

STANLEY'S EXPLOITS, OR, CIVILISING AFRICA



By D. J. Nicoll

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INTRODUCTION

Capitalism is daily robbery, set up by the original theft of nearly all the world's resources by a tiny minority of people. This control is what makes exploitation possible, and the logic of capitalism is that you can never have too much profit. In fact, they can never get enough: there must always be new 'markets' to loot. Colonialism, for all the talk about 'Christianity', 'civilisation' and 'protection' was about raw materials and captive markets.

We never need an excuse to reprint work by David Nicoll, the anarchist militant who did time for exposing the framing of the Walsall Anarchists and agitated tirelessly as an editor, speaker and writer. But despite the fact that it's well written, can any pamphlet over 100 years old say anything of relevance now? Nicoll uses all those nineteenth century words – 'savages', 'civilisation', 'explorers'; but read a page and you'll see he knows who

is worthy of contempt, who the enemy is. Firstly this shows that as long as there has been colonialism there have been anti-colonialists – this internationalism could have been more effective but it does have a track record. Secondly, while Nicoll is not original in his criticisms, he is revolutionary in his attitude. He is not someone who opposes only the worst excesses of colonialism or capitalism but accepts or wants to spread its everyday alienation and exploitation. This is not charity, but solidarity: a recognition that European and African workers – then as now – fight under different circumstances, but they fight the same enemy.

Further reading

On Nicoll:

David Nicoll, *Life in English prisons*;

The Walsall Anarchists (both published by KSL)

George Cores, *Personal recollections of the anarchist past*
(KSL)

John Quail, *The slow burning fuse*

'David Nicoll memorial meeting', *KSL Bulletin* #16

(September 1998)

<https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/gxd2xh>

You can read an account of Sheffield anarchists
distributing this pamphlet at a meeting of Stanley's on the
15th of May 1891 at:

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP189106>
[19.2.44.5](#)

On Africa:

Sam Mbah & I. E. Igariwey *African anarchism* (See Sharp
Press)

STANLEY'S EXPLOITS, OR, CIVILISING AFRICA

IT may be interesting at the present time, when journalists, middle-class orators, lion comiques, pious tub-thumpers, and all the advertising agencies of a commercial civilization, combine to raise a deafening chorus of praise to Stanley, to state why we Socialists are not in an abject State of admiration, and to support our objections to this modern commercial hero by indisputable evidence.

First, we do not admire Mr. Stanley because we do not like his methods of exploration, which resemble more the piratical operations of Blackbeard or Teach, or the savage warfare of the Spanish conquistadores, than the peaceful marches of his predecessors in African exploration. Secondly, we have still less liking for the ultimate result of his journeys, which carry slavery, misery, degradation, and death in their train, and leave a long and bloody trail behind them. With regard to the first objection, we must

admit that there is some excuse for Stanley: his early occupation, and the scenes he witnessed while pursuing it, may in some measure account for his brutal carelessness of human life. Everyone knows that he was originally a war correspondent. According to his own account he was first employed by American papers during the great Civil War. In the same capacity he witnessed battles between American troops and the Indians. His next experience was in 1868, with Napier in Abyssinia, when the main incidents of the war were a battue of helpless savages and the burning of Magdala. In 1869 he was present at some of the bloody scenes of the repression of the republican insurrection in Spain, when the people were mercilessly butchered at Valencia and Saragossa. While in Madrid, "fresh from the carnage at Valencia," he was summoned to Paris by the manager of the *New York Herald*, of which he was correspondent, and was sent in search of Livingstone,

who had disappeared in Central Africa, and was generally believed to be dead.

The incidents of that journey are told by Stanley in the well-known work, "How I found Livingstone." I may mention, here that whenever I produce any evidence against Mr. Stanley it is always taken from his own works and his own words. The unfortunate natives who have come in contact with the valiant explorer cannot tell us their side of the story. Stanley is his own accuser, and doubtless, like all men, he makes the best of his little eccentricities. If those who have suffered by them could tell their own tale, no doubt it would be considerably blacker than it is at present. Still, we will own that he pursued his task of finding Livingstone with more humanity than has characterized his later expeditions. It is true that in chapter vi., pp. 217-18 of that work he admits submitting one of his followers to "a vigorous and most necessary

application of my donkey-lash,” and “to flogging right and left to rouse the pagazis and soldiers up.” He also embarked upon a wicked and useless war in alliance with the slave-hunting Arabs of Unyanyembe against an African chief, Mirambo, who had successfully resisted their encroachments. Mr. Stanley tells how his allies in this war were fond “of decapitating and inflicting vengeful gashes in dead bodies” (p. 279). On p. 282 he relates how they surprised one of Mirambo’s people asleep, “whose head they stretched backward and cut off as though he were a goat or a sheep.” Nice allies for a pioneer of Christianity and civilisation.¹ These incidents are, however, only worth mentioning as illustrations of the character of this pioneer of civilisation, and we shall find that his passion for cruel slaughter attained a still higher development later on.

After his return from finding Livingstone, Stanley

1 And yet, although even then he assumed this lofty character, Mr. Stanley recounts these atrocities as though they were rather amusing.

accompanied the army of General Wolseley in the Ashantee expedition, and was present during the defeat of the Ashantees and the burning of Coomassie. Stanley, in his book "Coomassie and Magdala," curiously enough censures the English general for his mildness towards the enemy. In criticising his own expeditions we shall have no occasion to blame Stanley for weakness.

