OFF TO THE TRANSVAAL!

BY

HENRY AUSTIN.

An Epic of the Hour.

DEDICATED
to
The English Nation at Large
(That Should be Confined)
and with
Disrespect Profound
to such
Jameson Raiders of Parnassus
as
Messrs. Alfred Austin, Algernon Swinburne and
Rudyard Kipling.

Preface and Notes by JOHN B. CARLTON.

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PREFACE.

HENRY AUSTIN, in my humble opinion the most thoroughly American poet that has yet appeared, breaks a comparatively long silence with this outburst of wit, humor and moral passion, "Off to the Transvaal!"

If, as runs the old adage, Indignation is a ready maker of rhyme, surely it may be said that never has a righteous resentment caused a more felicitous flow of noble verse than this poet's latest contribution to the cause of oppressed humanity.

Fierce as it may seem in its arraignment of England, it will be noted how clearly toward the close the poet shows his deep love of all that is best in English civilization and how ready he would be to aim the arrows of his wrath against the national wrongdoings of his own people.

Two things in this poet's far too infrequent utterances particularly impress me: the ardor of his heart, his deep breadth of sympathy with mankind; and

the freshness of his art, the quiet potency and originality of his music. His are distinctly new notes.

This fact has not eluded the notice of recognized literary authorities. As far back as 1887 James Russell Lowell, perhaps in his latter years America's greatest critic, wrote to my friend of his own motion thus: "I am glad to find a new poet, for such you certainly are."

Three years later, when Henry Austin's first book of poems appeared, Edmund Clarence Stedman, an almost equal authority in literature, emphasized the same point, saying: "I see you write in your own vein and that is unusual for a young poet to do—nowadays. It is still more unusual to find thought and feeling in modern lyrics. Don't be afraid to indulge in either—there is a welcome ready for both."

About the same time Rev. Edward Everett Hale, in an article published by the Boston *Transcript*, said: "First, Mr. Austin really has the eye which perceives the analogy between things visible and invisible. He doesn't have to hunt for this analogy; it comes to him itself and suggests to him what he wants to say. Secondly, Mr. Austin has what I call the lyric swing. Very few people in our time have it."

A score more of celebrated men and women might be quoted who have expressed warm admiration for

Mr. Austin's glowing verse, which ought to be known far more widely. Indeed, it is my belief that only a curious temperamental shyness has prevented this fervent singer of a varied song from coming into public view more often and thus gaining adequate recognition of that rank as a poetic artist which he has long held in the estimation of a clear-seeing few.

Touching this present poem, "Off to the Transvaal!" little or nothing need be said. Its melody and power must impress even those who may deem it overcharged with audacious color and electric passion. I have appended at the end a few historical and critical notes concerning certain occurrences generalized by the poet, which notes, very likely, will be considered superfluous by the majority of readers, but may be of use to some.

JOHN B. CARLTON.

Off to the Transvaal!

I.

In the Great Name of Progress
What means this blare and glare?
Ah! 'tis the Modern Ogress
Leers from her island lair—
Unleashing on their quarry
Her hell-hounds long delayed:
This is no Jameson foray,
No petty border raid.

II.

Mark! how she speeds her legions
Across the tossing foam,
To seize in fairer regions
A purer people's home!
Hark! how the bands are playing,
How well the welkin roars!
'Tis merrier than a Maying,
This jaunt, for slaying Boers.

III.

Drowning the blare of trumpets
With shrill and lusty whoops,
How the half-million strumpets
Of London cheer the troops!
The sodden mob grunts louder,
Fuming with beer and rum;
And Tommy A. feels prouder:
His heyday now has come.

IV.

He holds the stage—the centre—
By right of might divine;
He in whose brain could enter
No thought or feeling fine;
What blessings the paid parsons
Invoke upon his head!
What rapines and what arsons
Before his fancy spread!

V.

Or, in his war-dream, maybe
Blithe Tommie lifts to-day
A fine, fat Transvaal baby
Upon his bayonet gay,
Spitting the little varlet
Right in the mother's sight;
For England's men of scarlet
In crimson games delight.

VI.

But Tommie is "no coward,
Although a perfect brute;"
He'll fight, till overpowered;
He'll die for lust or loot.
True; if well propped with rations,
Brave Tommie is not slow,
Against all weaker Nations,
With better guns to go.

VII.

Witness Omdurman's slaughter
And Copenhagen grand,
When miles of bloodied water
With red foam kissed the land!
But how, at glorious Concord,
The Tommies took to flight
And how Majuba encored
That world-reviving fight!

