

"Go back," she said, "and stay with him. I go to feed Maureen's child; and as I do to her may the Mother of God do to me and mine!"

She stood at the door of the wretched cabin where a gaunt man, the ghost of Con Heffernan, crouched by the embers, and in the corner Maureen lay silent with the child creeping and crying against her. Con Heffernan stood up and his face was humble.

"If you come in friendship, Brigid Dwyer, you are welcome," he said; "if you come in hatred your vengeance is here before you."

"My child is dead," she answered, "and he sends me to give his milk to your child."

As she said it her eyes looked at the man with indifference, hardly seeing him, indeed. Her heart was with her dead lamb out in the rain, and what else there

was was turning to the dead child's father.

She still stood at the threshold of the house, and on her face the brightness grew.

"God save all here!" she said, with the familiar Irish greeting. Then she went to Maureen's side, and took up the crying baby. Hungrily, hungrily she held it to her breast, and as the child fed, her face grew almost happy. She heard no more the crying of her lamb in the rain; and softly, softly with the milk her tears began to flow.

So Brigid Dwyer took the child of the man and woman who had betrayed her and fostered it. And the child's mother came back to life in time, because of the ease and comfort that Brigid Dwyer brought her. But when she was well, and the child weaned, Brigid gave her the half of her farm and went away to live with her husband the other side of the mountain.

BOOTY FROM BENIN.

By O. M. DALTON.

MORE than one notice has already appeared in the Press on the important and interesting objects brought home from the late expedition to Benin City. These spoils principally consist of elephants' tusks, covered with elaborate carvings in low relief, and of metal castings, in which many of the subjects represented on the tusks are found repeated. The discovery of these treasures resembles that of a valuable manuscript. They are a new "Codex Africanus," not written on fragile papyrus, but in ivory and imperishable brass; and it will be long before their significance for the historical and ethnological study of the West African kingdoms can be estimated at its full value. In the meantime, while men of science are engaged in sifting their evidence, let us attempt an *ad interim* sketch of the material which lies before them, and of the country in which it was discovered.

The story of the expedition and its causes is still fresh in the general memory. It may be read in the Parliamentary Reports in Commander Bacon's "Benin, the City of Blood," and in the stirring little book entitled "The Benin Massacre," by Captain Alan Boisragon, one of the two survivors of Consul Phillips's ill-fated mission. But there are a few facts about Benin and its relations with Europe which deserve a brief consideration here.

Benin is the name of a negro kingdom and its capital, lying to the west of the Lower Niger, and with easy access to the sea. Its annals, before it came in contact with Europe, are obscure; but the great bend of Africa to the north of it has been traversed for so many centuries by ancient trade-routes linking the Western Soudan with the Mediterranean, and probably the Niger with the Nile, that we can hardly suppose even a negro kingdom to have remained quite unaffected by their

existence. But for us the history of Benin begins in the century when Portugal sent forth her captains courageous into every sea of the Southern Hemisphere. It was about 1486 that Alonso d'Aveiro came back from Benin City with a new kind of pepper, and accompanied by a black ambassador, accredited by the ruler of Benin to his royal brother at Lisbon. The business of this ambassador was to beg for missionaries, and his success in obtaining them was, no doubt, largely due to his good luck in stimulating the enthusiasm of John II. for mysterious adventures. He told a tale of an empire lying far to the east, where dwelt a mighty monarch to whom the Kings of Benin owed allegiance, and from whom, upon their accession, they received as insignia a cap, a staff, and a cross, all of shining brass. In those days Africa was not yet regarded as a land created to plague Foreign Secretaries: it was, rather, the home of all kinds of marvels — where dragons warred with elephants, and where lay concealed the famous empire of Prester John. It was, therefore, only natural that this story should set adventurous brains on fire. But, after all, the mission came to little: the climate was too bad, and the natives too unconvertible. Nevertheless, the enterprise of the Portuguese was not to be denied, and their influence on the Guinea coast was a durable one.

But in the sport of colony-hunting they met with their usual ill-luck. In the words of a member of the nation which supplanted them, "They did but serve as setting-dogs to spring the game, which as soon as they had done was seized by others." Before the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch were the predominant power in these parts, though destined at a later period to recede in their turn before other nations. Meanwhile, the first Englishmen had visited Benin City in the middle of the sixteenth century, and in 1591, on their third expedition, they took up, among other trading materials, the peculiar horse-shoe shaped bronze currency to which we shall have occasion to refer later on. The Englishmen left no account of the city.

