

AT HER BEST.

"SHE'S at her best to night" they say,
Watching the boards whereon she steps,
Lightly and gay ;—she, waxing sad,
A shadow in her eyes, forgets
'Tis but a play.

The piece runs so :

Her child is claimed by death, stern foe,
And when she sees him lying there,
She gives a cry of keen despair,
They looking on, in their delight
Exclaim "How well she acts to-night."

They do not know her child is lying ill.
Alone, waiting for her to come ;
They cannot guess what pangs her poor heart fill :
—Now it is over, and she hurries home.
Home—call it home? A garret bare.
Yes, it is home—her child is there.

She holds sweet bouquets in her arm,
Her triumphs, valued for *his* sake,
"My child" she cries in vague alarm
"I have returned—look up! awake!"
No movement, none. Ah! vain she cries
And tries to ope his lifeless eyes.

The sweet bright flowers around them lie
A contrast to such misery,
Shown by the rising moon's fair light.
Ah! yes—"She did her best to-night."

FERRARS.

AN AFRICAN MONT BLANC.

IT WAS reserved for Mr. H. H. Johnston, F. R. G. S., to penetrate the mysteries of the "Monarch of African Mountains." The first glimpse of Kilima-Njaro was obtained long before the party reached its base. And here it may be proper to explain that this name is given to the whole mountain-mass, which consists of two huge peaks and a number of smaller ones, just below the third parallel south of the equator. The highest of the peaks is called Kibô, is eighteen thousand eight hundred and eighty feet above the level of the sea, and is always covered with snow on the top, and occasionally down to the altitude of fourteen thousand feet. This is, so far as is at present known, the highest mountain in Africa. The twin-peak, Kimawenzi, is sixteen thousand two hundred and fifty feet high, and although above the snow-line, is not continuously snow-clad. The whole mass is of volcanic origin, and the two peaks are the craters of extinct volcanoes. Approached from the south-east, the mountain has the appearance of lonely isolation, and presents a truly remarkable spectacle, with its peaks towering to the clouds and its glittering snow-caps. It was not until the thirteenth day after leaving Mombasa that the party entered the state of Mosi, ruled over by the chief Mandara. This little kingdom is of about the same area as London, and is on the lower slope of the mountain, between three and four thousand feet above the sea. Splendid views are obtained from it over the plains below, and its condition is anything but one of savagery. The agriculture is of a high order, and the people, although nearly naked, are both intelligent and industrious. Finding that the feuds between the Mosi people and the other mountain tribes were a bar to his progress through Mandara's country, Mr. Johnston withdrew, and negotiated treaties of peace and commerce with one of the rival potentates whose territory extended nearer the summit. Before doing this, however, he had to retire to a place called Taveita, through which he had passed on his way to Mandara's. Of this place he says: "From the day of my first arrival up to the time of my final departure, it seemed to me one of the loveliest spots on the earth's surface." Taveita is a sort of trade centre of the district, and is ruled over by a senate of notables, called the "Wazêc," or elders, who preserve law and order, and arbitrate in disputes between the resident natives and the nomadic traders. Its population is about six thousand. From Taveita, Mr. Johnston negotiated with the chief of Maranû, a State rather larger than Middlesex, on the south-eastern flank of the mountain. After many preliminaries and much changing of presents, he was at length admitted into this kingdom, and had positively to crawl into it through the defensive stockades which it seems the custom in this country for the separate peoples to erect around their domains. Between the kingdom of Maranû and the summit of Kibô there lay no opposing tribe, so that, having obtained guides, Mr. Johnston was, after a little delay, enabled to continue his journey to the snow. The route crossed a fine river, and lay at first through a smiling and fertile country, with signs of cultivation and flourishing banana-groves up to an altitude of five

