the approach to the Hawash, the boundary river of the kingdom of Shoa, was looked to with eager expectation.—At length the height was reached from which was obtained "an exhilarating prospect over the dark, lone valley of the long looked-for Hawash. The course of the river was marked by a dense belt of trees and verdure, stretching towards the base of the great mountain range, of which the cloud-capped cone, which frowns over the capital of Shoa, forms the most conspicuous feature." The mission now began to exult:—"Though still far distant, the ultimate destination of the embassy appeared almost to have been gained, and none had an idea of the length of time that must elapse before his foot should press the soil of Ankober." A day of intense heat was, as usual, followed by a heavy fall of rain, which, owing to the unaccommodating arrangement of striking the tents at sunset, thoroughly drenched the whole party. The new difficulty was, how to cross the Hawash, "second of the rivers of Abyssinia, and rising in the very heart of Ethiopia, at an elevation of 8000 feet above the sea. It is fed by the niggardly tributaries from the high bulwarks of Shoa and Efat, and flows, like a great artery, through the arid plains of the Adaiel, green and wooded throughout its long course, and finally absorbed in the lagoons of Aussa. The canopy of fleecy clouds, which, as mid-day dawned, hung thick and heavy over the lofty blue peaks beyond, gave sad presage of the deluge that was pouring between its verdant banks from the higher regions of the source."

They were now on "the spot which exhibited the forest life of Africa." In a lake adjoining the river, the hippopotamus "rolled his unwieldy carcase to the surface, amid floating crocodiles, protruding his snout to blow a snort that might be heard at the distance of a mile." An unfortunate donkey, which had been partly drowned and partly strangled, was thrown out of the camp. No sooner had night fallen, than this prey roused the appetites of the whole forest. While the rain descended in torrents, the howl and growl of wild beasts was heard at their banquet on the donkey throughout the night. Lightning played over the woods; the "violent snapping of the branches proclaimed the nocturnal movements of the elephant and hippopotamus;" the loud roar and startling snort were constantly heard; and by morning every vestige of the dead animal, even to the skull, had disappeared. Africa, in all its provinces, is the scene of the boldest field sports in the world—India and its tigers, perhaps, excepted. But Africa excels even India in the variety and multitude of its mighty savages—lions, elephants, panthers, and hippopotami; the sands, the forests, the jungles, the rivers, the marshes, everything and place abounds with brute life, on the largest, the boldest, and the fiercest scale. Africa, with the human race on the lowest grade, has the brute on the highest, and its true name is the great kingdom of savage nature.

At length they reached the city of Furri, loaded for the thirty-fifth time, with the baggage of the British embassy. The caravan, escorted by a detachment of three hundred match-lock men, with flutes playing, and muskets echoing, and the heads of the warriors decorated with white plumes, on the 16th July entered the frontier town of the kingdom of Efat. Clusters of conical-roofed houses, covering the sides of twin hills, here presented the first permanent habitations that had greeted the eye since leaving the sea-coast—rude and ungainly, but right welcome signs of transition from depopulated wastes to the abodes of man.—The African seems a robber by nature, and the sight of the bales and boxes excited the national propensity in a most violent degree. Even the royal ministers and courtiers seem to have felt a passion for looking into those prohibited treasures, which evidently tempted their virtue in a most perilous degree. Meanwhile a special messenger arrived, bearing reiterated compliments from the Nagoos, (king,) with a horse and a mule from the royal stud, attired in the peculiar trappings which belong to majesty. Those animals awoke all the loyal curiosity of the people. At the sight, women and girls, enveloped in blood-red shifts, who had thronged to stare at the strangers, burst into a scream of acclamation. A group of hooded widows thrust their fingers into their ears and joined in the clamour. The escort and camel-drivers placed no bounds to the hilarity. A fat ox, that had been promised, was turned loose among the spectators, pursued by fifty savages with their gleaming *creeces*, and hamstrung by a dexterous blow, which threw it bellowing to the earth in the height of its mad career, and tribes of lean eurs commenced an indiscriminate engagement over the garbage. The neighbouring nations look upon the population of this province with great contempt. They say that their tongues are long for lying, their arms are long for stealing, and their legs are long for running away.

The mission now approached another region, perhaps the finest in Africa. Every change in the climate and soil in Africa is in extremes, and barrenness and unbounded fertility lie side by side.

"As if by the touch of the magician's wand, the scene now passes, in an instant, from parched wastes to the green and lovely islands of Abyssinia, presenting one scene of rich and thriving cultivation. The bag-

gage having at length been consigned to the shoulders of six hundred grumbling Moslem porters—for here the camel, from the steepness of the hills, was useless—and forming a line, which extended upwards of a mile the embassy, on the morning of the 17th, commenced the ascent of the Abyssinian Alps; the flutes again played the wild warriors of the escort again chanted their song. It was a cool and lovely morning, and an invigorating breeze played over the mountain's side, on which, not less than ten degrees from the equator, flourished the vegetation of northern climes. The rough and stony road wound on, by a steep ascent, over hill and dale, now skirting some precipitous ascent, now dipping into the basin of some verdant hollow, where it suddenly emerged into a succession of shady lanes, bounded by flowering hedgerows."