The first detailed account is given by a compiler named Artus, of Dantzic, about 1598. Then comes that of Van Nyendael, the Dutchman, in 1702, published by Bosman, Chief Factor of the Dutch possessions. Since the time of Bosman the most notable names connected with Benin are those of Belzoni, who died at Gwato in 1823, and of Sir Richard Burton the ubiquitous, who was there in 1862. Between that time and the expedition of the present year, visits have been made by an official of the Niger Company, by a representative of a private firm, and by Captain Gallwey, D.S.O., of the East Lancashire Regiment, who led a mission in 1892.

The kingdom of Benin was formerly the most powerful of the great negro states. It is said that at one time its Kings could put 100,000 men into the field. But in the days of the Dutch explorers its glory was already on the wane, so that even in the King's quarter, which alone once contained 15,000 inhabitants, the roomy, clay-built houses stood "like poor men's corn, widely distant from each other." Some thirty-five years ago Sir Richard Burton exposed the place as a city of shams, and subsequent travellers have agreed in describing "the great Benin" as a decadent and an incurable degenerate. But at every stage of its decay it was always a city of horrors. The place "had a fume of blood," and positively reeked of death. The end came when Sir Harry Rawson pulled down Benin from all its remaining state, and the site of so many abominations was doomed to remain unbuilt on for ever.

The people of Benin must be dismissed in a few words. Their way of life, their beliefs, and their superstitions resemble those of other West African negroes, and may be studied in the works of Major A. B. Ellis, Miss Kingsley, and others. The King himself was regarded as a sacred person, and veneration was paid to certain kinds of animals. Fetish ruled supreme, so that a man's worship might be directed to anything, from an elephant's tusk or a human skull to a stick or a seed, or a lump of clay with feathers stuck in it.

The Benin "Ju-Ju" was famed far and wide, and much of the awe in which the city and its rulers were held seems to have been due to its influence. It is needless to add that human sacrifice played as large a part in Benin as ever it did in Dahome or Ashanti; while the estimation in which the "Ju-Ju Men" were held may be gathered from the fact that, while the price set on King Duboar's head by Sir Ralph Moor was fifty puncheons, that on the head of the "chief fetish priest" was as much as ten. For the rest, the Benin people have been given a fairly good character for honesty in commerce, though not in daily life. Burton calls them, with one exception, the most pilfering race he ever met with. And they seem to have been cleanly, the manufacture of native soap having been a flourishing industry among them. But all travellers unite in describing them as very second-class fighting men. According to Bosman, "They are so cowardly that nothing but the utmost necessity can oblige them to fight." While Captain Gallwey is still more explicit: "The Bini is not a fighting man, and a great coward into the bargain." This judgment is borne out by the fact that the members of the massacred force constantly charged their armed assailants out of cover with their sticks. The stout resistance made in defence of their Lares and Penates may be explained by the nature of the country, which was admirably adapted for "sniping" tactics.

As for forms of government, the city was dominated by the usual serio-comic African court, surrounded by all the paraphernalia which Hutchinson calls "indescribable gimcrackry," and moving in an atmosphere of that laborious ceremonial in the imagination of which the negro shows something very like genius. In their commercial transactions with the outer world the Bini were hampered by their "Ju-Ju," which forbade them to cross water—they were, therefore, largely dependent on middlemen, among whom the Jakris were the most important tribe.

Before turning to the Illustrations, we must make some mention of the carved

tusks, which have not yet been satisfactorily photographed.

That these tusks were objects of worship, and that human sacrifices were offered up before them, there can be no shadow of a doubt. Nearly all travellers mention them, and they were found in private houses as well as in the large Ju-Ju compounds, their bases being usually supported by human heads cast in metal.

The report of Sir Ralph Moor, issued in the present year, contains the following passage: "Seven large sacrifice-compounds were found enclosed by walls 14 ft. to 16 ft. high, each two to three acres in extent; against the end wall in each, under a roof, was raised a *daïs*, with an earthen (clay) sacrificial altar, about 50 ft. long, close against the wall, on which were placed the gods to whom sacrifice is made—mostly carved ivory tusks, standing upright, mounted at base in hideously constructed brass heads. In front of each ivory god was a small earthen mound, on which the victim's forehead would apparently be placed."

