NOTES AND COMMENTS

Although no official announcement has yet been made of the settlement of the dispute between France and England over the Niger territory in West Africa, the terms of settlement are given out so authoritatively by the French press as to indicate that agreement is not far from completion. From the tone of French comment, it is evident that the negotiations have been conducted on the principle of give and take, the regret expressed by the Paris press at the loss of Boussa, and so of an important commercial port on the Niger, being tempered by an extension of French rights to the west and by concessions as to trade routes. While in the entire controversy Great Britain has had the weight of law largely on her side, French contention has been most stubborn, with respect to the region on the right bank of the Niger, and especially the province of Borgu, which forms the hinterland of both the British colony of Lagos and the French possession of Dahomey.

Under a treaty concluded with the King of Boussa in 1890, this province was added to the territories of the British Royal Niger Company, but though at the time France apparently acquiesced in the transfer, when, three years later, she conquered Dahomey, she declared the treaty invalid, on the ground that the real sovereign of Borgu was the King of Niki. Thereupon the Niger Company promptly made a treaty with that potenate, thus establishing beyond doubt its right to the territory; but as it failed to follow this action by actual occupancy, the French, on the ground that treaties with savages without occupation amounted to nothing, invaded the province and took possession of the principal towns. As the effect of this occupation, if acquiesced in, would be to deprive the British colony of Lagos of its hinterland and confine it to a narrow strip of coast, just as the British colonies of Gumbia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast have already been hemmed in by the extension of the hinterland of French Senegal, and also to give France control of the Middle Niger, the London Government demanded the immediate evacuation of the province. The negotiations following this demand have been prolonged but have, apparently, reached a conclusion in the establishment of a new boundary between the British and French spheres in that quarter.

This boundary begins at Ilo, a town on the west bank of the Niger, in about latitude eleven degrees thirty seven minutes north, and runs somewhat west of south to Niki, thence to the crossing of the river Nanou and the ninth degree of latitude, and thence with a slight deviation to the most northeasterly point of Dahomey; all west of this line remaining French, and all east being British. As the temporary boundary, previously in force, ran from the northeastern part of Dahomey due north to Say, on the Niger, France gains under the new agreement a considerable wedge of territory extending from Ilo to Say and south to the ninth parallel. On her side, Great Britain secures the Lagos hinterland, though somewhat reduced by the French wedge, with control of the whole of the lower Niger, and possessions of Boussa, on the right bank, the commercial port of the region and the head of navigation in the dry season. With this settlement the chief cause of contention between the two powers in West Africa is removed, but a definition of the boundaries of the Gold Coast hinterland, and of their respective spheres of influence eastward from the Niger to Lake Chad, must be reached before all questions at issue are amicably adjusted. As the French negotiators have thus far been able to make the concessions deemed imperative by British opinion, there is no reason to believe that they will not find a way of doing so in the remaining matters of dispute.

DROWNING.

The sudden drowning of a good swimmer is not due to a cramp, as generally supposed. There is no reason, says a high medical authority, why cramp in a leg should prevent an ordinary swimmer supporting himself in the water by the hands or on his back, or cause him to throw up his hands and sink once for all like a stone. The explanation is that the drum of the ear is perforated and the pressure of water causes vertigo and unconsciousness.

A TASTE OF IT.

Noted Anarchist, explaining his position to fellow-passengers on Western railway train—Ve vant all laws banished from the statute pooks. Ve vant effry citizen to do as he blease—

Leader of Western Outlaws, suddenly boarding the train—Hold up y'r hands!

Good for the Soul.

I.

It was about twelve or thirteen years before Dr. Lavendar was discovered to have outlived his usefulness that, one night, in the parsonage study, with only Mary, and his brother, Joey Lavendar, as witnesses, he married Peter Day. Peter, with a pretty girl on his arm, drifted in out of the windy and rainy darkness, with a license from the Mayor's office in Upper Chester, and a demand that Dr. Lavendar perform the marriage service. Both the man and woman were strangers to him and the little old minister looked at them sharply for a minute or two—he had misgivings, somehow. But the girl was old enough, and looked perfectly satisfied and intelligent, and the man's face was simple and honest—besides, the license was all right. So he asked one or two grave and kindly questions: "You've thought this well over? You know what a solemn thing marriage is, my friends? You are well assured that you are acting soberly, discreetly, and in fear of God?"

