

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 1898.

AN ECLIPSE IN INDIA.

THE JANUARY POLAR ECLIPSE GRAPHICALLY DESCRIBED

By an English Officer in India Who Tells a St. John Friend of the Many Interesting Scenes Accompanying it—What the Natives Thought of the Eclipse.

The following extract is from a letter received by a lady in St. John from Ranikhet, N. W. P. in India, in regard to the eclipse of the sun on January 22nd. The writer is a young English officer. PROGRESS is also indebted to the same source for the Indian Pioneer, which contains valuable astronomical information concerning the eclipse:

"We shall get a good good view of the eclipse from here at Ranikhet, although we shall not be fortunate enough to see the total eclipse, which is only visible in one or two places in India. A party of English astronomers have been in this country for some time making preparations for this event, and an observatory has been temporarily erected at Buxar, where the Viceroy his wife and staff have gone to witness the eclipse. I will, if possible, send you a paper with full accounts of observations taken, and I will also try in the later portion of this letter to give you my account of what I saw.

In this connection, some native astrologers have been frightening the poor superstitious Hindus with prophecies of a terrible nature. One of the dreadful things that is predicted by these wise fools is a terrible earthquake lasting 1 hour, 9 hours, or 4 days (accounts differ), which is going to destroy at least 2% of the population both white and black, cause wholesale destruction among houses, shake the very foundations of the Himalayas and play havoc with the whole country.

The fakirs (priests) are aiding and abetting these men in their attempts to cause a panic among the ignorant natives, by saying that all these calamities are the result of their own (the people) short-comings. Had they all risen in one mass when the signal was given by the tribes in the Hills, and combined with them in their efforts to drive the accursed invaders from the sacred shores of India the gods would have smiled upon them and instead of sending earthquakes etc. they would have blessed them and would have showered down beautiful gifts on them; (this is not exactly the way they put it, but its as near as I can remember, and will serve to show you that the bitter feeling against the English is still extant.)

The people are in a dreadful state of funk, and things have come to such a pitch that the authorities have issued instructions to all those in charge of districts, both military and civil, to keep a watchful eye on the natives in case they should be disposed to try and avert the threatened evil by a determined effort to throw off the yoke, and a reward has been offered for the apprehension, or for information which shall lead to such, of the astrologers and others who are busily spreading this sort of thing among the people.

If these prophecies don't come to pass (and there can be no doubt in any sensible persons mind on the subject) these miserable wretches can easily be gulled into believing that it is simply because the fakirs have been able to intercede favorably with Buddhas, Vishnu, Kali, or some others of the numerous gods which these people worship.

22nd; What a day this has been! I don't suppose I should ever witness such a scene as has been enacted here today, were I to remain in the country 50 years. As I have remarked in a preceding page the natives were looking forward to the eclipse with fear and trembling, and as the time drew near for the phenomenon to make its appearance, it could be noticed by even the most casual observer that they were almost frantic.

At 12.15 p. m., the shadow began to creep on to the sun at the right side, near the bottom—about 5 on dial of clock,—and immediately this was noticed the natives who were assembled within the Hospital compound prostrated themselves at full length on the ground at the same time uttering loud cries of "Churdo swajke budmah." (Let! Let the sun go, rascal!) and "Sab adme marega piche" (all men will die after); some of them then commenced tearing off their scanty clothing, whilst others picked up handfuls of dust which they scattered around them on every side; others commenced to pray aloud,

each seeming to strive to outvie the others in making the loudest noise; and two fakirs in a small temple just below the Hospital,—who had evidently been drinking arrack and thus made themselves mad-drunk—suddenly leapt to their feet and started to dance and sing, at the same time slashing their bodies and limbs with small knives, until they were obliged to give in from sheer exhaustion and loss of blood. Of course we were powerless to put an end to such proceedings as these, however much we may have disapproved of them. It would have been more than our lives were worth to have ventured into the midst of this crowd of yelling fanatics, as they all believed that we were the cause (all Europeans I mean) of the calamities which were to follow the eclipse (Aindi-girun). As the shadow began to get larger, and as the surface of the sun got smaller their cries increased, until they were almost deafening, and when at 1.30 the climax was reached, and only about one-fifth of the face of the sun could be seen, I really thought they meant to attack us as they gathered together and kept pointing to us, and shaking their fists at us, but they evidently thought better of it. It was very trying to us, as we were but a small party in comparison to them, and there is no doubt that had we shown any signs of fear they would have made an attempt upon our lives, so frantic were they.

When, however, the shadow began to leave, and more of the sun made its appearance they speedily changed from woe to glee and began to dance and sing, and exhibit every sign of joy, and when at 2.45 the last vestige of shadow had disappeared their hilarity knew no bounds.