The tusks, a very large number of which have already reached Europe, are ornamented in two distinct styles. The simpler are plain and polished over the greater part of their surface, with a few carved transverse bands of a plaited pattern. The more elaborate are completely covered with human, animal, and monstrous figures, executed in low relief, many of which are again met with in the metal castings. Certain of these tusks are supposed to have been typical of death, and, as such, to have been worshipped above others. One of these, now in the possession of Sir William Ingram, bears a striking central figure representing death. Many of the tusks have suffered considerably from exposure, and are much weathered, a result which would naturally follow from their position under a mere pent-house roof at the end of a large open enclosure, especially in a climate exposed, as Hakluyt would say, to "storming weather of such putrifying quality that it rotted the coats of men's backs."

The objects in cast metal are exceedingly numerous, the class now most largely

represented in the British Museum consisting of plaques with figures in strong relief.

These castings are both of bronze and brass as well as of various intermediate alloys. Mr. W. Gowland, who has analysed a number of specimens, suggests that the raw material was supplied by the "manillas" or armlets imported from Europe in such large quantities by sea, and not made of any uniform alloy. It seems probable that the natives had little knowledge of metallurgy, but just melted down whatever they could get—in early times manillas, and later the brass rods exported from Birmingham. The process must, for technical reasons, have been the method known as the *cire perdue*, necessitating the use of a wax model enclosed in a casing of clay from which it is afterwards melted out. The conventional designs incised on the figures and on the backgrounds of the plaques have been produced by subsequent chasing.

Turning now to our Illustrations in detail, we will first notice the objects which do not take the form of plaques, all of which, with the exception of the small mask, have been presented by Sir William Ingram to the British Museum.



1. Drum-Shaped Pedestal for a Sacred Tusk or Trophy.
Presented to the British Museum by Sir William Ingram, Bart.

No. 1, the drum-shaped object surmounted by human figures, and with other figures in relief round its sides, may either have been a pedestal for a small tusk, or a kind of receptacle for fetish objects, into the interior of which rum or palm-wine may have been poured. It will be seen that in front of the upper group of figures is a rectangular aperture, while a larger circular orifice opens behind them. The central upper figure, possibly the King, holds in his hands two ceremonial knives or swords, while his arms are supported by the lateral figures in a manner familiar to us from representations on some of the plaques, and from the accounts of various travellers. This mode of showing respect was also accorded the principal chiefs. On the ground at his feet is an object bearing a close resemblance to a "neolithic" or ground stone axe-head. It is well known that stone implements are regarded with superstitious veneration by peoples who have long enjoyed the use of metals.

The two animals flanking the axe-head are leopards, probably regarded as sacred beasts, if we may draw any inference from the frequency with which their effigies recur. The crocodile, another African sacred animal, appears in low relief on the upper surface, which is also ornamented with scroll patterns. On the front side of the drum may be seen another figure with two small "supporters," while beyond



2. Female Head, nearly Lifesize
Presented to the British Museum by Sir William Ingram, Bart.



3. A Warrior found, with Fig. 4, in a Ju-Ju House.
Presented to the British Museum by Sir William Ingram, Bart.

these are two larger figures holding up shields in order to screen the head of the central personage.

The remaining points of interest in this most remarkable object are still so numerous that one can do no more than mention some of them. On the lowest tier of relieved figures may be noticed human hands and arms, reminding one of the amulets used against the evil eye, with leopards and skulls of oxen, etc.; while on the ground of the sides occur Maltese crosses, a fact which has its bearings upon the general question of



4. Figure of a Woman found by an Officer of the Benin Expedition in a Ju-Ju House.
Presented to the British Museum by Sir William Ingram, Bart.

origin. This pedestal stands about two feet high.

