

FIGHT BETWEEN AN ICHNEUMON AND A COBRA.

A letter to the *Madras Times*, dated Trichinopoly, signed by three officers of the Indian service, has the following account of a fight between a mongoose, or ichneumon, and a cobra:

We think the long vexed question, whether the mongoose, on being bitten by the cobra retires into the jungle and finds some antidote for the poison, or whether the venom of the serpent produces no effect upon the animal, has been at last settled. On Sunday last, while seated in the mess-house with several officers of the regiment, a servant came and stated that a snake had been seen to enter a hole in the ground close to where the guard was. We immediately sent for a mongoose (a tame one, and the property of an officer) and put him to the hole.

He soon began to scratch away at the earth, and in half an hour a fine cobra, about a yard long, came forward, with head erect and hood distended, to attack the mongoose, who seemed to care nothing for the reptile, but merely jumped out of the way to avoid the blows which the snake struck at him. The mongoose, unfortunately, had just fed, consequently did not now show much inclination to go in at him; so we secured the snake and carried him over to one of the officers to have the contest carried on there, after the mongoose should have had some little time to get over his breakfast. After a couple of hours' rest, we placed the cobra in a room, with closed door we having in the mean-time taken up a secure station in the room, from which we could observe all the movements of the combatants, the mongoose was let in, and the fight commenced.

The mongoose approached the cobra with caution, but devoid of any appearance of fear. The cobra with head erect and body vibrating, watched his opponent with evident signs of being aware of how deadly an enemy he had to deal with. The mongoose was soon within easy striking distance of the snake, who suddenly throwing back his head struck at the mongoose with tremendous force. The mongoose, quick as thought, sprang back out of reach, uttering at the same time savage growls. Again the hooded reptile rose on the defensive, and the mongoose nothing daunted by the distended jaws and glaring eyes of his antagonist, approached so near to the snake that he was forced, not relishing such close proximity, to draw his head back considerably. This lessened considerably his distance from the ground. The mongoose at once seeing the advantageous opportunity, sprang at the cobra's head, and appeared to inflict as well as to receive a wound. Again the combatants put themselves in a position to renew the encounter, again the snake struck at his wily opponent, and again the latter's agility saved him.

It would be tedious to recount in further detail the particulars of about a dozen successive rounds, at the end of which time neither combatant seemed to suffer more than the other; we will limit ourselves to describing the final and most interesting encounter. The fight had lasted some three quarters of an hour, and both combatants seemed to nerve themselves for a final encounter. The cobra changed his position of defence to that of attack, seemingly determined now to do or die. Slowly on his watchful enemy the cobra advanced; with equal courage the mongoose awaited the advance of his unvanquished foe. The cobra had now approached so close that the mongoose, owing to want of space behind, was unable to spring out of reach by jumping backwards, as he had done in the previous encounters, nimbly bounded straight up in the air. The cobra missed his object and struck the ground under him.

Immediately on the mongoose alighting the cobra, quick as thought, struck again, and to all appearance fixed his fangs in the head of the mongoose. The mongoose as the cobra was withdrawing his head after having inflicted the bite, instantly retaliated by fixing his teeth in the head of the cobra. This seemed to convince the cobra that he was no match for his fierce and watchful antagonist, and now no longer exhibiting a head erect and defiant eye, unfolded his coil and ignominiously slunk away. Instantly the mongoose was on the retreating foe, and burying his teeth in his brain, at once ended the contest. The mongoose now set to work to devour his victim, and in a few minutes had eaten the head and two or three

inches of the body, including the venom so dreaded by all. We should have mentioned before, that previous to this encounter, the snake had struck an owl which died within half an hour of the infliction of the bite, showing beyond a doubt its capability of inflicting a death-wound.

After the mongoose had satisfied his appetite, we proceeded to examine with a pocket lens the wounds which he received from the cobra; and in washing away the blood from one of these places, the lens discovered the broken fang of the cobra imbedded in the head of the mongoose. To discover whether there was any truth in the assertion that the mongoose owes its impunity from the bite of the most venomous serpents to its knowledge of an herb which is an antidote to the poison, or whether, on the other hand, a prophylactic exists in the blood of this extraordinary animal, rendering it innocuous to the bite of a reptile fatal to all other animals, we have had the mongoose confined ever since (now four days ago), and it is now as lively and healthy as ever. We consider therefore that there no longer exists a doubt that in the blood of the mongoose there is a prophylactic, and that the idea it derives its impunity from an herb is one of many popular errors.

