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Giovanni Battista Belzoni.

I.

BELZONI AT PADUA.

I HAVE no intention of troubling the reader with a biography of Giovanni Battista Belzoni. The birth, the short, eventful life of forty-five years, and the death of the great Italian explorer, have been written and re-written both at home and abroad: his excursions into ancient and classical Egypt are as familiar, if not more so, to the Englishman as to the Italian. My business is with a few details of his career, and especially with his death, concerning which I know more than any man now living. Finally, I would suggest certain honours due to his memory before it fades,—the fate of travellers and explorers amongst their brother men,—into the mists and glooms of the past. As, however, all are not familiar with a career, peculiarly attractive to Englishmen, which began in 1815 and which ended in 1823, the following facts, borrowed more from living authorities than from books, may not be unwelcome.

Belzoni's mother-city was Padua. A century after he was born I visited what now represents his birthplace, No. 2946 in the Via Paolotti. It stands opposite the gloomy old prison of the same name, a kind of guardhouse, whose occupation is denoted by the sentries and the wooden window-screens. The two-storied, four-windowed tenement, with its yellow walls and green shutters jealously barred in the ground-floor, bears, under the normal Paduan arcade, a small slab of white marble inscribed:

IN QUESTA CASA
IL 5 NOV. 1778 NACQVE
BELZONI.

The building, however, is modern. In the early quarter of our century, the street was a straggle of huts and hovels, and the garden of the present house contained more than one. They were "improved off" about 1845, on the occasion of his leading home a bride, by the present owner, Sig. Squarcina, C.E.

As the explorer tells us in his well-known *Travels*,* the family was originally Roman, with the rights of citizenship, and the name Bolzon, or Bolzoni, was softened by him to Belzoni. One of many children, he

* *Narrative of Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia, etc.*, fol. and atlas. London, Murray, 1820.

inherited a splendid *physique* from his mother, Teresa, of the well-known Orsolato house; she is described as a woman of masculine strength and stature. His father, Jacopo, was a *tonsore*,—in plain English, a barber,—proud of the old home which he had never seen, and full of legends concerning the grandeur of Rome and his ancestry. Let me say, *sans rancune*, that there is an important difference (in kind) between a Roman *tonsore* and a northern "barber." We must not confound old and new civilisations.

The future traveller's first journey was an escapade which is related at full length by his biographers.* The father had taken his large and lively family for a *gita* to Monte Ortone, near the famous thermæ of classical Abano, and the day in the country had been so charming that Giambattista persuaded his younger brother Antonio to repeat the trip without the formality of asking leave. This led to further wanderings—to Ferrara, Bologna, and other places in the direction of Rome; but the two runaways, who were penniless, presently lost heart and returned home. Hence, possibly, the persistent but mistaken report which makes Belzoni's father a *cultivatore*, or peasant-proprietor, at Abano, and, consequently, a compatriot of Pietro di Abano, the "Conciliator of Doctors' Differences" (A.D. 1250–1316).

Padua, it must be confessed, has by no means neglected her worthy, as is known to every traveller who visits the Palazzo della Ragione. This curious pile, which separates the fruit market and the vegetable market, with their Dahoman umbrellas, is thoroughly out of place. The guide-books tell us that the architectural idea was borrowed from a Hindu palace; I find in it a forecast of the nineteenth century railway station. A mighty roof covers the great hall, *Il Salon di Padua*, called "of Reason" because courts of law were held here; both have the merit of being as large and as ugly as any in Italy. Inside, over the doorway, stands the great medallion in Carrara marble, two metres in circumference, cut in *alto-relievo*, at Rome, by Rinaldo Rinaldi of Padua, a pupil of Canova. Girt by the serpent of immortality, the head of the turbaned and long-bearded explorer looks towards the dexter chief, and bears the following simple and incorrect legend:

I.B.BELZONI.VS.VETER.AEGIPTI (*sic*) MONVMENT.REPERTOR.

Below stands:

OBIIT, AET. ANN. XLV IN AFRICA. REGNO
BENINENSI AN. MDCCCXXIII.

This medallion was set up after the explorer's death. In 1819, when he revisited his native city, and, despite the *res angusta domi*, presented to her, with the pride of filial piety, two Egyptian statues, his

* Vol. ii. pp. 11–16, *Viaggi in Egitto*, by Prof. Abate Lodovico Menin, Milano 1825. Menin was acquainted with Belzoni's mother, and with the whole family, of whom only relations on the female side (Orsolato) now remain.

compatriots showed their gratitude by a medal coined in England. It bore round the figures :

OB DONVM PATRIA GRATA
A.MDCCCXIX.

On the reverse is :

IO. BAPT. BELZONI
PATAVINO
QVI CEPHRENIS PIRAMIDEM
APIDISQ. SEPVLORVM
PRIMVS APERVIT
ET URBEM BERENICIS
NVBIAE ET LIBYAE NON
IMPAVIDE DETEXIT.

