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Chatham Mineral Water Co. LIMITED.

Mineral Liment Cures Colds, etc. in Chatham.

## THE MYSTERY OF BHOTAN.

A Weird Tale From The East.

PHIL and I were going to India, that far-away land of which so much has been written. We had talked the matter over for many a year, and now our hopes were about to be realized, as in a few days we were to set sail for the enchanted realms of the Orient. Phil was a companionable fellow—fearless, yet withal gentle and lovable. His equal could not be found in a week's march.

The object in view in taking this long journey was to personally study the habits of that peculiar and ancient race—the Hindus—at the rather specimens of fauna and flora which we, as scientific men, so much desired to add to our respective fine collections already gathered together from different sections of our own America and Europe.

Our trip across the Atlantic was uneventful. We reached Calcutta in due time without mishap. We first sought out one of those necessities to travelers in a strange land, a guide. A couple of enagers or burros were also secured, and on the third day after our arrival we were ready to proceed inland. We laid our route to the northward, through the Bengali district, whence we would proceed to the mountains of the Himalaya range and spend most of our time in and around Bhotan.

We journeyed leisurely and found much that interested us. We had been fortunate in securing for our guide a native who was thoroughly acquainted with the territory through which we desired to go. He and Phil became fast friends.

We had a very successful trip without incident until we neared the borders of Bhotan, some three hundred miles distant from Calcutta. Here Poonjah confessed that he did not care to go further toward the north; said we could go to the east or to the west, or anywhere else, but not there. We coaxed, calmed and entreated; but he stood firm. Finally, when pressed for his reasons for refusing to continue the trip into the territory which we had selected, he graphically portrayed to us by speech and pantomime that it was a land of evil spirits, and that the Bhotanese were sorcerers and in league with the demons of the air. If we insisted on going there we would take our lives in our own hands. Furthermore, he personally had been warned away from there several years ago, and was told that should he ever return anywhere within the borders of Bhotan his life would pay for his temerity; that he was a marked man, and though he should escape the watchful eyes of the people, he would still be in danger, for the spirits would seek him out and slay him.

The vivid portrayal of Poonjah's feelings and fears impressed us both deeply. But before us were the coveted prizes that this land held, and which we had come so far to secure. To retreat now before an imaginary foe was galling to our pride. We sympathized with our benighted guide, and we argued that he belonged to a primitive, untamed race, and that if we could but prevail upon him to proceed with us all would be well, and we could later convince him of the folly of his fears.

As we were then in an interesting district, we let the matter drop so far as Poonjah was concerned, but took it under advisement between ourselves for several days.

Our silence upon the subject had about convinced our faithful guide that we would not attempt to go further north, and he had in the meantime regained his usual happy demeanor and gentle composure.

One morning Phil suggested that we once more broach the subject to him. We could not then give up our further trip, and if our arguments with him should not prevail, we would dissuade him to return to his own land, while we pushed on alone to the goal of our desires.

"Come here, Poonjah," said I, as he was passing near our tent. "We are about to take up our journey to the northward, with or without you, as you please. We have thoroughly discussed the situation, and while we deeply sympathize with you in your dread of this land, we cannot forego our trip in consequence of it. If you are afraid to continue we will go on alone, and you may retrace your steps without us."

I had unwittingly struck the keynote to his pride. He listened to me in silence. When I had finished speaking he straightened up his lithe form, and in measured tones said:

"A Hindu is not a coward. Poonjah knows no fear for himself. He can but die. It is for you that he has feared and has dared to rebel. But you are determined to go, Poonjah is but your slave and will go with you. May Buddha save you from all harm."

With a gracious salaam he quitted our presence.

This matter being settled, we set about preparing to take up our line of march, our destination being Tassagong, the principal village of Bhotan, where we hoped to be hospitably received by the natives.

At break of day the following morning we were astir. Poonjah had our burros ready, and not a line of fear or hesitation was visible upon his mobile countenance. In fact, he appeared more voluble and cheerful than usual, and he and Phil became more attached than ever.

Two days later we were upon the lofty table-land separating British India from Bhotan, and by another day we hoped to be in the latter country—the reputed land of evil spirits.

I must confess to a feeling akin to superstitious dread as the night closed around us, and for the first time my thoughts reverted seriously to the many rumors which I had heard and tales that I had read respecting the people with which we were to sojourn during the next few weeks.

"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," I could now more fully feel for Poonjah. He had been reared and educated in a land of darkness, superstition and occult mysteries. My training had been altogether in a different atmosphere, where superstition had no habitat, and wherein it would have been an evidence of ignorance and cowardice to have betrayed a semblance of dread of the supernatural. Yet here I found myself upon this borderland actually imbuing the fears of our benighted guide.

I mentioned not a word to either Phil or Poonjah that would betray to

them my sensations; neither did I discover in either of the twin aught that would lead me to believe that they were at all worried over the prospect.

That night I slept the sleep of the just, and it was broad daylight when I awoke. Poonjah and Phil had been astir long before me, and breakfast was already prepared.

I had become much attached to our Hindu guides, but between him and Phil a friendship had sprung up that was more than ordinary. The two were almost inseparable.

