

## Narrative Pieces.

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### A HURRICANE AT MADRAS.

I was once, and only once, about seventeen years ago, when residing in Madras, caught in one of the terrific tornadoes which periodically visit tropical climes. I was then a boy, barely in my teens; but of all the lessons inculcated, through birch-broom or other medium, none ever remained so firmly impressed upon my mind as this event. I had only about a week previously arrived, after a long voyage from England, and was yet in an early stage of what is termed in India, "griffinhood"—that is to say, everything and every one around me was a seven days' wonder—a source of surprise, admiration, conjecture, or disgust. I was surprised at the hot weather, the luxurious style of living, the scanty vestments of the natives, the intolerably hot curries they swallowed, and the heavy burthens they carried under a broiling sun; but the hurricane surprised me more than all.

For some days previously the atmosphere had been more than usually sultry and serene. Not a cloud was to be seen in the brilliant haze of the firmament; everything refracted a horrible glare; and wherever one looked, there was the same dull, leaden aspect—fiery withal—which seemed like almost invisible liquid lead poured over nature. It made the temples throb, and the eyeballs start out of their sockets; and then, again, when night came, sleep would not follow in its train, and close those fevered eyelids, but mosquitoes paid their visits, and stung them into irritation. Inflammation and sore eyes meanwhile gave ample occupation to the medical profession, whilst the wise in weather-signs predicted an earthquake. The sullen, ceaseless roaring of the surf upon the Madras beach was the only sound that interrupted the intense silence of those sultry nights; whilst evenings and mornings were ushered in by the dismal notes of the screech-owl

and the discordant cry of the jackal. Nobody, according to their own statement, had had a wink of sleep the night immediately preceding the first outbreak of the tempest. The morning broke dismally gloomy, and the oppressive state of the atmosphere was even more than ever unbearable. People, however, got up and went to work as usual. Cultivators repaired to their fields or gardens, shopkeepers to their shops, and merchants, bankers, judicial, and other civil *employes* to their respective offices. Everybody, except the sun, was at his post by ten, A. M. As for Sol, he had overslept himself; any way, he would not show his red and cheerful face that morning; but this, upon the whole, was rather a luxury at Madras, where a cloudy day is as rare as a sunshiny winter day in London. People ventured out on foot, and even without umbrellas, disdaining to ride in palkee or tonjons, and having no immediate fears about *coup de soleil* or brain fever. But though man seemed to disregard the threatening state of the weather, this was far from being the case with the brute and feathered creation. These all gave unmistakable symptoms of anxiety for shelter against some pending strife in the elements. Rambling pigs would turn back, and scamper home again; all the cocks and hens in Second-line beach, in lieu of straying out miles in search of their daily grubs, would insist in flocking under the shady side of Mr. Griffiths' shop, where they created such a din, cackling and crowing, that Mr. Griffiths' head book-keeper was nearly out of his senses, and made two false entries in that ledger where never before had been blot or scratch. Cows could not be managed at all that morning, for they kept lowing dismally, and would not eat; and as for the crows, that terrible nuisance of Madras, they never allowed their tongues to flag a single instant, consulting possibly upon the lowering state of the atmosphere.