[From the New York Herald.]

REMARKABLE DISCOVERY NEAR THE HEAD WATERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

St. Anthony, (Minn.) Dec. 3, 1866.

The monotony of our quiet little town has been considerably disturbed of late by discoveries of a most curious and remarkable nature which have been made within a few days past in our midst. They are of so singular a character as to be beyond the pale of credence in the minds of almost every one who has not been a witness to the facts in the case; but they are vouched for by the citizens of such known respectability and veracity, that the genuineness of the statement in regard to them is placed beyond a doubt.

A Mr. Reuben Nesmith, who lives in a small house near the German Catholic Church, had occasion to go down into the cellar on the evening of the 1st instant to arrange a place for his winter stock of potatoes, which he had been hauling that day from his farm, about two miles beyond Manomin. While engaged in putting together a temporary bin and while digging to make room for the timber used in constructing it, his shovel came in contact with a plate of iron, which after being cleared of earth proved to be a trap door, which was secured by a curiously wrought lock, with heavy bolts running into a stone beneath. It was so much corroded by rust that a little pressure with a crowbar caused the plate to give way, and upon staking it up, an opening was discovered beneath which a spiral stone staircase led down into the earth. Before venturing down this staircase Mr. Nesmith communicated the fact of its discovery to his brother-in-law, Mr. Luther Chamberlain, and having procured a lantern the two proceeded to descend, and after going down one hundred and twenty-three steps, they found themselves in a narrow, horizontal passage, dug in the white sand, which, as every one familiar with the geographical formation of the banks of the Upper Mississippi knows, underlies a strata of limestone. Proceeding along the passage a distance of about seventy-five feet they emerged into a spacious artificial cave, also excavated in this white sand. This cave was of an oblong form, and leading out of it were several smaller ante-chambers, all of which gave signs of having been at some former day occupied as depositories of some kind. Iron and copper implements, of a rough kind of workmanship, were found scattered about, some of them evidently having been used for excavating purposes, others for cooking utensils, the marks of fire being observable on the latter. On entering one of the small ante-chambers, a number of rude seats were found, and upon one side of the room an elevated platform, upon which stood a rough hewn stone, something like the reading desk of an episcopal church. On the wall behind this desk, on either side of a very colossal human figure, in base relief, very curious hieroglyphics were found traced in the white sand, and an ornamental tracery of peculiar design covered the other three sides of the chamber. In the next apartment a sort of stone sarcophagus was found, upon the top of

which was laid an immense rock, firmly cemented to the burial case, and which required the united exertions of four men to remove. This being done, a human skeleton was found underneath, the bones of which crumbled to powder immediately on exposure to the air. Several copper and iron rings were found in the sarcophagus, as also a curious silver ornament, octagonal in shape and carved in unintelligible characters, some of which corresponded with those upon the wall of the apartment above referred to.

A third chamber was much larger in extent than the others, and the ceiling was very much like an inverted funnel in shape, directly under the apex of which was a large cube-shaped stone, which was stained with marks of fire and some other dark substance, and a deposit of hardened ashes lay around it upon the ground. It was evidently used as a sacrificial altar, and this theory seemed to be confirmed by the fact that an aperture large enough to admit the body of a man opens from this apartment to a smaller one, the floor of which is below that of the other rooms, and which is covered with a limy powder, apparently the ashes of bones; whether human or otherwise, cannot be ascertained. On continuing their explorations, the party found an iron plate door, which easily gave way upon a little pressure, and a passage way about three feet in height, and large enough for one person to pass in a stooping posture, was discovered. Mr. Nesmith followed the passage way, which led in a somewhat circuitous direction to the vicinity of the river. This is proved by the sound of water washing upon the shores, which may be distinctly heard at the end of this passage way, the outer opening of which has apparently been filled up from the inside with broken rocks, and through the interstices, of which fresher air than that of the cave can be felt blowing at times.

The whole affair is a mystery; the relics found are not at all aboriginal in character, and may have been the work of a people existing long before even these prairies were the hunting grounds of the Indian. Copies of the hieroglyphics have been carefully transferred and forwarded to some of the most learned archaeologists of the Eastern States, and it is hoped that they may be able to obtain some clue to the origin of these remarkable relics. We understand that the State Horticultural Society has made Mr. Nesmith a liberal offer for them. In the meantime, our little town is all agog as to discoveries, and hundreds of people have visited the house of Mr. Nesmith to see these remarkable antiquities. We trust the Historical Society may be able to secure them as a most interesting addition to their small but valuable collection.