"Yes, sir," said Peter Day; and the girl, a pretty, sick-looking creature, opened her big brown eyes with a glimmer of interest in them, and said, also, "Yes, sir." So Dr. Lavendar did his duty, and found a surprisingly large fee in his hand, and went back to smoke his pipe and write at least a page of his great work, The History of Precious Stones.

That was the last he saw of the unknown bride and groom for many a long year. Once he heard of a new threshing machine that was being tried at the Day farm, in the next county, and was interesting two or three farmers in his own parish; but he did not connect the rich and successful farmer of Grafton, a village near Upper Chester, with the man he had married that stormy June night. So, though his neighbors had found them interesting enough, Peter Day's affairs had never come to Dr. Lavendar's ears.

Peter had been commiserated for forty years. His farm was prosperous; it kept pace with all the new machinery, fertilizers were not despised, and there was no waste; the Day heifers had a name all through the State; and a thousand acres of haying-land meant a capital as reliable as government bonds. "I guess he's worth $75,000 if he's worth a cent," his neighbors said, "but the old lady, she won't let on but what they're as poor as poverty." There was no doubt that Peter Day was prosperous; but, nevertheless, he was commiserated:—he had a mother.

"The farm is the best farm in Westmoreland County, but whether Peter can keep it up when the old lady goes, that's another question."

"He may not keep the farm up but he can let himself down," Henry Davis, who was the blacksmith, declared; "and I'll be glad of it! Before Peter Day goes to heaven—I guess there's no doubt of Peter's going there in due time?—he ought to know something about the earth. He's acquainted with the Other Place, dear knows, with the old woman!—not that I'd say anything against her now she's on her death-bed." Henry put a hand on the bellows, and a roar of blue flame burst through the heap of black fuel on the forge. "Don't you let on to anybody, but I doubt if Peter'll ever be more 'an three years old. His mother's bossed him every breath he breathed since he was born, and he'll be just real miserable learning to walk alone at forty."

It must be admitted that here was cause for commiseration: All his forty years Mrs. Day had dominated her son's life; she had managed his farm, and he had fetched and carried and improved according to her very excellent judgment. She had formed his opinions—or rather, she had given him her opinions; she had directed his actions, she had bought his clothes, she had doled out every dollar he spent, and taken scrupulous account of the spending; she had crushed, long ago, any vague thought of marriage he may have had, and she had assured him over and over that he was a fool. A hard, shrewish, hideously plain, marvellously capable old woman, with a temper which in her later years drew very near the line of insanity. Then she died.

The August afternoon that the little train of silent people carried her out of her own door up to the family burying-ground in the pasture (the Days were of New England stock, and had the feeling of race permanence in their blood, which shows itself in this idea of a burying-ground on their own land)—that August afternoon was sunny and still, except for the sudden song of a locust in the stubble, stabbing the silence and melting into it again. Some sumacs were reddening on the opposite hill-side; and the blossoming buckwheat in the next field was full of the murmur of bees; its hot fragrance lifted and drifted on any wandering breath of wind. Peter Day walked behind the coffin in his best black clothes, with his hat in his hand; then came the friends and neighbors, two by two. A path had been mowed through the thin second crop of grass; but the women's skirts brushed the early golden-rod growing in the tangle of briars in the angles of the snake fence. Up in the pasture, where the burial-lot, enclosed by a prim, white paling, lay under a great oak, a bird, balancing on a leaning slate headstone, burst into a gurgling laugh of song. The oak dropped moving shadows back and forth on the group of men and women who stood watching silently that solemn merging of living into Life—of consciousness and knowledge and bitterness and spite, of human nature, into Nature. This ending of the mean and pitiful tumult which is so often all that individuality seems to be, this sinking of the unit into the universe, is like the subsidence of some little whirling gust of wind that for an instant catches up straws and dust and then drops into dead calm. There is a sense of peace about it that is not exactly human; it is organic, perhaps; it only comes when there is no grief. They felt it, these people who stood watching, silently, unbelieving in their hearts that they too would some time go back into sun and shade and rolling world. There was no grief, only curiosity and interest and the sense of peace. When it was over, they walked slowly back again, pausing for some low-voiced talk at the Day doorway, and then leaving Peter, and drawing a longer breath perhaps, and raising their voices to chatter together of the dead woman's temper and meanness and the money she had left.

