

SNAKES IN INDIA.

Although a European is seldom bitten by a snake in India, the danger is always present to everybody's mind, owing to the large number of natives who die from bites and to the constant sight of the reptiles. Indeed, snakes always form a fruitful source of conversation at an Anglo-Indian dinner table, when other topics are scarce, and a goodly flow of stories, theories, and doubtful incidents in natural history may invariably be reckoned upon when "snakes" are started.

Our illustrations are from sketches by the late Captain W. W. Robinson, Royal Engineers, who died at Aden on June 7 last. In an interesting article, for which we regret that we cannot afford space, he remarked that the "Griffin" is always carefully instructed by his moonshi in snake lore, including the habits of the whipsnake, "who whips and whips you till you die."

"It was during one of his lessons," Captain Robinson continued, "that I first saw snake charming. Parties of natives carried round baskets slung at the end of bamboos, and squatting down in front of the veranda, offered, in a jargon as peculiar to them as the squeak is to a Punch and Judy man in England, to get up a 'very good dance.' The lids of the baskets were opened,

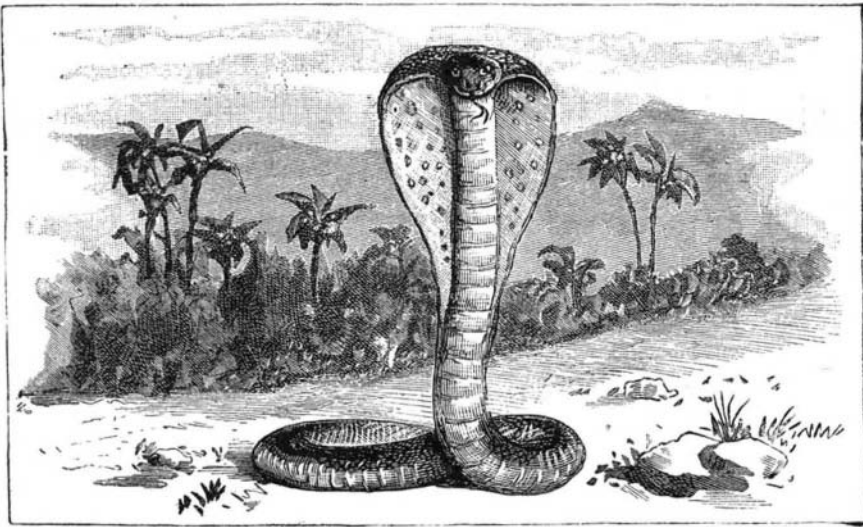
about just out of his reach. My wife and the servants, taking the snake in the rear, decided the contest much to the cobra's disadvantage. On one of our police sepoy's being bitten, I found, on examining his foot, the unmistakable mark of the two fangs of a poisonous snake." I gave him some brandy, extemporized a rough tourniquet, and was proceeding to carry out the government instructions for snake bite. The man himself, however, and his companions thought he ought to go to the representation of a Mussulman saint at a neighboring mosque, and while I was finding a razor they carried him off. Next morning, on making inquiries, I found the man was alive, though very sick. The holy saint had repeated prayers over him, had bound a pebble on his right arm, which was only to be removed by the holy man himself, after eight days, with appropriate prayers. If taken off by any one in the interval the man would die. In a few days the sepoy was well, the saint removed the bandage and pebble, and I was appealed to as a witness to a veritable miracle. Had I not seen the bite and testified that it had been caused by a venomous snake?

