

had lost the middle finger of his left hand; a man who had lived for some years in India, and had in his possession a number of Indian curios, yet I could not, I dare not, believe what the ordinary dictates of my reason prompted.

Two hours passed by, and then I heard the outer door open, and the familiar step of Yorston sounded on the stairs. I shuddered, and an indefinable dread stole over me. In another minute he was standing in the room. I cast a hurried glance at my companion—his swarthy complexion was, I fancied, a shade paler than usual, and I thought, too, that his eyes sparkled with a strange and unnatural brightness.

"Have you read the paper to-night?" he asked in a strained voice.

"I have," I replied.

"And you believe"—he continued, slowly approaching me and peering down into my face, "you believe—?"

"What?" I asked, shaking from head to foot, looking into his face, and now not daring to withdraw my eyes from his piercing gaze—

"*That I did it*," he answered, sinking his voice almost to a whisper—

"No—no!" came my trembling response, "I *cannot* believe it—"

"Do you believe it *now*?" he went on, drawing from his pocket the ivory handle of a dagger, from which the blade had been snapped off—"See, it is of Indian workmanship."

I covered my face with my hands—

"I do," I said.

My father then continues his narrative thus:

I must now make a slight digression. You must not suppose, my children, that what follows is a wild and fantastic fiction on my part. As a matter of fact, Yorston told me positively that the priests and devotees of Buddha were able to perform the most astounding feats—so inexplicable, indeed, are they to us that we should certainly regard them as nothing short of miracles if we could witness them. Travelers and scientists, will tell you that in order to offer any reasonable explanation of their marvelous performances, we can only suppose that they first mesmerize their audiences,

or in some way bring their minds under influence, and thus they *compel* them to believe that they are spectators of scenes that really do not occur at all—otherwise we must conclude that these religious fanatics verily do perform miracles, which is contrary to my faith and at variance with common-sense and intelligence.

And now to proceed—

"Did you ever see me robed in the garb of a native Indian?" enquired Yorston, gazing at me intently, and muttering some mystic words.

"No," I answered, vaguely wondering what was going to follow.

He lowered the lamp, and opened his trunk.

"Turn your head for a few minutes," he went on.

The minutes that passed seemed to be hours—I heard the rustling of garments, then the room seemed to be illuminated with a soft, reddish glow, and at his bidding, I once more looked around.

What a transformation had taken place! There stood Yorston, dressed in some strange Eastern costume. His hands were raised, and he was apparently giving utterance to some incantation in a language unknown to me. Next, he bent down to the floor, and I saw what seemed to be a very small worm. And, as Yorston raised himself slowly up, the worm grew in size, and took upon itself the form and color of a serpent. Slowly it developed, increasing gradually in dimensions, until there stood before me, with forked tongue, hissing and horrible to witness, a *cobra* from the jungles of the East.

My children, I saw it with my own eyes.

My tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth with horror. I leaned forward in my chair, petrified with a nameless dread. I dared not move a muscle—that horrid serpent, with its glittering eyes, and poisonous fangs, rooted me to the floor. Then slowly my fearful companion, still muttering his incantations, bent downwards until the reptile became smaller, and smaller, and gradually dissolved away as mysteriously as it had appeared. Next, he threw off a portion of his attire, baring his chest and limbs,