All, irrespective of caste, rushed down to the nearest river bed (there are several small ones near, but at this time of year very little water is to be seen in them) and began to bathe, some of them bathing as often as ten times—evidently to make up for lost time—and, as I don't suppose they will bathe again for years, in this respect the eclipse was a good thing for them.

Some of them even went so far as to shave face and head completely bare, although for what reasons I have been unable to ascertain.

The Brahmins distributed alms among their poor brethren, the Hindoos fasted all day, while the only difference it made to the Mahomedans was that they had to pray once extra.

Having described the ongoings of the natives I will proceed with the eclipse as it appeared to us. As I have before stated we were unable to witness the total eclipse as that was only visible from certain places, but what we did see of it was very fine.

Commencing at 12.15, the shadow gradually darkened the face of the sun bit by bit, until about 1.30, when at least four-fifths of the entire surface was darkened; the effect was beautiful, the sky gradually fading from a deep azure to a dull leaden gray, and shedding a lovely soft light around. Distant objects appeared to draw gradually nearer, and the snows standing out wonderfully clear against the leaden background afforded by the sky, seemed to have come within a stone's throw of us. During the latter half of the period taken up by the eclipse they seemed to be slowly receding, until just as the sun shone forth in full splendor again, they had regained their original position. The sky also was once more of a rich azure, and everything appeared exactly as before the eclipse commenced. It was noticed that during the whole of the time the shadow was passing, a strong breeze was blowing, and as soon as it (the shadow) was gone the wind ceased.

Whether this was noticed on the plains I am unable to say, but all to whom I have mentioned the matters they noticed this.

The natives watched the different phases by looking at the reflection of the sun in bowls of water; but we used for the most part spoiled photo negatives, (of which I have a lot, left by my friend Mr. Burns) which answer the purpose as well as smoked glass. It is possible that had our attention not been so fully attracted by the natives I might have seen more of the eclipse, but I think the proceedings of these poor superstitious fools are equally as interesting as any thing that I could have gathered from a more close scrutiny of the various phases of the eclipse."

Another Account.

The following account of the eclipse as seen from the Orient steamship Orotava has been communicated by a lad to his father: and printed in the London Graphic.

"The eventful 22nd of January dawned beautifully. Except for fleecy clouds the

sky was perfectly clear. The ship had been slowing down considerably during the last twenty-four hours, and, to insure being on the central line of totality, had gone some way out of its course; in fact, it seemed almost at our disposal. A private yacht could not have suited us better.

"The general excitement was considerably heightened when, on sitting down to breakfast, we found on each plate a bit of smoked glass; and to insure our getting a good view all the awnings were taken down, so we had nothing to complain of, not even the weather. The sun was shining serenely as ever, and the sea was calm as we could have wished.

"At about 10 o'clock a clergyman was asked to give a few words of explanation concerning the phenomenon, but he had scarcely commenced when the alarm was given that the eclipse had begun. This took us completely by surprise, for we had been officially told that morning that the eclipse would begin at 11.58, but it was evidently totality that was meant. It was most amusing to see how that meeting broke up, lecturer and audience, rushed away, and sure enough when we looked through our smoked glass there was a part of the sun's circumference obscured.

"The progress of the moon was scarcely perceptible, but gradually the sun blotted out, the temperature fell considerably and the light began to show less. About five minutes before totality a most uncanny light prevailed, there was a kind of dull grayish hue over everything, and the general appearance of the sea was like that dead calm which marks the approach of a great storm; and then, as we watched, we could see a silvery light suddenly appear all around the moon. A moment later and the sun was entirely blotted out.

"The sky overhead was dark blue fading into gray, and finally into lilac near the horizon. The whole effect was not unlike a sunset, only the same colors were visible all around the horizon. A few stars could be seen in the neighborhood of the eclipsed luminary, but at the darkest it was not necessary to have any artificial light to read or write.

"The corona itself was a magnificent sight. All around the moon beams of silvery light shone out, reaching in some places to about twice the moon's diameter. The 2 minutes 9.15 seconds of totality was all too short to admire the beautiful sight and almost before we had taken it all in a beam of light shot out from the other side of the moon and seemed to chase away the darkness immediately. The sky and sea soon assumed their natural colors and the eclipse was over.

SMOCK MARRIAGES.

Instances in Maine That Prevailed in England a Century Ago.

A Bangor lawyer attending court in the ancient town of Wiscasset went rummaging recently in the colonial court records of the place, and in the course of his reading ran across the official registration of a 'smock marriage.' Not knowing what sort of a marriage that was he looked further, and got considerable light upon a custom that prevailed in England a century or two ago, and also to some extent in the American colonies.

