

It reminds one of a very common scene in the rural districts of India. A Brahminie bull is an animal in which dwells the spirit of a dead Brahmin priest. He is branded all over with signs and symbols of his high office. He belongs to no one and is free to wander and browse anywhere, at least in theory; but when a Hindoo comes out on an early morning and the dawning light shows him a Brahminie bull rapidly gorging his precious little patch of seed rice or making havoc amongst the Indian corn which has to last him until the rains, then in spite of the sacredness of his bovine guest, he endeavors by the aid of clods of earth, or even a stick, to persuade the animal to move on. The "move on" means that the still only half-breakfasted bull starts to graze on the next man's patch of crops, and the owner of this can equally ill-afford to lose his property, and so tries to drive the animal back again. The beast must go somewhere, and thus after trying to go north, and being headed off and turning south, and again meeting with a rebuff, he turns westward and may steal a meal in that direction. But the blood of the two villagers is up by this time, and long after the bone (or rather bull) of contention has passed, they will turn their batteries of clods and bad language on each other. Now when the villagers start to fight verbally, the women feel that it is their quarrel, and thus a row which started at daylight may last until the heat of the sun drives the combatants apart. Generally, after the men have got their female relatives well started, they leave the matter in their hands and themselves loaf off to work or bathe.

I have already mentioned that when natives wish to scare away spirits they make use of noises, and hence the beating of drums and blowing of conch shells make night hideous after funerals, marriages, and other domestic events, for on such occasions spirits are supposed to be specially prone to be present and to give trouble. The feeling is wide-spread in India that the decline of the power of the spirits during the present century has been due, not as we would explain it: to the spread of education among the masses, but to the sound of the British drum.

With such a fallacious groundwork as regards the etiology of disease to go upon, the people of India have nevertheless had handed down to them many very wise hygienic rules of conduct. Thus they believe that when small-pox is raging it angers the goddess of Disease for the friends and neighbors of the sick man to go near him, and it is for the same reason inexpedient that they should travel. Their best conduct is to stay quietly in their villages, avoiding the dwelling of the sick man, leaving his treatment to those specially appointed for the purpose. Now evidently the united observation of many people through hundreds of years had noted that when people went near such a patient they were apt to get the disease themselves, or when (having been near him) they