But Stanley was soon to play a more distinguished part. Dr. Livingstone was dead, and the proprietors of the *New York Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* were anxious to find a successor for the man whose name was famous throughout the civilised world. To these smart business men it seemed fit that the prophet's mantle should fall upon the shoulders of the brisk young American journalist. Stanley was accordingly sent off into the wilds of Africa to complete the discoveries of the dead man. He started from Zanzibar on November 12, 1874, with a well-equipped

army of three hundred Zanzibaris, some of whom were well experienced alike in exploring, ivory-trading, and slave-hunting. Mr. Stanley first journeyed in the direction of the great lakes where, however, he did not at first make many discoveries of great importance. Still the proprietors of the *New York Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* expected something for their money, and it was possibly with a view of providing them with some sensational articles that Stanley engaged in a series of wars with several savage tribes, the incidents of which are both instructive and interesting as illustrating the methods usually adopted by this apostle of civilisation in dealing with the natives of Africa. The incidents were deemed so extraordinary that Col. Yule (an old soldier, eminent also as a geographer, who took a great interest in primitive peoples) and H. M. Hyndman drew the attention of the Royal Geographical Society and the public to the “civilised warfare” carried on

by the representative of the *New York Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph*.²

The first letter of Mr. Stanley detailing his conflicts with the natives was printed in the *Daily Telegraph* of October 15, 1875. It tells us there how, while he was engaged in palaver with the elders of the Waturu, that

“It soon became evident, however, that though the elders were content the warriors were not, as they could be seen hurrying by in scores and gesticulating violently in crowds. ... As we watched them we noted that about two hundred detached themselves from the gesticulating crowds east of the camp, and disappeared hurrying to the thick bush west of us. Soon afterwards one of my men returned from that direction bleeding profusely from the

²Accounts of this civilised warfare, in longer extracts than can I am able to give from Mr. Stanley’s letters, will be found in a pamphlet entitled “Mr. H. M. Stanley and the Royal Geographical Society, being the record of a protest” by Col. Henry Yule and H. M. Hyndman. Bickers and Son, Leicester Square, 1878.

face and arms, and reported that he and a youth named Sulieman were out collecting firewood, when they were attacked by a large crowd of savages who were hidden in the bush. A knobstick had crushed the man's nose, and a spear had severely wounded him in the arm, but he had managed to escape, while Sulieman was killed, a dozen spears having been plunged in his back."

The savages afterwards fired a shower of arrows upon the camp. Stanley's men then set upon them, and, being well armed, easily routed them. Here is his own description of the victory :-

"The skirmishers now returned, and announced that fifteen of the enemy were killed, while a great many were wounded and borne off by their friends. All my men had distinguished themselves. Even 'Bull,' my British bull-dog, had seized one of the Waturu by the leg, and had given him a taste of the power of the sharp

canines of his breed before the *poor* savage was *mercifully* despatched by a Snider bullet,”

The italics are mine. This passage certainly shows a keen relish for slaughter and cruelty. You would think that the killing of one and the wounding of another man had been sufficiently avenged by the slaughter of fifteen men and the wounding of many more; but Mr. Stanley is not satisfied. His taste for massacre, acquired by seeing savages and rebellious crowds shot down in heaps by a storm of bullets and grapeshot from the arms-of-precision of civilised troops, has not been sufficiently gratified. On the next day the “war” was resumed. Mr. Stanley has witnessed the burning of Coomassie and Magdala, and now desires to have a little illumination on his own account. He continues:

“Accordingly, I selected four *experienced* men to lead four several detachments, and gave orders that they

should march in different directions through the valley and meet at some high rocks distant five miles off; that they should seize upon all cattle, and burn every village as soon as taken.”

The word “experienced” we have put in italics is worth noting. We suppose they were “experienced” in savage warfare and burning villages. In that case it is probable that these men who commanded Mr. Stanley’s infernal columns were “experienced” in the atrocities of Arab slave-hunting expeditions, and no doubt they had now obtained work which they enjoyed. Unhappily, however, one of these detachments fell in with a strong force of the men whose villages they were going to burn, and were slaughtered to a man. The second very nearly shared the same fate, but was rescued by reinforcements despatched to the spot by Stanley. He then describes with unctious the work of the other detachments:

“Meanwhile, smoke was seen issuing from the south and south-east, informing us that the third and fourth detachments were pursuing their way victoriously; and soon a score or more villages were enwrapped in dense volumes of smoke. Even at a distance of eight miles we beheld burning villages, and shortly after the blazing settlements in the north and east announced our triumph on all sides... The next day we renewed the battle with sixty good men, who received instructions to proceed to the extreme length of the valley and destroy what had been left on the previous day. These came to a strong and large village on the north-east, which, after a slight resistance, they entered, loading themselves with grain, and afterwards setting the village on fire. Long before noon it was clearly seen that the savages had had enough of war, and were quite demoralised, so that our people returned through the silent and blackened valley without

molestation.”

Now, even supposing that the previous massacre was amply justified by the “offences” committed by the natives, yet nothing can justify the acts of incendiarism and pillage committed by Mr. Stanley. It was not a war upon men, it was a war upon women and children, who were left to starve amid the “silent and blackened valley,” which had once flourished in abundance and resounded with the innocent mirth of thoughtless savages, who had no idea that an enterprising war correspondent was on his way to “civilise” them.

