

animal form a great part of the profit which results from this capture; as the Berberines will give as much as two dollars for them, the unguent being used as a perfume for the hair.

In some of the rivers of Africa, the negroes are bold enough, and indeed skilful enough, to combat the crocodile in his own element. Armed only with a sharp dagger, they dive beneath him, and plunge the weapon into his belly. It often happens, however, that the combat is fatal to the man, and frequently his only chance of escape is to force his dagger, or if this be lost, his thumbs, into the animal's eyes, with all his might, so as to produce great pain and blindness."

Herodotus explains the mode of crocodile-hunting in his time, which was managed by means of a hook, baited with the chine of a pig, while the attention of the monster was aroused by the cries of a living pig, which the fishers had with them on the shore. In anticipation of prey he dashed into the river, and meeting the baited hook, instantly seized and swallowed it, and was then dragged ashore: the men then endeavoured to blind his eyes with mud, and when this was accomplished, his destruction was easy; but if not, so violent were his struggles, and so dangerous was it to approach him, that it was not without difficulty that he was despatched.

Fish, floating carrion, pigs, dogs, and other animals surprised on the banks of the river, are the food of the crocodile; yet on land escape is by no means difficult, as the legs are ill-formed for running, and the little false ribs, or appendages to the vertebræ of the neck, limiting the lateral motion of that part, render sudden turns a matter of great difficulty.

In water, on the contrary, the animal is prompt and rapid; lashing his tail from side to side, he cleaves the waters like an arrow, leaving a track behind him from the impetuosity of his progress. Sometimes, it is said, he will dart forward into the middle of the river, uttering a loud bellowing, his eyes glaring and his body swollen, while with his powerful tail he lashes the surrounding water, till it is worked into a foam. This exhibition of excitement ended, he darts off to his accustomed covert, and regains his concealment.

The eggs of the crocodile are of an oblong shape, hard, and somewhat larger than those of a goose; and the young, compared with their gigantic parents, are very small, but display, even at that early period, their innate ferocity. Numbers, both of young and eggs, are destroyed by beasts and birds of prey. The ichneumon has been from an ancient date celebrated for the havoc it makes among them.



A LONDON OPIUM-DEN.

THE following vivid account of a visit paid to an East-end opium-den, is given by a writer in the *Daily Telegraph*:—

"I suppose a powerful, able-bodied African, raving drunk, is about as ugly an illustration of the depths of degradation to which intoxicating liquids can

reduce a human creature as the most zealous Lawsonite could desire to make use of. I am sure of this, however, that Sambo at his worst, and when his opal eye-balls, rolling in frenzy, gleam like the jewel to which they are likened when it is exposed to the sun or to fire, and when his protruding lips shrink back and look as hard as ridges of black bone, hedging his double row of vicious teeth,

even then he is not such a repulsive-looking being as the yellow-skinned opium smoker after his third or fourth drunk, when he is propped by the considerate landlord against the wall with legs no more available than those of a rag doll, there to remain until consciousness slowly returns to him, when he will take a swig at the water jug to moisten his parched mouth, and go at the pipe again.

The terribly ugly spectacle, however, is not commonly on view. To behold it one must first gain admittance to a smoke-house. Unlike a public-house, no sign distinguishes it, and its whereabouts is known only to the initiated. But the habitual opium smoker knows where to find it, and thither he resorts to snatch perhaps a couple of hasty pipes if he has pressing business in hand, or to make a night of it—two, three nights and days as well for that matter—in congenial company.

I had not much trouble in discovering two smoking-houses in the locality, the master of one being not a Chinaman but an Irishman. I told him what I required, and he suggested no obstacles. I was as welcome as anybody else to come to his house and to smoke a pipe as well if I had a mind to it. Evening was his busiest time. A few regular customers who lived in distant parts of London, and had honoured him with their patronage for years, came for a quiet pipe in his best room in the daytime, but it was not until about dusk that the common sort came, and then he was sometimes so full as to be obliged to turn people away.

