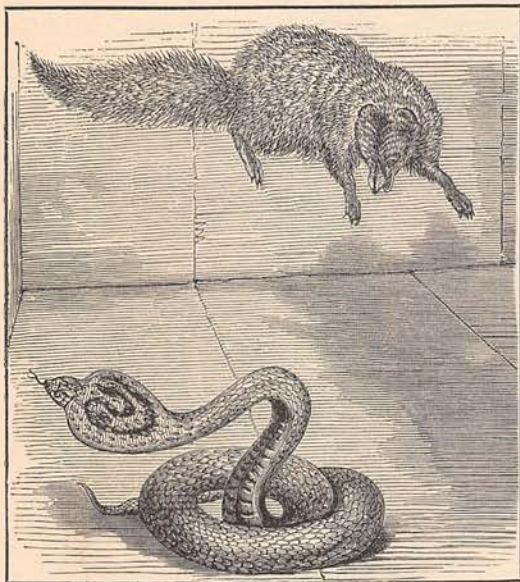


A REMARKABLE FIGHT.

EVERY reading boy or girl knows something about the poisonous serpent of India, called the Cobra de Capello. This name, which means "hooded snake," was given it on account of its habit of dilating or stretching its neck into a sort of hood, partly covering the head. The snake is from three to



four feet long, of a brownish-yellow color, and its poison is exceedingly dangerous, and generally fatal.

But there is also in India a little animal called the mongoose, which is said to fight and overcome the cobra, and even to receive its bite without injury. The mongoose, which resembles the weasel in size and general habits, is covered with gray and dark-freckled hairs,—a sharp-nosed, wonderfully agile little creature, as you will see from the picture. Some naturalists believe that the mongoose knows of a plant or root which, when eaten, counteracts the snake-poison; but others deny this, and maintain that the venom has no effect on the animal, which therefore destroys the cobra without danger, just as hogs kill rattlesnakes in our own country. It is a singular fact that poisons do produce different effects upon different animals, and the following account seems to show that the mongoose is really a natural enemy of the cobra, and is thoroughly proof against the serpent-poison. The fight described was witnessed by several officers of the British army in India, who signed a report of it, which reads, mainly, as follows:

"The mongoose approached the cobra with caution, but without fear. The cobra, with head erect

and body vibrating, watched its opponent anxiously, knowing well how deadly an enemy he had to contend with. The mongoose was soon within easy striking distance of the snake, which, suddenly throwing back his head, struck at the mongoose with tremendous force. But the little creature, quick as thought, sprung back out of reach, uttering savage growls. Again the hooded reptile rose, and the mongoose, nothing daunted by the distended jaws and glaring eyes of its antagonist, approached so near to the snake as to force it to draw its head back considerably; this lessened its distance from the ground. The mongoose, at once seizing the opportunity, sprung at the cobra's head, and appeared to inflict as well as to receive a wound. Again the combatants renewed the encounter; again the snake struck at its wily opponent, and again the latter's agility saved him.

"The fight went on in this way three-quarters of an hour, and both creatures seemed now to nerve themselves for the final encounter. The cobra, changing its position of defense for that of attack, advanced, and seemed determined now 'to do or die.' The cobra soon approached so close that the mongoose (which, owing to want of space behind, was unable to spring out of reach by jumping backward, as it had done in the previous encounters) nimbly bounded straight up in the air. The cobra missed its object, and struck the ground under him. Immediately on the mongoose alighting, the cobra struck again, and, to all appearance, fixed its fangs in the head of the mongoose. The mongoose, as the cobra was withdrawing its head after it had inflicted the bite, instantly retaliated by fixing its teeth in the head of the snake, which quickly unfolded its coils and ignominiously slunk away. Instantly the mongoose was on its retreating foe, and burying its teeth in the cobra's head, at once ended the contest.

"The mongoose now set to work to devour its 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 cobra had struck a fowl, which died within half an hour after receiving the bite, showing, beyond doubt, the snake's power of inflicting a deadly wound.

"After the mongoose had satisfied its appetite, we proceeded to examine with a pocket lens the wounds he had received from the cobra; and on cleansing one of these places, the lens disclosed *the broken fang of the cobra deeply imbedded in the head of the mongoose.* . . . We have had the mongoose confined ever since (now four days' time), and it is as healthy and lively as ever."