No. 2.—A cast female head, nearly life-size, ought, from the point of view of artistic excellence, to have been considered first. So fine is the modelling, so lifelike the whole execution, that it must have been the work of a master in his craft and have been made in the "best period" of Benin. It belongs to the class of *spirantia aera*, and if a Greek sculptor had been called upon to reproduce the head of a negress, one wonders whether he could have done it much better. As a work of art this head stands above all the other things as yet brought from Benin. Turning to details, we may note the conventional treatment of the ears and nostrils, the elaborate coiffure, and the vertical cicatrices over the eyes, which, as they constantly recur on other figures, seem to indicate the national mark or crest of the Beni. In West Africa, people carry their crests blazoned on their bodies, pouncing and raising their skins until they look "like flowered damask or a wrought stomacher." The two central vertical bars just above the nose may have the same meaning; they are usually inlaid with copper, which in this case (as in that of No. 7) has been lost. The unprepossessing face of No. 4 shows all the marks intact. No. 3 is a small figure of a warrior with



5. Ceremonial Staff, with Sacred Bird.

shield and barbed spears, while his female companion (No. 4) holds up a flat rectangular sheet of metal in her right hand.



6. Brass Mask supposed to have been worn as an Ornament.

What this object may be it is hard to determine; it might possibly represent a kind of fan. These two little figures, each about six inches high, were originally fixed on a stone pedestal, from which they had to be broken off.

No. 5, which has a comical resemblance to a lectern, is the end of a hollow brass staff. A reference to No. 16 will suggest that these staves were sometimes used as musical instruments, being played like a triangle with a stick or bar of metal. The bird, which always has a round seed-like object in its beak, may either be a vegetarian or the curved-

beaked vulture, which is sacred in other places, and was quite indispensable to the municipality of Benin.



7. European Sportsman, with Matchlock and Dog.

No. 6 is a small brass mask-like object about six inches high, covered with snakes swallowing frogs, and other designs calculated to make the blood run cold. A noteworthy point is the appearance of two hands which issue from the lower

jaw, recalling the hands which appear in No. 1. A reference to the central figure in No. 10 will suggest that these little masks may have been attached as ornaments to the lower part of the upper garment.

We now come to the plaques, which are nearly uniform in size, all being about eighteen inches in height. The holes at their corners suggest that they were nailed upon walls or pillars; but it must be remembered that there was no stone in Benin, and that the clay walls would ill



8. Men with "Manillas," or Ring-Money, to be offered to the King.

support the weight of some of the heavier specimens, which would require very large nails to keep them in their places.

No. 7 is a European, apparently going out shooting, accompanied by a dog of uncertain breed and with a very lamb-like head. He wears a head-piece with a feather, rather resembling a morion; and beneath it a kind of hood with a vandyked border, probably made of leather, and coming right up to the lower lip. This sort of hood had almost if not entirely disappeared in England by the beginning of the sixteenth century. We shall notice later that this way of muffling

the throat and chin is also fashionable with the natives, though they use a broad collar of coral beads for the purpose.



9. Man with Ring-Money.

Besides the matchlock, the sportsman is armed with a sword, and wears short breeches down to the knees. The background of the plaque is chased with a quatrefoil pattern, which is repeated on almost every specimen which has come to light.

In No. 8 we see three men with morion-shaped hats of distinctly European pattern. The central figure carries a staff terminating in a crocodile's head with a fish between the jaws (compare Fig. 19). The two other figures hold in their hands the manillas, to which allusion has already been made. These objects possibly provided the raw material from which most of the plaques were cast. All three men wear the loin-cloth, which in the case of wealthy people was smothered in muslins and fancy cloths until it stood out like a hooped petticoat, giving the wearer the appearance of a human handbell. Often and often must European travellers have longed to give them a good shaking. No. 9 shows another man with ring-money.

No. 10 presents us with another group of three figures. The central personage is

seated on a kind of stool, and holds an axe-like object in his right hand; at each side kneels a worshipper or attendant. All three wear helmets of a Persian shape, while from their upper garments hang ornaments resembling human and crocodile heads, possibly like No. 6. The kind of muffler or collar, reaching to the lower lip, of which we have spoken above, seems to be built up of beadwork, as, indeed, do the jackets and helmets. If these are coral beads they indicate rank and wealth, for coral beads formed an official decoration, and the imports were very large. Bosman tells us that strings of coral were given to provincial governors: "that being equivalent to the arms of an order of knighthood"; and that if a governor lost his coral necklace he was a doomed man. Burton says that a necklace was equivalent to the C.B., and the broad anklets to the G.C.B. The King was the fountain of honour, and performed the investiture himself. A comical story is told of a Benin man executing a *pas seul* down the street after his liege had thus "made a gentleman of him." On the upper part of the plaque are two small European busts, one holding something to his mouth, the other having a manilla in his hand. The latter fact suggests the connection of the manillas with Europe.