It is not surprising to find after these incidents that Mr. Stanley had a few more conflicts with other native tribes. Here is another charming incident, which I quote in full. It appeared in a letter published in the *Daily Telegraph*, November 15, 1875, and describes some events which took place on the shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza while

Stanley was engaged in trading with the Wavuma, a native tribe of the district:

“While we were bargaining for potatoes with this party the other canoes came up and blocked the boat, while the people began to lay surreptitious hands upon everything; but we found their purpose out, and I warned the robbers away with my gun. They jeered at this, and immediately seized their spears and shields, while one crew hastened away with some beads it had stolen, and which a man insolently held up to my view, mockingly inviting us to catch him. At the dangerous example of this I fired, and the man fell dead in his place. The others prepared to launch their spears, but the repeating rifle was too much for the crew of so-called warriors, who had hastened like pirates to pillage us. Three were shot dead, and as they retreated my elephant rifle smashed their canoes, the results of which we saw in the confusion attending each

discharge. After a few rounds from the big gun we continued on our way, still hugging the shores of Uvuma, for it was unnecessary to fly after such an exhibition of inglorious conduct on the part of fifteen canoes, containing in the aggregate over a hundred men.”

Mr. Stanley seems here to have revived on his own account the ancient criminal law, by punishing the petty theft of a few paltry beads with death. Still the good gentleman doubtless suffered considerable disappointment, with which we are sure the kind-hearted reader must sympathise. Fancy! the cowardly natives would not stop to be shot down by Stanley’s repeating rifle, so only “three were shot dead” and a few canoes smashed by the elephant rifle. What a falling off was there from the glorious slaughter of the Waturu!

In the *Daily Telegraph* of August 7, 1876, we find Mr. Stanley in hot water again with the natives of Bambireh, an

island on the western side of Albert Nyanza. These lawless savages dragged Stanley's boat ashore and stole his oars and a drum. On the whole, their attitude was threatening, and the explorer wanted to get away. He says:

“As soon as I saw the savages had arrived in the presence of Shekka with our drum, I shouted to my men to push the boat into the water. With one desperate effort my crew of eleven hands lifted and shot it far into the lake, the impetus they had given it causing it to drag them all into deep water. In the meantime the savages, uttering a furious yell of disappointment and baffled rage, came rushing like a whirlwind towards their canoes at the water's edge. I discharged my elephant rifle with two large conical bullets into their midst; and then assisting one of my crew into the boat told him to help his fellows in while I continued the fight. My double-barrelled shotgun, loaded

with buckshot was next discharged with terrible effect, for without drawing a single bow or launching a single spear they fell back upon the slope of the hill, leaving us to exert our wits to get ourselves out of the cove before the enemy should decide to man the canoes. My crew was composed of picked men, and in this dire emergency they did ample justice to my choice. Though we were without oars they were at no loss for a substitute. As soon as they found themselves in the boat they tore up the seats and footboards and began to paddle, while I was left to single out with my rifle the most prominent and boldest of the enemy. Twice I succeeded in dropping men determined on launching the canoes; and seeing the chief who commanded the party that took the drum, I took deliberate aim with my elephant rifle at him. That bullet, I have since been told, killed the chief and two others who happened to be standing a few paces behind him; and this

extraordinary result had more effect, I think, on the superstitious minds of the natives than all previous or subsequent shots. On getting out of the cove we saw two canoes loaded with men coming out in pursuit from another small inlet. I permitted them to come within a hundred yards of us, and this time I used the elephant rifle with explosive balls. Four shots killed five men and sunk the canoe. This decisive affair disheartened the enemy, and we were left to pursue our way unmolested; not however, without hearing a ringing voice shouting out to us, "Go and die in the Nyanza!" When the savages counted their losses, they found fourteen dead and wounded with ball and buckshot, which, although I should consider to be very dear payment for the robbery of eight ash oars and a drum, was barely equivalent in fair estimation to the intended massacre of ourselves."

The reader's attention is called to this last sentence, for

it is doubtful whether anyone will agree with Stanley that the killing and wounding of fourteen men was not an adequate punishment for the “intended” massacre of Mr. Stanley and his followers. He did not consider it enough, for we find him soon afterwards engaging in another expedition of vengeance. Another fact worthy of notice is the use of “explosive balls,” generally known as explosive bullets. The use of these missiles, on account of the diabolical wounds they inflict, has been forbidden in “civilised warfare.” Stanley, however, considered them quite good enough for savages. This fiendish cruelty – for which there is not the least defence, as he could have stopped the pursuit of the two canoes without using them – makes his yearnings for the “spread of the Gospel” among the natives of Africa sound like the most detestable hypocrisy. The *Daily Telegraph* of August 10, 1876, contains an amusing rhapsody on the pleasures of rest

after massacring the inhabitants of Bambireh which reminds one of the satisfied purring of the tiger after completely gorging himself with human flesh. The very beginning is laughable in its hypocrisy:

“Sweet is the Sabbath day to the toil-worn traveller [after a bout of shooting savages, be it observed]; happy is the long sea-tossed mariner after his arrival in port; and gladsome were the days of calm after our troublesome (!!)

exploration of the Nyanza. The brusque storms, the continued rains, the cheerless grey clouds, the wild waves, the loneliness of the islands, and the inhospitality (!!)

of the natives, were like mere faint phantasmagoria of the memory – so little did we heed what was passed while enjoying the luxury of this rest from our toils. Still, it added to our pleasure to be able to conjure up in the mind the varied incidents of the long lake journey; and they served to enliven and employ the mind, like condiments

quickenig digestion.”

Mr. Stanley’s complaints of the “inhospitality” of the natives are rather amusing, Perhaps, if that gentleman had been a guileless savage, and someone had come round setting fire to his house and firing explosive bullets at him, it is possible that he would have been “inhospitable.” His reference to the “varied incidents” of his journey serving to “enliven (!!) and employ the mind, like condiments quickening digestion,” is very suggestive of the tiger smiling blandly after a good gorge which fills him with a sense of comfortable repletion. Mr. Stanley continues: “As the memory flew over the lengthy track of exploration, how fondly it gazed upon the many picturesque bays, margined with water-lilies and lotus plants, or by the green walls of the slender reed-like papyrus. Then after a lot more talk about “green islands,” “rich grain-bearing plains,” “soft-outlined hills,” “tall, dark woods,” Stanley indulges in a

vision of Christianity and commercial civilisation. After speaking of how his memory clung to Uganda, “the beautiful land, with its intelligent king and no less remarkable people,” Mr. Stanley’s imagination from the present Uganda “painted a future dressed in a robe of civilisation; it saw each gentle hill crowned by a happy village and a spired church from which the bells sounded the call to a gospel service.”