The little whirl of shrewish wind had fallen into calm; it was "all over," as the saying is—and so much greater is Life than living that it was as thought it never had been. Except to Peter Day. The house had the stillness of that grave he had left up in the pasture. He heard some one move about out in the kitchen, and the clock ticking in the hall. But there was no strident old voice to bid him do this or that; no orders to obey, no fierce and insane fault-finding. The silence was deafening. He sat down in the parlor—the occasion seemed to demand the dignity of the parlor. The chairs had been put back in their places, but the open space in front of the fireplace struck him like a blow; and the lingering scent of the flowers made him feel sick.

He was a short, sturdy-looking man, with a soft black beard, and kind, quiet, near-sighted eyes, which his round spectacles magnified into lambent moons. There was no weakness in his face; but there was patience in every line; just now there was bewilderment.

"Dead?" He was trying, dumbly, to adjust himself to the fact; to understand it, or at least to believe it. He felt something swell in his throat, and very likely he thought it was grief. Habit does much for us in this way; a carping, uncomfortable companionship of forty years is yet a companionship. Life runs in rough grooves, but they are grooves, and when it leaves them there is a wrench and jolt, and perhaps even a crash—and very often it is all mistaken for grief. Peter, in his simple way, called it grief. As he sat there in his black clothes looking at that open space where the coffin had stood, he was vaguely conscious that he wished he had his dog Jim beside him: but after forty years of being told that he "could not bring dogs and cattle into the house," and that "he was a fool to want to," he would have found the effort of freedom absolute pain. So he sat still until it grew dusk, trying to believe that she was dead, thinking about heaven—for he was a religious man—and saying to himself that she was "far better off." But never saying that he was "far better off." too.

Of course, as the weeks passed, he adjusted himself to the difference in his condition; he grew accustomed to certain reliefs. Yet he did not realize that he was free. He was like a horse who slips his halter in a tread-mill, but goes on and on and on. He was not harassed by the goad of the strident voice, but he did the same work, in the same way, in the same harsh and unlovely surroundings;—and he did not bring Jim into the house for company! He spent his money on certain meagre essentials of food and fuel, and on necessary improvements of the farm; but he missed his mother's judgment and her shrewd foresight in such matters. He went to church, and slept heavily during the service; but he never went to the church sociables. His mother had despised them, and he was too old to acquire social habits. He made no effort to be intimate with his neighbors. Mrs. Day had quarrelled with them, and would not have their names spoken in her presence if she could help it, so, if Peter had a capacity for friendship, these speechless years had made it dumb. Hence he was singularly isolated, untouched by the interest or the gossip or the knowledge of the life about him. He spent his days as he had always spent them, following the lines his mother had laid down for him. He went through the usual round of daily work. In the evenings he read his agricultural paper or an old book on sermons. There was no one to tell him to go to bed, and once he fell asleep, his arms stretched on the table in front of him, and wakened in the cold early light, stiff and bewildered, and heavy with fatigue. But there was one point on which Peter Day was perfectly clear; he might, through stupidity or dulness, go on in the tread-mill now that the halter was slipped, but—he was glad to miss the goad!

The final awakening to a knowledge that he was free came some ten months later. It was in June; a hot, sparkling day, when every hand on the farm had twice as much as he could do. Something had gone wrong about the mower; and Peter, with Jim at his heels, went into the village to get the blacksmith to weld a broken rod together. It was a loss of time, this hanging about the blacksmith's shop waiting for the work to be done, and the old habit of uneasiness, because of his mother's rage at any delay, made him tramp about, frowning and pressing his lips together, and looking up the road as though fearing some messenger, sent to bid him hasten.

The shop was dark, except for the red flicker when the smith thrust his pincers into the heap of ashes with one hand and started the bellows with the other. Then a shower of sparks flew up the great black cone of the chimney, and Peter could see his piece of broken iron whiten in the flames. He looked at his watch restlessly and walked to the door and back.

"Ain't you 'most done?"

"I ain't. And I won't be for a half-hour,' Henry Davis said. "What's the matter with you, Peter, anyway? What's your hurry? It wouldn't kill anybody if you didn't get back till to-morrow. Your other machine's going. There ain't no dyin' need of this here one, anyhow."

"Well, I ain't one to waste time," Peter said. Jim yawned and stretched himself on the bare black earth of the floor. He, at least, was in no hurry.

"Well, whose time are you wastin'?" the smith insisted, good-naturedly. "It's your own, ain't it? I guess you got a right to loaf. There's no one to say you nay," he ended.

"That's so," said Peter. But he still tramped back and forth, until the smith, turning the bar about on his anvil, cried:

"For the Lord's sake, Peter Day, get out! Go on up to Main Street and get a shave. Get out o' here, anyhow."

