The Namuchi-myth; or an attempt to explain the text of Rigveda viii. 14. 13.—By Charles R. Lanman, Professor in Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

The fact has been recognized, ever since the earliest days of Vedic study, that the myths of the Veda are the poetic outgrowth of certain natural phenomena. The fact appears, for example, from the work of Yáska, when he quotes the opinion of his predecessors. And the natural basis of any given myth is usually not difficult to ascertain. Such, however, is not the case with the one now in question. The text cited above reads:

अयो फेनेन नमचे:
मिर रक्षोदयतान्यः |
विशा वदयज यथः: ||

It is commonly understood and rendered as follows: ‘With the foam of the waters, Namuchi's head, O Indra, thou didst cut off, when thou wast conquering all thy foes.’

There is no doubt about the incorrectness of this interpretation. Nevertheless it is an exceedingly ancient one, as appears from the legends into which this brief allusion of the Vedic Samhitá is expanded in the Bráhmaṇas. From the Bráhmaṇa-passages* and from the explicit language of Sáyana†, it is clear that the water-foam was conceived as the actual weapon with which Indra cut off the demon's head. The fable says that Indra used this most remarkable weapon because he had sworn to Namuchi, saying, “Neither by day nor by night will I slay thee, neither with the mace nor with the bow, ... neither with the dry nor with the wet.” And so, in order to slay him, without perjuring himself, Indra smote the demon at twilight, which was neither day nor night, and with the foam of the water, which was neither dry nor wet. ‘He cast the water-foam into (the shape of) a thunderbolt’—अयो फेन वक्रयमिन्यतः—literally, ‘The water-foam he made by pouring or founding (as molten metal) to be a bolt.’

All this is quite in keeping with the style of the Bráhmaṇas; and it follows naturally enough from the text of the Samhitá, provided we misunderstand it as did the authors of the Bráhmaṇas. But to my mind there is no conceivable natural phenomenon of which this may be re-

* See Čatapatha Br., xii. 7. 3; Táttirīya Br., i. 7. 1. These passages, with one from the Mahábhárata, are conveniently assembled by Muir, in his Sanskrit Texts, iv. 261.
† फेनेन तस्म शिरविचोदः, अयो फेनेन वष्णभृतेन ||
garded as the mythical reflex. We are therefore led to inquire, did not the words of the sacred text mean something different from what even the ancients themselves supposed them to mean? I believe that they did and that the misunderstanding can be accounted for.

I suggest that the Vedic text be translated: 'With water-foam Namuchi's head, O Indra, thou didst cause to fly asunder, when thou wast conquering all thy foes.' This appears to me intelligible if we assume that the natural phenomenon to which it refers is a waterspout ('trombe') on an inland lake. How, now, does this view accord with the natural facts in question and with a strict verbal exegesis of the text?

Major Sherwill has given a description of Bengal waterspouts in the Journal of this Society for 1860, volume XXIX., p. 366 f., along with some excellent pictures. And in a German work of Th. Reye, entitled Die Wirbelstürme, p. 17 f., further information and pictorial illustration may be found. The waterspout is of course an object of terror, and it is most natural that it should be personified as a demon. The verb चक्ष्यनिर्दृक्त means 'cause to rotate,' and the motion is qualified as upward and outward motion by the preposition अनु. The compound चक्ष्यनिर्दृक्त means accordingly, 'thou didst cause to move upward and outward or to fly asunder with a gyratory or centrifugal motion.' It is not possible to express by one simple English phrase the ideas involved in the compound; but they seem to me to be quite simple in themselves and to follow unforced from the Sanskrit and to be thoroughly suitable for the not infrequent phenomenon of a waterspout as seen by unscientific eyes. The head of the column is twisted and made to burst asunder and scatter itself 'with foam' (कपन, as an instrumental of accompaniment), i.e., in abundant foamy masses. Then, with the dispersion of the column, often comes (see Sherwill, p. 370, Reye, p. 32) a heavy rain. This is all in entire accord with the usual representations of gracious Indra's deeds of prowess.

In particular, also, it accords most strikingly with the quite differently expressed idea of Rigveda v. 30. 5b (= vi. 20. 6b), where Indra is spoken of as 'twirling (like a stick of attrition or like a churning-stick) the head of the demon Namuchi,'

| द्रास्या द्रास्या नमबनेशनाय | and that, immediately after the couplet in stanza 7,  
| श्रव्य द्रास्या नमबनेश्वर यक्ष | अस्वमेव मवेशरे स्त्रिवासम्यनाय |

This explanation of the stanza in question, moreover, harmonizes well with the succeeding stanza, Rigveda, viii. 14. 14,
in which Indra is praised for hurling down the demons that were striving with magic wiles to creep up and to scale the heights of heaven. To the poetic fancy, nothing would suggest more naturally the idea of demons trying to scale the heavens than the sight of this strange magical ladder betwixt earth and sky.

In this connection, the discussion of Bergaigne, *La religion védique*, ii. 346-7, should be compared. The language of the śloka at Mahābhārata, v. 10. 37 = 328 seems also to favor my view. The whole epic passage is a reminiscence of the Namuchhi-story.

The false interpretation of the ancients, finally, rests simply upon the ambiguity of the instrumental case form फेन. The case might denote the relation of accompaniment—as it really does here; or it might denote the relation of means—as the authors of the Brāhmaṇas supposed it to do.

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*On some new or rare Muhammadan and Hindú Coins.*—By Dr. A. F. Rudolf Hoernle.

In July and September last I received from the Deputy Commissioner of Hoshangābād, in two instalments, a hoard of 477 gold coins, which had been found in a field in the Sohagpur Tahsil of the Hoshangābād District, by some ploughmen while ploughing their field.

This hoard was carefully examined by me, and a detailed report published in the *Proceedings* of the Society for December 1887.

Among the 477 coins, there were 451 belonging to different (so-called) “Pathān” emperors of Dehli; 4 belonging to the Mughal emperors Aurangzīb and Farrukh Siyar, 1 belonging to the Bengal king Sikandar bin Ilyās, and 21 silver-gilt forgeries.

The “Pathān” emperors of whom there were coins, are Ghiyāšu-d-dīn Balbān (1 specimen), Muizzu-d-dīn Kailqobād (1), Jālān-d-dīn Firūz (1), 'Alān-d-dīn Muḥammad (391), Ghiyāšu-d-Tughlaq I. (3), Muḥammad bin Tughlaq (24), Firūz Shāh (19), Firūz Shāh and Fath Khān (2), Firūz Shāh and Zafar (2), Ghiyāšu-d-dīn Tughlaq II. (2), Abā Bakr bin Zafar (1), Muhammad bin Firūz (1), Maḥmūd bin Muḥammad bin Firūz (1), and Maḥmūd bin Muḥammad bin Tughlaq (1).

Most of these coins belong to more or less well-known types, which have been already published in Thomas’ *Chronicles of the Pathān Kings*.