



DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND AGRICULTURE.

VOLUME XVI., No. 5.

MONTREAL & NEW YORK, MARCH 1, 1881.

SEMI-MONTHLY, 30 CTS. per An., Pos

HUMAN TREES OF INDIA.

BY DANIEL C. BEARD.

All those who feel a sufficient interest in the subject to study or notice the facts must at times be struck with amazement at the wonderful resemblance of certain insects and other animals to vegetable and inanimate objects. So exact is this resemblance in some instances as to deceive the most experienced. Wallace, the great naturalist, was very anxious to secure a specimen of a certain brilliant butterfly, but was unable for some time to capture one on account of the creature's sudden unaccountable and mysterious disappearance. He finally discovered that the outside of this insect's wings was an exact representation of a leaf. When the butterfly alighted upon a shrub and closed its wings it completely deceived even this experienced scientist. Some species of lobsters found at Bermuda so closely resemble submarine stones, even to the coating of sea weeds, that I have passed by an aquarium containing them supposing the tank to be uninhabited. The common katydid, whose constantly-repeated notes, late in summer, warn us of the approaching frosts, has a representative in South America, whose wings not only resemble a green leaf, but, to add to the deception, the tips of the wings are ragged and discolored, having the exact appearance of a leaf that has been disfigured from the attacks of caterpillars. I once had one in my studio, and it was with great difficulty that I could convince visitors that it was not an artificial insect with wings made of real leaves. In the snow covered regions of the North the foxes, hares, bears, and birds, with very few exceptions, assume the prevailing white color of the surrounding objects. Man has not been blind to these hints. There are various tribes of savages who successfully imitate stumps and stones by remaining immovable in crouching positions so as to baffle their pursuers. This mimicry is carried to a wonderful degree of perfection in India, that strange country, as Dr. Latham says, "of a teeming, ingenious, and industrious but rarely independent population. It is a country of an ancient literature and ancient architecture," and, he might have added, of a modern degradation. A country where such a society as the murderous thugs is possible; a country where robbers are educated from childhood for the profession in which they take great pride, openly boasting of their skill. One of our most skilful and adroit

bank robbers would be considered by these India experts but a bungling amateur. The scientific manner in which these robbers prepare for their raids shows a thorough knowledge of the dangers of their calling, and the best guards against the same, choosing darkness for their forays. When their dusky bodies are least observable they remove their clothes, anoint themselves with oil, and with a single weapon, a keen-edged knife suspended from their neck, creep and steal like shadows noiselessly through the darkness. If detected, their greasy and slippery bodies assist them in eluding capture, while their razor-bladed knife dexterously severs the wrist of any detaining hand. But the most ingenious device to escape capture is that shown by the Bheel robbers in the accompanying illustration. It often happens that a band of these robbers are

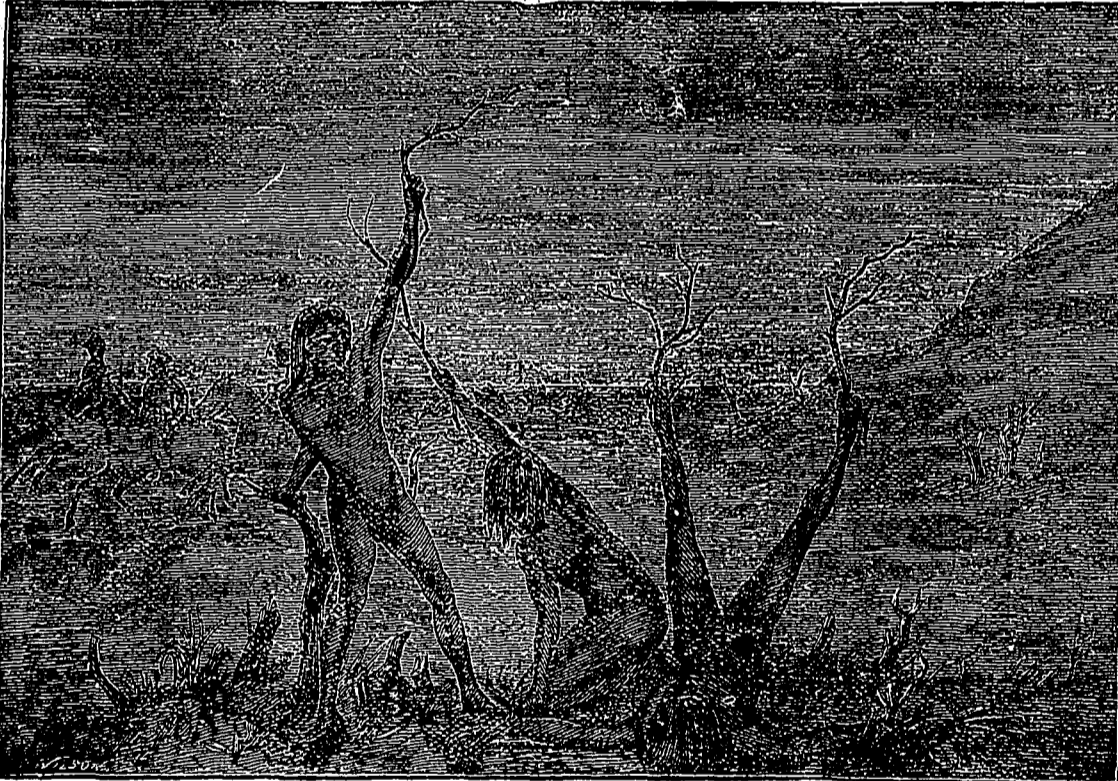
When all is safe they quickly pick up their spoil and proceed upon their way.