Peter laughed, and went, saying that he'd be back in ten minutes. "And mind you have that done!"

He loitered along, looking at his watch more than once, and coming to a standstill before the window of a grocery-store. He did not go in. All these years the curb of his mother's will had held him away from the shiftless and friendly gatherings about the stove or around the back counter, and he seemed to feel it yet. So he only looked into the dusty window. There were wooden rakes stacked up at one side, and boxes of cotton lace, and two jars of red and white sticks of candy, and fly-specked cups and saucers in thick white earthen-wear there were some advertisements of poultry food pasted against the glass, and a print of a new mower. He took these in absently, looking at his watch, and wondering if the bar was nearly done. And then his eye caught a colored lithograph propped up against some tinware. A row of girls, smiling, coquettish, marching each with slippered foot well advanced, holding out a gay skirt with the thumb and forefinger of one hand, and flirting with the other a huge feather fan across arch and laughing eyes. The flutter of the pink and blue and white skirts, the slender ankles, the invitation and challenge and impertinence of the upward kick, seemed to Peter Day perfectly beautiful. He gazed at the picture, absorbed and entranced. The owner of the shop, standing in his doorway, watched him grinning.

"You better go see 'em, Mr. Day. They're to be here to-night. The parsons mad, I tell you."

Peter came to himself with a start, and read the announcement of the production in the town-hall, on such a date and at such an hour, of Sweet Rosy. The notice below the picture set forth:

The Four Montague Sisters will Perform their Charming, Refined and Side-splitting Farce, with all Accessories of Magnificent Scenery, Exquisite Music, and Elaborate Costumes. The Ballet is pronounced to be the most Beautiful in Loveliness of Form, and Perfection of Grace, ever seen in America.

YOUTH, GRACE, BEAUTY.

Admission, 35 Cents.

"We've never had one of these be[illegible] shows up here," said the storekeep[illegible] "but, of course, I've seen 'em. I'm [illegible] go when I'm in the city, because [illegible] example can't injure nobody th[illegible] Here it's different. This one isn't [illegible] bad as some, I understand. Why don't [illegible] you go and see 'em, Mr. Day?"

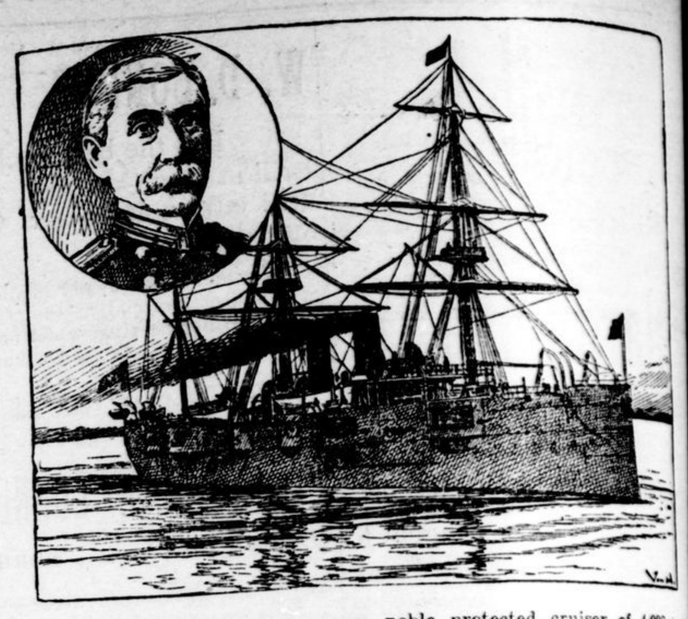
Why didn't he? Peter Day wanted [illegible] to the blacksmith's shop for [illegible] and walked home "studying." Why shouldn't he go to see the show? [illegible] did not ask himself whether there [illegible] anything wrong in such shows—he [illegible] er had asked himself such questions. There was nothing abstract about [illegible] er. He had simply ducked and wri[illegible] under his mother's tongue, and [illegible] ed her decisions of what was right [illegible] wrong, avoiding by a sort of instinct [illegible] the things that roused the furious [illegible] per which lay always ready to f[illegible] and roar and shake the house dow[illegible] any most trivial excuse. In ten mi[illegible] he had gotten more or less used [illegible] peace, even if he had not taken [illegible] tage of it. But why shouldn't he [illegible] advantage of it?

