BOOKMAKING circles the house of Sampson Low & Co. has recently been much talked of by reason of its publishing feat in the matter of Stanley's "Darkest Africa"; an account of the changes it has undergone since its foundation in 1790 will, therefore, be of interest.

Sampson Low was the name of the original founder, but he died while still a young man, and the responsibilities of the bookselling and publishing business he had established in Lamb's Conduit-street descended upon his son, whose christian name was also Sampson. Lamb's Conduit-street was a fashionable quarter at that time, and Sampson Low's establishment was a favourite resort of many of the literary geniuses of the day, including Macaulay and Lytton. The second Mr. Low also took his son into partnership, and it was at this stage that Mr. Edward Marston (the present head of the house) joined the firm, and added to it his Australian export business. To-day Messrs. Sampson Low are undoubtedly the largest export publishers in the world. It was when Mr. Sampson Low, jun., died, that his brother, Mr. Wm. Low, took his place, and at the same period Mr. Searle and Mr. Rivington became partners in the house. About 1881 Mr. Wm. Low died and the vacancy was filled by the eldest son of Mr. E. Marston, viz., Mr. Robt. B. Marston. The death of the elder Mr. Low removed the last living member bearing the founder's christian name, though young Mr. Charles Low, son of Mr. Wm. Low, holds an important position in the house.

Concerning the publications that this house has turned out, they are many and varied, including a huge variety of novels. Of the great successes in this line, "The Woman in White" is in the front rank, and then come Jules Verne's works, which have had an enormous sale. Of R. D. Blackmore's "Lorna Doone," the recently published edition quickly covered sixty thousand copies, although the book has been published over twenty years. William Black's novels have also sold remarkably well, as have also W. Clark Russell's sea stories.

With periodical literature the firm is also busy, producing the English edition of Harper's Magazine and Harper's Young People. Then there is The Publishers' Circular, The Fishing Gazette, The Nursing Record, Sporting Celebrities, etc., all belonging to this house. Nor must we omit to mention that Messrs. Low & Co. have published books by nearly all the leading American authors, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, Mrs. Beecher Stowe, Charles Dudley Warner, &c.; also works by most of the great travellers, viz., Stanley, Capt. Burnaby, Sir George Nares, Commander Markham, Dr. Lansdell, MacGahan, Serpa Pinto, Schweinfurth, Butler, &c.

In the course of a chat with Mr. Robt. Marston, our representative obtained from that gentleman some valuable expressions of opinion relative to the various departments of bookmaking. Concerning book paper, he said it was now produced with a much higher glazed than hitherto, the idea coming from America. This was, in his opinion, hardly so artistic as the old-fashioned plain paper, but it enabled printers to print almost any block—good, bad, or indifferent. The gloss could be obtained by running an inferior paper between cylinders. The price of paper was much reduced, and there was enormous competition in its manufacture. That building (St. Dunstan's House) often shook with the weight of paper that passed up the street for use at another house. These loads came entirely from the continent, but Messrs. Low & Co. used English-made paper almost exclusively.

Everything was now in favour of cheap books, and he (Mr. Marston) thought publishers were looking more to cheaper editions to recoup them. Few people now bought expensive books, and this was particularly the case with the bookstalls, although, of course, there were exceptions. Where Smith's stalls used to do a large sale in six-shilling novels, their orders were now almost entirely for the two-shilling class, the demand for the higher priced book having fallen almost to nothing. Two-shilling novels went off very well, but that was much overdone, and publishers were obliged to go for the very best authors.

CASCADES OF THE NEPOKO.
FROM STANLEY'S " DARKEST AFRICA."

