

THE FEROCIOUS AFGHAN.

Fighting Him on His Own Ground.

A Simple Device Which Completely Baffled Him.

As a soldier under two Governments I have fought Sepoys, Boers, Hottentots, Maoris, Indians, Malays, and civilized white men, but for real, downright ferocity and dogged perseverance I give the medal to the Afghans. Such a thing as cowardice is unknown among them. They are ready for a fight at a moment's notice, and they can stand the cold steel and grape and canister longer than any white troops I was ever opposed to. They are fanatics to the last drop of blood, and when an enemy fully believes that death on the battlefield means eternal rest for his soul, he becomes doubly dangerous.

In the march to Cabul, which won laurels for the British arms only that they might be covered with the disgrace of bad diplomacy, we found the Afghan on his own soil and on battlefields of his own selection, and though we could drive him in every instance, each victory cost us some of the best blood in the English army.

One of our outposts, as the column was encamped in the Coota valley to recruit its strength and bring up supplies, was nine miles to the north, where it covered a strategic point. A detachment of 100 men was kept there for fifteen days, being relieved every five days, and I went out with the last detachment. We were all infantry, and we had 100 rounds of ammunition for our muskets. The post was not in the valley, but up among the hills, where it covered three different passes, and it was a terribly lonesome spot. It was among the ruins of an old temple, and the first companies holding it had used the great blocks of stone to build a fort. This structure was about 100 feet square, crowning a steep hill, and the walls were about twelve feet high. Two sides of it were the walls of the old temple, strengthened a little, and while it was a rude affair as a fort it was a stout and safe retreat in case of a few men being hard pressed.

The blunders made in that historic campaign are too numerous to be recorded. The most impartial historians are agreed that incompetency was the leading feature. We had been at the post two days when the Captain in command took fifty of the men for what he called a reconnaissance up one of the passes to the north of us, and at the same time sent twenty-five men on another fool's errand to the east. We had been put there simply and solely to prevent the enemy from coming down the pass right at our door, and entering the valley. What was beyond us did not matter. There was muttering among the men as they were marched out, each carrying twenty-five rounds of ammunition, and they called "farewell" to the twenty-two of us left behind. Half an hour after they had passed out of sight we heard sharp firing to the north and east, and not one single man ever returned to us. They were ambushed in the defiles and slaughtered, just as might have been expected.

On this very same day the main army decided to advance. A courier was despatched to notify an outpost, but he never reached us, either turning back through fear or having been picked off by some concealed rifleman. About five o'clock in the afternoon the natives appeared in large numbers, both above and below us, and then we knew what had happened: indeed, they taunted us with the annihilation of our comrades, and gave us the news that the main column had moved on and deserted us. An old Sergeant, who had passed twenty-two years in the service, was in command of us, and as soon as he fully realized the disaster which had come about he called the men together and said:

"We have no choice in this matter. A thousand men could not push their way down into the valley now, to try and overtake the column. We must remain and do what we can."

"But what can we do?" asked a corporal. "Die!" replied the Sergeant. "That's what we were sent out here for, anyhow. We are twenty-two to hundreds and thousands. We must kill as many of the devils as we can and then lay down ourselves."

There wasn't a glimmer of hope. We knew the Afghan. In that long and bloody campaign neither side bothered with prisoners. If we captured one, ten, fifty, or a hundred it was puff! bang! and they were left lying dead as we marched on. If one of our men fell into their hands his head was looped off or a spear sent through him before he could wink twice. They'd have the life of every man, even if they yielded up twenty lives for one. Some would follow on after the column, but hordes would be left behind to harass the outposts left along the line of communication.