"It is seldom one hears of a European being bitten. I only know of two authenticated cases while in India. One was bitten by a cobra belonging to some snake

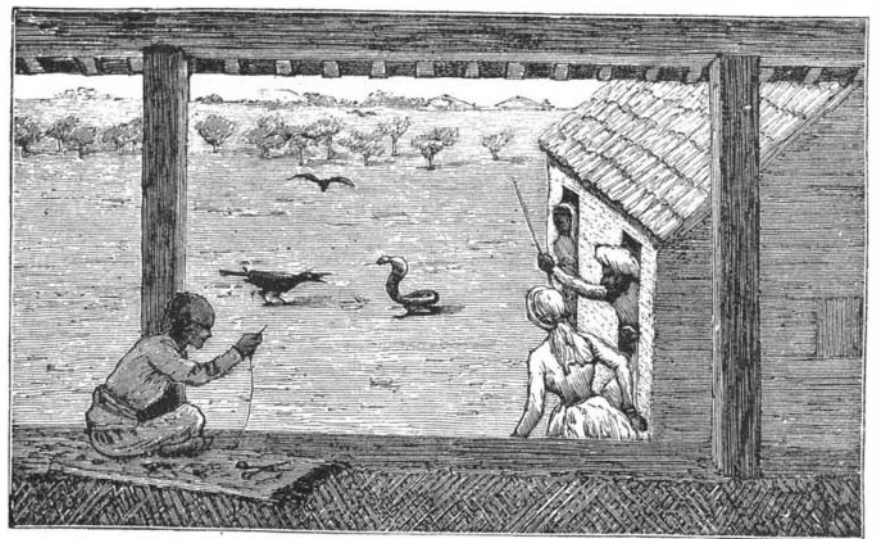
ing them to be of different race from the majority of the inhabitants. Two forms of skull are frequently met with in long barrows, both of a long, narrow shape, but differing from each other in one having a regular oval outline, while the other broadens out from a narrow forehead, and, having attained its greatest width, terminates rapidly behind. The skulls found in these villages correspond exactly to the first type. It is therefore probable that there were two distinct races of the long-headed people, which will have to be distinguished in future.

Drink Legislation in Austria.

The Austrian government have, it is stated, introduced into the Reichsrath a strong measure for the prevention of drunkenness. The reason alleged is the alarming deterioration in the physique of young men enrolled for military service, owing to the spread of spirit drinking among the humbler classes. It will be interesting to see if the provisions of this measure are accepted. They would be difficult to carry in this country, where freedom even to get drunk is still jealously guarded. Spirit shops are to be closed at five on Saturday afternoon, and to remain so till five



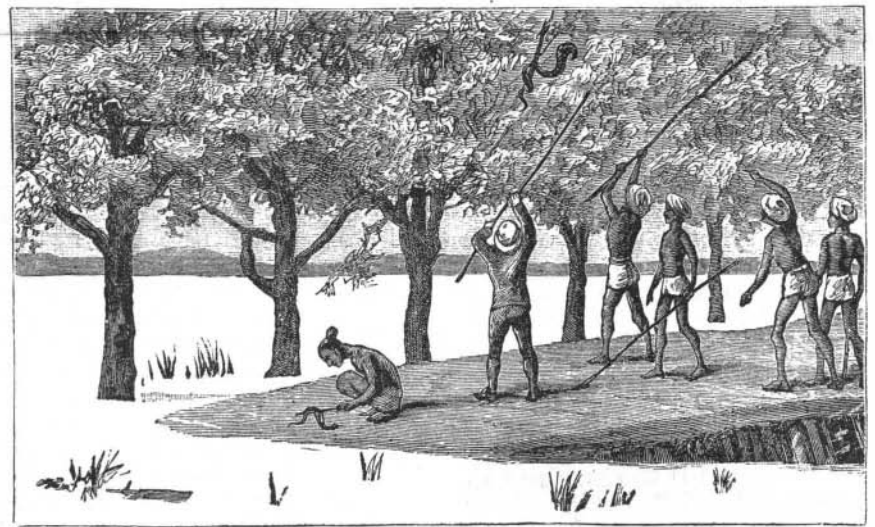
A COBRA.



COMBAT BETWEEN COBRA AND CROW.



COBRA CHARMERS.



"DURING THE FLOODS."