At either side of the entrance which carries the medallion sit the two Egyptian statues alluded to. Both represent Pasht, the cat-headed goddess of Bi-Bast, or Bubastis, now Zagazig town. Brugsch Bey makes her Isis of the tabby-head, in Arabic Bissat (the cat), Osiris assuming the title of Bas or Biss (the tom-cat). The two hold in the left hand the mystic Tau; one has well-marked whiskers *à la Rè Galantuomo*; consequently, despite the forms, which are distinctly feminine, it has become, in local parlance, the "male mummy." "Pussy,"* on the right is inscribed :

IO. BAPT. BELZONI. PAT.
EX THEBIS AEGYPTIS
DONVM MISIT
A.M.DCCCXIX.
CIVITAS GRATA.

Further to the left of the entrance stands the plaster statue of Belzoni, carrying on its base the artist's name, SANAVIO NATALE. It is of heroic size, at least ten feet tall, and habited in a very fancy costume: large falling collar, doublet buttoned in front, sash round waist, shorts, long stockings, and "pumps" with fancy arabesques: in Rabelaisian phrase, "pinked and jagged like lobster wadles." The right hand holds a roll of manuscript; the left controls a cloak, or rather a fringed cloth, a curtain, which is, I presume, the picturesque and poetical phase of cloak. This work of art has two merits. It shows the explorer's figure exactly as it never was, and it succeeds in hiding his face from a near view; the rapt regard is so "excelsior," so heavenwards, that the spectators see only a foreshortened nose based upon a tangled bush of beard. The inscription also has its value: it is long, while it says little; it omits one of the names; and, as a record of exploits, it indulges too freely in the

* In the *Gold Mines of Midian* I derive this word from "Bissah." The cat is a later introduction into Europe, and the very word (Katt, *Catus*) is probably Semitic.

figure called "hysteron-proteron." I copy it because, being provisional, there are hopes of its growing out of childish defects, and the numbers in parentheses show what should have been the proper order of the lines:*

GIOVANNI (add BATTISTA) BELZONI
NATURALISTA IDRAVLICO ARCHEOLOGO
(4) IL RECONDITO EGITTO DIVINANDO SVELÓ
(3) ERCVLEO INFOCILATO
(9) ALLE INGORDE SABBIE TOGLIEVA BERENICE
(8) LA SECONDA PIRAMIDE (6) I SEPOLCRI D'IPSAMBVL
(7) LA NECROPOLI PSAMETICA (sic) PENETRAVA†
(5) SMOSSE LA MOLE DE MEMNONE FONDATO IL MVSEO BRITANNICO (sic)
PARLÓ FAMA SI GRANDE
CHE GLI STRANIERI STANCHI D'INVIDIARE ONORARONO
A PIÙ ARDVE IMPRESE SCORREA L'AFRICA
IL SIRIO ARDORE SPENSE L'AVDACIA
CREBBE LA GLORIA

NATO IN PADOVA 1778 MORÌ A GATO D'AFRICA 1823.

The first three lines are correct enough, "barring" the mutilated name. Belzoni, after preparing to become a monk, studied the elements of engineering at Rome, which, on the French occupation (1803), he exchanged for London. "Hercules" probably alludes to the fact, forgotten by his countrymen, that he supported himself by feats of strength at various theatres. He was a magnificent specimen of a man, strong as a Hercules, handsome as an Apollo; the various portraits taken about this time show the fine features which rarely, except in statues, distinguish the professional athlete. He had that "divination," that archaeological instinct, which *nascitur, non fit*: we see it now in MM. Mariette, Cesnola, and Schliemann, whose name is Shalomon.

After marrying, and passing nine years in England, Belzoni with his wife drifted to Egypt (June 9, 1815), then happy under the rule of Mohammed Ali the Great. He began, as an "independent member," with setting up a hydraulic machine at the Shubrah Gardens, carrying owls to Athens, coals to Newcastle. He failed, and fell into the ranks. Nile-land was then, as now, a field for plunder; fortunes were made by digging, not gold, but antiques; and the archaeological field became a battle-plain for two armies of Dragomans and Fellah-navvies. One was headed by the redoubtable Salt; the other owned the command of Dro-

* The 1st of January was up the Nile; the 2nd, entered the Second Pyramid and continued till the 3rd up stream; the 4th was to Berenike on the Red Sea, and the 5th to the so-called Oasis of Ammon.

† This orthography, and even *Psamatikhos*, is found; but the π of Psammis, or Psammetic, probably bore in this a sign of reduplication ($\pi\pi$).

vetti, or Drouetti, the Piedmontese Consul and Collector, whose sharp Italian brain had done much to promote the great Pasha's interests.

Belzoni, without a regular engagement, cast his lot with the Englishman, and was sent to Thebes. Here he shipped on board a barge and floated down to el-Rashid (Rosetta), the bust of Rameses II., miscalled "Young Memnon,"—(Miamun or Amun-mai). The Colossus reached its long home, the large Hall in the British Museum, without any of the mishaps which have lately attended a certain "Needle."* The explorer then travelled, *via* Alexandria, Cairo, and Edfu, to the Isles of Elephantine and Philæ, both, by-the-by, meaning Elephant (*Arabic* el-Fil), despite Wilkinson. The enemy attacked him as he was removing his obelisk from Philæ; it consisted of an "Arab" mob, numbering some thirty, under the command of two Italians—Lebuco and the "renegade Rossignano," with Drouetti in the rear. Belzoni defended himself in a characteristic way, by knocking down an assailant, seizing his ankles, and using him as a club upon the foemen's heads. This novel weapon, in the Samson style, gained a ready victory. He reached Wady Halfah (second Cataract), and cleared the deposits of Typhon from the Ramesseums of Abu-Simbal (Ipsambul). The so-called Crystal Palace contains a caricature of these rock-temples; and country folk identify the Colossi with "Gog and Magog."