VIII.

Ay, pitted 'gainst white foemen,
Except when three to one,
The race-mad British yeomen
Are mighty sure to run.
The "bully-boys" turn craven;
Turn curs the Lion-whelps;
And fly, to beat the raven,
With mirth-provoking yelps.

IX.

O England, once a Nation
Of generous, just renown,
How swift to degradation
Can Majesty go down!
Your poets, once exhorters
To nobleness of life,
Now squeak to earth's four quarters
A creed of greed and strife.

X.

Erst on your meadows, rippling
With joy, a Shakspere smiled:
Now you are sib to Kipling—
"Half devil and half child."
But louder than his yelling,
His gaudy, bawdy rhyme,
Comes a deep music, swelling
With tears from every clime.

XI.

We hear that world-wide sorrow,
More ceaseless than the sea,
Presageful of that morrow,
When England shall not be.
Lands ye have laid a ban on
Echo the Sepoy's yell,
Tied to your Christian cannon,
Blown to your Christian hell!

XII.

From Ireland, stripped and stricken,
Her mouths with Famine full;
From where swart Kaffirs sicken
To pile the golden wool—
The fatal fleece of Jason—
On England's slippery floor
Wrong's damning diapason
Rolls on from shore to shore.

XIII.

From many a murdered Nation,
From many a crimson sod
Goes Rachel's lamentation
Against ye up to God.
Arab and Abyssinian,
They know "the light" ye bring;
The cross of your dominion;
The hymn your shrapnel sing.

XIV.

You're "bettering" now the Zulu,
Not killed or quelled with ease,
As Cook did Honolulu
With nameless foul disease:
You tried the Dutch Republic
On fair Majuba's height:
We saw the little cub lick
The Lion out of sight.

XV.

And recently your Rhymer,
    Your "White-Man's-Burden" Bard—
What nerve was e'er sublimer,
    What drummer's cheek so hard?—
Dared offer us, by sample,
    Your friendship and your cheers:
To follow your example—
    "Approval of our peers."

XVI.

"Our peers?" That's laughter-moving;
    We proved in War's embrace
And long in Peace *were* proving
    You an inferior race.
What! we accept that offer?
    We turn to buccaneers,
Brimming a Pirate's coffer
    With gems—of blood and tears?

XVII.

We take his Greek donation
    Of mischievous advice
And sell our starry station
    For such a paltry price?
We pose as new Crusaders
    To spread Religion's reign
And boast like you, you traders,
    We fight "for others' gain?"

XVIII.

What! we, whose holy charter
Of Justice for Mankind
Was writ by Brown, the Martyr,
In Lincoln's life-blood signed?
Oh! than such Tiger-aping
'Twere better we should fall—
The sky-born banner draping
Pure folds above us all!

XIX.

In the Great Name of Progress
What means this blare and glare?
O vast and gory Ogress,
Leering from out your lair,
Is there no ruth, no savior,
No Gladstone in your land,
To halt ye in your 'havior,
To make ye understand?

XX.

The Doom of each Oppressor—
It looms on History's page.
For ye what Intercessor,
When dawns the day of rage:
The day of desolation,
Red wrath and blackest fate,
For ye whom, as a Nation,
All just men scorn and hate!

XXI.

Forget ye Byron's warning
How eagerly the world
Prays for that cloudless morning
That sees your banner furled
And in your gates the stranger;
While o'er the joyous main,
To save from God, The Avenger,
Ye call to us in vain?

XXII.

In vain. And yet, my brothers,
We do not hate your soil
To death: like all the others
Ye've taken in the toil;
Betrayed with kiss Iscariot;
Bilked, bullied, bought and sold;
Or dragged behind your chariot
In the mad race for Gold.

XXIII.

To England's real Splendors
Our spirit is not blind:
Our heart glad tribute renders
Her Victors of the Mind;
Shakspere, the starry-shining,
With wit and wisdom rife:
More, at the block, resigning
With grace his lofty life.

XXIV.

Vast Milton, blind in glory,
Cast on an evil time,
Living a nobler story
E'en than his song sublime:
John Hampden and John Howard,
To Man's true vantage vowed:
Shelley, whose free soul towered—
An eagle o'er a cloud!

XXV.

What one of these re-makers
And raisers of Mankind
E'er preached that "heathen" acres
For White Men were designed?
To such, their Country's mission,
Was it to hold in fee
And shadow with perdition
Far land and foreign sea?

XXVI.