He looked through his round sp[illegible] cles at Jim jogging along in the [illegible] in front of him, with a sort of [illegible] intentness. "I'm going to see th[illegible] he said to himself. "Why not?"

So he went. He went that [illegible] night.

To be Continued.

COMMODORE JOHN C. WATSON, HIS FLAGSHIP AND HIS FLEET.



A despatch from Washington, says: —Commodore John Crittenden Watson, who has been ordered to take a fleet of six fighting ships across the Atlantic to meet the Spanish on their home coasts, is one of the youngest commanders of the navy. It is within the possibilities that another Manila may be seen at Cadiz, but however that may be, Commodore Watson will have no lack of good ships and big guns with which to do battle. The most important of the six fighting vessels in the Watson fleet are his own flagship, the Newark, and the big battle ships Iowa and Oregon. The three others are the Yosemite, Yankee and Dixie. They are auxiliary cruisers purchased by the United States after the war began. The Dixie was formerly El Rio. She has a displacement of 4,664 tons, is 380 feet long, is mounted with twenty-two guns, and has a crew of 350 men. The Yankee was formerly El Norte. She is of the same tonnage, gun power and man power as the Dixie, and the Yosemite, which was formerly El Sud, is a sister ship of the other two, with the same men and arms. The flagship Newark is a noble protected cruiser of 4,098 tons displacement. She is 310 feet long, 49 feet two inches in the beam, and steams at the rate of nineteen knots an hour. Her main battery consists of twelve 6-inch breech-loading rifles and her secondary battery of four 6-pounders, four 3-pounders and two 1-pounder quick firers, four 37-mm., Hotchkiss revolving cannon and four Gatlings. She has a complement of 384 men. The commodore himself, although still in his fifties, served on Farragut's flagship all through ther civil war. He was born in Frankfort, Ky., and was graduated with honors from the naval academy at Annapolis. After making a tour of the world he was assigned to Farragut's ship, and did not leave the hero till peace was declared. Commodore Watson is a grandson of John J. Crittenden, who was once attorney general of the United States and who wrote the famous Crittenden compromise bill. He is a nephew of General George B. Crittenden and Thomas L. Crittenden, who were heroes of the civil war. Commodore Watson's wife was a Miss Thornton of San Francisco. He has two sons; one Edward [illegible] Watson, is an ensign on the cruiser Detroit, and the other Thornton [illegible] is now a private in the Seventh cavalry.

HOW THE ROMANS BUILT ROADS

Some Ideas for the Road Builders of Our Own Lines.

An authority on road construction says that the Romans made their main roads to last forever. They were composed of siliceous and calcareous materials, and were far superior to the highest type of modern work. The roads averaged 4 to 4 3-4 meters, smaller ones 3 to 3 1-2 meters. In mountain regions the road was reduced down to a single carriageway [illegible] meters. The sidewalks were [illegible] near the cities but reduced to [illegible] tenths of a meter in the outer districts. They were built of cut stone, with [illegible] on the border. At every twelfth [illegible] mounting stones were placed, and every 1000 paces milestones. So [illegible] the bests roads were paved with [illegible] ble. The minor or secondary [illegible] were not so carefully made, though [illegible] a solidity with which few modern [illegible] can compare. A ditch was dug [illegible] solid earth, which was stamped [illegible] or staked; then on a floor of [illegible] or 15 centimeters thick a layer [illegible] tar was spread. This formed the [illegible] of the four courses which comprised [illegible] the road. The first was a [illegible] several layers of flat stones [illegible] hard cement or clay. This layer [illegible] usually 30 centimeters thick, [illegible] twice that in bad lines. On this [illegible] a concrete of pebbles, stones and [illegible] en bricks, strongly rammed with [illegible] sheathed rammers. The [illegible] thickness of this layer was 25 centimeters. In the absence of mortar [illegible] was used. Superimposed on this [illegible] a layer of 30 to 50 centimeters [illegible] vel or coarse sand carefully rolled. [illegible] top layer, or crust, was composed [illegible] ran to a thickness of 20 to [illegible] meters or more. It was made [illegible] ently, according to the material [illegible] hand. It was either paved with [illegible] stone or laid with pebble and [illegible] or metaled.

ROUND THE WHOLE W[illegible]

WHAT IS GOING ON IN TH[illegible] CORNERS OF THE GLO[illegible]

Old and New World Events of Inte[illegible] icled Briefly—Interesting Hap[illegible] Recent Date.

Alcohol is being used wit[illegible] lamps to illuminate paris o[illegible] park, the Thiergarten.

