

A CHRISTMAS IN INDIA.

An Encounter With a Cobra While Lying Ill of Insect Bite.

When one reads of the great number of people who come to their deaths each year in India from serpents and wild animals and crocodiles, the figures can hardly be credited by one who has not visited that country. India is the paradise of all that is savage, revengeful, venomous, and sly, beginning with the thug and ending with the flea. The climate and topography of the country favor the wild beast more than man. It is the natural home of every species of reptile—of many species of carnivora—of almost every poisonous insect which can be named. The offer of large rewards for the killing of poisonous serpents has taken tens of thousands of dollars from the coffers of the Government without decreasing the number of deaths by snake bites by one. The tiger, leopard, jaguar, panther, and other fierce creatures have been thinned off by the natural settling of the various provinces, but one has only to go

A FEW MILES FROM THE RAILROAD

lines to find them to-day as they were found twenty years ago. It will forever be a combat between man and beast in that country, with the odds in favor of the beast.

In making my way from Peniab to Lahore, in the days before the railroad, having the company of two English sportsmen and a British officer. I was bitten on the cheek by some poisonous insect which dashed at me as we were riding in the shade. It struck me like a flash, and was off before I could raise my hand. Being new to the country, I supposed it to be some insect common to the woods, but it was scarcely three minutes before I began to suffer great pain, and in five I had to dismount. The natives were agreed that the bite came from a jungle hornet, and that I would be a sufferer for some days. Fortunately for me, we were close to the outskirts of a village called Halarad, and when I could no longer stand on my feet, which was about seven minutes after being bitten, I was carried into the village and a native doctor set to work on me. I was then raving with pain, and my face was swelled until I could not see. It was four days before the pain left me, and ten before I had recovered sufficient strength to ride. In this interval occurred the adventure I set out to relate.

On the sixth day after my misfortune, and Christmas morning, a hammock was slung for me out doors under a tree, and a native sat at its roots to administer to my wants. He held the end of my hammock cord in his hand, and once in a while gave it a pull and kept me slowly swinging. The village was a scattering one, containing about 200 natives, and from my elevated position I had a pretty good view around me. There was a jungle about forty rods away, while the ground between was

COVERED WITH RANK GRASS and weeds at least knee high. In front of the hut to the left of my tree sat a young woman who was making some repairs on a garment belonging to her father. On this morning most of the men in the village had gone off on a hunt, and everything was as quiet as a Sunday morning in a Canadian hamlet.

The balmy air and the motion of the hammock would have induced sleep had I not slept thirteen hours out of the preceding twenty-four. I was quiet, but wakeful. In the course of half an hour the hammock ceased to move, and I saw that the servant was fast asleep. Almost at the same moment I caught a flash of something at the edge of the jungle, and then I noticed a movement of the grass. I was sportsman enough to comprehend that some animal or reptile was moving toward me, but I had no enthusiasm—not even common curiosity. I traced the progress of the unknown creature by the motion of the grass, but did not speculate as to what it was. The country is overrun with hares, field rats, and other small and harmless animals, and the fact that something was moving in the grass would not have been considered by the natives as worth investigating. I was looking at the ground, but thinking of matters at home, when I suddenly caught sight of the head of

A MONSTROUS SERPENT

raised above the grass. It was held pretty steady for a few minutes, and then moved slowly from right to left and back like the pendulum of a clock. At this time the reptile was about a hundred feet away, and right at the edge of the tall grass. Between me and him the ground was bare, the grass having been killed out by the feet of the villagers.

I suppose that there was still sufficient poison in my system to deaden my sensibilities to a certain extent. I felt no fear of the serpent, nor did I wish for my gun to give him a shot. I had no fears for the woman seated with her back to the grass, nor for the native fast asleep below me. This complacency on my part is to be accounted for as I said, on the ground that my nervous system had been deadened and had not yet recovered its activity. The serpent presently crawled into view, and I saw that it was a cobra of enormous size. As soon as the snake was clear of the grass he raised his head for a closer survey. The woman and man were about the same distance from him, each being the side of a triangle. As I saw him hesitating about a choice, I calmly reasoned that he would come my way.

HE HAD TWO VICTIMS

under a tree, and only one the other way. He was a long minute making up his mind, and he came creeping toward the tree, head well up, eyes blazing, and tongue darting in and out.

It may be that the serpent saw the sleeping man, but if so he had determined on attacking me alone, perhaps because I was higher up and offered him a better show. When I realized that he was certainly coming my way I felt a tingle of excitement all through my nerves, and at once shouted to the sleeping servant. He cast off sleep and sprang up, and I suppose this action saved me, for the cobra had already raised its head high as the hammock. As the native sprang up he could have touched the snake. He saw it before him, uttered a shriek of terror, and next instant was a victim. I saw the snake strike him repeatedly in the face. I think the poor fellow lost consciousness with the first attack, for the one scream was all he uttered.