Cascades of the Nepoko.
From Stanley's "Darkest Africa."
Continuing, Mr. Marston said there were certainly more facilities for getting a book done cheaper to-day than ever, especially if it was printed in the country. But in order to get work done well and quickly, Messrs. Low always employed London printers, with the exception of one or two Edinburgh houses. As to the class of printing, he preferred a good plain type with a broad margin to any elaborate fancy work. Pickering was still as good an example as could be followed, and printers would do well to keep his work constantly before them. Of course, that class of work was only possible in the better class books. Printers now in the matter of photographic reproductions and photogravure. For Low’s edition of Walton, all the photo-gravures had been done by Dawson, of London, and they were highly spoken of. Although process blocks might not be artistically the correct thing, yet they enabled the publisher to illustrate a book which otherwise he would not illustrate. The early wood engraved illustrations were, he thought, quite equal to anything that was produced to-day in England or America. The illustrations to “Favourite English Poems and Poets” were beautiful, and in his opinion held their own against anything to-day got into one groove and turned out one book after another without any variation. Though publishers might not order the work to be done differently, yet they liked to have suggestions made to them. With regard to cheap binding some very pretty imitations of leather, etc., were now turned out in paper, but they were badly. The Stanley book was bound by two firms, Messrs. Burn and Messrs. Leighton, Son & Hodge.

Questioned upon the subject of illustration, Mr. Marston said it was one in which he had taken the deepest interest, in fact, he had made quite a study of process blocks, and had translated one or two books on the subject. He did not think England was behind newer, although produced forty years ago. But now-a-days it was difficult to get leading artists to draw for illustration, it paid them better to paint pictures. As an example of modern work, Stanley’s “Darkest Africa” was a very good example. Some of the pictures were by the best artists, and the reproduction was by the best wood engravers.

The illustrations that accompany this article will testify to the truth of the above remarks, Mr. Marston having kindly permitted us the use of the engraved blocks. “Darkest Africa” has been so generally reviewed in the press that perhaps any more remarks on the subject are scarcely needed. Its sale has been

ADDRESS TO REBEL OFFICERS AT KAVALLI.

FROM STANLEY’S “DARKEST AFRICA.”
phenomenal in every country in which editions have been published and the demand still seems as large as ever.

At a dinner to celebrate the publication of Mr. Stanley’s “In Darkest Africa,” given by the publishers, Messrs. Sampson Low & Co., Mr. E. Marston, head of the firm, gave some interesting details of the “making” of the book. He said: “You will all admit that Mr. Stanley’s recent passage through Darkest Africa was a grand feat. Well, I am inclined to think that the way he wrote his account of that grand feat was not much less remarkable. The work contains,

keep on doing so for fifty days consecutively, without any break or relaxation whatever to speak of, is quite another matter. Now let me glance at the manufacture of these volumes. In view of the enormous amount of public interest felt in this book I see no objection for once to depart from our usual reticence in such matters, and to say that we have orders in the house for over 16,000 copies, besides 6,000 of a colonial edition, and other issues. You know the whole thing had to be rushed through the press, and I assure you it has taxed the resources of Messrs. Clowes’ vast establishment for many weeks. In the

roughly speaking, a thousand pages of forty lines each. On January 25th of this year, not a line of it had been written. Then it was that Mr. Stanley sat down at the Villa Victoria in Cairo, with a firm determination that nothing earthly should stop him till he had finished it. In fifty days he completed his self-imposed task or rather the task which he says I imposed upon him. This means that he not merely wrote out, but that he had to think out, twenty pages, say, 8,000 words a day. Gentlemen, if you wish to know what an amount of endurance and perseverance that means, I recommend you to try the experiment yourselves. It is easy enough to write twenty very long pages a day, for one, two, or three days, but to

printing department the work has found employment for many weeks for 60 compositors, 17 readers, 12 reading boys, and about 200 machine-pressmen and warehousemen. The paper consumed in printing the edition de luxe, the colonial edition, the canvassing edition, and the trade edition weighs 65 ½ tons. This paper, if it had been laid out in single sheets, would have formed a white carpet for Mr. Stanley to have walked upon from the Congo to Zanzibar, or if laid sheet upon sheet it would have formed a tower something like the Tour Eiffel. The type and material used weighed 7 ½ tons, and there were 2,500,000 types used in each of the above editions. Eighteen steam printing machines and ten hand presses consumed 1 ½