

AN EAST-INDIAN GHOST.

It Proved to be a Non-Constrictor Twenty Feet in Length. Almost every town or village has its haunted house and the little village settlement of Wanda, in India, was no exception.

After industriously playing for a few moments, says a correspondent of the Philadelphia Times, up through the hole in the basket came the head of a cobra—one of the most poisonous of snakes—up came the hideous head with its hood that gave a malignant appearance to the reptile, and when twelve or fifteen inches above the basket it began to wave to and fro as if in obedience to the measure of the music.

After the snake dance—or the snake "charming," as Europeans are wont to call it—the Indian snake-charmer walked around the house and among the bushes pointed out a hole which might have been made by a rabbit. To one of the native attendants he said that for a small sum extra he would take out a cobra which he thought was in the hole. The English officer did not believe it, but willingly submitted to the experiment, and seating himself before the hole the magician began his mournful plaint.

For fifteen minutes he kept up the noise, and then from the opening there appeared the ugly, hooded head of a cobra. Another hole was soon found, this being directly at the base of the wall of the house. The man examined it a few moments carefully, and then began to play upon the flute.

Hardly had the group gathered about the performer before a most remarkable noise came from the house. First, there was a sound as of escaping steam; then a sound of some great body striking the wall and rubbing against the timbers. Dust in clouds came from the hole and the "charmer" started back in terror, overturning the man behind him. Recovering himself he darted to the hole and thrusting his arm in drew out, not a cobra, but the tail of a much larger snake. Astonishment was depicted on the native's face and horror in those of many of the spectators, as he stood holding the tip of the tail, and five feet of the body was visible.

For a second the man hesitated, then regaining his courage he shouted in Hindoostanee for the lookers-on to stand back, and taking a good grip upon the tail he pulled gradually backward. Out it came, foot by foot, inch by inch, until it was five feet long, and he held it up as if it were a snake.

A quick jerk now and the entire monster was clear—at least twenty feet in length—big enough to swallow a deer, and yet held by a single man. The native was, however, not in the least discouraged. He clung to the tail, and as the huge reptile turned toward him with an angry hiss he gave it a swinging motion by turning slowly. Gradually he increased his speed, turning faster and faster, until he seemed the center of a wheel, the spokes of which were the body of the python. So rapid was the motion that the snake's body was perfectly straight, and it was evident that as long as the motion could be kept up the man was safe, but if the monster could reach him he would in a moment be crushed in the horrible folds of the reptile.

The lookers-on had long since fled, the natives had gone shrieking up the street, the Englishman alone standing by, but even he did not know what to do as it was impossible to shoot the animal as it was flying around; so he stood a few minutes agape at the curious position of the man.

It soon became apparent that the charmer knew what he was about. Not far from the house stood a stout flag-staff, a foot and a half through, of solid teakwood, and toward this he was gradually moving, whirling the snake faster and faster. Now he was within twenty-five feet of it, and suddenly it dawned on the few spectators who were about to do this. The man struck the head of the reptile against the pole. Nearer he came, whirling faster and faster, until the reptile stood out like a whip-lash, and then, with a quick step forward, he brought the head of the reptile against the wood with a crashing sound. He released his hold and the great reptile doubled up in convulsive folds, digging up the earth and sending clouds of dust into the air, finally dropping limp and lifeless to the ground.

A wondering crowd soon surrounded the dead box, the now brave natives expressing their opinions as to its size. One thing was evident—that here was the "ghost." The big snake had in some way obtained entrance to the house, probably through the hole in the foundation, and had produced the mysterious sounds heard by the men. The snake-charmers had, as is their general custom, placed a harmless cobra in the hole and before they had time to call it out it had encountered the big box, with the above result.

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