In 1817 Belzoni, still under Salt, made his third run up-country, and attacked the famous Bîbân el-Mulûk, the "Gates (*i.e.* tombs) of the Kings." The hollow sound of a wall revealed an inner chamber, and the sinking of the ground, caused by rain, led to the Sepulchre of Sethi I. His description of crawling, snail-like, through the passages is admirable. The results of this work best known in England, are the Colossal head and arms sent to the British Museum; and the Sarcophagus, of semi-transparent arragonite, afterwards (1824) sold by Salt to Sir John Soane for 2,000*l.* "Belzoni's Tomb" preserves his name in Egypt; but I have noticed that of late years certain tourist-authors have forgotten the duty of rendering honour where honour is due.

During 1817–1818 Belzoni worked at the *Troici lapidis mons*, vulgarly known as the "Second Pyramid." He had some difficulty in persuading the Bedawin-Fellahs of the west bank to assist him; but, as usual, he ended by succeeding. He cleared the upper of the two openings, and found that the Arabs had been before him. The inscription given by him (p. 273) and copied into every hand-book is, let me say, despite of Professor Lee and M. Salâmé, in part unintelligible. Perhaps Belzoni's occupation is not gone. It appears to many that those

* In 1822, John Murray, of Albemarle Street, published six "Plates illustrative of the Researches and Operations of G. Belzoni in Egypt," &c. They are, 1. General View of the Site of Thebes. 2. The Mode in which the Colossal Head of Young Memnon was taken from Thebes. 3. India from the Ceiling of the Great Vaulted Hall, in the Tomb supposed to be that of Psammis, at Thebes. 4 and 5. Ruins of Ombois, &c. 6. Interior of Temple in the Island of Philæ.

vast sepulchral mansions must contain many chambers; and I ask myself why the pendulum and the new sound-instruments should not be scientifically tried.

In September, 1817, our explorer set out from Esue to visit Berenike (Troglodytica). This Port of Ptolemy Lagi was the African terminus of the Indian "overland," intended to turn the stormy and dangerous Gulf of Suez; and it held its own till supplanted by Myos Hormos and other ports further north. The goods were disembarked, were carried by caravans through the Desert of the Thebais, to Coptos, Kobther, Caphtor (?), Kobt, Kaft or Koft on the Nile; and thence were floated down to Alexandria. The land journey was estimated at 258 Roman miles, and the march of twelve days gave an average of 21 per diem: our modern itineraries make the total 271 English statute miles. A similar western line was also taken, to escape the even more turbulent and perilous Gulf of Akabah; the road lying from Leuke Kome (el-Haurâ) through the Land of Midian to Rhinocolura (el-Arish), on the Mediterranean.

At Berenike, following M. Caliud, and seeking for sulphur, Belzoni discovered a temple of Serapis; he explored the emerald mines of Jebel Zabbârah to the north-west, and the "Emerald Island," or St. John's, which the Arabs call Semergeh, or Semergid, from the Greek Smaragdos. Berenike has twice been visited by my friend General Purdy (Pasha), in 1871 and 1873. He found remains of mines about the Jebel el-Zabergah (Zumurrud?) with scorïæ, handmills, and other appurtenances of the craft, all along the road.* Belzoni's last trip (1819) was to Mœris and "Elloah" (El-wah) el-Kasr, the smaller oasis, of which he is the discoverer. He was wrong, however, in identifying it with the "Wady" of Jupiter Ammon, which is Siwah.

After five years of splendid and profitable work in Egypt, Belzoni left it for ever (1819). In London he published his book, canvassed his friends, and prepared to carry out the dream of his life,—a plunge into the then unexplored depths of the African continent. And here, leaving him for a time, we will return to Padua. *Par parenthèse*, the "Chauvinismus" concerning stranger jealousy hardly applies to England: she was the explorer's second mother; and his enemies were his own countrymen.

In 1866, when Padua exchanged the "Eagle with Two Heads displayed" for the plain Cross Argent of Savoy, sundry patriotic citizens addressed a petition to the municipality, praying that the name of the *contrada* be changed from the ignoble "dei Paolotti" to the noble "Belzoni." The request was disregarded, probably for the usual reason; it did not emanate from the fountain of all civic honour—the town-hall. The experiment is to be tried again, under circumstances which ought to, and which I hope will, ensure success. The Riviera (quay) Santa Sofia, formerly a fetid canal, one of the many veinlets of the Bacchaglione, has

* Bull. *Egypt. Geog. Soc.*, No. 6, Nov. 1870.

just lost name and nature; the ground, a large oblong, will be planted with trees (Eucalyptus?), and it would start well in life under the honoured name of PIAZZALE BELZONI.