What sickening cant from a person who had just been inculcating the gospel by a system of wholesale murder! But Mr. Stanley remembers that trade follows not only the flag but the missionary, who makes an excellent commercial traveller, and he resumes with another flight of his imagination:

“It saw the hill slopes prolific with the fruits of horticulture, and the valleys waving fields of grain; it saw the land smiling with affluence and plenty, its bays

crowded with the dark hulls of trading vessels: it heard the sounds of craftsmen at their work, the roar of manufactories and foundries, and the ever-buzzing noise of enterprising industry.”

This picture of “enterprising industry” may commend itself to those of our readers who are the fortunate possessors of a commercial mind. Those who are not blest in this important respect will perhaps not be so pleased with its manifold beauties. To these it may seem that the beautiful land of Uganda will not be greatly improved by being turned into a manufacturing district after the model of our Black Country. Nor will its “remarkable people” achieve a higher sense of the blessings of civilised life after labouring for twelve or fourteen hours a day amid “the roar of manufactories and foundries,” by going home to a dark, close den in some filthy, reeking slum, to watch the way in which their thin

starved children are degenerating through starvation, dirt, and disease, into puny, miserable abortions of a once vigorous and happy race. The “many picturesque bays, margined by water-lilies and lotus plants, or by the green walls of the slender, reed-like papyrus,” will lose somewhat of their charm when they have a chemical factory on their shores vomiting sweltering smoke, and pouring forth a green poisonous stream into the placid waters of the lake. Nor will those happy people of Uganda, who trudge under heavy burdens to “the dark hulls of trading vessels” have much cause to bless Mr. Stanley as they writhe beneath the whips of his successors, even though they may receive weekly the high wage of the casual London docker. It is even possible that, the inhabitant of the “happy village” on the “gentle hill” may not greatly rejoice when “from the spired church the bells sound the call to a gospel service,” when he remembers that he is starving

upon a wretched wage, and that though there are “waving fields of grain” in the valleys, and the land is “smiling with affluence and plenty,” yet the affluence and plenty is not for him but for his hard taskmasters, those newly-imported pests, the European pests, the European landlord and capitalist. It may be profane, but we cannot help thinking that he may be inclined to say “damn the gospel service!”

We now come to another instance of “inhospitality” on the part of the natives. A little while after, Mr. Stanley, having finished “resting,” determines to start once again upon his “exploring” expedition. At this period he is much disturbed in his mind by a polite message from an African chief – Rwoma, the King of Southern Uzina – through whose territory Stanley desire to pass. Here is the message in full:

“Rwoma sends salaams to the white man; he does not want the white man’s cloth, beads, or wine, and the white

man must not pass through his country. Rwoma does not want to see him, or any other man with long red hair down to his shoulders, white face, and big red eyes. Rwoma is not afraid of him, but if the white man will come near his country Rwoma and Mirambo will fight him.”

Rwoma showed his good sense by refusing to have anything to do with Stanley; but that pioneer of civilisation was only held back from giving Rwoma and his tribe a taste of the resources of civilisation by the reflection that Rwoma was the proud possessor of “150 muskets,” and had several thousand warriors at his back. He therefore gave up this idea, and, abandoning his intention of marching through Rwoma’s territory by force if necessary, took the lake route to Uganda, borrowing some canoes off a friendly chief for this purpose. In crossing the lake Stanley halted at Mahyiga island, five miles south of Bambireh, and one mile south of Iroba. Being in the near

neighbourhood of the natives of Bambireh, he thought that he had not shot enough of them before, so he determined on another massacre. He says in the same letter;

“Remembering the bitter injuries I had received from the savages of Bambireh [they had stolen eight oars and a drum], and the death by violence we had so narrowly escaped, I resolved, unless the natives made amends for their cruelty and treachery, to make war on them, and for this purpose I camped on Mahyiga Island [He then took measures accordingly]. I despatched a message to the natives of Bambireh to the effect that if they delivered their king and the two principals into my hands, I would make peace with them. At the same time, not trusting quite to the success of this, I sent a party to summon the king of Iroba, who very willingly came with three of his chiefs to save his people from the horrors of war. Upon their arrival I put them in chains, and told the canoe-men that the price of

their freedom was the capture of the King of Bambireh and his two principal chiefs.”

Here is Stanley, according to his own admission, loading the chiefs of a peaceful tribe with chains, who had come to save their people from “the horrors of war” – and what those horrors were we know too well – because another tribe had inflicted a trifling injury on him. This may be considered simple justice by explorers of the modern school, or by their comrades and friends the Arab slave-hunters, but to our minds it is simply abominable injustice and detestable tyranny.

