The Khyber Pass and the Afridi.

Macmillan's Magazine.

The Khyber Pass has always been to Englishmen a place of ill repute, rivalling in its gloomy associations the Black Hole of Calcutta or the Well of Cawnpore; and never did any place appear to me to deserve an evil reputation more truly than the famous pass as I first saw it one bleak stormy day at the end of last year. * * We were marching up the Khyber as part of a force destined to clear the Pass and reopen the trade route to Afghanistan, and knowing that, at best, our occupation must last several months, we regarded the country through which we were travelling with very mixed feelings. Hitherto we had been marching through an enemy's country, had razed his towers and fortifications, and had felt the pride of knowing that we had been where no white man had ever set foot before. Now we were in what is practically British territory, marching along a road which the Government of India is pledged to keep open and in good repair, while all round us were our own forts and strongholds in absolute ruin. As we descended to the open space above the Khyber stream, where we were to encamp, just below the historic fort of Ali Musjid, we began to realize the damage done us by the Afridis. The caravanserai, in peace time crowded twice a week by the heavily laden caravans passing between India and Afghanistan, no longer existed. The barracks of the Khyber Rifles were in ruins; and of the fort itself little remained but the outer walls and towers, too solid to be destroyed without dynamite. In fact throughout the whole length of the British Khyber, from Lundi Kotal to Fort Maude, almost under the noses of our guns at Jamrud, a determined attempt had been made to wipe out every trace of English authority. There was not an Englishman in the force which entered the Pass that day who did not understand what the effect on the whole frontier would be if we were to fail to inflict condign punishment on the tribes for such an act of daring insolence. * *

The Afridi is by nature and training a skilful skirmisher and a splendid shot; his very life depends upon his being both. Rare indeed is it that the tribes are not at open hostility among themselves, while within the tribe, and even within the family, blood feuds are so common that every Afridi has far more enemies than friends. A strict code regulates the prosecution of these feuds. During seed time and harvest, or during the progress of a sacred war, all quarrels are laid aside; and at all times the persons of women and children are inviolate. But with these exceptions their feuds are persecuted with a vindictiveness to which the history of the Scottish Highlands in the wildest times can offer no parallel. An Arakzai, who owned a house just below a spot which my picquet occupied for some time on the Sampagher Pass, one day pointed out to me another house within twenty paces of his own. There, he said, lived his enemy, and then he went on to describe with the utmost pride how he had killed the father of the present owner after waiting nine whole months in his tower for a shot, his food and water being brought him by the women of his household, who also were responsible for the proper tending of the fields and cattle of the estate, until this somewhat protracted stalk had been brought to a successful issue. It is this state of affairs which makes the possession of a good rifle the dearest ambition of a frontier tribesman, a good Government Martini being always worth over three hundred rupees, an immense sum of money to a people as poor as the Afridis. The difficulties experienced by the headmen of the tribes in collecting the rifles for the fines we have imposed may be easily imagined, when it is realized that the greater number of these rifles must come from men with blood feuds on their hands to whom the sacrifice of their arms means sooner or later the sacrifice of their lives. A charming story is told of the Kamber Khels, illustrating how cheaply the tribesmen regard human life. A moollah of the tribe once in a moment of candor expressed his regret to his flock that no sacred man among them had yet been called upon to lay down his life for his religion, alleging that the presence in their midst of the tomb of so holy a man would be of the highest value both from a spiritual and a practical point of view, spiritually because the Prophet would regard them all henceforth with greater favor, practically because devout pilgrims attracted to the shrine would enrich the whole tribe by their gifts. The Kambers took counsel together, laid hold of the moollah and slew him; and then having erected a suitable shrine over his corpse, felt that they had done all that was in their power to remove a reproach which reflected upon the whole tribe.

BLACK RAIN.—Red rain is a not uncommon occurrence, nor is black rain in large manufacturing centres. The drizzle which so frequently falls on the northeast coast when the wind is from the sea is usually black in Newcastle. But black rain, so black as to obscure the sky and send birds to roost in the middle of the day, must be a rare occurrence in agricultural Ireland. A remarkable fall of black rain which was experienced in the Mullingar district on March 30 is described in the current issue of the *Meteorological Magazine* by Mr. John Ringwood, of Kells. The fall extended over an area of about thirty miles in length and at least sixteen in width. While the rain was being precipitated lamps had to be lighted in shops and houses, birds roosted, and many people suspected that the last trump was about to sound. The coloring matter of rain was simply soot, and, according to Mr. Ringwood, we of northern England may reasonably be suspected of having supplied it. His theory to account for the presence of so enormous a quantity of soot in a country so far removed from large manufacturing towns is that during the previous week there had blown strong winds from the northeast, which winds collected the soot from the manufacturing towns of northern England and southern Scotland, and carried it at a high altitude in a southwesterly direction, causing lovely sunsets similar to those which followed the eruption of Krakatoa. When the soot laden air current met a moist wind from the southwest, the latter parted with its moisture and the former with its soot. Hence Ireland's black rain was a sequel to our northeasterly gales.—*English Mechanic.*

Mine Salting.