The necessary measures are being taken by Giovanni Dr. Tomasoni, of Udine, a man of property, who has travelled round the world. He holds, by-the-by, with Mesnier (1874), against Gray (1875), that the Bonze in strange costume, short cloak and flat cap, who appears in the Buddhist temple of the "Five Hundred Genii" at Canton, is not Shien-Tchu, a Hindu saint, but a western man, and consequently Marco Polo.*

The first step will be to name the Square; the second, to raise a Monument. Something provisional might be set up, in the shape of a wooden pyramid, till subscriptions justify a formal statue. As this charge could not fairly be imposed on the municipality, an appeal should be made to public generosity. Padua has now many wealthy sons, and we may hope that they will practically disprove the imputation of *materialismo*. Let us also hope that the statue will be realistic;—will show the explorer in working garb, not habited like a Turk, a courtier, or a Hercules.

II.

BELZONI IN BENIN.

Before landing the explorer on the edge of the Dark Continent, it is advisable to cast a short glance at Africa, in connection with England, during the first quarter of our century. The "African Association," which became (1831) the "Royal Geographical Society," was formed in June, 1788. It began by sending out Ledyard, one of the Cook's circum-navigators, who was killed by fever in "Sennaar,"—properly Si (water) n (of) and Arti (the Island)=Water Island. Followed Lucas; but this well-qualified traveller returned, *re infecta*, to the north coast. Next went the gallant Major Houghton, to be plundered and left to starve among the Arabs of Ludamar (Wuld Omar) in the Great Desert (1791). Then came upon the stage that famous Mungo Park, whose charming volumes, I believe, owe most of their charm to Brian Edwards, of Jamaica. The Scotch surgeon's first and ever memorable march was made in 1795-97, and the fatal second in 1805. Herr Hornemann, of Göttingen, set out from Cairo in 1798; became, it is supposed, a Marabut or Santon in Káshná; and disappeared about 1803. Roentgen was murdered near Mogador in 1809. Adams, *alias* Benjamin Rose, assured the Association that in 1810 he had visited "Timbuctoo," or, properly, *Tin-bukhtu*, the "Well of Bukhtu." The same place was reached, in 1815, by James Riley, supercargo of the American brig *Commerce*, who brought back authentic details concerning the then

* Lecture of February 20, 1877. Mr. Archdeacon Gray's *Walks in the City of Canton* was printed at Hong Kong. It supports the Hindu claims in pp. 207-8 and 217.

mysterious course of the Niger. Captain Tuckey, R.N., commanding a Government expedition, lost himself and most of his companions by Congo fever and calomel, in 1816. During the same year, Major Peddie died at the beginning of his march on the Rio Nunez; and Major Campbell, his second in command, at Kakundy, in the next, June 13, 1817. Captain Gray (1818-19) returned safe from a trip to the Upper Gambia. Major Laing (1821-22) fixed the sources of the Niger, which he did not reach, in N. latitude 9°.* He was murdered during a second expedition in 1826, and evil reports, probably false, connected his death with the French explorer Caillié. The expedition of Ritchie and Lyon ended disastrously, by the death of its chiefs, in November, 1819. Lastly, Denham and Clapperton began their memorable exploration in 1820, and returned in January, 1825.

During this interval, Belzoni again presented himself before the British public. The reports concerning "Timbuctoo" had only whetted general curiosity; and the factitious importance with which the march by "long Desert," and the "treachery of the Moors," had invested that uninteresting place, lasted till the visit of my late friend Barth in 1853. The nineteenth century moves apace. In 1879 the French are proposing an impossible railway from Algiers to the ex-capital of Negroland;—the chief inducement being, evidently, to cut out *ces Anglais*.

The Italian explorer had much in his favour. His gigantic strength was unimpaired; and he had recruited his health by three years of beef-steaks and beer. He had acquired the habit of command; and he was well acquainted with colloquial Arabic. His economies and the liberality of his friends supplied him with the sinews of travel. The well-known Briggs Brothers, of London and Alexandria, lent him 200*l*. On the other hand his forty-five years were against him: Africa, like the persons alluded to by Byron, ever

Prefers a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

Belzoni began by visiting Tangier, where, foiled by the suspicions of the Moors and the Jews, he failed to reach Fez. He now changed his plans, and very sensibly made his will (May 20, 1823) before entering Central Africa, the "grave of Europeans." He divided his property into three parts—the recipients being his mother, "Teresa Belzoni," or "Bol-zoni;" another Theresa, the daughter of his deceased brother Antonio; and his wife Sarah. This done, he embarked at Mogador, touched at

* I proposed to explore the sources in 1860-65; but the late Dr. Baikie agreed with me that *le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle*. My friend Winwood Reade was not successful in 1869. The head of the Joliba ("Great River") has just been reached by MM. Zweifel and Moustier, *employés* in the house of M. Verminch, of Sierra Leone. They ascended the Rokelle, passed the Kong Mountains and Falaba town with some difficulty; and, guided by Major Laing's map, found the main source on the frontier of Kissi and Koranka, some 200 miles from the "Lion's Range." What was our "Royal Geographical Society" doing?

Cape Coast Castle, and landed in the Bight of Benin. He seems to have "divined" the Niger outlet. There were many "theoretical discoverers," especially my friend the late James M'Queen; but the question was not practically settled till Richard and John Lander dropped down the Nun, or direct stream, to the Atlantic mouth, in 1830.