10. King or GoI with Attendants; Small Busts of European Type above.

No. 11 represents the front of a dwelling or of a Ju-Ju house. The pillars are formed of cast or carved figures superimposed; or possibly of wooden pillars with plaques nailed on them. In the centre are two small cast leopards and what may represent two stone axe-heads (compare No. 1). On the roof, which looks as if it were made of shingles or tiles, rather than the usual palm-leaves, is a cast-brass snake fixed head downwards. Just such a snake Van Nyendael saw on the King's Palace at the end of the seventeenth century, probably placed there with a religious significance. Of the four figures in front of the house, two bear the characteristic shield, and two carry fans of a type common on the Lower Niger.

In No. 12 the central figure is interesting, because he appears to be wearing a feather dress—a curious thing in Africa. To the front of the dress are attached snakes resembling that in the preceding Illustration. The wearer of this strange garb was probably a sort of "Lord High Executioner," the bell worn on the breast being a badge of the executioner's gruesome office, and used to proclaim a human sacrifice. Of the two diminutive figures,



11. Native Building, probably Part of a Ju-Ju House.

one is playing an ivory horn, while the other has a "gong-gong," or tongueless bell, the exterior of which is tapped with a small bar.



12. The Lord High Executioner of Benin with Attendants.

No. 13 represents a warrior armed with shield and barbed spears, and wearing a necklace of beads and teeth, a bell, and a very strange head-dress. The West African has always had a weakness for head-dresses and for varied coiffures. Tawdry hats of all kinds were early shipped from Europe, as well as a few of a more serviceable kind. The Captain of War, who ranked next to the King, was in 1825 quite happy in the possession of the hat affected by the London coalheavers of the period. The King of Warri must also have been an admirer of the *chapeau de haute forme*, for he is said to have worn a headpiece three feet high.

No. 14 shows us two fish, the head of each resting on the other's tail. The fish may be a kind of catfish, venerated by the Jakris. Their sacred nature is rendered more probable by their reappearance in No. 15, where they form the legs of a figure which must represent a god, for he is performing the dangerous feat of swinging two leopards by their tails. The superficial resemblance of this figure to the serpent-legged Abraxas, so commonly engraved on Gnostic gems, is obvious; but a connection between the two, though conceivable

can hardly be called probable. The same god recurs frequently in ivory and wood carvings, and would seem to provide quite one of the most popular subjects.

In Figs. 16 and 17 we see musicians of various sorts, probably bandsmen of the King or of some high chief. The three men in No. 16 are using brass birds, like that seen in No. 5, as "gong-gongs" or "triangles," marking time on them by means of short wooden or metal rods. The "gong-gong" held by the figure in No. 17 is of an unusually ornate description, and must be an instrument reserved for the greater customs or ceremonies.



13. Executioner or Warrior with Shield and Spears.

In No. 18 we have an admirable representation of a palm-tree, possibly the Palmyra, or *Borassus Flabelliformis*. No. 19 shows a favourite design, representing a saurian holding a fish in his mouth, and the series is concluded at No. 20 with another figure, of an executioner, pointing to a head of European type—possibly that of some beheaded prisoner.

The series itself is a representative though by no means an exhaustive one. But the variety of interesting points is so large that it is impossible to draw attention to them all without putting an undue strain on the patience of the reader.

And now, perhaps, the question will be asked, "What is the date of these objects, and who made them?" To this we

must reply that all such questions are premature until the whole available material has been subjected to a careful comparative study, not only from the ethnographical but also from the technical and artistic points of view. The effort must be made to trace the origin and affinities of the costumes and weapons on the one hand, and of the artistic processes on the other. In view of the actual dispersion of the Benin relics, such a study must necessarily take time.

But though a categorical answer must for the present be postponed, a provisional reply may, perhaps, be hazarded. Mr. H. Ling Roth has pointed out that travellers have now been all round the Benin



14. Two Fish Crossed : a Sacred Symbol.



15. Figure typical of Strength—probably representing a God of the Benin Worship.

country, but no one is known to have reported the existence among neighbouring tribes of anything approximating to these castings. The only other objects of ancient appearance which can be at all compared with them were discovered by the late Major Copland Crawford at Warri, a place, it may be noted, more accessible than Benin from the sea, and one of the first towns to receive a Portuguese mission.

