87. Notes on Some Native Objects from Northern Nigeria.

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Nigeria.

Martin.

Notes on Some Native Objects from Northern Nigeria. *Being* **87**
Extracts from a Letter from E. F. Martin, Local Correspondent of the
Anthropological Institute.

Perhaps if I describe some of the many articles of daily use among natives, the result may be of some interest to you. I will start with a coat of mail that I recently acquired. This species of armour is not native-made. The Hausas of the Northern States (Nigeria) wear it in war time for defensive purposes. The chain mail is beautifully made, each separate link being riveted. I bought this specimen from a Hausa trader down from the Kano district. After continual inquiry, I find that these coats of mail (as well as helmets and swords) are dug up by the possessors or their fathers before them. They have no idea how they got there. It seems fairly certain, however, that they are evidences of the presence, at some distant time in the past, of members of a civilisation well in advance of what is found in those parts at the present day. The coat I have secured is in excellent preservation, from the neck right down to the waist; below that, however, it is badly torn and ragged. The fact of these specimens of old armour being found buried, sometimes in groups of half-a-dozen or so, helmets, swords, and all complete, points to the fact that they have not merely filtered through from the north on an occasional caravan, &c., but that the first owners died and were buried where these relics are now being found.

I have also a highly-decorated horse-collar made of rope bound in light blue leather, with four triangular pockets made of red and blue leather, bound round the edges with purple and crimson wool. These pockets are fixed on the collar so as to slide up and down. They contain extracts from the "Koran," and are supposed to act as charms.

I have secured a very beautiful pair of ostrich feather slippers, such as are only worn by the chiefs among the Hausa and kindred races. They are first of all sandals, made of good leather, and well worked. On to the sandal is fixed an "upper," composed entirely of ostrich feathers, clasped at the centre by a piece of ornamental leather work; in this case bright blue, with white metal discs. The ostrich feather here is a sign, if not of royalty, at any rate of wealth and position.

Two lamps that I have secured are very fine specimens of the smith's art. They both contain thirteen bowls, into which the oil is poured, and the dip (cotton) placed. The cotton dip hanging slightly over the lip of the bowl gives the light. These lamps consist of a central trunk supported on a conical pedestal, with three platforms supporting four bowls, each on their trunks, connected with the central tree by branches of metal. The bowl on the top of the tree is larger than the rest. The whole is made of white metal—tin or zinc.

Some fine specimens of "poker work" are to be found about here, especially about Egga district. I have some calabashes worked in this way with a very pleasing and even artistic result.

The people in these parts are excellent grass workers, their hats, mats, baskets, &c., being in some cases very fine specimens of the art of grass plaiting. Circular grass trays—used by the women when separating the husk from the flour just ground—are very typical specimens of grass work, the various coloured grasses interwoven forming very pleasing effects. The shapes and sizes of these trays—called in Hausa, *Lépé*—vary according to the district in which they are made. Whilst all are circular discs, some are quite flat, others slightly bulging and some again nearly bowl-shaped. A strange fact about the ornamental work in these basket-work trays is that, whilst the work starts in a spiral out from the centre of the tray, and this spiral may be of one colour for, say, five turns, then a different colour for another five, and so on, the maker never seems to be able to continue one colour from the next in a complete circle.

The grass hat made in the Nupé and lower Benué provinces, whilst a good type of weaving, is notable for the fact that no attempt is ever made to fit the hat to the forehead, but it is made so large that the top of the hat invariably rests on the crown of the head. It is not meant, in fact, to be worn merely on the head but over a hood or other head covering—turban, &c. In Bornu, however, the hat is made more according to our own methods, one specimen I have secured being broad brimmed and conical shaped. The first mentioned, that of the Nupé and lower Benué districts, is round (bowl) shaped.

I have been making as complete a collection of musical instruments as possible since my arrival, and I propose shortly to give a description of each, with photographs.

E. F. MARTIN.

REVIEWS.

Sociology.

Grierson.

The Silent Trade, a Contribution to the Early History of Human Intercourse.

By P. J. Hamilton Grierson. Edinburgh: William Green and Sons, Law Publishers. 1903. 22 × 14 cm. x + 112 pp. 88

Mr. Grierson has here put together in a concise form a quantity of material bearing upon the primitive practice of barter without intercourse. He discovers in it the first germs of a desire for peace, in connection with which the neutrality of the market and the protection of the stranger guest also play a prominent part.

Starting with the necessary assumption that such primitive practices are to be found in their simplest form in the hunting peoples who have not adopted agriculture or the pastoral life, he proceeds to sketch the evolution of the group or section of a tribe with its social relations: (i.) within its own limits; (ii.) with other sections of the same tribe; (iii.) with the world outside. This leads us to the question of exchange first within tribal limits and then with foreigners, and here Mr. Grierson treats fully the instances of "silent trade." The numerous similarities of usage between this practice and the primitive market customs lead to a discussion of neutral trade centres, the "market-peace," and the inviolability of the middleman. In a short summary the causes of the silent trade are discussed and various explanations offered, and since the true answer appears to lie in the fact that for purposes of trade the stranger is considered a friend and guest even when naturally a foe, we are carried on to the examination of primitive hospitality and treatment of strangers. This is to a very great extent connected with religious sanctions and thus with the primitive conception of law, both law and religion being crystallisations of custom; and we are left with the conclusion that the silent trade has been one of the principal factors in the breakdown of primitive exclusiveness and the diffusion of the idea of peace.

It is at once evident to the most cursory glance that Mr. Grierson has not formed a mere academic theory in despite of facts. His list of authorities quoted covers fifteen pages at the end of the volume, and there are frequent footnotes with references and citations. There is, indeed, always the danger in dealing with the ethnology of primitive tribes that practices may be misinterpreted, and widely different accounts given by different travellers; nor need an unwillingness to trade with Europeans be construed as an ignorance of any sort of commerce. But on the whole there is a singular concurrence of testimony with regard to the practice of barter without intercourse from parts of the globe so distant as Greenland, Tierra del Fuego, Central Australia, Ceylon, the Congo; whilst we meet with mention of it in Herodotus, Philostratus, Pliny, and a chain of authors from classical times to the present.

It would appear that the simple hunter in his family, or group of families, moving from place to place comes of necessity into contact with other groups of his own tribe, and a relation springs up between them which is at least not hostile if not wholly friendly; and this would account for the earliest form of hospitality which permits a