Chambers's Journal.

The methods of salting adopted are almost as various as the mines doctored. The simplest, and probably one of the earliest, means of salting in the case of gold mines, is what is known as the "nail trick." In this, the prospector, who is washing a dish of alluvial or crushed quartz, has concealed in his fingernails some fine particles of gold. Soon after starting to wash he finds it necessary to puddle the dirt with his hands in order to break up the clayey substances, and of course while he is puddling, the gold is freed and goes into the prospect, eventually making that pretty "corner" which the speculator so likes to see. Perhaps, however, the nefarious prospector has his nails too short for this trick, and he will then resort to the expedient of shooting fine gold into the dish from his mouth whenever he gets an opportunity of doing so without being observed. * * * Sometimes it happens that a really good property is salted. Thus one of the large mines now working at Broken Hill, and which has turned out an enormous quantity of silver and lead, was originally sold on a salt of several tons of ore conveyed from a neighboring mine, and carefully stacked about an outcrop. In New South Wales a gold mine that paid dividends for years was sold in the same way. On the faith of the promising "surface show," a shaft was sunk, and at about two hundred feet a splendid body of auriferous stone was struck. In Tasmania an alluvial tin mine which had been salted led the purchasers to the discovery of a gold reef which amply repaid them for their outlay.

A few instances of remarkable cases of salting may be interesting. Many persons will perhaps remember the great tin mine salting case in Canada, which was probably the most cleverly contrived swindle of its kind on record. The operators, two in number, purchased from time to time some small parcels of tin-ore in Cornwall, and shipped it to Toronto, taking care never to send more than a few bags in any one vessel. From Toronto the ore was taken out West some hundreds of miles and carefully planted along a granite ridge, the work of shipping and planting taking about twelve months to accomplish. The salters then left the scene and remained away for some three years. At the end of that time it was suddenly announced at Quebec that what appeared to be a large and rich tin field had been discovered in the West, and a claim had been put in for the government reward of (I think) sixty thousand dollars, which had been several years on offer for such a discovery. As might be expected, considerable excitement was manifested over the reported find, and when the government expert who was sent to inspect the property pronounced the discovery to be genuine, there was quite a rush of prospectors and speculators to the West anxious to peg out or to purchase tin claims. Meanwhile a company was formed to work the reward claims; and just when it was ready to commence work, the government, acting on the reports of its skilled advisers, paid over the reward to the claimants, who, with this sum and a further large amount obtained by the sale of their claims, suddenly disappeared and were never afterwards heard of. It is scarcely surprising that the Canadian experts were deceived, as grass and moss and other vegetation had grown over the packed ore, while the denudation of the hillsides had resulted in some of the tin being washed into neighboring creeks, where it was covered over with sand and debris. The swindle was exploded by a Cornish expert who had been sent for. He recognized the ore as having come from certain Cornish mines, and its sale and shipment were thereupon quickly traced.

The Mount Huxley mine in Tasmania afforded an instance of a most successful salt. A tunnel was put in a hill for a distance of about one hundred feet, and the sides, roof, and floor were all salted with fine gold dust. The so-called mine was then offered to a Sydney syndicate, who purchased it on the advice of an expert. Indeed his account of the property was so glowing, and the assays made from various samples taken were so good, that the shares in the syndicate went up to an enormous price, Gradually the Mount Huxley mine got to be talked about all over Australia as a possible second Mount Morgan, and preparations were made by the syndicate to float a company on a large scale, But the ardor of the shareholders was suddenly and effectually damped by the report of a government officer who was asked to examine the property, and who declared to the effect that it was no mine at all, but purely a commonplace though rather extensive salt.

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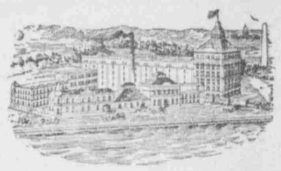

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