All this is so like England, and so unlike Africa, that we should suspect the major's memory to have been as active at least as his observation. But the work contains so much internal evidence of accuracy, independently of the confidence attached to the character of the intelligent writer himself, that we must believe the heart of Ethiopia to possess scenes that would be worthy of the heart of our own fresh and flower-bearing island. The scene which follows is quite Arcadian:

"The wild rose, the fern, the lantana, and the honeysuckle, smiled round a succession of highly cultivated terraces, and on every eminence stood a cluster of conically thatched houses, environed by green hedges, and partially embowered amid dark rees. As the troop passed on, the peasant abandoned his occupation to gaze at the novel procession; while merry groups of hooded women, decked in scarlet and crimson, left their vocations in the hut to welcome the king's guest with a shrill *zirolect*, which rang from every hand. Birds warbled among the groves. At various turns of the road the prospect was rugged, wild and beautiful. The first Christian village was soon revealed on the summit of a height. Three principal ranges of hills were next crossed in succession. Lastly, the view opened upon the wooded site of Ankober, occupying a central position in a horseshoe crescent of the mountains, still high above, which encloses a magnificent amphitheatre of ten miles in diameter. This is clothed throughout with a splendid, vigorous, and varied vegetation."

The embassy now halted, waiting for permission to enter the capital, and taking up their quarters in a town three thousand feet above Furri, on the frontier. The escort of the troop fired a salute on entering, and as they marched along, performed the war dance. A veteran capered before the ranks, with a drawn sword between his teeth, and the martial song was chorused by three hundred Christian throats. The prospect from this elevated point naturally struck the travellers with astonishment and admiration. The site of the town is only one of the thousand cones into which the mountain side is broken as it approaches the plain. The prospect over the plain was boundless, and countless villages met the eye upon the mountain slope. Wherever the plough could go, all was cultivated. Wheat, barley, Indian corn, beans, peas, cotton, and oil plants, thrived luxuriantly round every hamlet. The regularly marked fields mounted on terraces to the height of three or four thousand feet, becoming in their boundaries more and more indistinct, until totally lost in the shadowy green side of Mamrat (the Mother of Grace.) This mountain is a wonder, shrouded in clouds whilst all was sunshine below. It is clothed with a dense forest, and ascends to an elevation of 13,000 feet above the sea. Here are collected, for security, the treasures of the monarch which have been amassing since the re-establishment of the kingdom, one hundred and fifty years since.

After several further stoppages, they entered the reception hall. It was circular, and showy. The lofty walls glittered with a profusion of silver ornaments, and blazoned shields, matchlocks, and double barreled guns. Persian carpets and rugs of all sizes, colour and patterns, covered the floors; and crowds of governors, chiefs, and officers of the court, in their holiday attire, stood in a posture of respect, uncovered to the girdle. Two wide alcoves receded on either side, in one of which blazed a cheerful fire, engrossed by indolent cats; while in the other, on a flowered satin ottoman, surrounded by withered slaves and juvenile pages, and supported by gay velvet cushions, lay "His most Christian Majesty, Sahela Selasse!"—The Dechi Agulari, (state doorkeeper,) as master of the ceremonies, stood with a rod of green rushes, to preserve the exact distance of approach to royalty; and as the British entered and made their bows, pointed them to chairs, which done, it was commanded that all should be covered.

The monarch was not unworthy of figuring in this pomp. Forty summers, of which eight-and-twenty had been passed on the throne, had slightly furrowed his forehead, and grizzled a full bushy head of hair, arranged in elaborate curls. But though wanting the left eye, "the expression of his manly features, open, pleasing, and commanding, did not belie the character for impartial justice which he had obtained far and wide; even the robber tribes of the low country calling him a fine balance of gold."

After the delivery of the ambassadorial letters, the exhibition commenced, which had so long been the envy of the courtiers, and probably the conversation of the kingdom. The presents were displayed. A rich Brussels carpet, which completely covered the hall, Cashmere shawls, and embroidered Delhi scarfs of resplendent hues, excited universal admiration.—The finer specimens were handed to the king. As the various presents succeeded, the delight increased. A group of Chinese dancing figures produced bursts of merriment; and when the European escort, in full uniform, with the sergeant at their head, marched into the hall, paced in front of the throne, and performed the manual and platoon exercise, amid ornamented clocks chiming, and musical boxes playing "God save the Queen," his majesty appeared quite entranced. "But many and bright were the smiles that lighted up the royal features, as three hundred muskets, with bayonets fixed, were piled in front of the royal footstool. A buzz of mingled won-