Smock marriages were weddings where the bride appeared dressed in a white sheet or chemise. The reason of such a garb was the belief that if a man married a woman who was in debt he could be held liable for her indebtedness if he received her with any of her property; and, also, that if a woman married a man who was in debt his creditors could not take her property to satisfy their claims if he received nothing from her. In England, says an antiquarian, there was at least one case where the bride was clothed pure naturalibus while the ceremony was being performed at Birmingham. The minister at first refused to perform the ceremony, but finding nothing in the rubric that would excuse him he married the pair.

To carry out the law fully, as the people understood it, the ceremony should always have been performed as it was in the Birmingham church. But modesty forbidding, various expedients were used to accomplish the desired purpose and yet avoid the undesirable features. Sometimes the bride stood in a closet and put her head through a hole in the door; sometimes she stood behind a cloth screen and put her hand out at one side; again, she wound about her a white sheet furnished for the purpose by the bridegroom, and sometimes she stood in her chimere, or smock. Eventually, in Essex county at least, all immod-

esty was avoided by the bridegroom's furnishing to the bride all the clothes she wore, retaining title to the same in himself. This he did in the presence of witnesses, that he might prove the fact in case he was sued for any debts she might have contracted. A marriage of this kind occurred in Bradford in 1733, and the following is a true copy of the record of the same:

BRADFORD, Dec. ye 24, 1733.

This may certify whomsoever it may concern that James Bradford who was married to the widow Mary Bacon Nov. 22 last past by me ye subscriber then declared that he took the said person without anything of estate and that Lydia the wife of Eliazar Burbank & Mary the wife of Thomas Stickney & Margaret the wife of Caleb Burbank all of Bradford were witnesses that the clothes she then had on were of his providing & bestowing upon her.

WILLIAM BALCH, Minister of ye Gospel.

It is noted by the same writer that in all cases of smock marriages that have come to his knowledge, the brides have been widows.

It is thought that during the reign of George III. there were many smock marriages in Maine, then a part of the province of Massachusetts Bay—chiefly in Lincoln and York counties, or in the territory which is now so known. There is nothing to show that the practice outlived the Revolution. In Maine, up to 1852, a husband was liable for debts of his wife contracted before marriage, and no such subterfuge as the smock marriages could relieve him.

FREED FROM JAIL BY DICE.

Prisoner Won Jailer's \$400, Then Played Him with \$900 and Liberty at Stake.

"Getting out of jail with a good file seems easy enough," said an ex-Sheriff to a New York Sun correspondent the other day, "but I don't think I ever heard of but one case where a prisoner made his escape with a handful of dice. It happened years ago in my county after I had arrested a crack gambler from the West for shooting a farmer. The farmer was not killed and the Westerner was shut up in jail until court convened. The chances were that he would be sent to the penitentiary for half a dozen years at least. He went under the name of Mike Hunkler. That, however, was an alias.

"While I was going over the building one morning a stranger came up and asked to see Hunkley. He said that Hunkley was an acquaintance of his and he wanted to talk with him about securing the services of a lawyer to defend him. I let the man in, but told Robinson the jailer, to watch them.

"The following morning while I was at breakfast a boy rushed in and told me that Hunkler had escaped. When I made an investigation I discovered that Robinson had also disappeared. Later in the day I found a note from Robertson addressed to me. He asked me to forgive him, said it was an affair of honor and could not be helped. The escape was investigated by the Grand Jury and after a long wrangle I was completely exonerated as a trusted employee had played me false.

"The years rolled on and the escape had ceased to cause any comment. Some time afterward I got a telegram from Tennessee saying that Robinson was dead, and that he had made a request that I be notified. Five days later I received a letter written by Robinson, previous to his death, in which he told me the whole story of the escape.

"It seems the man who went to see Hun-

kler as his friend was a noted crook. He carried the prisoner a set of poker dice and a roll of bills amounting to about \$500. That night while patrolling the jail, Hunkler, who got to talking with him asked if he did not want to shoot a few hands. The cubes were brought out, and Robinson said he was the luckiest man with them in town. The jailer got \$50 out of his wallet to start on, and despite his luck he lost. He went back for another wad and in due time that drifted over to Hunkler. Robinson had \$400 in all, and he promptly brought it out. In an hour's time the last of his three years' savings was gone. Noticing his dejection, Hunkler after a while said:

"Robinson, I will make this proposition. I will give you a chance to win your money back and mine, too, on one throw. I'll put up \$900, and if you win, you get all. If I win, you let me escape to-night."