There is no White Man's Burden,
Save to reform himself;
True good to seek for guerdon—
Not further power and pelf;
And if my own dear Nation
Marches to England's drum,
Her just Annihilation
Cannot too quickly come.

HENRY AUSTIN.

NOTES.

STANZA IV. That no viler wretch exists than the average British soldier, save possibly the British sailor. all impartial observers have long been aware. The British Army Medical Department Report for 1894, page 118, states that out of 70,642 British soldiers in India, on July 15th, 1894, there had been admitted to hospital 19,892, or twenty-eight per cent, for the worst species of venereal disease. A dispatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, dated Simla, November 4th, 1896, announces that the annual admissions to hospital treatment for same cause exceed in number more than half the total strength of the British Army. That the English introduced this foul disease into India originally, just as they undeniably did into Honolulu, admits of little doubt.

STANZA V. The poet, when writing this, probably had in memory the following brutal, sneering reference to poor little Boer children in Mr. Alfred Austin's execrable verses, "Jameson's Ride":

> "Wrong! Is it wrong? Well, maybe;
> But I'm going, boys, all the same.
> Do they think me a Burgher's baby,
> To be scared by a scolding name?", etc.

In their abortive attempt to incite an insurrection of the still more cowardly Uitlanders, the British raiders at the fight near Krugersdorp, unluckily neglected the usual British precaution of being at least three to one. They had only 512 well-mounted men and a strong force of artillery, eight Maxims, one 12½-pounder and two 7-pounders. The Boers, by one account, had about 500 men, by another about 700; but of these only 50, well placed, were actually engaged at close quarters; the remainder being stationed as mere supports in case the 50 could not quite "surround" the invaders. The Boers who met and stopped the last charge of the British freebooters numbered exactly seven. The British lost about 50 men; the Boers four. Two of these, however, were accidentally killed by Boer bullets. At Majuba 160 Boers, led by General Joubert, climbed a precipice and attacked 600 British regulars, killed or wounded nearly half and put the rest to flight down the hill. Two Boers were killed.

STANZA VII. The celebrated English newspaper correspondent G. W. Steevens, who witnessed Omdurman, says in his recent book,

With Kitchener at Khartum": "And the Dervishes? The honour of the fight must go with the men who died. Our men were perfect, but the Dervishes were superb—beyond perfection. Over 11,000 killed; 16,000 wounded; 4,000 prisoners The Anglo-Egyptian army numbered perhaps 22,000. By the side of the immense slaughter of Dervishes the tale of our casualties is so small as to be almost ridiculous: 387. It was not a battle but an execution." To the credit of England be it recorded, however, that there was one decent Englishman, at least, who protested against Lord Kitchener's mutilation of the Mahdi's corpse. John Morley, May 25, 1899, at a large meeting at Lydney, after predicting that the present spirit of Imperialism in the English nation, if unchecked, would lead to Great Britain's destruction, used these words: "The Mahdi was an Arab, who rose against the misgovernment of the Egyptian authorities, but when the British took Omdurman they hacked off his head, cut off his beard and according to the statement of an artilleryman, the head was placed inside an empty kerosene can. This ghoulish act certainly discredits the British name."

STANZAS IX and X. The last four lines of Stanza IX contain, it seems to me, a rather extreme expression of the morally decadent condition of present English literature. It is true, indeed, that the most popular and typical verse-turners of England today are that jaunty "jingo-jingler," Mr. Kipling; that clumsy carpenter of commonplace couplets, Mr. Alfred Austin, and that clever fiddler in words with few ideas, Mr. Algernon Charles Swinburne; but England does possess a few poetic voices of genuine ring, men who have not pandered to their nation's passion for wholesale murder and robbery. Surely William Watson, Ernest Henley and Rennell Rodd ought not to be lumped into this caustic denunciation of English living poets and I don't think Henry Austin really meant to include them. for I have heard him quote their verses with relish and cordial praise. His keen enjoyment, too, of the several fine things Mr Kipling wrote before getting "syndicated" has been shown in various discriminative articles contributed to the Dial and other journals of note. It is a terrible pity, I think, that Mr. Kipling should have prostituted a really fine gift of picturesque utterance to the composition of such vile trash as "The White Man's Burden"; an especially impudent bit of advice from one who in his "American Notes" went out of his way to sneer at George Washington and to hint that the Chinese navy could sponge the American from the slate of old ocean. Had he stuck to writing short stories, it might have been better for Mr. Kipling's chances of a permanent niche in Literature.