There appears, therefore, to be presumptive evidence that what external influence there was did not primarily come

require a great stretch of the imagination to suppose that existing facilities were now for the first time turned to full account and new processes introduced, while the native talent for working in metal received an unprecedented stimulus. The scanty historical material which we possess tends to show that the Portuguese found Benin at the height of its vigour, and in the most favourable condition for the assimilation of what they had to teach. We shall

be making no unjustifiable assumption if we suppose that while the *floruit* of Benin lasted, the arts, old and new, flourished also; and that the decay of these arts kept pace with the degeneration of the kingdom and the increase of internal disorders. Such a theory explains the homogeneous nature of the plaques, which all look as if they were executed

within the limits of a single brilliant period far surpassing anything that preceded or followed it. To compare small things with great, Benin enjoyed an artistic Renaissance, of which these bronzes are the evidence. That Renaissance was due to the influence of a higher civilisation, the seat of which is to be found



16. Musicians, with "Gong-Gongs."

from any of the interior parts of Africa, but rather from the coast; while the actual craftsmen were inhabitants of the kingdom of Benin, reproducing processes perhaps taught them by instructors of superior culture. In spite of the prevailing English habit of regarding the negro purely from the standpoint of St. James's Hall, we must insist that the African has been a worker in metal from a remote period, and in this respect at least should be taken seriously. Granting, as we reasonably may, that metallurgy in some form was practised before the arrival of the early European voyagers, it does not



17. Musician with Ornamental "Gong-Gong."



18. Palm-Tree.

in Europe itself, and whose symbol, the cross, is to be seen suspended from the neck of more than one of the cast figures.

The general conclusion, therefore, at which we arrive is that none of the castings are anterior to the arrival of Europeans on the West African coast, while some, especially the

smaller objects in brass, may be quite modern; and that though some of the ivories may be older, this has yet to be proved.

But though we must suppose the art of casting in Benin to have received its chief impetus from Europe, we may concede that the influences from the interior of Africa, especially from the north and north-east, may have also had their effect upon its details. Amid the extraordinary variety of costumes with which that art confronts us, we may see a headdress here, a weapon or implement there, which may remind us of various inland peoples. Again, there are peculiarities in the structure of the houses of Benin and Yoruba which have suggested to some an ancient connection between these countries and the Roman colonies of North Africa. But though prepared to give due weight to any such suggestions if supported by solid facts, we must protest against all sensational and bizarre speculations which would implicate the august and venerable

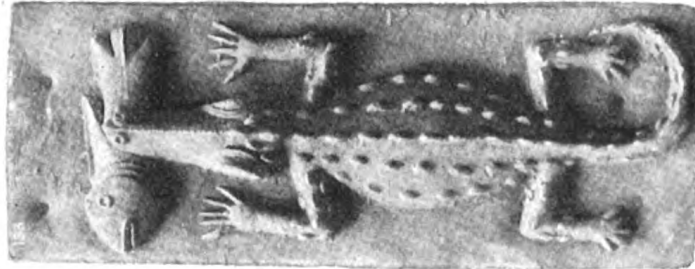
civilisations of the Nile, the Mediterranean, in the affairs of a negro kingdom, merely to satisfy the popular principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico*. It is not that we

need overlook the old trade-routes running down from Tripoli and Morocco, with their oases and their Nijni Novgorods, whither all

manner of wares are brought by all manner of men. Nor need we ignore the mysterious city of Timbuctoo, and the yet more mysterious city of Jenné, with its supposed Egyptian architecture and tradition. But in spite of all this, a conjecture can only raise itself to the rank of a proof by bringing the most unimpeachable titles with it, and in the present case these have still to be produced.

When suddenly confronted with objects like these spoils of Benin, we are certainly

tempted to provide them at all costs with some ancient or romantic origin. But, as a recent *Quarterly Reviewer* has well said, what we want in cases like this is not the light-winged theorist, but the more slowly moving student of art who has no wings, but is strictly pedestrian in his habits. This is the kind of student who will be most likely to decipher the Benin Codex, and most ready to admit the truth of the aphorism — *Il faut avoir beaucoup étudié pour savoir peu*.



19. Crocodile Seizing a Fish.



20. Executioner; Head of European Type in Background.