

NOTES AND QUERIES.

The accompanying statement forwarded to us by Sir Herbert Samuel, High Commissioner for Palestine, will be read with interest in connection with the statement of the Rev. W. M. Christie given on page 21 of the *January Quarterly Statement*. At Sir Herbert Samuel's request Lieutenant Beverley, A.D.C. to General Palim, wrote this account of his experience and had it countersigned by the men of his regiment who were with him. Two points make it clear that the creature seen on this occasion was no crocodile. Firstly it had a "fang," and secondly it, unlike Mr. Christie's animal, did not run to a pool or river, but disappeared down an opening in the ground.

The statement runs as follows:—

"It was during the practice camp of the 16th Brigade, R.F.A., I was on duty to clear the range of Arabs, etc., with a party of 40 men, who were posted at intervals round the range to keep people off. I had posted my men and was going my round visiting them. When about 8 miles south of Jaffa on the south-west side of Wady Rubin, at about 8.30 a.m. I noticed about 50 yards from where I was riding what appeared to me as a very large lizard lying basking in the sun. I rode up to within about five yards of the animal, which at once roused itself, stood its ground and kept on ejecting a fang from its mouth. Not knowing whether this was poisonous, I did not approach any nearer for fear that the horse might be stung, but instead threw a lance at the animal, the effect being that it turned and ran at a fast pace, with me following at a canter. It ran for a distance of about 200 yards to a large rock and disappeared down an opening between the lip of the rock and the ground.

I might mention that some Arabs saw this from a distance and came over to the place where the animal disappeared, and we tried to eject it, but without result. The Arabs seemed very excited, and it appeared by their actions, etc., that they had never seen the beast before. It was about 6 to 8 feet in length, about 18 inches across the back, the same colour and covering as a lizard, four legs and a pointed head and tail; and as I have previously mentioned, a fang."

The creature on this occasion was evidently the not uncommon Monitor (*Monitor niloticus*) or "Great Lizard" which inhabits inland sandy or desert parts of Palestine, Sinai, Egypt and Mesopotamia. It is not recorded as growing over five feet long, and, possibly, had the specimen been caught and measured its length would have been found to be considerably less than it appeared to be in the excitement of the chase.

The following extract from Dr. Peters' "*Nippur*" (vol. 11, pp. 329-330) records a similar experience in Irak:—

"Three hours from Nejef we passed a large new khan in process of erection, as a charitable entertainment of pilgrims. It was a bequest from a Persian, named Merza, lately deceased in Nejef. A little later we ran down a monitor lizard, or arwal, about three or four feet long. In running, the creature straightened out its legs and galloped, standing as high from the ground as the goats of the country. When overtaken it turned about and showed fight. I do not wonder that old travellers mistook the creatures for alligators, and told marvellous stories of deadly encounters with them, in which the poor lizards were naturally always defeated."