"Benin," or "Binnin,"—by the natives called "Ibini," "Bini," or "Ini,"—held her head high amongst African kingdoms during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In our age the name has fallen into disuse, and few know anything beyond the fact that she lies somewhere in West Africa. According to early explorers, the length (north to south) was 80 by 40 leagues of depth. John Barbot* increases these figures to 300 by 125, and makes the northern limit "Ardra," now Dahoman, which he identifies with the classical *Aranga mons* on the South Ethiopic Ocean.

Benin was discovered by the Portuguese, of whom old Willem Bosman politely says, "They served for setting dogs to spring the game which was seized by others." The explorer was Joam Afonso de Aveiro,† and the date 1485, one year after Diogo Cam had begun that conquest of the Congo which has lately been completed by Mr. Henry M. Stanley. Men were enthusiasts in those days. Fernan' de Póo (Fernando Po) called his trouville *A Ilha Formosa* (Fair Isle); and the Benin River became *O Rio Formoso*, or Feroso,—an older form,—but not Formosa, the feminine. In our times the British mariner sings,—with variants:—

The Bight of Benin! the Bight of Benin!
One comes out where three goes in.

The natives know the stream-mouth as *Uwo ko Jakri*, or "Outlet of Jakri," the latter being African for the European Wari, Owari, Awerri, Ouueri, Owhyeré, or Ovare, a petty principedom on the southern fork. The late Mr. Beecroft, H. M.'s Consul for Fernando Po, proved (1840) by a cruise in the *Ethiophe* steamer that this Wari branch leaves the Niger a little below Abu or Ibu town. Consequently the Rio Formoso is the Western arm of the Delta, whose hypotenuse measures some 180 miles.

The "Missioner" soon took Benin in hand. Aveiro brought home a "Mouf" (Ambassador) from the King, praying to be supplied with reverend men and ghostly meals. The Capuchin, Father Jerom Merolla da Sorrento,‡ tells us a pleasant story how Father Angelo Maria per-

* This "Agent-General of the Royal African Company" treats especially of Benin in book iv. chap. 5, and his brother James continued the work from 1682 to 1699.

† He was factor of the then Dutch Elmina on the Gold Coast during the terminal quarter of the last century. His twenty-first letter treats of the "Kingdom of Benin;" and his valuable work was translated in 1705.

‡ He wrote about 1680 his *Voyage to Congo and several other Countries, chiefly in Southern Africa*. His work, which is minute and valuable, was first "made English from the Italian" in Churchill's Collection (i. 521). I borrow from Pinkerton (vol. xvi.), and hope to republish the book with the good aid of the Hakluyt Society.

sued a "white young lady" of St. Thomas Island to a peculiar act of self-devotion. She travelled to Benin, and, "being arrived at the King's palace, she was received by that monarch like another Rachel by Jacob, Esther by Ahasuerus, or Artemisia by Mausolus, and afterwards married by him after the Christian fashion; thereby giving a good example to his subjects, who soon forsook their former licentious principles and submitted to be restrained by the rules of the Gospel; that is, were all married according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church." This much-suffering young person sacrificed herself to very little purpose. During the seventeenth century Benin, like Congo, was overrun by a little army of "Apostolic Missioners;" who had, however, more care for their fees of slaves than for cures of souls: they meddled and they muddled, and they conducted themselves generally, to judge by their own accounts, in a way which would have secured deportation at the hands of downright Mr. John Dunn.

By slow degrees Christianity withered on its uncongenial soil. The Portuguese, who had begun work at Benin under D. Joam II., struck work under D. Joam III. During the latter part of the last century only a few half-caste traders and slavers from St. Thomas kept up churches and lodges at the chief settlements. In 1862 I found a trace of the faith in one place only, Wari- or Jakri-town; a tall cross still bore a bronze crown of thorns nailed to the centre, and a rude M(aria?) of the same material was fastened to the lower upright. Singularly strange and misplaced was this emblem, rising from a grass thicket surrounded by a wall of the densest jungle, with a typical dead tree in front. Native huts here and there peeped over the bush; and hard by stood the usual Juju or fetish-house, a dwarf shed of tattered matting garnished with a curtain of white calico soiled and rusty. Truly a suggestive type of the difficulties with which the Cross had to contend in lands where Nature runs riot, and where the mind of man is rank as its surroundings;—difficulties against which it has fought a good fight, but hitherto without the crown. Hard by the cross was a mound of solid earth, whose tread suggested that it was a place of sepulture. Of these reverend men, these Nigerian martyrs, it may be truly said, "Time hath corroded their epitaphs and buried their very tombstones." Not a sign of burial appeared save a bit of blanched and weathered skull. Yet they are not to be pitied. They laboured through life at a labour of love, expecting the pleasing toil to end in eternal repose. And the good which they did lives after them;—at Wari I saw none of the abominations of Great Benin and Dahome.