Scotland is excited over th[illegible] of a number of firms that [illegible] speculating on the boom [illegible] whiskey.

Spain, having lost control o[illegible] gar-producing colonies, has s[illegible] gates to the conference on [illegible] tion of sugar bounties, bein[illegible] Brussels.

Personally conducted tours [illegible] liland, with a chance to shoo[illegible] and other large game, are a[illegible] by a London Tourist agency. [illegible] will last three months and co[illegible]

Wales, which was made a [illegible] by itself three years ago by [illegible] has now been raised to a dio[illegible] er the name of Menevia. Dr. [illegible] the Vicar Apostolic, becomes [illegible] Bishop.

British railroads have con[illegible] stop Saturday half-holiday [illegible] trains during the summer n[illegible] the ground that they have th[illegible] full with the more profitabl[illegible] traffic.

England's Grand Lodge of [illegible] ons has severed its relations [illegible] Grand Lodge of Peru, owin[illegible] latter's removal of the Bo[illegible] Law from its altars and [illegible] "Bible" from the ritual.

London vestries are obje[illegible] paying burial fees to clerg[illegible] services that are never held, [illegible] the suppression of paris[illegible] grounds. In Lambeth alone [illegible] has been paid out in this wa[illegible] years.

Russia's cross on the St. [illegible] erected to the memory of the [illegible] who perished in Suwaroff's p[illegible] the Alps in 1799, is now com[illegible] stands in the right bank of t[illegible] opposite the Devil's bridge.

Oxford University this yea[illegible] first time had more candid[illegible] honors in modern history th[illegible] classics, the numbers being 1[illegible] former and 125 for the lat[illegible] glory of a "Double First" i[illegible] ing.

A Welshman has accompli[illegible] feat of walking 4,000 quarter[illegible] 4,000 successive periods of 9 1-2 [illegible] each at Leeds, a world's reco[illegible] ty thousand persons looked o[illegible] finish. He had previously w[illegible] distance in intervals of 9 1-2 [illegible]

Apia in Samoa has been [illegible] cricket match for the benef[illegible] church that has lasted three [illegible] There is no entrance fee for [illegible] tators, but any one who ch[illegible] bat on paying a shilling, and [illegible] is bowled out can go in agai[illegible] ing once more.

Liquor may be sold in the [illegible] Commons without a license, t[illegible] Magistrate having dismissed [illegible] mons against its barkeeper. [illegible] Daily News puts it, "If the [illegible] Commons wants liquor, the [illegible] Commons will have liquor, an[illegible] courts in England cannot co[illegible] legislative power."

Spitzbergen has reached the [illegible] becoming the subject of inte[illegible] complications. Though Swede[illegible] suzerainty over the islands, [illegible] silof, the Russian explorer, [illegible] ing his Government to hoist [illegible] perial standard over them b[illegible] Swedes strengthen their clai[illegible] ecting there an astronomical [illegible] tory and a rescue station.

All the Judges of England, a[illegible] sidering the question for m[illegible] a year, were unable to agree [illegible] finition of what a "place" is [illegible] the London County Council i[illegible] to ask legal advice as to the [illegible] of street. The Council recen[illegible] moned a man before a Polic[illegible] trate for laying out a stree[illegible] property without obtaining t[illegible] cil's permission. His defence [illegible] It was not a street, but a c[illegible] for the use of his tenants, [illegible] Magistrate said that he coul[illegible] cide the point till the Council's [illegible] obtained an accurate definit[illegible] street from a superior court [illegible]

Reports have been received [illegible] bah, the Arab conqueror of [illegible] tral Soudan, who seems to [illegible] again. After his conquest of [illegible] mi and Bornou he invaded th[illegible] State of Sokoto, was at first [illegible] badly, when the report of h[illegible] arose, but got his forces toge[illegible] erpowered the Sultan of Sok[illegible] captured Kano, the metropol[illegible] west central Soudan. He is [illegible] cognized as King of Kano, by [illegible] koto Sultan, acting on the a[illegible] the British Niger Company [illegible] these reports prove true a new [illegible] is added to the British, Fre[illegible] German complications in W[illegible] rica.

Excavations have been made [illegible] Wilhelm and Reichel of the [illegible] Archaeological Institute at t[illegible] ple of Artemis, at Lusoi, in [illegible] Arcadia, discovered by Prof. [illegible] last year. The terrace of th[illegible] was examined and the ruins of [illegible] circular building and a po[illegible] were found, which had been d[illegible]