

Saintsbury remarks: "The great peculiarity of Victor Hugo is that his poetry always transports. No one who cares for poetry at all, and who has mastered the preliminary necessity of acquaintance with the French language and French prosody, can read any of his better works without gradually rising to a condition of enthusiasm in which the possible defects of the matter are altogether lost sight of in the unsurpassed and dazzling defects of the manner. *This is the special test of poetry*, and there is none other. The means by which he produces these effects consist in a mastery of varied versification, in an extraordinary command of pictorial language, and above all, in a certain irresistible habit of never allowing the iron to grow cold. Stroke follows stroke in the exciting and transporting process in a manner not easily paralleled in other writers."

The same may be said of his prose. And Victor Hugo will hold in the mind of posterity "the position of the greatest poet and one of the greatest prose writers of France."

"IN DARKEST AFRICA."

THE history of the expedition to relieve Emin Pasha, as told by Stanley in his latest book, can scarcely be called entertaining, although it is full of interest from beginning to end. It is the story of the best equipped expedition that ever entered on African exploration. It was planned with the utmost sagacity. Practically unlimited means were at its disposal. Everything that the experience of its leaders thought requisite had been obtained, and nothing was left to chance. Every contingency that suggested itself was carefully provided for. Stanley knew the country through which he was to travel. He knew the character of its inhabitants. He knew the men he was taking with him. He knew the nature of the assistance he must employ on the march. Yet, with all this forethought, the history of the expedition is one long narrative of suffering and disappointment. The expedition whitened its route with the bones of its dead. Death in one form or another was rarely a day absent from the camp, while, perhaps, the bitterest blow of all was the discovery, at the end, of the worthless character of the man for whom all this suffering was undergone. But for the impetus it has given civilization, neither England nor Stanley would have much reason to congratulate themselves on their last experience in Darkest Africa. But, while the narrative is one of suffering and privation, it is also one of untiring energy and indomitable perseverance in the face of the most unlooked-for difficulties. Before dealing with the narrative itself, however, a few words may be necessary respecting the reason and the object of the expedition.

About twenty-five years ago the Khedive of Egypt, Ismail by name, conceived the idea of restoring the empire of the Pharaohs. The Nile was to be the "River of Egypt" in reality, as well as in name; its flag was to float

undisputed from Albert Nyanza to Alexandria. The ambition of the Khedive far exceeded the resources of his country. Egypt was neither very wealthy nor very populous, and a few scattered military posts, commanded by European adventurers, were all that could be afforded to maintain the newly established authority over a quarter of a continent. The force was entirely insufficient to overawe the turbulent population of the Soudan, infested as it was with Arab slave dealers and native ivory hunters. These soon became exasperated by the restrictions imposed upon what they regarded as their legitimate trade, and the uprising of the Mahdi was the natural result. Against this outbreak the cowardly Egyptians were powerless. Hicks Pasha, who raised a force of twelve thousand men, very formidable on paper, led them in confidence against the enemy, and was annihilated. Baker Pasha had four thousand men, with which he marched against the rebels, and barely one-third of his men escaped. Darfur, Kordofan, Khartoum fell, one after another, Gordon Pasha having been murdered at the latter place. In a few months Egyptian authority had vanished from the Soudan, and the only relic of the ambition of Ismael was the Province of Equatoria, on the shores of the Albert Nyanza. The Governor of this Province was a German-Jew named Edward Schnitzler, a doctor by profession. He had early entered the service of Turkey, and from there went to Egypt. With Turkish manners he adopted a Turkish title—Emin Effendi Haleim—the faithful physician, to which the Khedive added that of Bey, and stationed him at the outside limit of the new Empire. Here, surrounded on all sides by foes, and every moment expecting to be attacked by the victorious Mahdi, he sent a despairing cry to Europe for help. "Unless assistance soon comes we are lost," he wrote. The assistance he required was arms and ammunition, as he spoke hopefully of the fighting capabilities of his troops, if they were only properly equipped. England had encouraged the ambition of the Khedive, and its Government was held to be in a measure responsible for its disastrous ending. Emin's appeal, therefore, brought an immediate response from the English people. Over twenty thousand pounds sterling was at once subscribed for the expense of the expedition, and all eyes turned towards Henry M. Stanley as the person to lead it. He was at the time engaged on a lecture tour in the United States, but he threw everything to the winds the moment he received the message. On Christmas Day, 1886, he was in England, discussing arrangements, route, etc., and on the 21st of Jan., 1887, he started from London, on an expedition that was destined to Bring Darkest Africa in touch with the civilization of Europe.

We have in our editorial capacity been necessarily thrown into company with those members of the "fourth estate" who had the felicity of printing these imperishable effusions, and though we were told they were always "settin' em up," we found this related merely to the types—nothing stronger.