Upon the heels of the "Apostolic Missioner" came the merchant, who was mostly a slave-dealer. Now our eye-witnesses and authorities become Bosman and Barbot, who give copious accounts of the country and country folk. All the principal European nations, Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French, at one time had *comptoirs*; and all failed in consequence of the mosquitos, the fever, and the utter rascality, the compli-

cated dishonesty, of the people, or rather peoples. The celebrated botanist (A. M. F. J.), Palisset de Beauvais, here passed upwards of a year (1786) in collecting materials for his *Flore d'Oware et de Benin*. In 1788 Capitaine Landolphe founded near the river mouth for the *Compagnie d'Owhyéré* a fort and factory which he called Borodo; this establishment lasted till 1792, and died of the Great Revolution. In these days a few English houses, Messrs. Horsfall, Harrison, Stewart and Douglas, and others, have settlements near the estuary, and take palm-nuts in barter for English goods. The export slave trade is totally stopped, to the manifest injury of the slave, who was once worth eighty dollars, and now hardly as many sixpences. Nothing, however, would be easier than to run a dozen cargoes of *casimir noir* out of the Benin river.

The ethnological peculiarity of Great Benin, as noted by all travellers, is the contrast between a comparative civilisation and an abominable barbarity. The capital which Bosman and Barbot call Oedo (Wedo) had in 1800 a circumference of six leagues; and of the thirty main streets some stretched two miles long and twenty feet wide. All were kept in a remarkable state of cleanliness,—a virtue little known to Europe in those days,—because “every woman sweeps her own door.” At levees the prince sat upon an ivory couch under a silken canopy; and on his left hand, against a fine tapestry, stood “seven white scoured elephant’s teeth” on pedestals of the same material. The palace also contained large stables for horses; an article of luxury which has almost died out. The nobles bore the titles of Homograns (*homens grandes*) or grandees, and below them were the Mercadores and Fiadores (sureties or brokers). Yet the city was a Golgotha, an Aceldama, and Barbot exclaims in the bitterness of his heart and nose:—

The fiends their sons and daughters they
Did offer up and slay:
Yea, with unkindly murdering knife
The guiltless blood they spilt;
Yea, their own sons’ and daughters’ blood
Without all cause of guilt.—PSALM lv. 35-38.

The “grand customs” on the death of a “King” were, and are, essentially different in detail from those of Dahome. Yet the underlying idea is the same. Majesty must not enter Hades, Ghost-home, the Shadowy Land, without regal pomp and circumstance. The body is lowered into a deep pit; and the most beloved domestics of both sexes, who highly prize the honour, take their places above it. The mouth of the hollow is then closed with a large stone, and crowds of mourners sit around it night and day. Next morning certain officers, told off for the purpose, open the pit and ask the set question, “Have ye found the king?” (i.e. in Deadman’s-land). Those alive answer by telling how many of their number had perished of hunger and cold. This “strange-fantastical ceremony” is sometimes continued for five or six days. When at last no sound comes from below, the lieges make a great feast, and

spend the night running about the streets, chopping off heads and dragging off the corpses, which are thrown into the pit before its final closing. Bosman, in the normal chapter on “Manners and Customs,” notices the “ridiculous religion” and the frequent “apparition of ghosts of deceased ancestors,”—in fact, full-blown Spiritualism. But, like the men of his day, he never for a moment suspects that anything lies beneath the surface.

In May, 1838, Messrs. Moffat and Smith,* surgeons on board a merchant schooner, went to the city of Great Benin, wishing to open, or rather to re-open, trade. The latter, a “very promising young man,” died of a dysentery caught by being drenched with rain. They were horrified to see a trench full of bodies at which the turkey-buzzards were tugging, and “two corpses in a sitting position.” These victims had probably been despatched with a formal message, announcing the arrival of strangers to the King’s father in Ghost-land. The same unpleasant spectacle was offered in August, 1862, when I visited Benin, accompanied by Lieutenant Stokes, of H.M.S. *Bloodhound*, and Dr. Henry.† In the tall rank herbage, on the right of the path leading into the city, appeared the figure of a fine young man bare to the waist, with arms extended and wrists fastened to a scaffold framework of peeled wands, poles and stakes planted behind him. For a moment we thought that the wretch might be alive: a few steps convinced us of our mistake. He had been crucified after the African fashion, seated on a rough wooden stool, with a white calico cloth veiling the lower limbs. Between the ankles stood an uncouth image of yellow clay, concerning which the frightened natives who accompanied us would not speak. A rope of lliana, in negro-English called a “tie-tie,” bound tight round the neck to a stake behind, had been the immediate cause of death. The features still showed strangulation, and the sacrifice was so fresh that, though the flies were there, the turkey-buzzards had not found the eyes. The blackness of the skin and the general appearance proved that the sufferer was a slave. No emotion whatever, save holding the nose, was shown by the crowds of Beninese, men and women, who passed by; nor was there any expression of astonishment when I returned to sketch the victim.

It is some comfort to think that the murder was committed with as much humanity as possible. These messengers to Ghost-land are always made to drink off a bottle of rum before the fatal cord is made fast. In one point, indeed, I found the Beninese superior to their neighbours. Twin births are esteemed good omens, not bestial and unnatural productions; and the mother receives a royal bounty like the happy parents of triplets and quartets in England. Beyond this nothing can be said in favour of Great Benin. The town has a fume of blood; it literally stinks of death. Without any prepossessions for “Humanitarian policy,” and far from owning that Proselytism has succeeded, or ever will suc-

* “A Visit to the Capital of Benin in the Delta of the Kwará or Niger,” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1841, vol. xi. pp. 190-192.

