

verses of Victor Hugo as thick as bees upon a bank of thyme. For boldness of imagination, indeed, he has no rival, except, perhaps, among the Eastern poets—a certain Chinese author, for example, who in one of his poems describing a flock of cranes in full flight says, with a fine excess of fancy,—

They lifted up their voices like a sail.

Nothing quite so audacious as this will be found in Victor Hugo or any other poet of the Western world. But to give a single example of the exuberance with which his genius could pour forth a continued stream of rich and striking fantasies, take the following from a short poem entitled "Sunsets." And here, the object not being to render the poetry of the language, which would be hopeless, but merely to set forth the imageries which it contains, a prose translation may be forgiven.

"O, regard the sky !

"There the moving clouds take strange forms under the breath of the winds. At times beneath their waves the lightning gleams, as if some giant of the sky had swiftly drawn his sword among the clouds ;

"Then appears, hanging in the heavens, a monstrous beast, an alligator broad and striped, with fangs in ranks, against whose leaden flanks the bright clouds shine like golden scales ;

"Then a palace arises—till the air trembles, and all fades, and, strewn along the sky, its vermeil cones hang overhead, down-pointed, like inverted hills ;

"Then that cloud of lead, of gold, of copper, of iron, wherein, with sounds of heavy murmurs, repose the tempest, the waterspout, the thunderbolt, and hell—it is God who hangs them there in throngs, even as within the niches of a dome a warrior suspends his clashing arms.

"Then—all disappears ! The sun, dashed down from high, like a red globe of bronze cast back into the furnace, which falls with a shock upon the waves, upflings like flakes of flame into the zenith the burning foam of the clouds."

The peculiar characteristics of Victor Hugo's style are, generally speaking, not to be found in any writing in our language. There is, however, a passage in Landor, and that, curiously enough, a simile, which reads exactly as if it were a fine prose rendering from some work of Victor Hugo's, so curiously (and of course by mere coincidence) does it reflect the distinguishing marks both of his imagination and of his power. The passage in question describes the funeral pyre in which is about to perish the last surviving citizen of Numantia :—

"He extended his withered arms, he thrust forward the gaunt links of his throat, and upon gnarled knees, which smote each other audibly, tottered into the civic fire. It, like some hungry and strangest beast in the innermost wild of Africa, pierced, broken, prostrate, motionless, gazed at by its hunter in the impatience of glory, in the delight of awe, panted once more, and seized him !"

This passage, fine as it is, is yet by no means uniquely fine among the works of Landor. Of all prose writers few have used the simile so abundantly as he, and certainly none so greatly. One other instance may here be taken from his writings, an instance of a peculiar beauty all his own, and worthy of quotation not more as an example of similitude than for the sake of a most pure and haunting music which makes the very poetry of prose. No verse was ever sweeter.

"There is a gloom in deep love, as in deep water; there is a silence in it which suspends the foot, and the folded arms and the dejected head