At dusk that same evening I was again in the neighbourhood. The house I was in quest of was situated in what notoriously is the worst part of the locality—up a court in a street, the majority of the inhabitants of which are probably known to the police. Had I been in any doubt as to which was the particular court where my opium master lived, I should

have been speedily set right, for at that very moment there came shuffling up the street two gaunt objects, Lascars seemingly, with their flimsy blue serge jackets buttoned close, and each with a woollen comforter round his throat, though the evening was close and sultry. They made straight for the court, and were in such a hurry that they reached the smoke-house, and disappeared in at the door, before I could overtake them. The door was ajar, and as I had made an appointment with the landlord, I walked in without scruple, and at the farther end of a passage there found a room where opium smoking was going at full blast.

It was not a large apartment—not more than fifteen or sixteen feet square possibly; but a hasty glance around revealed to me thirteen individuals present, exclusive of the master of the house and an attendant. A dingy paraffin lamp hanging against the wall revealed the pretty picture. At least half the floor was covered with a large mattress, and on three sides of the square were placed bolsters as dirty as the walls themselves; and huddled nose and knees, with their heads on the bolsters, two on a side, reclined six smokers in various stages of intoxication with the opium they were inhaling. There were two long forms in the room, and on one of them sat five customers, waiting their turn (the remaining two making up the thirteen, were lying on the floor by the wall, motionless as men asleep or dead), and being in no particular hurry to rest my head on a bolster, I took a back seat, but in full view of the mattress.

The opium master's assistant—a ragged youth without coat or waistcoat, and who seemed to have stirred his hair to the wildest possible disorder in an opium dream—was concocting something in a pipkin that stood on the hob of the fire-grate, when one of the impatient waiters and watchers drew his attention to a smoker whose pipe-stem had

dropped from his lips, and who lay helpless and hideous, with his mouth ajar, and with a failing phosphorescent light in his half-open eyes. Well used to the job, the attendant hauled him off the mattress and laid him with the other two by the wall, while the first man on the form sprang forward with alacrity to take his place, and, with a face expressive of blissful expectation, resigned himself to the following ceremony. Unbuttoning his jacket, and divesting himself of his cap, he lay down on his side, with one hand under his head, as though composing himself to sleep, while the presiding genius got a pipe ready for him.

With a little bodkin he took from the saucer a portion of opium seemingly no larger than a moderate-sized pea, and holding it on the point of the implement, twiddled it in the flame of the lamp, causing it to emit a sickening odour. When the morsel was sufficiently fried he placed it in the pipe-bowl, and, thrusting the pipe-stem into the eager mouth of the smoker, applied a light to it, which the other sucked.

Sucked is the word! Anything like blowing a cloud, such as happens when one ignites the fragrant birdseye in the bowl of a briar or meerschaum, or even a clean and honest clay, was out of the question. The Lascar's lips closed over the blunt stem as though they were glued to it, and one only judged that he was sucking by the drawing in of his cheeks. I observed the pipe narrowly, and could discern only the thinnest thread of pale blue smoke rising now and again from

its bowl. What fumes there were the smoker swallowed, as his eyes blinked lazily, and each moment more resembled that of a pig whose last gorge of barley-meal was a treat to dwell on ere it fell asleep. I am unable to say exactly how long it took to consume the smouldering opium, but certainly not more than eight or nine minutes. At the end of that time a gurgling in the pipe-stem announced that the charge was burnt out, and, for the time, completely drunk and incapable, the smoker was bundled off the mattress to make room for the next customer.

I don't know how long the two that were on the floor when I entered had been lying there, but they now began to rouse, shivering and shrinking in their clothes as though they felt cold, and staring at each other and about the room in a bemused way, and as though their brain was still 'fuddled' with the powerful narcotic. Nor did they appear to recover completely until the tattered waiter handed them each a small cigarette of ordinary tobacco. After smoking it out they rose from the floor, shook themselves, and took a seat on the form, ready for another 'drunk' when it came to their turn.

The various smokers did not talk with each other during the long interval of waiting, or appear in the least inclined to be companionable, but for the most part sat with their eyes closed and their arms folded, as though anxious to shut out everything that might break the thread of their cogitation on pipes past and in prospective."