The alarm seemed to go all over the village in a moment, and the people at once hastened up with drums, articles of tinware and whatever could create a din. They also shouted at the tops of their voices, and for a minute or two the cobra seemed undecided

whether to attack me or beat a hasty retreat. I was

SICK AND DIZZY WITH THE TERROR and the odor, and made no move to help myself. That was doubtless the wisest policy. I could have emptied myself out of the hammock upon the ground beside him, and he would certainly have resented my presence. Twice he reared up as if he meant to strike me, but the noise alarmed him. A young man finally came running up with a blazing torch, and this was hurled with such precision as to light directly upon one of the cobra's folds. He must have been badly scorched, for he hissed as loudly as an angry gander, flopped himself about in a terrible way, and then went off to the jungle at a rapid rate. Then the natives rushed in to the aid of the poor fellow, who was unconscious and moaning in a pitiful way. They had half a dozen remedies at hand, but none of them was of the least avail. He died in about thirty-five minutes and the corpse was one of the worst sights I ever beheld. It turned a green-black with the powerful poison, and it swelled until one could hardly believe the object had ever been a human being. The natives examined the face and reported that the serpent had struck him five times.

THE LAST ENEMY—DEATH.

BY JOHN IMRIE, TORONTO.

Death comes to all, no man can stay his hand;
If he but calls, the proudest in the land
His summons must obey, and then be led
By his cold, icy hand 'mong silent dead;
There to remain till Death himself shall die,
And He who conquered Death shall reign on high.
Oh, Death! where is thy sting if Jesus save?
Where, then, thy victory, O cruel grave?
Thou hast no power o'er him whom God defends,
For him all things subservest most glorious ends.
Death but relieves from earthly pain and woe,
A friend, though in the guise of mortal foe.
Oh, may the grave to me be but a door
To that bright land where Death shall reign no more!

"Yes, I have seen the day when Mr. Astor, the millionaire, did not have a pair of shoes to cover his feet." "And when was that, pray?" "At the time he was bathing."

Did your former physician give you a diagnosis, madam?" Mrs. N.—"No, doctor; he only gave me iron, but I am willing to take one if you think it would do me any good."

Christmas Carol

Words by Margaret S. Sangster.

Musio by Harrison Millard.

In Unison or as a Solo.

1. Sing, chil-dren, sing a joy-ful strain,
2. Be-hold! the Prince of Peace is born,
3. We, too, would go to Beth-le-hem,
4. Sing, chil-dren, sing, and send a-long

In long re-sound-ing
The sky of night is
And at the low-ly
The nev-er end-ing

Con brio.

cho - rus; And hail the Lord who comes to reign,
riv - en; Lo! glad to greet the sac-red morn,
man - ger, With hum-ble hearts, with old and gem,
cho - rus, Till na-tions lift a migh-ty song

In Love's do-min-ion o'er... us. He comes, He comes, a
Ply shi-ning hosts from hea-ven. The star! the star! its
Would seek the king-ly Stran-ger. The song! the song! it
To Love tri-um-phant o'er us, The Love! the Love! O

lit-tle Child, A mo-ther bends a-bove Him; He comes, the gen-tle, meek and mild. And well may children love Him.
wondrous flame Lights King and priest to find Him; The Day-spring quickens at his Name, The darkness lies be-hind Him.
nev-er dies, To Son of Ma-ry ring-ing; It soars be-yond the rift-ed skies, Where an-gels join the sug-ging.
tell it out, It comes, our grief to ban-ish; The world shall swell the vic-or's shout, When death and sin shall van-ish.

Chorus. With Spirit.

Tell far and wide, that all may hear, The sweet, the dear old sto-ry; Sing loud and high, sing true and clear The heav-en-ly an-gels' glo-ry!

GENERAL NEWS.

C. A. Davis, of Nevada, Mo., sneezed so violently the other day that he broke one of his ribs.

As Henry Esterwin of Bethany, Va., was chopping wood, his little 4-year-old daughter ran up and put her foot on the log. Henry didn't notice her until the axe came down on the foot, severing it.

There are about 200,000 men interested in brass bands, either as players or makers of instruments. There are 30,000 brass bands in the States at the present time, and the number is rapidly increasing.

Nora Brown of Owensboro, Ky., lying ill with a fever, startled her friends by suddenly saying that she saw an angel, who said to her distinctly, "Thou shalt live another year." Her friends believe Nora.

A liquor dealer at St. John, N. B., who has been in the habit of blowing horns and otherwise disturbing the Salvation Army when they pass his place, was rotten-egged recently by a number of young men of the town.

One of the institutions of Connecticut this fall is the cider beat, who, pretending to be out buying cider, samples the farmers' apple juice, gets invited to eat dinner or take tea, says he'll call again, and goes on his dishonest way.

Citizens of Eminence, Mo., recently saw seven wild geese flying south, pursued by a large eagle. Soon he caught up with them, and then the geese turned and made fight, and, after driving the eagle off, went on their way southward.

David Wright, a colored citizen of Columbia City, Fla., is the father of twenty-five children, most of whom are living. His present wife is worthy of her third husband, for she has borne twenty-seven children of whom nineteen live.