"Robinson thought over the matter for fifteen minutes, and finally agreed to play one poker hand to the full. Robinson won the toss, and had to play first. He pitched out the dice and then looked down on two pairs, queens and jacks. He kept the queens and then took the three other cubes for the second throw. He got another pair of jacks and an ace. "He cursed his luck, but threw again to the queens. He turned another queen and a pair of aces.

"Hunkler took the dice to beat the full. He rattled them long and careful, and when they hit the jail floor he smiled as he saw three tens. Another ten would set him free, with \$900 in his pockets. On the second throw he made a pair of jacks, but they did not free him. Robinson held his breath on the third toss, and to his sorrow he saw the lucky ten turn. He told Hunkler he was free, but that he had made himself an outcast. At 1 o'clock the next morning the two slipped away, Robinson refusing to accept a dollar from Hunkler."

Barbed Dogs Not Fit For Alaska.

Archdeacon Phair, who has spent many years in the remote Northwest as a missionary for the Church of England, and is at present in Montreal, states that intending Klondikers who think of taking dogs with them are making a very serious mistake. Mr. Phair says that the "huskies," or Esquimaux dogs, are well protected with a growth of hair between their toes which prevents their feet from being frozen. Imported dogs have not this necessary pedicel extremity protection, and every dog taken into the Klondike during this winter is sure to suffer and be rendered quite useless. Dozens of noble-looking mastiffs have been leaving Montreal almost daily for the Alaska territory. It seems deplorable that all these animals should have to come to such an untimely end.

A Kansas widow whose husband lost caste and fortune through strong drink and who finally died with delirium tremens, had a marble monument erected over his grave upon which a snake of many coils has been chiselled, as also this inscription upon the pedestal, and just beneath the fiery eye and forked tongue of the serpent: "At last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

Mary, Ida, and Nettie Ward of Phillips county are sisters, but their family relationship has become very much entangled. Mary married a widower named Wilson and Ida became the wife of his son Charles. Nettie married a nephew of the elder Wilson, named William Benton. All have children.

A FRIEND'S ADVICE.

And what it led to.

It is not a common occurrence that a friendly word should be the means of giving nearly forty years of happiness and health to the person heeding the advice it carried. This was the case with Mary Lingard. At twenty-five she was dragging out her days in misery. At sixty-one she finds herself so active and strong she can do work that would shame many a younger woman, and looks back on thirty-six happy, healthful years of industry. But let her tell her story:

"Thirty-six years ago I had great trouble with my liver. The doctors allowed that there were tumors growing on it, and they blisters my side in an effort to give me relief. I was at that time earning my living as a tailoress, but for five years, between the pain in my side and the blisters I was in constant misery, and work was a drag to me, with no prospect of relief; fortunately for me, however, a friend advised me to take Dr. Ayer's Sarsaparilla, and finally persuaded me to take a regular course of it. When I first commenced taking the Sarsaparilla my side was so painful that I could not fasten my dress, and for a time I did not get any relief, but my friend advised me to persevere and relief was sure to come, and come it did. This happened, as I say, thirty-six years ago. My liver has never troubled me since, and during these years I have passed through the most critical period of a woman's life without any particular trouble, and to-day, at sixty-one years of age, I am active and strong, and able to do a day's work that would upset

many a younger woman. Ever since my recovery I have taken a couple of bottles of Dr. Ayer's Sarsaparilla each spring, and am quite satisfied that I owe my good health to this treatment. I give this testimonial purely in the hope that it may meet the eye of some poor sufferer."

MARY LINGARD, Woodstock, Ont.

Dr. Ayer's Sarsaparilla has won its way to every corner of the world by the praise of its friends, those who have tried it and who know they were cured by the use of the remedy. There is nothing so strong as this personal testimony. It throws all theories and fancies to the winds and stands solidly upon the rock of experience challenging every skeptic with a positive "I know." Ayer's Sarsaparilla with its purifying and vitalizing action on the blood is a radical remedy for every form of disease that begins in tainted or impure blood. Hence tumors, sores, ulcers, boils, eruptions and similar diseases yield promptly to this medicine. Some cases are more stubborn than others, but persistence with Dr. Ayer's Sarsaparilla usually results in a complete cure. Mary Lingard began with a bottle, and went on to a course of Dr. Ayer's Sarsaparilla. When she was cured she realized that a medicine that could cure disease could also prevent it. So she took a couple of bottles each spring and kept in perfect health. There are thousands of similar cases on record. Some of these are gathered into Dr. Ayer's Curebook, a little book of 100 pages which is sent free by J. C. Ayer Co., Lowell, Mass. Write for it.