

pointed out to him where traces of former cities were overgrown and hidden by the dense vegetation.

*On the Delta of the Amazons.* By H. W. BATES, Assist.-Sec. R.G.S.

The area which geographically constitutes the Delta of the Amazons forms an irregular triangle, measuring about 180 miles each way. Contrary to what might be expected in the mouth of a great river lying on the equator, the country in and around it has a pleasant and salubrious climate. The islands and neighbouring mainland are not formed wholly of fluvial deposit: this is the case only with a portion of the area, 120 miles distant from the sea, the remaining portion, or that lying nearest the sea, having a rocky base and a sandy soil, the product of the disintegration of the rocks. The author concluded that this alluvial portion of the area was the true delta, and that at no very distant period the seaward portion of the present delta formed a series of islands lying off the mouth of the river. These islands he proved to be of great antiquity by an analysis of their fauna, which shows (in the groups examined) a large proportion of endemic species. The strong affinity of the fauna of the south side of the delta with that of Guiana also tended to show that the two regions could not have been formerly separated by a gulf 180 miles wide, impassable by these species. Had this been the case, the southern margins would more naturally have been peopled from Brazil further south, there being no known barrier to hinder the migration of species from this direction. All the facts furnished by the physical geography and the fauna pointed to the result, that an ancient tract of land or chain of islands bridged over the space between Guiana and what are now the southern borders of the delta.

*An Account of the Human Bones found in Tumuli situated on the Cotteswold Hills.* By Dr. H. BIRD.

The barrows and tumuli on the Cotteswold Hills vary in their size, structure, and contents. They are of two kinds—round tumuli and long barrows. The round tumuli are roughly constructed, and a kist is generally placed near the centre. The kist may contain the bones of one or many human bodies of different ages and both sexes, and flint-flakes and black rude pottery. The long tumuli or barrows are constructed in a superior manner. The bones found in the round tumuli indicate a peculiar race. They are tall, stout, square-built, and athletic, varying in height from five feet six inches to above six feet. They had long oval heads with large bases, wide and expanded behind, narrow, low, and contracted in front. The human remains discovered in the long barrows differ from those of the round tumuli, and are often mixed. Most of the higher-developed skulls, found in the vaults of the long tumuli, were broken across the vertex; and Dr. Thurnam has suggested that such broken skulls found at Rodmorton tumulus may have been broken before death, being the remains of murdered prisoners, or of persons slain for sacrificial purposes. Dr. Bird described some of a large collection of bones which he had taken from the tumuli, expressing an opinion, from the difference in configuration of some of the skulls, and some slight difference in the thigh bones, that some were the remains of an inferior race—the aborigines of the country—and others of a superior race that had made incursions into them from other lands. He contended, too, that the flints which he had found were identical in character with those recently discovered abroad, and which were held as proofs of an earlier history than that current among us.

*Advance of Colonization in North-Eastern Australia.*

By Sir GEORGE BOWEN, M.A.

*On the Present State of Dahome.* By Captain BURTON.

In the year 1863-64, the author twice visited Dahome; and he was now induced to thus make known the results of his observations of Dahome life in the belief that his experience would rectify many popular mistakes. The extent of the land of Dahome had been exaggerated, and was but about 4000 square

miles, with a population of about 150,000. The Customs of the Dahomans are divided into Grand and Yearly. The Grand Custom takes place only after the death of a king. The last Grand Customs were performed, in November 1860, by Gelele, the present sovereign, to honour the name of his sire Gezo. Reports from the Wesleyan missionaries show that very little change has taken place as regards the number of victims during two-thirds of a century. The Yearly Customs were first heard of by Europe in the days of Agaja the Conqueror (1708-27). They form continuations of the Grand Customs, and they periodically supply the departed monarch with fresh attendants in the shadowy world. The number of victims at the Annual Customs has been greatly swollen by report. During the author's second visit to Agbome forty men were put to death, an equal number of women presumably being sent to the next world; but if so, the execution took place within the palace. The men were all criminals and war-captives; no innocent Dahoman is ever killed on these occasions, and the king judges in person those accused of capital offences. He is so particular about the lives of his subjects, that, throughout the empire, coroners' inquests must follow every death and certify that it has not been violent. The time of execution is during the hours of darkness; and of these Zan Nyanyana, or "Bad Nights," there were two—January 1 and January 5, 1864. The public stay within doors under pain of death, and the king personally superintends the executions. Some are clubbed ("*ammassati*"); others are beheaded by the Mingan, or premier. After death the bodies are exposed in the Ujunro market-place for a few days. The men, attired as during life, in shirts and nightcaps, are seated in pairs upon Gold Coast stools, supported by a double-storied scaffold, about 40 feet high, of rough beams, two perpendiculars and as many connecting horizontals. Between these patibula are galleries of thin posts, about 30 feet tall, with single or double victims, hanging head downwards; cords, passed in several coils round the ankles and above the knees, attach them to the cross bar of the fatal tree. These tokens of the king's piety are allowed to remain exposed for several days, after which they are thrown into the city ditch. It is not, however, at the Customs that the great loss of life takes place. Whatever action, however trivial, is performed by the king, it must dutifully be reported to his sire in the shadowy realm. A victim, almost always a war-captive, is chosen; the message is delivered to him, an intoxicating draught of rum following it, and he is despatched to Hades in the best of humour. Captain Burton continued:—"I heard of only one case where the victim objected to lose his life. Even those who were prepared for the Customs (which I witnessed) sat looking at the various ceremonies, beating time to the music, and eyeing all my movements. At my request the king pardoned about half of them, but no man thanked me. There are two ethnological peculiarities in Dahome which require notice—the corporeal duality of the king, and the precedence of women over men. The monarch is double—two kings in one. Gelele, for instance, rules the city, and Addo-kpon governs the bush—that is to say, the country and farmer folk. The latter has his palace, about six miles from the capital, his high officers, male and female, his wives and eunuchs. Moreover criminals and victims are set apart for him at the Customs. With regard to the position of women, it must be remembered that the king has two courts, masculine and feminine. The former never enter the women's palace; the latter never quit it except on public occasions. The high officers of both courts correspond in name and dignity: there are, for instance, the female "Min-gan" and the male "Min-gan," the she-Meu and the he-Meu, and the woman officer is called the "No," or, mother of the man. Strangers also find maternal parents. There is, for instance, an English "mother," who expects presents from her *protégés*. Some resident merchants have two "mothers," one given by the late, the other by the present king. Royalty itself is not exempt; there are "mothers" for all the deceased rulers. The origin of this exceptional organization is, I believe, the masculine *physique* of the women, enabling them to compete with the men in bodily strength, nerve, and endurance. The custom is of old date in Yoruba; and our histories depict the "Mino" ("our mothers"—vulgarly called amazons), before the birth of the late King Gezo, who used to boast that he had organized a female army. He ordered every Dahoman to present his daughter, of whom the most promising are chosen, and trained to arms. Gelele, the actual ruler, causes every

