

ready for use. There is little doubt that Mr. Stanley's latest expedition will, in like manner, be fruitful of grand results in the near future, especially as it shall prepare the way for the entrance of Gospel light in "Darkest Africa."

Brieflet No. 15.

IN ROME—THE INTERIOR OF ST. PETER'S.

"But thou of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee—Majesty,
Power, Glory, Strength and Beauty—all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled."—*Byron.*

I hesitate to say anything about the interior of this magnificent edifice which, in the estimation of competent judges, "surpasses all powers of description." The truth is, however, that many of the details are not in themselves so very remarkable. Of the statuary and the paintings, there are perhaps few pieces above mediocrity as works of art. Nor does the vast size of the building account for the astonishment with which you behold it for the first time; this is due rather to the admirable proportions, the skilful disposition of every part, and the exquisite harmony of the whole. It certainly is very large, being 613½ feet in length, 448 across the transepts, and 153½ feet in height. And, this vast space being unencumbered with pews or seats of any kind, every part of the building is seen to the best advantage. The finest point of view, of course, is where the nave and transepts intersect—beneath the centre of the dome. The temptation to continue gazing upwards into that great vaulted canopy is almost irresistible, and but for the pain which it produces in the back of your neck, the sight is one you would not soon tire of. The decorations in gilding, frescoe, and mosaic are splendid. This dome is 139 feet in diameter inside. If it looks "light and airy," it is only so in appearance, for where it springs from the buttresses its walls are twenty-eight feet in thickness! Between its outer and inner shell there is a roomy staircase by which the ascent is easy to the lantern on the top of it which is 400 feet from the floor. Around the base of the dome, on a gilt band, you read in huge letters the Latin version of the passage of Scripture on which the Church of Rome bases her claim

for supremacy, and around which "the fires of controversy have raged for ages."—"THOU ART PETER, AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." The four piers that support the dome are of enormous proportions.

In front of the high altar, where eighty-six gold lamps are kept perpetually burning, a flight of steps leads down to the shrine of SS. Peter and Paul, and you are shown a sarcophagus said to contain portions, at least, of the remains of these apostles. Among other reputed "relics" are the head of St. Andrew, part of "the true cross," and the fabulous napkin of St. Veronica—"with which our Saviour wiped the sweat from his brow on the road to Golgotha," and which, so it is averred, retains the impress of the face still! Strange delusion! This rag is adored with imposing ceremonies by countless thousands every year. Except on very rare occasions, public worship is never conducted in the main body of this magnificent temple—the side chapels being used for this purpose. Several of these are as large as ordinarily sized churches. Their floors are covered with memorial slabs to the memory of departed popes, of whom a hundred and thirty-four are buried in St. Peter's—the long Latin inscriptions usually ending with these words,—*Orate pro eo*, "Pray for him." The only effigy of St. Peter in the body of the church is a very common-place bronze statue of the Apostle seated in a chair, holding a key in his hand and with one foot extended to the edge of the dais. On festival occasions this dark image, said to have been recast from an old statue of Jupiter, is dressed up in full pontifical robes. Few Roman Catholics pass it without stopping to kiss its great toe. Little children, even, are lifted up to it and learn to kiss the toe before they can discern their right hand from their left; though it would be more strictly true to say they kiss the place where the toe had been, for by this oft-repeated kissing it is clean gone. Ranged along the walls are a number of mosaic copies of some of the finest paintings in existence, such as Raphael's "Transfiguration," "The Baptism of Christ in Jordan," "The Last Communion of St. Jerome," &c. These mosaics—very large and very beautiful—are composed of little bits of glazed