It stood us in hand to make a good use of the few hours left us. The Afghans were elated and excited and showed no disposition to attack that evening, but we knew the morrow would open a siege which might last until there was no longer a man to defend the fort. As there were five days' rations for one hundred men, the twenty-two of us had close upon a month's provisions. As for water, there was a spring bubbling up within the fort, and all the preparations we could make consisted in strengthening the position. During the night we built a bomb proof, hauled in a large supply of firewood, and not one of us got a wink of sleep. Day had scarcely broken when we found ourselves surrounded by at least a thousand natives. The first move on their part was to demand a surrender. This was promptly refused, and musketry fire was then opened on the fort. We made no return but avoided the port holes as much as possible, cooked breakfast, and most of the men slept until noon.

I told you our fort was on the crest of a steep hill. The earth slanted away from us in all directions for about forty rods, and there was any cover for an enemy. So the puzzle was what prevented them from carrying our walls by assault. For thirty-six long days and nights we were cooped up in that fort, not suffering for food and drink, but a prey to constant anxiety, and then the second main column came up from the east and sent us relief. In the fight in the pass below the fort over 300 natives were killed, and of the dozen captured alive every man of them expressed a desire to see our strange guns before being disposed of as prisoners were. They were brought inside and permitted to inspect them and their curiosity was unbounded. Poor devils! They were backed against the wall, not twenty feet away, and shot to death even as their faces still expressed wonder and astonishment.

stations when darkness fell. What we feared was a night attack with scaling ladders, and that was exactly what they were planning for. Instead of talking time to make ladders, however, they made a rush on us about 1 o'clock in the morning with a detail of men, carrying long poles to rest against the walls. The sentinels gave us timely notice, and, standing on blocks of stone so as to bring us nearer the enemy as he showed up on top of the wall, we tumbled him off with bullet and bayonet so rapidly that he drew off in great confusion.

That attack was a good thing for us. The enemy gave us credit for three times our actual strength, and therefore decided to move with more caution in the future, and it gave us the idea that our position could be defended against big odds. During the next day the Afghans kept up a slow and irregular fire against us, simply wasting their lead, and all the men, except those on necessary duty, were permitted to sleep. When night came again we discovered the cause of their apathy. We plainly heard them clearing away the small trees on the plateau and using the spade, and knew they were going to plant artillery to use against us. The artillery branch of the Ameer's service was very weak, the guns being of light calibre and the ammunition generally poor, but no one could doubt that if a gun or two was got to bear on us, and the enemy would keep pegging away the shot and shell would in time effect a breach.

We had above 6,000 rounds of cartridges, as our slaughtered comrades had left three-quarters of their store behind them, and the Sergeant ordered us to man the ten portholes on that side and keep up a steady fire on the plateau. It was firing at random in the darkness, but we doubtless knocked some of them over, and quite certainly delayed the work. When morning came we could see that they had cleared the ground and begun to throw up a small fort to hold the guns. Our fire had driven them off. During the day they made bullet-proof screens of boughs and mats, and paid us but little attention. When night fell they set up their screens and worked behind them, and though our fire might have inflicted some slight loss, it did not prevent them from getting two guns in position. They had an earthwork six feet high to protect the gunners, and as the Sergeant looked out and saw what had been done, he grimly said:

"Well, we shall have a few days less to live."

While we were at breakfast the guns opened fire with solid shot. They were only forty rods away, and yet the gunnery was so poor that the first nine shots were thrown away. When they began to strike, however, we realized the damage they might inflict. The stones were but little harder than sandstones, and, while too heavy to be hurled down, flaked and crumbled under the impact. We manned the portholes and fired at the embrasures, and in this way we checked, though we could not silence the fire. They got the guns trained on one particular spot, and before night came we knew that they could breach us in two days more. As darkness closed in their fire was suspended. They could see the progress they had made, and there was no need of hurry.

We had with us a born genius, who had fought under almost every flag, and taken the oath of allegiance to four or five Governments, and early in the evening we noticed him overhauling the pile of poles we had dragged in for firewood. He at length selected out four or five, which had all the spring of Canadian hickory, and then unfolded his idea to the Sergeant. We first laid five poles on the ground and pinned them fast. Then, three feet in rear of them we elevated five other short poles about two feet from the ground on crotches. When the end of a long pole was put over one of these and rested against the one on the ground, we had what would have been a spring board, if there been any board about it. We then nailed box-covers to the other ends of the poles, made ropes fast to bend 'em down, and we had a principle made use of in war 1,600 years ago.