† “My Wanderings in West Africa,” *Fraser’s Magazine*, March, 1863.

ceed, in this part of Africa, I could not but compare once more the difference between Abeokuta, where there are missionary establishments, and Benin, which for years has remained a fallow field. In the former, human sacrifice still flourishes; but it is exceptional, it is done *sub rosa*, and it does not shock public decency by exposing the remnants of humanity. In the latter it is a horror—*teste* “Fraser.”

This unpleasant city was Belzoni's first objective. He had engaged a homeward bound sailor, a negroid from Káshná, who had served on board H.M.S. *Owen Glendower*, as his companion to “Timbuctoo,” *vid* Haussa. Thus he hoped to open a way through one of the most dangerous corners of the Dark Continent. A similar attempt was made in our day by the unfortunate Jules Gérard, the *Chasseur* (afterwards *Tueur*) *du Lion*. Whilst his relations live I hesitate to tell the true tale of his death.

Belzoni was not a general favourite in Egypt. He had placed himself in a false position, and he seemed to suffer under a chronic irritation and suspiciousness. He complained of “atrocious persecutions;” he found fortune “barbarous and unkind,” and he left Egypt “prematurely,” his plans being incomplete. In Africa it was otherwise. The skippers, supercargoes, and agents, popularly termed “Palm-oil lambs” (of the Nottingham breed), rough-mannered, kindly-hearted men, soon learned to love their guest as a friend. With affectionate adieux he took leave of them, was rowed up stream and landed at Gwato. Bosman calls this village “Agatton;” he tells us that it ranked in importance after Boededoe (Obobi),* and Arebo, Arbon, Egro, New-town or Young-town. “It was formerly a considerable place, but hath suffered much by the wars; it is situate on a small hill in the river; and it is a day's journey by land to the city of Great Benin.” Barbot describes “Gotton” as a very large town, much more pleasant and healthy than its two rivals.” The country is full of all sorts of fruit trees, and well furnished with several little villages, whose inhabitants go thither to the markets, which are held at Gotton for five days successively. He places it twelve leagues S.S.E. of the capital. Messrs. Moffat and Smith make “Gatto or Agatto” twenty miles to the S.W. (read S.S.W.). I have noticed “Gwato” at some length, as here Belzoni was fated to find a grave.†

The explorer was kindly received by Obbá (King) Oddi or Odállá, father of Jámbirá, *alias* Atolo, whom I visited. In 1862 many of the oldsters at Benin remembered the traveller; and talked admiringly of his huge black beard, his gigantic strength, and his mighty stature,—six feet six. Everything was looking well, when the bad water of the city, taken from holes and polluted wells, brought on a dysentery, and the explorer was no longer young. In those days African fever was treated with the lancet, which still names our leading Medical Journal. Dysentery had the benefit of calomel, opium, laudanum, and oleum ricini,

* p. 138, *Fraser*, February, 1863, and p. 275, March, 1863.

† p. 277, *Fraser*, March, 1863.

the latter a poison in those lands. Here let me observe that the anti-diarrhoea pill in the Crimean campaign was fully as fatal as the Russian bullet. When Nature is relieving the engorged liver, Art slips in and prevents the cure. Instead of meat-broths to support the strength, paps and gruels are given to sour the stomach; in fact the treatment was, and generally is, that best calculated to ensure fatal results.

Belzoni was too ill to take leave of the King, who sent him a kindly message. On the morning of November 28 (1823) he told Captain John Hodgson, of the brig *Providence*, who had run up to see him, that the hand of death was upon him. On December 2, with his usual good sense, he begged to be carried to Gwato and thence to “Bobee” (Obobi), hoping much from the sea air. Mr. Hodgson in his ignorance unwillingly consented, and despatched him in a rough palanquin accompanied by Mr. Smith; he himself intended to rejoin the sufferer at Gwato, whence the vehicle was to be sent back. At the end of the march the disease seemed to take a favourable turn; and the explorer was well enough to eat some bread and drink a cup of tea. Before leaving Benin city he disposed of his belongings. He ordered all the objects worthy of a passage to be sent to England by the brig *Castor* of Liverpool. He wrote a few lines to Messrs. Briggs; and, being unable to hold a pen, he sent his ring to his wife, with an expression of lively affection and loving memory.

At 4 A.M. on the next day (December 3), the explorer awoke with swimming head, cold extremities, and eyes expressing delirium. He was strong enough to swallow a little arrowroot, but not to speak. At 2.45 P.M. he passed away, apparently without pain. Mr. Hodgson, reaching Gwato at 4 P.M., found that the body had been laid out by Mr. Smith. He went to the local Caboceer, or Governor, and obtained leave to bury his dead “at the foot of a very large tree.” Under its broad foliage a grave was dug six feet deep, and at 9 P.M. the corpse was buried with all the honours. Mr. Hodgson read the funeral service, and his eighteen men, headed by himself and Mr. Smith, saluted with three salvos of musketry his guest's tomb. Sundry guns were fired by the vessels in port, the schooner *Providence*, the American *Curlew*, and the *Castor*. Mr. W. Fell, supercargo of the latter, caused his carpenter to prepare a tablet with an inscription noting the day of death, and expressing the pious hope that all European travellers who may visit the last home of the intrepid and enterprising traveller, will be pleased to clear the ground, and to repair the ring fence if necessary.

