

TRAVELS IN AFRICA having to do with big game only are not held in great esteem any more. Indeed, there was a strong reaction some years ago against the needless destruction of animal life in Africa and India by English sportsmen, followed latterly by complaints of the extinction of the buffalo and other large animals of the West by the same restless and indefatigable hunters. This volume is not even wonderful of its kind, for of two things one is evident : either Mr. James was not as lucky in slaughtering lions, buffaloes, elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes and deer, with melodramatic effects, as some of his predecessors, or he confines himself more strictly to facts than they did. And yet he is not chary of hair-breadth escapes. Such value as the book can boast arises from recent events. The Soudan just now is the most talked-of place in the world, owing to the overthrow of the army of Hicks Pasha by the Mahdi. Nothing bearing directly on the Mahdi will be found here, but at least a portion of the Soudan is described, some of its inhabitants photographed and more or less studied, and certain important spots, like Massowah, Souakim, and Sanheit, pictured. The Abyssinians, who are likely to prove at any moment a factor unaccounted for in the affairs of the Soudan, were seen but once. But that once cost the life of one of the best of the native servants ; and a valuable horse and several fine guns were forcibly carried off from the party. Mr. James was with a number of friends and relatives, Nimrods all, and his account is much more a sequel to Sir Samuel Baker's narrative of travel and sport in the same region than a novel tale. Interesting facts, however, are by no means wanting,—such as the account of a visit to Abyssinian monks on a mountain almost inaccessible, the points of resemblance between some of the Soudan people and the ancient Egyptians painted on the walls of the graves in the Nile Valley, the survival in the Soudan of the old Egyptian fashion of marriage between brother and sister among chiefs, curious tribal laws by which a debtor gradually becomes a slave and entails on all his female relatives a life of prostitution, the mysterious disease of camels called *guffer* which permits of any amount of laziness on the part of camel-drivers, and other curios in the way of African customs, beliefs, persons and beasts. The much-talked-of Souakim, so Mr. James informs us, gets its name from seven virgins who inhabited the island near the mainland on which it is built. The virgins maintained that *ginns* or fairies became their husbands, and hence their descendants called the island Sowagin, or 'Together with the fairy.' If the party made great havoc among the wild beasts, it distributed more than its fair share of trinkets among the natives, and furthermore gave them free food and magic-lantern entertainments.

'We always commenced the show by displaying portraits of the Queen and Prince of Wales : these were both very popular, and invariably re-demanded. We had been careful before leaving England to choose subjects for the slides that we thought would interest them ; and their exhibition was always successful. The most popular consisted of a series of animals found in Africa, such as the hippopotamus, elephant, etc ; and when we displayed a representation of a man escaping up a tree from a crocodile, with the beast opening and shutting its mouth and trying to seize him, they fairly shrieked with laughter.'

They visited a very well-managed Romanist school kept by monks and nuns where boys and girls are educated. The boys find it hard on graduation to obtain places or work of any kind owing to Mussulman prejudice, but the girls are worse off, because nobody will marry or employ them. Their only prospects are starvation or infamous lives. Coming home the party fell in with two agents of the Freedman's Aid Society of New York, who were returning from a wide tour southward above the Blue and White Niles. Their object was to find fitting places for the colonization of American blacks.

* The Wild Tribes of the Soudan. An Account of Travel and Sport, Chiefly in the Basé Country. By F. L. James. New York : Dodd, Mead & Co.