Now, then, pull down the end of the pole place a stone on the pan and let go, and the spring sends the stone flying sky high, to come down with a crash on somebody's head. In an hour we had the five ready and playing away, there being plenty of broken stone in the fort for ammunition. There was spring enough to the poles to throw a five-pound stone sixty rods, and we heard sounds to prove that we drove the enemy from a dozen different positions during the night.

The guns opened on us early in the morning, and then a funny thing took place. It may seem almost absurd to you, but I'm giving you only what was officially reported when I say that with our five spring guns, as you might call 'em, we actually drove the gunners out of that redoubt and silenced their fire. After a little practice we could get just the right spring to send the stone soaring away like a bomb, to fall upon their uncovered heads. A jagged stone, weighing from one to five pounds, and falling from a height of fifty or sixty feet, is not to be despised. They tried to get a shelter over them, but with our musketry fire at the embrasures, and our rocks dropping from above, they had to desert the redoubt. Wherever we found a body of the enemy sheltered by rock or thicket to fire on us we trained our inventions on them, and they had to withdraw.

After the failure of the artillery to breach the walls the Afghans sat down to starve us out. The idea was to wear us out as well, and a fire of musketry was maintained day and night. They probably didn't expect to do any great harm by this fire, but they knew it would keep us on the alert and annoy and irritate. It did have that effect, and they harassed us further by threats of assault. We on our part kept them dodging with our missiles, and I have no doubt we wounded a good many of them in that way. They couldn't make out what sort of guns we had which fired without noise and threw rocks instead of iron or lead, and this puzzle was what prevented them from carrying our walls by assault.

For thirty-six long days and nights we were cooped up in that fort, not suffering for food and drink, but a prey to constant anxiety, and then the second main column came up from the east and sent us relief. In the fight in the pass below the fort over 300 natives were killed, and of the dozen captured alive every man of them expressed a desire to see our strange guns before being disposed of as prisoners were. They were brought inside and permitted to inspect them and their curiosity was unbounded. Poor devils! They were backed against the wall, not twenty feet away, and shot to death even as their faces still expressed wonder and astonishment.

CONFLAGRATIONS IN HISTORY.

Some Great Fires Which Have Startled the World.

Among the great fires of history, undoubtedly the burning of the Serapeum library at Alexandria, in the year 640, by the Caliph Omar I., is most widely mourned, as the destruction of 500,000 volumes cut off much of the human knowledge at that time. The general impression of the importance and significance of this fire is, no doubt, augmented in great measure by the alleged answer of this Saracen conqueror, who replied to the protest against the burning with: "If these books are against the Koran, they are pernicious and must be destroyed. If they agree with the Koran, they are redundant and need not be preserved," and it is not generally remembered that Julius Caesar burned a larger library of 700,000 volumes at Alexandria, known as the Brucean library, B. C. 48, nearly 700 years before the burning of the Serapeum library by Omar I.

At times of sack and pillage, Jerusalem has been burned time and again; the most noted instance being at the siege by the Romans under Titus, during the year 70, when a faction called the Sicarii set the city on fire in many places, and eventually 1,100,000 of the inhabitants perished by fire and the sword. Constantinople has, like all Oriental cities, suffered severely from fires, a large part of such losses being undoubtedly due to the fatalism of the Mohammedans, who bow to their kismet. Said a sultan: "If it is the will of Allah that my favorite city burn, it is the will of Allah."

In Dillaway's quaint account of travels in the Levant in 1797, it is stated that the sultan is summoned three times to a fire in Constantinople, and if the fire lasts an hour he is obliged to attend in person and bring mules laden with piasters for the firemen.