The men of Iroba, however, succeeded in capturing the king of Bambireh, who was “chained heavily,” and the king and chiefs were restored to liberty. Then, not content with loading the king of Bambireh with chains, Stanley started for that island to massacre the natives. As he approached Bambireh, he saw that the savages were concealed in a

thick plantain-grove, where it was impossible for even Mr. Stanley's elephant rifle to reach them. It was necessary to get the poor wretches – who seemed inclined to remain on the defensive – out of their covert to shoot them down. We will tell the rest of the story in Mr. Stanley's own words:

“Perceiving that the savages of Bambireh were too strong for me to attack in the plantain-grove, I made for the opposite shore of the bay, where there were bare slopes covered with short green grass. The enemy, perceiving my intention to disembark, rose from the coverts and ran along the hills to meet us, which was precisely what I wished they would do, and accordingly I ordered my force to paddle slowly so as to give them time. In half an hour the savages were all assembled in knots and groups, and after approaching within a hundred yards of the beach, I formed my line of battle, the American and the English flags waving as our ensigns. Having anchored

each canoe so as to turn its broadside to the shore, I ordered a volley to be fired into one group which numbered about fifty, and the result was several killed and many wounded. The savages perceiving our aim and the danger of standing together, separated themselves and advanced to the water's edge, slinging stones and shooting arrows. I then ordered the canoes to advance within fifty yards of the shore, and to fire at close quarters. After an hour the savages saw that they could not defend themselves, and retreated up the slope where they continued still exposed to our bullets. I then caused the canoes to come together, and told them to advance in a body to the beach, as if about to disembark. This caused the enemy to make an effort to repulse our landing, and accordingly hundreds came down with their spears ready on the launch. When they were close enough, the bugle sounded a halt and another volley was fired into the

spearman, which had such a disastrous effect that they retired far away, and our work of chastisement was consummated. Not many cartridges were fired, but as the savages were so exposed, on a slope covered only with grass, and as the sun of the afternoon was directly behind us and in their faces, their loss was great. Forty-two were counted on the field lying dead, and over a hundred were seen to retire wounded, while on our side only two men suffered contusions from stones slung at us.”

How can one find words wherewith to characterise this infamous massacre of men who were only defending their shores from invasion against armed murderers, directed by a gentleman who arranged the deliberate and fiendish butchery as calmly as he afterwards wrote the account of it, and who, while shooting down the natives without mercy, took extremely good care not to expose himself or his men to the slightest risk from the primitive weapons of

these poor naked creatures. Be it observed that “only two men suffered contusions from stones” on Stanley’s side. This shows how safe the “fighting” was. There was not even the poor excuse of passion for this gratuitous bloodshed. Let it stand upon record that Mr. Stanley deliberately went out of his way to coldly slaughter a people whose only crime was that they had stolen some trifling articles and put the great and brave traveller in fear of his precious life. Mr. Stanley in his cold-blooded ferocity was more cowardly than Caligula, more wanton than Nero.

As might have been expected, Stanley’s glowing accounts of his glorious exploits attracted some considerable attention in England. Some impertinent persons troubled with stupid humanitarian scruples concerning the treatment of savages, generally known as the Aborigines Protection and the Anti-Slavery Societies, wrote to Lord Derby, who was then at the Foreign Office,

about Mr. Stanley's methods of advancing "civilisation." Strangely enough, his lordship appears to have sympathised with these stupid scruples, and in his reply through his secretary to these societies stated that he "has read with great regret the reports of the circumstances which seemed to have taken place" during Mr. Stanley's explorations, and "which have created such a painful impression in this country..." He also hoped that Mr. Stanley "would be able to afford some explanation or justification for his proceedings, which is not apparent from the reports which have been as yet received."

Mr. Hyndman, introduced by Col. Yule, brought the matter before the Royal Geographical Society; but they were met by the previous question. The chairman, Sir Rutherford Alcock, however stated that he did

"Not believe there were two shades of feeling with regard to the conflicts of Mr. Stanley with the natives of

Africa. He thought Lord Derby had expressed the feeling of the whole nation when he said that Mr. Stanley's later letters were read with great regret, and that they created a most painful impression throughout the country... No doubt there was a unanimous feeling with regard to his proceedings and all condemned in the very strongest way the circumstances, so far as they were known, of the apparent ruthless slaughter and violence which he had described in the second attack on the Island of Bambireh."

However, despite these answers, the Society decided to welcome Stanley on his return in 1878, in the full flush of his exploits during his descent of the Congo. On Thursday evening, February 7, Stanley was received at St. James's Hall, but he offered no explanation of his conduct save to sneer at his critics, and to show himself in his natural character of a blustering bully. The *Standard* of February 9, 1878, states that

“The Council of the Royal Geographical Society have too evidently feared to insist on an explanation lest Mr. Stanley in his blustering way, of which he gave the audience at St. James’s Hall a safe sample when he asked any of his critics to stand up that he might be ‘measured’ – should allege that the secret of the enquiry was English jealousy of American success.”

Nor has Mr. Stanley ever made an adequate explanation of his actions, save by a very weak attempt to excuse the slaughter at Bambireh. In this he stated that he sent some people belonging to a tribe of his ally M’tesa to buy food from the natives of Bambireh (*after* he had shot 14 of these with explosive bullets), and as Mr. Stanley might have expected, some of his friends were killed by the vengeful natives. We cannot doubt, taking all the circumstances into consideration, that Stanley sent them to be killed in order to have a pretext for massacre. Still,

Stanley made up for an inadequate defence of his own barbarities by abusing his accusers. He said they had given vent to much “vile, slanderous, and almost libellous abuse.” He imputed unworthy motives to them, and balanced the weakness of his case by the strength of his language. Both charges were utterly untrue. As to the motive of his adversaries, Mr. Stanley is rendered, by his own personal character, incapable of judging any action except from the standpoint of the meanest, basest, and most brutal passions. Men judge of other people by themselves, and surely this was the case with the emissary of the *Daily Telegraph*. As to the “vile, slanderous, and almost libellous abuse,” as it was pointed out at the time, no one had accused Stanley but Stanley himself.

