

## THE POETRY OF EDWIN MARKHAM.



EDIOCRITY is a sheep that rigorously follows its leader. It does not depart from the beaten path. It does not originate: it imitates. It does not initiate: it copies. It does not move singly, but goes with the majority, and shouts with the crowd. The common-place is its breath of life. Suspicion is its inaffable characteristic. It suspects because it does not understand.

If we desired a proof of the trend and universality of mediocrity, we should find it in the way the great majority of people treat new ideas. It is said that certain savage tribes of Africa kill all strangers they encounter. Alimential considerations doubtlessly have some weight, as they seldom fail to have even among people who are not professional cooks, but without them, plausible reasons for what Macduff would call the "deep damnation of the taking off" of the "tenderfeet" would probably be found in their strangerhood. Want of knowledge begets distrust. As a means of dealing with physical entities, assassination is now generally frowned down by people possessing the slightest degree of civilization, but the brute instinct which inspires it still finds full expression in our manner of treating new and strange ideas, especially such of them as seem out of harmony with our established beliefs concerning the diurnal conflict between the "masses" and the "classes," to which some grim humourist has given the sounding title of Civilization.

Burning at the stake, except among the white savages of the Southern States, having become unfashionable, we cannot quite make an end of the troublesome fellows who dare to think largely and encourage others to do so. but we can, and do, vilify and denounce them as vicious disturbers of the public peace, and we can, and do, systematically condemn and misrepresent the ideas they advance, simply because they sound new to our conservative hearing.

All this moral imitation of the native Africans at their worst is, I take it, an indication of the power of mediocrity, which like