A great fire at Rome, 12 B. C., caused the Emperor Augustus to take measures for increasing the defense against fire, which had been hitherto in the hands of bodies of police numbering 20 to 30, stationed in various portions of the city, and re-enforced at times of fire by companies of volunteers. He appointed new officers with the rank of magistrates, who were entitled to wear magisterial robes. Each attended by two lictors, and provided with a fire organization of 600 slaves.

It is probable that this was not entirely satisfactory in its operation, because six years later another fire caused him to undertake further reforms on a scale fully characteristic of him who "found the city built of brick and left it with palaces of marble." He increased the fire department to a scale commensurate with the needs of the city. Seven thousand freemen were organized into seven battalions, and one battalion was quartered in every alternate ward of the city. These men made careful inspections of the kitchens, of the heating apparatus, and of the water supply in the houses, and every fire was the subject of judicial examination. The cost of the organization was maintained by a tax of 25 per cent on the sale of slaves.

Two notable examples of contagions stopped by conflagrations are the burning of Moscow by the besieging Tartars, in July, 1570, when the plague was stopped, and secondly the fire in London, September, 1666, which also stopped the plague, and it has been unknown there since.

This London fire is properly called the great fire of modern history, because the reforms which were started in consequence of it are living issues in the municipal affairs of today. The fire was caused by an overheated baker's oven; and in the course of four days it swept over 436 acres, burning 13,200 houses, 89 churches, and St. Paul's Cathedral, causing a damage estimated to be £10,716,000, say \$53,500,000.

Under the direction of Pepsys the fire was stopped by blowing up buildings, which was, at the time, the only method of reducing a fire that had grown beyond the capacity of the small fire engines. These were on large tubs, and threw a stream of water directly on the fire, as hose was not invented until ten years later (1682) by Van der Heide.

The cities of America, on account of the larger amount of wood in their construction and the prevalence of irresponsible methods of building, have suffered severely from fires.

The first devastating fire in America was probably the one occurring at Boston, March 20, 1760, when 400 dwellings and stores were burned, causing a loss of £100,000.

In the colony of Massachusetts Bay, regulations in regard to construction of chimneys and thatched roofs were made as early as March 16, 1630, and various enactments were made at later dates. The ordinance at the town meeting of Boston, March 14, 1645, made provision that each householder should have ladders long enough to reach to the ridge of his house, and a pole "about 12 feet long, with a good large swob at the end of it," and various graded penalties were provided for those not conforming to the law.

Philadelphia has been remarkably free from conflagrations in comparison with other large cities. It does not appear to have been visited by a great fire until July 9, 1850, when a fire along the Delaware River front, at Vine Street, extending over 18 acres, caused a loss of life estimated as high as 33, in addition to 120 wounded, and a pecuniary loss of \$1,500,000.

New York was visited by a severe conflagration in the southern part of the city on December 16, 1835, which extended over an area of 40 acres, destroying 674 houses, and causing a loss which has been estimated as high as \$20,000,000, on which there was only \$8,000,000 insurance—an amount which ruined several insurance companies.

One of the first of the more recent conflagrations was the burning of Portland, Me., July 4, 1866. The fire was caused by a boy throwing a firecracker into a cooper's shop, for the avowed purpose of scaring the workmen. In this respect the act was an unparalleled success, the damage being about \$10,000,000.

The Chicago fire, October 9, 1871, was one of the largest in all history, devastating an area of 3½ square miles, and causing a loss of about \$190,000,000, on which insurance was paid to the amount of about \$100,000,000. Two hundred and fifty lives were reported lost in this fire.

Thirteen months later to a day, Boston was visited by a fire which extended over an area of 65 acres, burning the best mercantile buildings in the city, and causing a damage of \$75,000,000, on which there was an insurance to over \$65,000,000.—Scientific American.

GREEN GOODS IN CANADA.

The Old, Old, Game, with a Few Telling Innovations.