A considerable section of the press, and even the Jingo press of the time, gave eloquent expressions of the

general feeling concerning Mr. Stanley's exploits, as a few quotations will show. The *Pall Mall Gazette* of February 11, 1878, said

“We must altogether demur to the doctrine stated in general terms that the explorer is always at liberty to ‘make war’ upon any savage tribe who threatened to obstruct his advance. *A European traveller penetrating into a country inhabited by savage tribes, whatever the services he may be seeking to render civilization, is an intruder.* He is not, as so many European philanthropists appear to suppose, the natural lord of the soil in mere virtue of his white skin. *Its black possessors have the perfect right to resist his invasion if they choose,* and should they do so we entirely deny that as a ‘pioneer of civilization’ he is entitled in the name of his mission to force his way through them by the use of elephant rifles and explosive bullets. Exploration under these conditions

is in fact exploration plus buccaneering, and though the map may be improved and enlarged by the process, the cause of civilisation is not a gainer thereby but a loser.”

This condemnation applies equally to Stanley's later exploits, as will be seen further on. The *Saturday Review*, of February 16, spoke out strongly :—

“It is not ridiculous, it is not sentimental, to denounce war which is waged on mere savages in the interest of speculative capitalists and their journals. The horrors are the same as those over which the *Telegraph* wails when they befall the Turks. The women and children of ‘burning villages and blazing settlements’ suffer just as much, whether the missionary power that supplies the torch resides in Peterborough Court or in St. Petersburg. When ‘each gentle hill in Uganda is crowned by a happy village and a spired church from which the bells sound the call to a gospel service’, then perhaps this private Holy War of

Messrs Levy Lawson and Gordon Bennett will be justified by its fruits. 'The blessings of the Gospel of Peace,' as the *Record* said, and of Lord Houghton, will be on the work."

Similar comments appeared in other papers. Mr. Stanley has not been altogether insensible to these criticisms, and one proof of this may be found in his book, "Through the Dark Continent," where he has considerably toned down the account of his exploits, so altering some of the stories of the massacres he committed that it is almost impossible to recognise them as the same occurrences. He is also particularly careful to lay great stress on his own "gentleness," "forbearance," "mildness," "long-suffering," and "placability." Apologies on this score are needless.

Let me give some examples in his account of the battle with the Waturu, or Wanyaturu, as he calls them, in his book. He exaggerates the provocation given by the

savage, and greatly praises his own moderation. The incident of the bull-dog and his teeth is altogether omitted, and he glides lightly over the burning of the villages, so lightly that many readers would hardly notice it. His firing on the Wavuma, and shooting the man who stole the few beads, is greatly altered. According to his book, the Wavuma threw their spears before he fired, but a few sentences will serve to show how it differs from his letter:—

“Forming a line on each side of us, about thirty yards off, they flung their spears, which the boat’s crew avoided by dropping to the bottom of the boat. The canoes astern clapped their hands gleefully, showing me a large bunch of Matunda beads which had been surreptitiously extracted from the stern of the boat. I seized my repeating rifle and fired in earnest to right and left; the fellow with the beads was doubled up and the boldest of those nearest to us was disabled.”

Now, I wonder how it was Mr. Stanley forgot in his letters that the Wavuma attacked him first, an important fact that quite changes the story. It is surely strange that Mr. Stanley should only remember this crucial point *after* he had been accused of inhumanity in taking such a frightful revenge for the theft of a few beads. It is still more curious that he didn't bring it forward on the public platform in answer to the attacks made upon him. Perhaps, however, he thought that the public might look upon him as it does upon a witness in an important case, who, having admitted a fact very damaging to himself, hastens, at the first moment he understands what he has done, to "correct" his evidence. Mr. Stanley's behaviour to the people of Bambireh is also explained away in a similar fashion.

I have dealt first with the facts cited against Mr. Stanley by Colonel Yule and Mr. Hyndman. Some people

may say that this is ancient history, but still I would ask them if they think Stanley's character has changed very much. It is true, he is not so frank nowadays in giving the reasons for his numerous conflicts with the natives; but when we find that his journeys can still be clearly traced across the centre of Africa by a blood-red trail strewn with corpses, one cannot help doubting whether Stanley has acquired more humanity in later years. Most of us have a vivid recollection of his sensational letters to the *Telegraph* upon his battles with the "cannibals" of the Congo. It seems very doubtful now, according to Mr. Stanley's later book entitled "The Congo," whether these were cannibals at all, but one thing is quite certain – the bulk of Mr. Stanley's allies in that famous journey were. In the beginning of the journey Mr. Stanley was escorted by Tippoo Tib, an Arab slave dealer, who with other Arabs had established their dominion over the Manyema, a

nation of cannibals, and it was with an escort of cannibals commanded by Arab slave-hunters that Mr. Stanley started on his journey. No wonder the natives resisted; the other alternative of becoming slaves or being eaten was too unpleasant. It is true, Tippoo Tib and his comrades left Stanley in the heat of the fight to struggle on alone, but the natives were not to know the difference between Stanley's men and their escort. It is curious to note, also, that the first shot that was fired came from Stanley's party. It was fired by Billali, the Arab boy who carried Mr. Stanley's big gun, and who, doubtless, thought that he was as much justified in potting natives with it as his master. Those who would go into this question further are referred to the second volume of "Through the Dark Continent."