girl to be brought to him before marriage, and retains her at his pleasure in the palace. Of Gelele's so-called amazons about two-thirds are said to be maidens—a peculiar body in Africa. The remaining third have been married. That an element of desperation might not be wanting, women liable to death are “dashed” to the king, and are duly enlisted. The fighting women are not *de facto* married to the king; but it may take place at his discretion. The first person that made the present ruler a father was one of his colonels. The amazons affect male attire, especially when in uniform. There is nothing savage or terrible in their appearance. When young, they are compelled to dance and to take violent exercise, which renders them somewhat lean; and, as they advance in years, they grow in weight. The soldieresses are not divided into regiments. There are, however, three distinct bodies, as in the male army. The Fanti company takes the centre, and represents the body-guard. The king generally pays “distinguished strangers” the compliment of placing them in command. I had this honour, but was not thereby entitled even to inspect my corps. The Fanti women bind round their hair, which requires scanty confinement, narrow white fillets, with two rude crocodiles of blue cloth sewn on the band. The other two divisions are the wings, right and left. The three corps consist of five arms, under their several officers—namely, 1. The Agbarya, or blunderbuss-women, who may be considered the grenadiers. They are the biggest and strongest of the force, and each is accompanied by an attendant carrying ammunition. With these rank the carbineers, the bayoneteers, and a company armed with heavy weapons, and called “Gan’ u’ nlan,” or “Sure to kill.” 2. The Elephant-hunters, who are held to be the bravest of these women; twenty have been known to bring down, at one volley, with their rude appliances, seven animals out of a herd. 3. The Nyekplo-hen-to, or women armed with the huge razors, of which an illustration lately appeared in the English papers. 4. The infantry, or line women, forming the staple of the forces; from them, as in France, the *élite* is drawn. They are armed with Tower muskets, and are well supplied with ammunition. But they “manœuvre with precisely the precision of a flock of sheep,” and they are too light to stand a charge of the poorest European troops. Personally they are lean, without much muscle; they are hard dancers, indefatigable singers, and, though affecting a military and swaggering gait, they are rather mild and unassuming in general appearance. 5. The Go-hen-to, or archeresses, who, in the late king's time, were young girls, the parade corps, the pride of the army, and the pink of dancers. Armed with a peculiar bow, a quiver full of light cane-shafts, and a small knife lashed with a lanyard to the wrist, they were distinguished by scanty attire, by a tunic extending to the knee, and by an ivory bracelet on the left arm. Their weapon has sunken in public esteem. Under Gezo's son they are never seen on parade, and, when in the field, they are used as scouts and porters. They also carry the wounded to the rear. The total number of amazons was 1685. Gelele, the present king, has never been able to bring more than 10,000 troops into the field. His “most illustrious viragos” are now a mere handful. King Gezo lost the flower of his force, in March 1851, under the walls of Abeokuta, and the loss was never made good. Gelele has lately followed the example of his sire. On Tuesday, March 15, 1864, the present king carried out his favourite project, his daily thought and nightly dream—an attack upon Abeokuta, where his father had left fame and honour. The attempt was contemptible in the extreme, and the consequence to Dahome a loss of about 1000 slain and about 2000 captured. Thus Dahome yearly loses *prestige*. She is weakened by a traditional policy, by a continual shedding of blood, and by the arbitrary measures of her king, who has resolved to grind the foes of his subjects for ten years, of which six have elapsed. She is demoralized by an export slave-trade, by frequent failings in law, and by close connexion with Europeans. As was remarked a dozen years ago by Commander Forbes, Dahome now contains no Dahomans. The gallant old race of which our historians speak has been killed out; its place has been taken by a mongrel breed of captives. Except the royal blood, which may number 2000 souls, all are of an impure race, and are *bond fide* slaves to the king. Under these circumstances, it is pleasing to remark the gradual but sure advance of El Islam, the perfect cure of the disorders which rule the land. Amongst eight hammock-bearers I found two Moslems.”