The Rev. J. D. Woods gives an interesting account of these marvellous mimics. I quote the following:

"Before the English had become used to these manœuvres, a very ludicrous incident occurred. An officer, with a party of horse, was chasing a small body of Bheel robbers, and was fast overtaking them. Suddenly the robbers ran behind a rock or some such obstacle, which hid them for a moment, and when the soldiers came up the men had mysteriously disappeared. After an unavailing search the officer ordered his men to dismount beside a clump of scorched and withered trees; and the day being very hot, he took off his helmet and hung it on a branch by which he was standing. The branch in question turned out to be the leg

minutes, leaped from one side of inclosure to the other. I looked closely, and saw that it was each lowered by a black beetle, that backward and forward, not seeming discouraged when the frog, every time it reached it, jumped back over its head so escaped. It was evidently a strength and perseverance between; and I was anxious to see which would give in. They went on, however, a long time that I grew tired of them, and went away. The next day as I was again passing, I looked in the area to see what had been the result of the struggle, and, strange to say, it was still on; the beetle deliberately hunting its victim, which, whenever they were about to meet, escaped by a great leap to the other side of its prison. Not until that evening did it end: then the poor frog, tired out, and too much exhausted to make any resistance, became the prey of its enemy, and no doubt furnished it meals for many a day.

As there were a good many rats about the out-houses and wood stacks, professional rat-catchers used to come once or twice a year, with their dogs and ferrets, and were paid according to the number they killed. Once when our gardener was assisting at the work of destruction he pulled one of the ferrets out of a hole, where it had been killing a brood of young rats. The poor mother, who had probably just returned from an expedition in search of food for her young ones, rushed out after the ferret, ran up the man's leg, on to his shoulder and down his arm, quite blind to her own danger, and only desirous to reach the object of her vengeance in his hand.—Harper's Young People.



HUMAN TREES OF INDIA.—BHEEL ROBBERS IN HIDING.

pursued by mounted Englishmen, and unable to reach the jungle, find themselves about to be overtaken upon one of those open plains which have been cleared by fire, the only shelter in sight being the blackened trunks or leafless branches of small trees that perished in the flames. For men so skilled in posturing this is shelter enough. Quickly divesting themselves of their scanty clothing, they scatter it with their plunder in small piles over the plain, covering them with their round shields so that they have the appearance of lumps of earth and attract no attention. This accomplished, they snatch up a few sticks, throw their bodies into a contorted position, and stand or crouch immovable until their unsuspecting enemies have galloped by.

of a Bheel, who burst into a scream of laughter, and flung the astonished officer to the ground. The clump of scorched trees suddenly became metamorphosed into men, and the whole party dispersed in different directions before the Englishmen could recover from their surprise, carrying with them the officer's helmet by way of trophy.—Scientific American.

THE BEETLE AND FROG.

I once saw a life-and-death struggle between two apparently very unequal opponents—a frog and a beetle. As I was standing near the cellar window, which was below ground, and protected by an iron grating, I noticed in the area below it a large frog, which, at regular intervals of one or two

SINGULAR INTERPOSITION.

A lady had a tame bird which she was in the habit of letting out of its cage every day. One morning, as it was picking crumbs of bread off the carpet, her cat, who had always before showed great kindness for the bird, seized it on a sudden, and jumped with it in her mouth upon a table. The lady was much alarmed for the fate of her favorite, but on turning about, instantly discerned the cause. The door had been left open, and a strange cat had just come into the room! After turning it out, her own cat came down from her place of safety, and dropped the bird without having done it the slightest injury.

APR 1 1881