As I emerged from the tent I noticed them in animated conversation, which ended in a warm embrace as they saw me approaching. Phil afterward told me that his friend still had misgivings about the safety of the party, and they had mutually pledged eternal fealty come what would, but did not want to worry me about it.

We were on a peaceful errand and hoped it would have a peaceful ending, and if we should find the natives to be warlike or resentful at our approach we would try to win them over by kindness and a liberal distribution of small treasures among the chiefs.

Two days more, and we had reached Tassagong. We were not molested on our way thither, but were eyed with much curiosity by all. We repaired to the chief's quarters, and the village through our guide told him what we desired. We gave him several pieces of silver and gold, and we were taken into His Majesty's good graces at once.

He tendered us the use of one of his bungalows, which was dry and comfortable, and, thanking him for his courtesy and generosity, we were shown to the place.

We were one of the typical bungalows of that section, only larger, and contained three rooms, with flooring and matting. It was elevated like others, as a protection against creeping and crawling things abounding in that country. It furthermore possessed doors, which could not be said of all structures used as habitations in Tassagong.

The chief gave orders among his people that we be not molested, and tendered us the freedom of the place.

We were all very weary and sought rest at an early hour that night. A large bed, well supplied with skins of wild beasts abounding in that region, lured us quickly to sleep. Phil and I occupied this bed, and Poonjah a smaller one in an adjoining room or alcove.

It seemed to me as though I had just closed my eyes in slumber when I awoke with a start, and instinctively felt the presence of another person in our room. The room was dark—very dark. I was spellbound. I could neither move nor speak. There was something or somebody moving stealthily along in front of our bed. A clammily came over me that chilled me to the heart. I started to move or speak, but my limbs remained rigid and my tongue clung to the roof of my mouth. It was a sensation impossible for me to describe. An uncanny chilliness pervaded the room. The thing moved with a rustling sound that was blood-curdling. I waited for a denouement which I felt must soon come. Whatever it was, it was, I thought, withdrawing, and I breathed freer. It had made the circuit of the room two or three times as though in search of something. When it finally departed it appeared to have brushed through the floor, for no door was open to allow of exit that way.

For a few moments I remained in a horrified state, but soon felt the return of my faculties and was about to wake my companion and tell him of my experiences, when I felt him move, and, rising upon his elbow, he almost yelled:

"Professor, did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" I ejaculated, sleepily, as though just aroused from slumber and annoyed at being disturbed.

"There has been someone in this room, and now he has gone."

"Nonsense!" I rejoined. "You are afraid of spirits and have had a bad dream. Lie down and go to sleep."

But he would not have it so, and insisted that he had been fully awake. He then went on to relate in detail just what he had heard, and it agreed exactly with my experience. We arose at once and lighted a taper, and began an exploration of the place. Not hearing a word from where Poonjah lay, we went there first. He was awake—his face distorted with agony. When at length our presence had somewhat reassured him, he repeated to us the same unearthly tale.

We searched the three rooms of the bungalow. There were no holes large enough for even a cat to crawl through. The doors were securely fastened as we had left them on retiring. Referring to our watches, we found that it was just past midnight.

Outside all was deathly still except for the distant laugh of a hyena or the howl of a jackal.

There was no more sleep for any of us the balance of the night, and we heartily welcomed the first glimmer of dawn.

We said nothing to anyone in the village about our experiences. We even dreaded to speak of them among ourselves.

We spent several days following with great profit and pleasure to ourselves. The venerable chief and his tribesmen were exceedingly friendly and sided greatly. Our fears had been by this time allayed, and we had attributed our unpleasant experiences of the first night to overwrought imagination and the fatigue of a long tramp the day previous.

However, we never relaxed vigilance, and loaded pistols were kept under our pillows while we slept, we more than half believing that our nocturnal visitor might come again and prove himself to be real flesh and blood, in which case we would be able to successfully cope with the fellow.

But our troubles were not destined to end so happily as we had hoped. One night I was again awakened as suddenly as on the previous occasion, and there was no mistake about what I heard. There was that same dreadful, indescribable presence in the room. Strive as I might to move, I could not. It was as though I had been chained to the spot by the links of Prometheus. Phil was perfectly quiet, and silence reigned except for the beating of my heart and the wish, wish of garments that I might slip along the bed. The cold perspiration stood out in great beads on my face. The thing came toward the bed. I could now feel its chill and terrible breath upon my cheek, and how I survived the ordeal and remained sane I know not. When the Thing at last left us, it, as before, apparently disappeared through

the floor. Phil had heard it and was ready to assist again in the search. The hour was midnight. Poonjah, his eyes nearly bulging from their sockets, welcomed our presence and accompanied us in our search. But it was vain. No clue had been left behind, and we were more mystified than ever.

We could not bring ourselves to desert the bungalow while working in that district, and we were not yet through there. Besides, we could offer to the chief no reason for rejecting his hospitality while still remaining in his country. But we determined to leave just as soon as we could decently do so.

We remained there for two more weeks without further adventure worth speaking of, and had packed up our belongings, prepared to start on our southward journey the next morning. Phil and Poonjah were in ecstasies.