Stanley's march to the "rescue" of Emin Pasha³ has

3 It is worth noting that even this expedition, which has been praised as if it were a philanthropic work, was simply undertaken for the purpose of commercial

also been marked by continual battles with the natives, and it is probable enough that these contests were provoked by the over bearing conduct of his own men, who had not lost the manners and customs of the slavehunters by “exploring” in the company of Mr. Stanley. He tells himself how one of his men, a Soudanese soldier marched into the village of a friendly tribe and deliberately began shooting the people down; as it was a “friendly” tribe he was handed over to them to be dealt with according to the law of “blood for blood.” But supposing this had not been a “friendly” tribe – what then? The natives would then have been forced to avenge

exploitation. The *Daily News* of Monday, April 7, 1890, gives an account of a book by a German missionary (Father Schynze), who stated that the expedition was got up by a shrewd Scotch merchant (Sir W. Mackinnon) who had probably never heard of Emin Pasha before, but who saw an opportunity of getting hold of Emin’s province and 4,000 cwt. of ivory that he had in his possession. So the slaughter caused by the expedition cannot be excused on the plea of philanthropy. Plain robbery and murder was its only aim and object.

themselves and would thus have furnished Stanley with the pretext for a massacre. The mere fact of Mr. Stanley being accompanied by a strong armed force, and insisting on marching through all the countries he came to whether the people liked it or not, is quite sufficient to account for all these conflicts. I would ask any man if under similar circumstances an armed body of foreigners of suspicious appearance forced their way through our country, behaving themselves like conquerors, whether we should not resist, especially if members of this expedition sometimes walked into our villages and deliberately began shooting the people down? If we take these things into consideration, we may understand why a continual slaughter of the natives with “smoking Remingtons” is still a feature of Mr. Stanley’s onward march.

But there is one thing Mr. Stanley is frank about, and that is his treatment of his own followers. In this he shows

that he has not changed with time. The following instance of how he serves them when mad with hunger is taken from his letter dated Ituri River, August 28, 1888. It runs as follows:—

“Hitherto our people were sceptical of what we told them. The suffering had been so awful, calamities so numerous, the forest so endless apparently, that they refused to believe that by and by we should see plains and cattle, the Nyanza, and the white man Emin Pasha. We felt as if we were dragging them along with a chain round their necks, ... They turned a deaf ear to our entreaties, for, driven by hunger and suffering, they sold their rifles and equipments for a few ears of Indian corn. ... Perceiving that prayers and entreaties and mild punishments were of no avail, I resolved to visit upon the wretches the death penalty. Two of the worst cases accordingly were taken and hanged in the presence of all.”

Mr. Stanley's receipt for dealing with men driven to desperation by hunger might be copied by his middle-class admirers in future trade depressions, when unemployed men mad with famine may sack a few bakers' shops. The only obstacle, doubtless, to the gallows as a remedy for discontent is that the English workers have not yet sunk to the abject servility of Mr. Stanley's escort, and the people who applied the remedy might perchance have a taste of their own medicine.

It is not surprising, considering the sufferings of the men – who perished by scores during the march – and the remorseless cruelty of the tyrant at their head, that later on a “mutiny” broke out, headed by one of Emin Pasha's men, who by this time had been “rescued.” The scene that followed was well described by a fervent admirer of Stanley (Mr. Stevens, an American correspondent) at the Savage Club, on Saturday, February 15, 1890, and

appeared in the newspapers on the following Monday. I give it in full, and ask the reader to remember that it was told by a friend of the explorer:—

“At that time Stanley was so weak that he could not turn in his bed without help; but so strong was his iron will that he insisted on being taken out of bed and propped in a chair. He took a strong stimulant and had himself carried outside his tent, where the people were all drawn up, and where the mutineer, who had been tried and found guilty, awaited his sentence. The chair was put down, and Stanley faced the miscreant, the fever in his eye, and his thin hand outstretched, ‘We have come through a thousand difficulties and dangers to save you,’ he said, ‘and this is our reward. Depart to God!’ The people thereupon rushed upon the man, shouting, ‘What shall we do with him?’ ‘Send him to God, I say,’ shouted Stanley, pointing to the overhanging limb of a tree. A rope was

thrown over it, noosed round the miscreant's neck, and he was swiftly run up and soon dangled a corpse in the air."

Other mutineers were subjected to "mild punishments" – that is, "some were flogged and others ironed." You would think this would be sufficient to maintain "order" in an expedition, but it is not enough for Stanley: he must introduce that other civilising influence – the gallows – into the African wilds as well. Perhaps the savage may find a good use for it one of these days, and send somebody else to "God." We mention no names; but there are some people who are too "good" for this wicked world. Before quitting this subject we would like to say that if Major Bartelott administered Stanley's system of ironing, flogging, and hanging liberally among his men, we can quite understand why his cannibal escort made short work with him.

In summing up the methods of Stanley's system of

exploration, we find them to consist of fire, sword, and rapine among the natives, and of ironing, flogging, and hanging among his own followers. And this is the person whom the respectable middle-class from press and platform call upon us to worship as a dauntless hero, a “Christian pioneer,” bringing “sweetness and light” to the benighted natives of the darkest regions of Africa! We would suggest that, after a series of Stanley banquets, the middle-class should make a pilgrimage to the tomb of the late Mr. Peace, of immortal memory, and cover it with heaps of flowers. Surely if Stanley’s courage and enterprise is worthy of so much admiration, we should not forget the efforts of the noted burglar in his most dangerous and hazardous occupation, which requires the very same qualities that Stanley has displayed. True, the exploits of Mr. Peace have not benefited the human race to any considerable extent. Let us see now if Stanley’s

explorations have improved the lot of wretched humanity. Let us look at Africa, and see if we Socialists are not right in denying that Stanley's expeditions have benefited or will benefit the natives of Africa. Our first reason is that, up to the present, he and his men have only benefited the natives by acting as the advance guard of Arab slave-hunters. In his book on the Congo, Stanley describes how in his journey up that river he found the tribes who had so valiantly opposed his passage had been massacred by slave-dealers, who, after Tippoo Tib's return to Nyangwe, had followed in Stanley's track, and, with the aid of the Manyemas, had carried fire and sword along the populous banks of the Congo. Stanley tells us in his book how his allies had desolated 118 villages and 43 districts, a country larger than Ireland, and had captured 2300 women and children as slaves and 2000 tusks of ivory. He says:

“Given that these 118 villages were peopled only 1,000

each, we have only a profit of 2 per cent.; and by the time all these captives have been subjected to the accidents of the river voyage to Kirundu and Nyangwe, of camp life and its harsh miseries, to the havoc of small-pox and the pests which such miseries breed, there will only be a scant 1 per cent. upon the bloody venture.” – ‘The Congo’, 2nd Vol., p148.