Such is the official and received account of the explorer's death. Local tradition declares that Belzoni was carried to the house of Ogéa, Caboceer (Governor) of Gwato. This man, described as a tall negroid of yellow complexion and uncanny look, died about 1850. He is said to have poisoned the traveller in hopes of plunder; and what lends colour to the charge is that he afterwards tried the same trick upon a European trader, and failed. The chief of Gwato, “Kusei,”—also, by the by, a noted

poisoner,—popularly known as “the Parson” (here an old title, hereditary and connected with the local religion), declared to me, among others, that many of Belzoni’s papers were handed over by Ogéa to the royal *Fiador*, or broker, and that since the latter’s death they descended to his son. Stray leaves have been seen, according to European testimony, in the hands of the townspeople, leading to the conclusion that there are more behind. Mr. Sharpe, a late agent to Messrs. Horsfall, made a liberal bid for these documents; but without result. I was equally unfortunate, although I offered a bale of cloth=20*l*.

Belzoni’s grave has been allowed, despite the epitaph, to drop out of sight. Staff Surgeon W. F. Daniell * described it as an “elevated mound of earth overrun with weeds, with the fragments of a decayed wooden cross.” Messrs. Moffat and Smith found the “grave of the traveller Belzoni marked by a wooden tablet fast going to decay.” In 1862, when I saw it, the place had become a *tabula rasa*.

The site of the sepulchre was pointed out to me near the Governor of Gwato’s house, to the south-east of the village. “Belzoni’s tree” is a fine spreading growth, which bears a poison apple, and whose boughs droop nearly to the ground. A little plantation of the Koko-yam (*Colocasia*) clothes the sides of the low mound from which the trunk springs, and a few huts and sheds stand between it and “the bush.” It is a pretty and romantic spot.

I assembled the village ancients, and made a desultory attempt at digging under their vague and discordant directions. But time was short, a fight was brewing, and African growths cover double and treble the area of our largest English. I was obliged to content myself with sketching Belzoni’s tree, with sending home a handful of wild flowers, and with expressing a hope that “some European passing by” would be more fortunate than myself.†

In 1865 I left Fernando Po, a locality famed for the rapid consumption of Europeans generally, and especially of English Consuls. Two of my successors have succumbed to the climate; and now there is a third applicant for the honourable, but ticklish, duty of representing the British Government. I can only hope that Mr. Consul E. H. Hewett will carry out a project of mine, foiled by circumstances; and will recover for the good city of Padua, which rejoices in the apocryphal relics of Antenor and of Livy, the mortal remains of her right worthy son Giovanni Battista Belzoni.

RICHARD F. BURTON.

* *Sketches of the Nautical Topography (&c.) of the Gulf of Guinea.*

† p. 28, *Fraser*, March, 1863.

Studies in Kentish Chalk.

NATURE lends no countenance to the dictum of Dr. Johnson that one green field is like another. Monotonous uniformity is not to be found in her least or greatest handiwork. While there are no hard and fast lines of demarcation between her geographical divisions, she has set certain broad marks of distinction upon their face which a little experience enables her students to note and recognise. It would scarcely be too much to affirm that the eye of a trained observer, at the first aspect of a new tract of country, can pronounce whether the soil be chalk, sand, or clay, what are its common native products, and what is the quality of the landscape in point of beauty. An expert in English chalk-scenery, at all events, may safely rely upon his powers of clairvoyance to distinguish its familiar features wherever he travels. There is no mistaking the *indicia* of that landscape when once thoroughly known. The gradual process by which such knowledge is acquired can no more be communicated than the pleasure which it brings. It is always true of Nature that

You must love her ere to you
She will seem worthy of your love.

All that can be done towards training another’s eye is to throw out a few hints which may help it to observe for itself. No easier school for a novice can be suggested than the Kentish chalk-lands, and the following rough notes of their prevailing characteristics may serve, *faute de mieux*, as a skeleton chart for his guidance. The area is a large one, but the district more particularly referred to is its most picturesque section, with which the writer happens to be best acquainted.

A condition convenient for the true enjoyment of a country such as this is that one should be an active walker. “The proud ones who in their coaches roll along the turnpike-road” can form but the most meagre idea of its variety and beauty. Even the horseman will be unable to penetrate many a recess specially haunted by its charm. It offers, however, no perilous pleasures to the mountaineer. Soundness of wind and limb, and a healthy contempt of dust or mud, according to the weather, are alone sufficient to qualify you as a walking tourist. At whatever season of the year you may take your first view of this landscape, the feature which will thrust itself upon your notice before all others is the uniform roundness of the outlines. The hills bear upon them the stamp of their aqueous origin. Gradually narrowing upwards from the base with a gentle acclivity, their slopes and crests are smooth; the former often vertically scored by the flow of water into deep central depressions,