

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

THE DEMON FAKEER.

"Who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigour? For God is but a great will pervading all things by the nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the Angels nor unto death utterly save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

JOSEPH GLANTVILL.

This narrative can scarcely be called a ghost story, indeed I hardly know whether there is anything supernatural about it or not. No doubt many persons will be able to explain it in a manner highly satisfactory to themselves if not to their hearers, and demonstrate it to be merely a question of remarkable coincidence, diseased imagination or deranged liver.

I am not, I think, particularly credulous myself, and have a profound contempt for modern spiritualism and all its cognate humbugs. I believe in animal magnetism as in all other well established facts and have my own theories as to its possible influence, with which I do not intend to bore a patient or impatient public. I merely propose to give a plain statement of the circumstances which came under my personal notice and leave my readers to form their own conclusions.

In 186—, I was visiting an old acquaintance, an indigo planter in the Bengal presidency. I suppress names and am purposely vague as to localities. He was a hard headed Scotchman of about as prosaic and matter of fact a type as can well be imagined, though it is quite possible, and indeed probable, that he possessed that underlying vein of mysticism common to most of his countrymen, to which admission the sceptic may attach just as much or as little importance as he pleases.

I had been staying with him several weeks and was thinking of returning to Calcutta, when one day my friend whom I will call Macpherson said, "Look here, Trevor, I am going down to Serinuggur, to-morrow, and as you have never seen a Juggernaut festival you had better come with me." I willingly assented and accordingly, next morning, we started from the adjacent station of the Eastern Bengal Railway. We were accompanied by the overseer of my friend's plantation, a very intelligent and well educated native who spoke English fluently.

On our arrival at Serinuggur we found the village thronged with devotees from all parts of the province, and after my friend had finished his business we hurried off to see the famous procession. When we arrived at the Temple the Car of Juggernaut was just starting on its journey dragged by a crowd of enthusiastic worshippers, and for some time we stood watching with much interest the motley throng of excited natives surging and swaying to and fro in their eager efforts to get near the sacred car and share in the coveted honour of dragging the god to his destination. A strong force of police watched the proceedings, their special duty being to prevent any of the more than usually devout worshippers from throwing themselves beneath the ponderous wheels, a proceeding which my friend informed me was common enough in the good old times, but now forbidden by an unsympathizing and unbelieving government.

It was a curious and interesting scene, but the sun was mounting high in the heavens, and the heat and dust were getting to be almost unbearable, so we started to make our way back to the railway station, my friend announcing that we had no time to spare if we meant to catch the return train. We made our way with difficulty through the dense crowd, Macpherson in advance shoving the natives right and left with scant ceremony; suddenly our further progress was barred by a closely packed mass of men and women collected round some person who seemed to be addressing them with great vehemence. Through this crowd Macpherson forced his way very unceremoniously; it closed in upon him, and then I heard my friend's voice loud in objurgation and saw his bamboo cane lifted high in the air.

I was a few paces in the rear and was pressing forward to rejoin him, when my attention was attracted to his overseer who was struggling frantically in the crowd and calling in the most earnest manner to his master, "Sahib, Sahib, don't strike him; it is the Fakeer." The man's countenance expressed an alarm and anxiety which seemed to me quite uncalled for in so slight a matter as a trifling assault by an European on a native, but his remonstrance came too late. I saw my friend's cane descend and heard a volley of opprobrious epithets; the crowd scattered right and left, and there was Macpherson standing flushed and excited in the vacant space with his cane half lifted fronting the man who had been addressing them.

My questions as to the cause of the disturbance were checked and as it were arrested upon my tongue by the startling appearance of this man. He wore the coarse filthy garments common to the wandering Dervish; his arm was extended in an attitude of menace, while his large and wild dark eyes were fixed on my friend with an expression of intense malignity which froze the very blood in my veins. I seemed to recognize at once the presence of a will overwhelmingly superior to my own and before which I felt like a slave in the presence of his master. The man uttered a few sentences with a slow and impressive enunciation, in strange contrast with the usual voluble utterance of the natives when angered or excited, but which my imperfect knowledge of the language prevented me from understanding, dropped his arm and disappeared among the crowd.