Please admire the commercial instincts of Mr. Stanley, who, in the presence of misery, rapine, and murder, can calculate concerning the small profit upon such a “bloody venture.” Further on, Mr. Stanley states that slave-hunters to get their slaves

“Have shot 2,500 natives, while 1,300 more died by the wayside through scant provisions and intensity of their hopeless wretchedness. And such slaves! They are families and young children who cannot run away, or with youthful indifference will soon forget the terrors of their

captivity. Yet each of the very smallest infants has lost the life of a father, and perhaps his three stout brothers and three grown up daughters. An entire family of six souls have been done to death to obtain that small, feeble and useless child.” – ‘The Congo’, 2nd Vol., pp., 149-50.

And yet if Mr. Stanley had never explored the Congo all this misery would not have occurred. Stanley, according to his own account, had some notion of avenging the massacres of the natives on the slave-drivers; but he reflected as follows:–

“And yet, who am I that I should take the law into my hands and mete out retribution?... I had not the slightest shadow of authority to vindicate the dictates of justice. I represented no constituted government, nor had I the shadow of authority to assume the *role* of censor, judge, and executioner.” – ‘The Congo’, 2nd Vol., p. 144.

It is strange that Mr. Stanley never thought of these

things when wretched savages were in question and not well-armed slave-traders. He might surely have also thought what right he had to assume the “*role* of censor, judge, and executioner” when his own followers were concerned. Perhaps the fact that the slave-traders were a strong party and armed with rifles had something to do with this singular forbearance. So he treated these demons as allies and comrades. “We exchanged gifts with Karema and his bloodstained confederates” (p. 151). That Stanley still finds allies among the slave-traders may be seen in his accounts of the Emin Pasha expedition, where we find him again acting in concert with Tippoo Tib and the Manyemas. Again he serves as the advance guard of the slave-hunters; for in his letter of September 1, 1888, to the Royal Geographical Society he states that his passage through the rich and thickly-populated country of the Banalaya, Bakunda, and Bungangeto has been the ruin of

the people. He writes – “The abundance found by us will never be found again, for the Arabs have followed my track by hundreds and destroyed villages and plantations, and what the Arabs spare the elephant herds complete.” So up to the present Stanley’s explorations have hardly been a blessing to the natives of Africa. Mr. Stanley has first broken the spirit of the natives with the deadly fire of his breechloaders, and they have then fallen an easy prey to the Arabs who have followed close upon his heels.

With the facts before us, there can be no doubt as to whether Stanley’s explorations have been for the benefit of the African race. But there is something else for our consideration, even if his brightest dreams are realised, and commercial civilisation is introduced into the centre of Africa. Ask those workers who live under that civilization, and who slave in unhealthy factories for starvation wages, and eat bad and adulterated food, and dwell in rotten

slums, whether they think the African savage will gain anything by exchanging his wild, free life for theirs? Let the philosophers and scientists, who say that the life of the savage is preferable to that of the civilised labourer, answer. Then, surely, until the life of the mass of the population is happier than that of the savage, we have no right to go and inflict our miseries upon him. Let us set our own house in order first before we talk of “civilising” others.

Let us sum up the conclusions at which we have arrived. We have seen that Stanley has made his way by armed force and with ruthless cruelty through native tribes, burning their villages and shooting them down like dogs with explosive bullets. We have seen that, far from suppressing the slave trade, he has often allied himself with the slave-hunters, and has cleared the way for them to fresh fields of rapine and slaughter. Finally, we see that his ultimate aim is the extension of trade and civilisation –

that is, the extension of a “shoddy commercialism,” including the “improvement” of the savage off the face of earth by the Martini-Henry rifle, the Gatling gun, the whisky bottle, and the worst diseases that our civilisation breeds. We can see in Africa, and all over the world where “civilisation” spreads, that the poor savage perishes from the face of the earth, or, at the best, sinks down into a hopeless, degraded being, as wretched and miserable as the outcasts of our great cities. Knowing these things, we Socialists refuse to join our voices to the chorus of triumph which greets the man who, to swell the ill-gotten wealth of our cruel sweaters, is willing to inflict these untold horrors upon a simple people who have not yet been accursed by “Christian” civilisation. Let the great thieves and their parasites welcome the sanctimonious pirate who glosses over fire, slaughter, and cruelty with the snuffing cant of the mission-hall. We will have none of him. Let him be

satisfied with the applause of those who would have crucified Christ and worshipped Barabbas; but, at least, amid their applause he shall hear our hisses. We have made our protest. We have given reasons for our accusations; and though we expect to make no impression on those who recognise in Stanley a man after their own heart, yet we trust that at least some of those who have been beguiled by them will take the warning to heart. Look upon your “god,” ye simple ones, and behold a murderous monster, whose barbarous cruelties should make even the murder fiend of Whitechapel shudder, and for whom instead of feasts, banquets, applause, and honours, a stout rope and a long drop would be fitting reward.