TOTAL ABSTINENCE.—A young lady who was a firm advocate of total abstinence, when riding from her father's county seat to a neighboring village, met a young man on foot who was carrying a suspicious looking jug. She at once reined in her horse and asked him what he had in the jug.

Looking up with a comical leer, he simply winked one eye and smacked his lips, to indicate that it contained something good.

The young lady, supposing he meant alcohol, immediately began to talk temperance, but her auditor requested the privilege of first asking her just one simple little question.

"What is it?" she inquired.

"It is this," he replied. "Why is my jug like your side saddle?"

She could not tell;

"It's because it holds a gal-on," said he.

"What trifling!" exclaimed the indignant young lady, and then continued, "young man, do you not perceive—"

"Just one more question," interrupted her auditor, "and then I'm done. Why is my jug also like the assembly room of a female seminary at roll call?"

"I'm sure I don't know," petulantly replied the young lady;

"Well, it's because its full o'lasses," said the incorrigible auditor.

The fair lecturer touched her spirited horse with the whip, and was soon out of hearing of the rude young man's laughter.

THE London Times insisted during our late war that we should "let the South go." We wonder that it does not now demand that England shall let Ireland go. Why not?

WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

We are informed that in making recent excavations in the upper part of Fauquier county Va. very curious relics have been found in a mound, which proved to be, what had long been supposed, an Indian burial place—two skeletons; which evidently showed there were giants in those days, with spear-heads and the paraphernalia found in Indian graves. The great subject of interest shown is a tablet containing hieroglyphics of a very curious character. W. Norris, of that county, a gentleman who has traveled very extensively in the east (and who was with Gliddon in his celebrated journey across the desert,) is of the opinion that this discovery will prove the identity of the Indian tribes with some of the Asiatic tribes, and settle the question so long mooted as to their origin. We are further informed that Mr. Norris will now proceed to Washington city with this tablet, for the purpose of showing it to Professor Henri and other Savans. The result is looked forward to with no little interest.

DEFINITION OF CHARITY.—Every good act is charity. Your smiling in your brothers face is charity; an exhortation of your fellow-men to virtuous deeds is equal to alms-giving; your putting a wanderer in the right road is charity; your giving water to the thirsty is charity. A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he does in this world to his fellow-men. When he dies, people will say "What property has he left behind him?" But the angels who examine him in the grave will ask: "What good deeds hast thou sent before thee?"

EDITOR DESERET NEWS: I copied the above items from an exchange, the *Alexandria Journal*, date 28 Dec., 1866. You are welcome to them.

A. FRIEND.

—The State Reform School of Ohio is highly extolled by Gov. Cox in his Message to the Legislature, as follows: My confidence in the success of such an experiment is not based upon the results of foreign systems alone. Our state has tried such a system with convicts under the age of sixteen, and with them it is no longer an experiment, but a decided and demonstrated success. The State Reform Farm was organized eleven years ago, upon the "family system" adopted in some reformatories for the young in continental Europe, and was the first attempt to introduce the plan into this country. A large proportion of the young sent there have been convicted of penitentiary crimes, some of them of the gravest character. The great aim of the commissioner in charge, and of the Elder Brothers (as the officers and teachers are called) has been to revive in these boys a respect for the right and a love for truth and virtue. All the discipline and instruction has been directed to this end. While the fact of their deserving punishment has not been ignored, they have been made to feel that their crimes have made the discipline of the school a necessity to them for their own good, and a necessity for the community's protection. Records have been kept of the youth discharged, and history traced as far as it has been possible to do so, and the results have been such as to justify the assertion that hundreds of boys have been made useful and honest members of society, who would otherwise have filled the prisons of the land and belonged to the class of professional criminals.

Gov. Crapo, of Michigan, makes a similar statement. He says: "The State Reform School is in a prosperous condition, and is achieving the great purpose for which it was established."

CHINA NOT FLATTERINGLY DESCRIBED.—A country where the roses have no fragrance and the women no petticoats; where the laborer has no Sabbath, and the magistrate no sense of honor; where the roads bear no vehicles and the ships no keels; where old men fly kites; where the needle points to the South, and the sign of being puzzled is to scratch the antipodes on the head; where the place of honor is on the left hand, and the seat of intellect is on the stomach; where to take off your hat is an insolent gesture, and to wear white garment is to put yourself in mourning; which has a literature without an alphabet, and a language without a grammar.

—An entire family in Portsmouth, Va., was carried off by the cholera one night, recently.