I turned at once to my friend and almost recoiled at the remarkable change in his appearance—his usually ruddy colour had quite deserted his cheeks, his face wore a sort of horror-stricken expression, and he looked like a man who had received a severe and unexpected mental shock. For several moments he seemed in a sort of stupor, but at length, gradually arousing himself, he hurried off in the direction of the station without taking the slightest notice of my eager enquiries.

"Who was that man?" I enquired of the overseer, as we followed at a more moderate pace.

"Sahib, he is not a man, he is a demon," replied the overseer in an awe-stricken accent.

I had now shaken off the impression with which the man had inspired me, and so I laughed and said: "Well, but who and what is he?"

"Surely the Sahib must have heard of the Fakeer Azimoolah," was the reply.

I then remembered having often heard the name as of a Fakeer famous all over India for his rabid hatred of Europeans. He was more than suspected of having been one of the chief inciters of the late mutiny, but nothing could ever be proved against him, chiefly on account of the unwillingness of the

natives to give evidence against one whom they deemed possessed of supernatural powers and attributes. "But what did he say to Mr. Macpherson?" I asked. "Sir, he cursed him," returned the overseer, with a visible shudder, "and I fear the master will never be lucky again." I made some light reply, and we arrived at the station just as the train was drawing up and took our seats to return home.

I found my friend though somewhat recovered, still gloomy and reticent. He was so manifestly unwilling to refer to what had taken place that after a casual remark or two I made no further allusion to the subject, and tired and exhausted as I was with heat and fatigue, was by no means sorry when we reached the house, where a bath and a *siesta* speedily reinvigorated me and made me look forward with interest to that important event of Indian daily life, the dinner hour.

During the meal, Macpherson was tolerably cheerful, but still evinced the same strange disinclination to refer to the events of the day. It was only on parting for the night that he grasped my hand and said very earnestly, "I wish to God, I had not gone to that place to-day." I attempted to rally him, but he shook his head impatiently and left me. Next morning, I returned to the city, where the cares and anxieties of business soon drove from my mind all recollection of what had occurred.

An attack of sickness sent me to Europe, in search of health, and nearly two years elapsed before I returned to India. Then I was surprised and grieved to learn of the strange series of misfortunes which had befallen my old friend. His bungalow had been burnt to ashes, himself and wife barely escaping with their lives, while his only daughter perished in the flames; his crops for two successive seasons had been a total failure, while lamentable bankruptcy of the great Indigo house of— had proved the climax of his commercial ruin. I found that he was then in Calcutta trying to establish himself as a broker, but his ill luck had become so proverbial that his friends were afraid to employ him in transactions of any importance.

I lost no time in going to see him, and was indescribably shocked at the sad change in his appearance. The hale stalwart man of two years before had as it were dwindled and shrunk till he seemed only a wreck of his former self, while his face wore the melancholy and despondent expression of the confirmed hypochondriac. He smiled faintly as he noticed my dismayed look and said, "Well, Trevor, I am afraid you don't find me improved?"

"Why, certainly you don't look first-rate," I replied with as good an assumption of indifference as I could muster; "your liver is out of order, old fellow, you want a change."

"It's more than liver, Jack," he returned. "Do you know I haven't had an hour's happiness or peace of mind since that miserable day at Serinuggur."

"Good Heavens! Macpherson," I exclaimed, "you don't mean to say you are still brooding over what that miserable Fakeer said."

"I'm haunted by the man, that's all. I tell you Jack that not a single trouble or misfortune has happened to me since then, —and God knows they have been numerous enough,—but it has been heralded by the appearance of that man a few hours before. Yes, yes," he continued interrupting me, with a faint assumption of his old petulant manner. "I know what you are going to say. I'm out of health, my liver is deranged and all that sort of thing. Do you suppose I haven't tried over and over again to argue myself into the same conviction. Surely you know me well enough to be sure I am not a man to succumb willingly to mere fancies, but it is of no use. I tell you the night that my bungalow was burnt and I lost my poor little Lottie, I saw that man standing by my bedside as plainly as I see you now."