STANZA XI. The poet's reference to the Sepoys appears to be rather grimly substantiated by the following passage from "British India," by R W. Frazer, L.L.B.I.C.S.: "Four tall (Sepoy) grenadiers, who had often led their comrades in many an action, and held as a right the foremost post in hours of peril, now stepped forward and claimed the privilege of dying first of those con-

demned to death for mutiny. They were tied to guns and blown to pieces. Twenty-four of the Sepoys had the same retribution meted out to them by the unflinching command of Major Hector Munro who knew the danger that lurked beneath rebellion not speedily repressed."

STANZA XII. As to that long Reign of Horror, England's treatment of Ireland, here is a confession by the great English historian, John Richard Green: "The history of Ireland during the fifty years that followed the conquest by William III is one which no Englishman can recall without shame." And here in reference to England's contamination of Kaffirs Zulus etc., is just a line from a recent article by an honest Englishman, Dean Farrar of Canterbury: "The cruel indifference with which we degrade the helpless childhood of the world by deluging savage tribes with drink."

STANZA XIII. Concerning the Abyssinian campaign in which Napier with 4,770 Europeans and 9,447 native troops reduced the fortress of Magdala, containing about 4,000 persons, Henry M Stanley has this highly picturesque note: "When the British under Sir Robert Napier took Magdala, the Abyssinian Emperor, Theodore, shot himself with a pistol bearing this inscription: 'Presented by Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, to Theodorus, Emperor of Abyssinia, as a slight token of gratitude for His kindness to Her servant, Plowden. 1854.'" It is noteworthy that Victoria's General in this campaign only carried 140 camp women for the use of his soldiers and officers or one woman for every thirty-four men, perhaps the most remarkable case of military polyandry on record, but probably a fair sample of what prevails in the British Army.

STANZA XVI. Possibly in composing that line with its curious phrase compounding two animals: 'Oh! than such Tiger aping," the poet had an inspiring reminiscence of Tennyson's evolutionary appeal to his countrymen to be men and "let the Ape and Tiger die." One would fancy, however, that it may have been first written "Lion-aping." instead of "Tiger-aping"; the lion being England's emblem.

STANZA XXII Byron's lament over England: "If she could only know, How her great name is through the world abhorred; How eager all the earth is for the blow That shall lay bare her bosom to the sword," has been recently emphasized by the declaration of an English statesman that England has never been so thoroughly hated by the world as now. Is the Dies Iræ dawning at last or must Humanity continue to cry: "How long, O Lord, how long?'

J. B. C.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Important to Investors in New Enterprises.

THE PERSONAL LIABILITY OF DIRECTORS AND STOCKHOLDERS OF CORPORATIONS. By GEORGE BELL, Esquire, of the New York Bar.

This book shows at a glance what obligations may be fastened on directors and stockholders and how to avoid them. It applies to all corporations doing business in the State of New York, wherever organized. For One Dollar The Bell Publishing Co. will send this valuable little pamphlet on approval and, if the investor, after examination, does not find it of great practical service to him, he can return it by registered letter and receive back the price.

HATS OFF TO THE CONQUEROR!

Knocks the persimmon—so they say
Down South, when speaking of the man
Who, in all matters, has a way
Of reaching high as e'er he can.

No fear is his. Like Dewey's fleet
He takes, while men in wonder gaze:
Fame blows for him her trumpet sweet
And in his field no rival stays.

Only by skill and worth he wins;
He wears well—and his wares the same;
If he makes hats, or books, or pins,
Perfection always is his aim.

Xerxes once heaved a sigh forlorn
For a new joy. No need of that—
Had he like Dewey lived; and worn
Columbia's Crown—a Knox-made Hat!

The above clever acrostic which appeared originally in the Boston *Commercial* and has been extensively copied is a pleasing little tribute to the greatest authority and expert in hats and hat-making in this country and probably in the world. The Bell Publishing Company in this connection takes pleasure in announcing that it has secured and will soon publish a book by Colonel Edward M. Knox, entitled "The Story of the Hat."

This is not a dull trade-book, put together for advertising purposes, but a fascinating account of the development of the hat from early ages to the present. The illustrations have been made for it by that fine artist, William E. B. Starkweather, of Paris; the engravings are now making by The Gill Engraving Company of New York; the electros by the Hubley Printing Co. (Limited), of York, Pa.; and the presswork will be that of the Ben Franklin Press of New York, or of Gibb Bros. & Moran. These facts insure the reader that the book will be beautifully made, besides being a work of intrinsic value.