

## PRIOR, MELTON (1845-1910)

The son of a draughtsman and landscape painter, Melton Prior was born 12 September 1845 in London. He was educated at St Clement Danes Grammar School and Bleriot College Boulogne, France, and formed an unofficial apprenticeship to his father whom he frequently assisted in the studio. Aside from his illustrations for *Penny Miscellany* and *The Sketch*, Prior's career was primarily with the *Illustrated London News* for whom he was an illustrator from 1868-73 and a special correspondent and war artist from 1873-1904. Sir William Ingram, the proprietor of the *Illustrated London News*, sent Prior on his first assignment as a special war artist covering Wolseley's Ashanti campaign in 1873. Prior was then sent on over 24 campaigns for the *Illustrated London News*, covering a remarkable number of conflicts including the 1873 Ashanti war, 1874 Carlist war, 1876 Serbian war, 1877 Russo-Turkish war, 1878 and 1896 Afghan wars, 1879 Zulu war, 1881 Boer war, 1882 Egypt conflict, 1886-7 pacification of Burma, 1896 Greco-Turkish war, 1900 Siege of Ladysmith in the Boer War, 1903 Somaliland campaign, and attempted to cover the 1904 Russo-Japanese war but was prevented from going to the front by the Japanese. Prior also covered several expeditions, from the 1884 Soudan and Nile expedition to the Somaliland expedition of 1903. He accompanied dignitaries on several tours, covering the Prince of Wales' 1875 Athens tour and his 1901 Canadian tour. Claiming to have fought in battle and to have narrowly escaped death numerous times, Prior was particularly vocal in his disappointment at the War Office's refusal to award campaign medals to war correspondents; instead Prior famously decorated himself with the campaign ribbons which he believed he had earned. Prior's illustrations were also featured in publications by other famous specials, including Henry Morton Stanley's *Magdala, the story of the Abyssinian Campaign* (1896) and William Howard Russell's *A Visit to Chile* (1890). Prior was known for his rapid sketching in pencil or ink and his dramatic use of chiaroscuro; though often the effect was lost with the translation of his sketches to engravings. Prior was also notorious for travelling in flamboyant style, and Ingram's payment of his generous expenses became emblematic of the potentially luxurious perks of life as a special correspondent. Whenever Prior was present in England, he attended every state funeral and ceremony and, after his death on 2 November 1910, was honoured with a memorial in the crypt of Saint Paul's Cathedral on 22 October 1912. **AD**

### References:

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