THE EAST INDIAN COBRA.

and two or three cobras were unceremoniously pulled out. Then, while a squeaky pipe was played, the snakes raised their heads, spread their hoods, and assumed the oft-pictured attitude. As the musician menaced them with his hand, they ducked their heads up and down, and this was the 'very good dance.' Then another of the party produced an unhappy, ragged looking mongoose (ichneumon), the traditional enemy of snakes, and a so-called fight was shown by alternately throwing him on to the snakes and jerking him back again by the string round his neck. There was not much 'charming' in the treatment of the cobras, who probably had had their fangs extracted. There are, I believe, however, authenticated accounts of men who handle unutilated cobras.

"The occasion of a river being in flood is usually a time of snake harvest for the naturalist, as the snakes are either washed up, drowned, or else driven from their holes to take refuge on high ground. During one flood I found two cobras up in the branches of a thorny acacia tree. The largest of the two we attacked, and killed with long bamboos. He was over five feet long, and the biggest cobra I have ever seen.

"Our poultry used to get very excited when a snake was about. The crows and other birds would similarly show its vicinity by flocking together near him in a state of much perturbation. On one occasion my wife was irritated by the continuous scolding croak of a crow. When she went out to drive him away, she saw a large cobra striking angrily at him. The crow danced

charmings, whose fangs he thought had been extracted. The other had touched with his foot what looked like a whiplash, but which was in reality one of the little Indian vipers (*Echis carinata*), a specimen of which I show in one of my sketches. Both cases recovered. The immunity enjoyed by Europeans is doubtless due to the fact that they wear boots in place of the sandal depicted; but even so one wonders that there are not more cases, when it is reckoned how often a snake is found in a bungalow."—*The Graphic*.

Early Britons.

In a paper read at a recent meeting of the British Association, Dr. J. G. Garson described the discoveries of General Pitt-Rivers at Rushmore, near Salisbury, where he has found the remains of no less than four British villages of the Roman period, besides many tumuli and cists. The human remains are extremely interesting, and throw much light on the characters of the people to whom they belonged. The chief point of interest which they show is the small stature of the people, the average of the males being 5 feet 4 inches and of the females 4 feet 11.8 inches in the village of Woodcuts; while in that of Rotherly, the other village excavated last year, the heights are 5 feet 1 inch and 4 feet 10 inches respectively. The skulls are of a long, narrow, oval form, with one or two exceptions, when they are of rounder form. These were found associated with longer limb bones, show-

ing them to be of different race from the majority of the inhabitants. Two forms of skull are frequently met with in long barrows, both of a long, narrow shape, but differing from each other in one having a regular oval outline, while the other broadens out from a narrow forehead, and, having attained its greatest width, terminates rapidly behind. The skulls found in these villages correspond exactly to the first type. It is therefore probable that there were two distinct races of the long-headed people, which will have to be distinguished in future.

On Monday morning. Ordinary storekeepers are not to be allowed to sell spirits, the sale of which is to be restricted to public houses, confectioners, and specially licensed stores. Dealers serving spirits to intoxicated persons are to be liable to arrest or fine. No debt for spirits consumed on the premises can be recovered by law if the amount exceeds the value of five liters. The magistrates are empowered to forbid retailers to serve spirits to habitual drunkards for any period up to twelve months. Similar legislation already exists in Galicia. The proposal now is to extend it to all Austria. The preamble of the measure sets forth that it is a direct outcome of the hygienic congress. It is a striking illustration of the impotence of our own Parliament that no legislation for the restriction of our enormous drinking habits has any chance of being entertained.—*Lancet*.

Trial of an Electric Street Car—Julien System.

On December 8, a street car with a Julien secondary battery as the source of electricity was tried upon the Fourth Avenue railroad in this city. It was filled with a party of invited guests. While many of the arrangements were provisional, it ran twice over the line, sometimes attaining quite a high speed. The battery carried was said to be enough to drive it forty miles. The maximum speed attained was about ten miles an hour. It started at 32d St., ran to 85th St., and down to the City Hall Park, and then returned to the depot at 32d Street.