"Perhaps the scoundrel set fire to the place himself," I suggested.

"So I tried to persuade myself," he replied, "but I ascertained, beyond the possibility of doubt that at that time he was at Delhi over eight hundred miles away. It was the same just before I got news of the failure of B—'s house where all my hard earned savings were swallowed up. In fact I always know when trouble is coming by the appearance of that demon with the same devilish expression on his face which I saw on that fatal morning before the Temple of Juggernaut."

"Have you seen him lately?" I asked, more impressed than I cared to own by the earnestness and evident conviction of my poor friend.

"Not for several months, thank God," he said, "but I know that I shall see him again, and that ere very long," was the desponding reply. Scarcely knowing what to say, and feeling the uselessness of remonstrance, I changed the subject to his present position and prospects, pressing him to use my services in any way that might avail him.

He told me that he expected his wife and son, then in England, to come out to him in the course of a few weeks when he proposed to take his son into partnership, and start in some mercantile business. In discussing his prospects and anticipating a useful career for his only remaining child, my poor friend seemed to regain some degree of his old cheerfulness, and as the sun was setting, we strolled out on to the verandah of his office which overlooked one of the native Bazaars.

The narrow street presented the busy and animated appearance usual at that time in the day—crowds of Baboos or native clerks were hurrying home after the duties of their office were over, Eurasians and Europeans of the lower order were jostling along in palanquins, swarms of *Bheesties* were hastening with their water-filled skins to lay the dust in the main streets and on the Esplanade before the usual driving hour arrived, while dozens of rickety hired carriages drawn by miserable and emaciated ponies went rattling along, their half naked drivers adding to the din and confusion by their frantic shouts and yells.

I stood leaning against a pillar of the verandah, smoking my cheroot, and chatting to my friend while I gazed half listlessly on the familiar scene; suddenly my cheroot fell from my hand, and I stood as if paralyzed. There in the middle of the street, leaning on a long staff, stood the well-remembered figure of the Fakeer of Serinuggur. The motley crowd passed and repassed him without apparently taking the slightest notice, and even in the midst of my confusion of thought it struck me how strangely they seemed as it were to melt away from the strange figure that stood so passively in the centre of that thoroughfare. A palanquin would come hurrying along, and then at the moment when it seemed to be bearing down right upon the motionless figure, would shrink or swerve aside, leaving it undisturbed and uninjured.

The face of the Fakeer was turned full upon us, and bore

the well-remembered look of intense malice, but now there was blended with it a sort of triumphant expression, which seemed to give added force to its malignancy.

I had intuitively suppressed the exclamation which rose involuntarily to my lips when I first caught sight of the figure, in the faint hope which I instinctively felt to be futile, that my friend would not observe it, but now a deep groan from Macpherson caused me to turn to him. He was clutching the railing of the balcony with a convulsive grasp which made it quiver like an aspen, while his eyes were riveted on the Fakeer with an expression of fear and dread which I have never seen equalled. I stepped hastily to him and caught him by the arm, fearing for the moment, that he would fall over the low railing into the street. As I did so, I looked again at the spot where I had seen the figure standing—it was gone.

I helped my friend into the room, and gave him some stimulant of which he stood much in need. "Well, you see it's not liver," he said with a ghastly smile. I tried to make some remark about coincidences, but I was so evidently arguing against my own conviction that he did not condescend to notice it. "I wonder what this new misfortune will prove to be," he said wearily. I did my best to cheer him up, but it was a hopeless case. The next day's mail brought him the intelligence of the death of his only son after an illness of a few hours.

He was so utterly overwhelmed by the shock, that a few of his friends made interest to get him a temporary appointment at one of the hill stations, trusting that change of scene and the bracing air of the mountains would restore his shattered nerves.

To a certain extent, this was successful, and he returned after an absence of some six months much improved in health and spirits.

