

not unlike the hand engraved upon the stone disc, have been reported or discovered *since* the publication of Mr. Holmes's article.

The art in the engraving is of a high character, but the latter is not more skillfully executed than the designs upon the highest type shell gorgets and the copper plates, illustrated in this chapter.

The beautiful shell gorget engraved with the figure of a spider (Fig. 237) was obtained from a mound on Fain's island, Tennessee. It is an unusual type. Specimens upon which this curious figure is

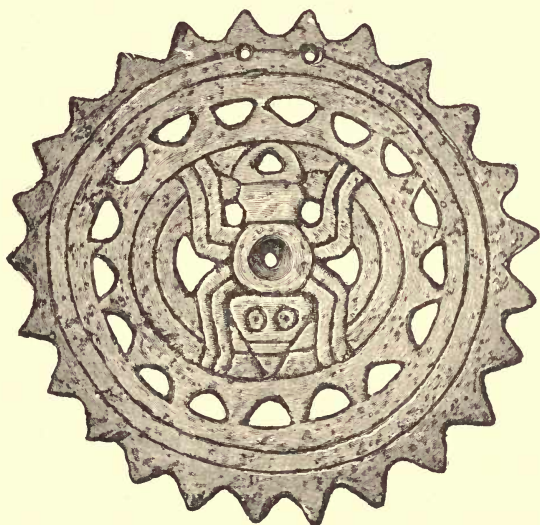


FIG. 237.—SHELL GORGET—THE SPIDER DESIGN, FAIN'S ISLAND, TENNESSEE (ACTUAL SIZE).

more naturally and elaborately represented have been discovered in the mounds at New Madrid, Missouri, and near East St. Louis, in Illinois.\*

The symbol or figure of a cross is usually represented upon the back of the spider, and the carvings are most skillfully executed. The remarkable uniformity of design is also a characteristic of these "spider gorgets." It seems strange that they should be dis-

\* The illustration is from the Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Plate LXI.

covered in mound districts so widely separated as East Tennessee, Western Illinois, and Missouri; yet we have already learned that both of these sections were once probably occupied by the tribes or kindred of the Stone Grave race of Tennessee. Further evidences of the similarity of the ancient arts in these distant sections will be presented hereafter.

We now come to the consideration of a series of ancient gorgets of shell, engraved with designs representing the human form. These antiques we regard as of very great archæological interest, as some of them probably mark the most advanced stages of art and development reached by the ancient inhabitants of America north of Mexico, and furnish information of a very definite and important character, as to the appearance, dress, and manners of the interesting race of mound builders, at the period when they were probably at the height of their power.

A number of these shell breast-plates, carved from the Busycon, representing the human face, have been discovered in the mounds of Tennessee, Virginia, and adjacent sections, but they are usually crude and of little value to the archæologist.

The figures engraved with the human form are also sometimes so peculiar and obscure that the devices upon them can scarcely be recognized, and are of interest chiefly as examples of mysterious symbolism.

Two of these specimens, from the ancient mounds of East Tennessee, are illustrated in outlines in Figs. 238 and 239.

The gorget from the McMahan mound, when discovered, was lying upon the breast of the skeleton.

The strange coils and folds, engraved in incised lines upon the serpent discs, are not more complicated and mysterious than these designs. A casual inspection reveals little but a confused mass of involutions, but, upon patient observation, the heads, the bodies, arms, hands, legs, and feet will be discovered. More elaborate illustrations of these engraved breastplates may be found in Mr. Holmes's monograph, but the figures are as obscure as in the outline sketches. The strange designs upon the three well-carved tab-