We had had a most successful trip, and we were returning freighted with precious treasures—some of them priceless. The chief was to give us safe conduct to the border, and we had much to be thankful for.

When I awoke that night when we retired, and we were not long awake after reaching our beds. It is a sleepy, drowsy climate, and we were never troubled with insomnia while there.

The bed which was occupied by Phil and me was placed against the inside partition and elevated some two feet from the floor. I usually slept on the front side of the bed, and did so in this instance.

My mind is perfectly clear as to my exact position. I went to sleep lying upon my right side, facing the room. When I awoke, shortly after, I was still in the same position. All my senses were alert. I felt that same horrible and gruesome presence again! It was near our bed and advancing toward us. On, on, nearer and nearer, slowly, like a cat upon its prey!

An unutterable sensation crept through my veins. I felt that something terrible was impending. What it could be I had not the slightest conception.

I would have given all my precious treasures could I at that moment have spoken or even moved. But my voice and limbs refused their offices, and I lay there as helpless as a child.

The strain was terrible. Had there been a visible enemy with whom to do battle it would have been different. But here in a strange land, said to be infested with evil spirits, and in the midst of a night whose darkness could be fairly felt, I was face to face with some intangible Thing that was advancing upon me unseen!

When finally it reached the bedside I leaped forward, touching my left side, which was uppermost.

Suddenly it drew back slightly, and then, with a lunge forward, it appeared to strike a mighty blow at my sleeping companion.

With this movement came release for me, for I was no longer bound.

Simultaneously with this blow Poonjah cried out in apparent agony: "Buddha! Phil! Buddha!" and he was then silent.

Phil rose up in the bed, screaming: "My God, it has struck me!" and with a peculiar gurgle, as though being strangled, he fell back upon his pillow and uttered not another sound.

Quick as a flash I now rose up in the bed, only to come in contact with a form that appeared like a man. I grappled with it, all fear having fled. I felt the strength of a Samson in my sinews. It was as real to me then as though I could see the intruder. Only one thought pervaded my mind—to capture this thing or die in the attempt.

My arms closed around it as firmly as would the coils of a python, and with a power born of desperation I brought them closer and closer, tighter and tighter. I could feel it in my grasp struggling to free itself, but it might as well have fought against the embraces of an octopus! I was getting the better of my unknown antagonist. My arms came together relentlessly, and before I could utter a word they cleaved the object in two and came together, when I found in my arms—nothing.

I jumped from the bed more dead than alive. I cried aloud to Phil in my terror, and then to Poonjah. But no response came from either.

I struck a light as quickly as my nerveless condition would allow and looked around me. One glance at the spot where Phil lay told a tragic story. His features were distorted and livid, and it did not require a second look to convince me that he was dead.

I reached over and tenderly touched the tortured face, but there was no response. The vital spark had fled.

With a cry of despair I rushed to where our guide had slept, half-fearing that in some way he might have been responsible for this terrible and mysterious tragedy. But I had wronged the poor fellow. He, too, was beyond the power of man, and lay on his cot in his last, long sleep.

I looked at my watch, and it was just past midnight. I examined the bungalow carefully, but found all secure.

I now opened one of the doors. Outside the air seemed oppressive. My brain reeled, and I fell to the ground in merciful unconsciousness.

There were two lonely graves upon the hillside near Tassagong. A A. stood at the head of each. One was marked by me in English simply "Phil," the other, "Poonjah." But after my departure (which fact I learned from the missionary who had given them Christian burial) a cabalistic inscription was placed on each by some person unknown, which translated signifies, "The spirits are avenged!"

The Old Man's Occupation.

The old man of the following story lived, presumably, in England, since we copy his words from an English journal, but we are not quite sure that his counterpart might not be found on this side of the water. "It's a queer world when you come to look it over," said the old man. "You know I educated Jim fer a lawyer."

"Yes."

"An' Bill fer a preacher."

"Exactly."

"An' Tom fer one of them literary fellers."

"Yes."

"An' Dick fer a doctor."

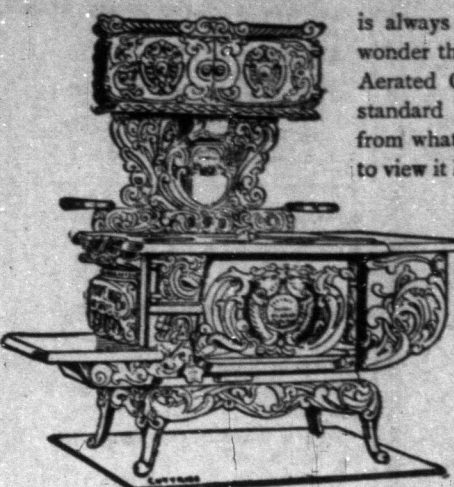
"Yes."

"Well, now, what do you reckon I'm a-doin' of?"

"Can't say."

"Well, sir, you might not believe it, but I'm a supportin' of Jim an' Bill an' Tom an' Dick, an' it keeps me a-goin' from daylight to dark."

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