A week or two later, I dined with him at the house of a mutual friend. He was in better spirits than I had seen him for a long time, and we had been rallying him about the advent of his wife to whom he was devotedly attached and whom he expected by the incoming steamer. We were a large party, the cloth had just been removed, and the servants always more numerous than the guests, were hurrying about, bringing lights for the inevitable after-dinner cheroot, when I saw my friend start suddenly, and fix his eyes, with the old horror-stricken expression which I remembered so well, on the group of servants at the other end of the room. Following the direction of his gaze, I could have sworn I saw the detestable countenance of the Fakeer gazing at us from out the cluster of busy *Kittaghars*. As I sprang from my chair, the face vanished like a form in a spectroscopic, and Macpherson fell fainting to the floor. Even as we were endeavouring to revive him, a servant brought in a despatch by the cable then just laid, announcing the loss of the mail steamer in a cyclone in the Indian Ocean.

Within three days I followed the body of my poor friend to the cemetery at Garden Reach.

Art and Literature.

"In His Name" is said to be one of the very best of Hale's books.

F. O. Adams, late English Minister at Yeddo, is writing a history of Japan, in two volumes.

George Macdonald is writing a serial under the title of "Malcolm" for *Lippincott's Magazine*.

A large number of manuscripts of Herder have recently been purchased by the Royal Library at Berlin.

Mr. Motley is better, but is still far from well, and he will spend the winter at Cannes. His "John of Barneveld" is ready for publication.

Messrs. Rivington are about to issue a report of the late Old Catholic Congress at Geneva, compiled by Prof. J. E. B. Mayor, of St. John's College, Cambridge.

John G. Whittier has declined, on account of his health, an invitation from the students of Dartmouth College, to be their poet at the next Commencement.

Dr. Schilleman's great work on Troy will be published in a few days. It is of large octavo size, and will have, besides the text, an atlas containing over 200 photographs.

The attempt to obtain in Edinburgh a great national monument of John Knox has been relinquished from want of encouragement. A statue is, instead, to be placed in some public building in the city.

M. Offenbach has given notice of action, with a claim of 20,000 francs damages, against one of the Paris musical critics, for having presumed to suggest that the composer's music was deficient in elevation, particularly in his latest pieces.

Mr. Mark Twain lately addressed a characteristic letter about himself and his lectures to *The London Morning Post*, which published the well-meant effort to attract audiences with the frigid remark that it was a curious specimen of transatlantic puffery.

Mr. Furnivall, secretary of the Chaucer Society, has found the name of Chaucer's mother, or, at least, his father's wife, in 1351 (when Chaucer would be about fourteen) and 1369; it was Agnes. She and her husband are described in 1369 in a grant of an annuity by them.

President Eliot of Harvard, Prof. Dana of Yale, Prof. Leo Lesquereux of Ohio, and Dr. Edmund Andrews of Illinois, are urged as candidates for Regents of the Smithsonian Institute, to fill the vacancies caused by the resignation of President Woolsey and by the death of Prof. Agassiz.

Professor Vanberg, who wrote a big book several years ago on Persia, has met with the serious misfortune of having other travellers go over the same ground and point out his numerous inaccuracies. They really raise the question whether he ever saw the places he presumed to describe. *The Athenaeum* bristles with the correspondence.

A new illustrated weekly paper, to be devoted to the interests of sport and the drama, is to appear in London early this year. The staff will include "Beacon," a writer of much influence in the sporting world, who has for some time been out of harness; "Amphion," and others of the better known of the contributors to *Baily's Magazine*.

The Massachusetts Historical Society celebrated the Tea-Party in its own venerable way. It exhibited for the delight of members a bottle of the Great Original Tea; likewise a dress sword worn by Mr. Josiah Quincy; and John Adams's journal of 1773, wherein he learnedly gives his views concerning the affair in Boston Harbour. At the Faneuil Hall Tea-Party was exhibited the fan of the lady celebrated in Holmes' poem of "Agnes," otherwise Agnes Surriage, who, a girl of all-work at the old Fountain Inn at Marblehead long before the time of Griffin's wharf, bewitched and married Sir Henry Frankland, Collector of Boston. She afterwards saved his life at the great Lisbon earthquake, a performance which was, doubtless, pleasing unto Sir Henry.