thousand five hundred feet. Shortly after that cultivation ceased, and a healthy district was reached, with grassy knolls and numerous small streams of running water. The ascent was very gradual, and the first night was spent in camp at six thousand five hundred feet. Leaving this, a dense forest was reached at seven thousand feet; then a district of uplands thickly covered with moss and ferns, studded with short gnarled trees, and teeming with begonias and sweet-scented flowering shrubs, but with few signs of animal life. At nine thousand feet, the region was clear of forest, and merely covered with grass; but higher up, the woodland began again, and water became very abundant. The third camp was formed at ten thousand feet, and here the party encountered a terrific thunderstorm and rainfall. It was succeeded by a fair and serene morning, leaving the two snow peaks in full view against a cloudless blue sky. At this point Mr. Johnston resided nearly a month, actively prosecuting his collecting and observing, and preparing for the final ascent. Then, one day, with three followers only, he started for great Kibô. For some two thousand feet higher, vegetation is abundant; and even at twelve thousand six hundred feet the party struck a pretty little stream, on the banks of which were patches of level greensward and abundance of gay flowers, while the spoor of buffalos was also observed. Bees and wasps were still to be seen at this high altitude, and bright little sunbirds darting about. But beyond thirteen thousand feet vegetation was seen only in dwarfed patches, and the ground became covered with boulders, lying in confused masses, with occasional huge slabs of rock, singularly marked like tortoise-shells. At thirteen thousand six hundred feet the last resident bird was noticed—a species of stonechat—although high-soaring kites and great-billed ravens were seen even higher up. At fourteen thousand one hundred and seventeen feet, the Zanzibari followers were thoroughly done up, and began to show unmistakable signs of fear of the "bogey" of the mountain, so they were left to prepare a sleeping-place for the night, while Mr. Johnston continued the ascent alone. At fifteen thousand one hundred and fifty feet he reached the central connecting ridge of Kilima-Njaro, and could see parts of both sides. The "Monarch" however, was veiled in clouds. "At length," he says, "after a rather steeper ascent than usual up the now smoother and sharper ridge, I suddenly encountered snow lying at my very feet, and nearly plunged headlong into a great rift filled with snow, that here seemed to cut across the ridge and interrupt it. The dense mist cleared a little in a partial manner, and I then saw to my left the black rock sloping gently to an awful gulf of snow, so vast and deep that its limits were concealed by fog. Above me a line of snow was just discernible, and altogether the prospect was such a gloomy one, with its all-surrounding curtain of sombre cloud, and its uninhabited wastes of snow and rock, that my heart sank within me at my loneliness. . . . Turning momentarily northwards, I rounded the rift of snow, and once more dragged myself now breathless and panting, and with aching limbs, along the slippery ridge of bare rock, which went evermounting upwards. . . . The feeling that overcame me when I sat and gasped for breath on the wet and slippery rocks at this great height was one of overwhelming isolation. I felt as if I should never more regain the force to move, and must remain and die amid this horrid solitude of stones and snow. Then I took some brandy-and-water from my flask, and a little courage came back to me. I was miserably cold, the driving mist having wetted me to the skin. Yet the temperature recorded here was above the freezing-point, being 35 degrees Fahr. . . . The mercury rose to 183.8. This observation, when properly computed, and with the correction added for the temperature of the intermediate air, gives a height of sixteen thousand three hundred and fifteen feet at the highest point I attained on Kilima-Njaro." When he returned to the camping-place, Mr. Johnston found that his three followers had deserted him, being thoroughly terrified, and certain that the white man had perished on the lonely heights.—*Chambers's Journal*.

LORD BROUGHAM, in characterizing the oratorical genius of Grattan, says that "Dante himself never conjured up a striking, a pathetic, and an appropriate image in fewer words than Mr. Grattan employed to describe his relation towards Irish independence, when, alluding to its rise in 1782 and its fall twenty years later he said: 'I sat by its cradle—I followed its hearse.'"

WHEN Dante was at the court of Sig.della Scala, then Sovereign of Verona, that prince said to him one day: "I wonder, Signor Dante, that a man so learned as you should be hated by all my court, and that this fool (pointing to his buffoon who stood by him) should be so beloved." Highly piqued at this comparison, Dante replied: "Your Excellency would wonder less if you consider that we like those best who most resemble ourselves."