Robert Muehlman of Detroit drew \$344 from the bank, intending to be married the next morning. During the night a burglar entered his room, chloroformed him, and stole the money. His wedding has been postponed in consequence.

The church edifice at Shrewsbury, N. J., is 117 years old, and is built on the site of an old stone church erected over 200 years ago. A Bible which was presented by Queen Anne is used in the service. The Bible is printed in red and black inks, on thick paper, in quaint type.

Lately a redwood tree was cut on the south fork of Elk River, Humboldt county, Cal., which was sawed into twenty-one cuts, four of which were sixteen feet long, twelve were twenty feet long, and five were twenty-four feet long, making the total length 424 feet. An accurate tally at the mill showed that the twenty-one logs furnished 70,736 feet of lumber.

A Rome, N. Y., girl filled three stone beer jugs with wet sand, corked them tightly, and set them in the oven to heat, so that she could warm her bed with them. The heat generated steam from the wet sand, and an explosion followed, which filled the room with flying sand and fragments of beer jugs. The girl and the rest of the family were badly scared, but unhurt.

A Georgia paper publishes as truth the story of a Marion county farmer who became satisfied that he had a tapeworm. So he carefully baited a little fishhook, tied a short line to it, swallowed the hook, and tied the line to his buttonhole. Then he waited for a bite. By and by he thought he had one and yanked the line; the hook caught in his throat and had to be dug out; he didn't catch the worm.

A San Diego citizen bought a ticket for San Francisco and sat down on the pier until the boat should be ready to start. He became much interested in seeing the work going on, the passengers hurrying down, the gangplank pulled in, and the lines cast off, and expressed pleasure at the sight of the big steamer as she left the pier. Then he remembered he wasn't on board, but that his baggage was, and his language was something shocking.

Farmer Hillman of Sharon, Ga., looking for gold on his farm found a spot where the soil was curiously discolored. He set his negro hired man to digging, and he found that he had struck simply a clay bed. No gold was found, but the negro, who was rheumatic, discovered that when he dug in the clay his pain ceased. He excavated quite a pit, and now persons in that vicinity declare that the soft clay of the pit is a sure cure for rheumatism; and it is reported that invalids who go there on crutches, after applying the clay to the affected parts, go away unaided.

A drove of a hundred hogs that were being driven through Allegheny became frightened and stampeded. About a dozen ran into a drug store bleeding and covered with mud. Two ladies who were waiting for prescriptions screamed with fear. One of them sprang on the counter and the other clambered upon the soda fountain. After upsetting every article of furniture in the store, the fattest of the affrighted hogs tried to get behind the prescription counter and overturned the stove. The stove is heated by natural gas, and when it was upset the pipe was broken and a sheet of flame shot up almost to the ceiling. A disastrous conflagration would have been the result but for the prompt action of the proprietor, who turned off the gas. Two of the hogs were badly burned. The owner of the swine were compelled to carry them out.

In the island of Java the juice of the berries of the mountain-ash is used as an acid for punch.

Another Deadly Missile.

A Yale professor has found a new and dangerous explosive that might, perhaps, take the place of the dynamite bomb. He received, the other day, from a scientific friend in South Africa, some specimens of ostrich eggs which he had ordered some time ago. However fresh and fit for the table they might have been when they were shipped, they had time to become a little stale, for they had been en route from Cape Town since November last, the ship being wrecked during the voyage. Some of the cargo was lost, but the ostrich eggs were miraculously spared. When they arrived at their destination, Peabody Museum, Yale, Professor Bouer, to whom they were consigned, was in ecstasies over them. Only think, ostrich eggs fresh from Cape Town! Not altogether fresh, perhaps, but sufficiently so for experimental and scientific purposes. While he was opening one, mentally cogitating, perhaps, whether he should fry it with a bit of ham or make it into an omelet, it suddenly exploded and knocked the professor senseless. When he recovered sufficiently to regain his feet, the loud smell that pervaded the room knocked him down again and stamped on him. He has been anointing himself with carbolic acid ever since.

How to Read.

A great deal more can be accomplished by systematic reading or study for fifteen or twenty minutes daily, than appears possible to one who has never tried it. It would suffice to keep up French or German, and to become conversant with the best authors. Or a little time given daily to the earnest study of science, and one might become a skillful botanist or geologist. Or if English literature be more attractive—as it undoubtedly is to the great majority—how soon would one become familiar with Milton or Shakespeare, Bacon or Macaulay, if a few sentences were read and considered daily.

Above all things it is important that one should read systematically, and not be guided by chance. Have always a good book, a standard work, that will repay careful study, at hand, and to that devote a part of the time that may be set apart for reading. Before opening the book recall as fully as possible what was read the day before, and on closing it see by reflection how many of the thoughts of the author you have made your own, and so cultivate memory.

Barnum offers twenty thousand dollars for the skin of a sea serpent, and a Harlem man is trying to hatch a sixty-foot snake from a jug of election whiskey. He don't have much trouble in growing the snake, but it puzzles him to keep the whiskey from getting away.