By nearly every New York mail Mayor Sherwood, Commissioner of Dominion Government Police, receives a batch of letters from alleged dealers in counterfeit money, which, instead of being delivered to the green goods men in New York, are stopped by the Post Office authorities there and forwarded to Ottawa. The latest dodge of these swindlers to escape detection was explained to your correspondent by Major Sherwood the other day. The circular sent out by the New York sharpers is constructed pretty much on the old lines. It offers counterfeit United States Treasury notes at the rate of \$8,000 in bad bills for \$300 in good money, or \$10,000 worth for \$650. The counterfeit paper is said to be printed from genuine plates stolen from the Printing Bureau in Washington, and in proof of this a newspaper clipping is enclosed which tells of the astounding revelations which followed the death of a supposed poor man who was found to have been really worth millions, all made by handling counterfeit notes printed from the stolen plates.

The clipping includes what is alleged to be the sworn report of the United States Treasury experts, setting forth the so-called facts of the theft of the plates, and the impossibility of detecting notes printed therefrom. The method of escaping through the vigilance of the Post Office officials is this: With the circular is enclosed a memorandum which the recipient is advised to "keep for future reference." It reads:

"Send your telegram to Charles Towns, 209 Elm street, New York city. Your password and sign is 'Coal 88.' Do not sign anything else."

"Caution.—Be sure you have the numbers plainly written on the telegram after you sign the word 'Coal,' otherwise your telegram will positively receive no attention. The figures are very important. Positively no letters received at this address. Do not write to me till I give you permission which will be within thirty days if I do not receive a telegram from you."

Communication thus quickly established between the sharper and his victim, it is an easy matter for the former to change his postal address so frequently as to lessen the chances of his letters being interrupted. How many of these circulars reach their destination and are acted upon by the greedy people who go into such business there is no means of computing exactly, but it is well known that people are taken in every day by the green goods game. Mayor Sherwood estimates that, notwithstanding all precautions, a goodly proportion of green goods circulars reach those to whom they are addressed, with the result that a class of men, for whom no sympathy can be felt, are continually making trips across the line, paying good money for gripsacks filled with supposed spurious bills, and, after concluding the bargain, come to find that their precious parcel of counterfeits has been adroitly exchanged for a bag of sawdust.

All it Was.

A gentleman who travelled in the rural districts of the West some years ago, says that to this day he has a "creeping sensation" when he recalls his experience in spending the night at a farm-house. It was late in the summer and the farmers were doing their threshing, while their wives were emptying their ticks and refilling them with clean straw.

Just before dark the traveller reached a comfortable-looking house, where a hearty welcome was accorded him when he asked if he might stay all night. While eating his supper he heard the farmer's wife say to her husband and son:

"The straw tick from the spare-room bed will have to be filled. I emptied it to-day and forgot all about it until this minute."

When the tired guest was shown to his room he undressed hastily and climbed into bed. Every movement of his body caused the straw to rustle under him, and pretty soon he discovered that it rustled even when he was lying perfectly still. He was of a nervous temperament, and the strange noise disturbed him.

It was only occasional. He would be still for a moment, and then the straw would rustle loudly. He fancied that he felt something moving under him. The rustling grew more frequent, and he wondered what caused it. It might be a rat!

He sat up in bed. At once the rustling became more violent than ever, and he distinctly felt movements under him. He jumped from his bed, lighted his candle, and looked at the straw tick. All was still now.

"I guess it's nothing but grasshoppers or crickets," he said. "I'm not going to be cheated out of my rest by some harmless insect."

He got back into bed, but passed a restless, wearisome night, hearing the rustling sounds frequently. The next morning he said to his host:

"I beg your pardon, but I think that a mouse or some small animal was in the straw you put into the tick on my bed last night. I heard and felt something rustling around constantly."

"We must see about it," said the man. "Henry, you pitch the tick out on the grass and empty out the straw. Like as not some of them plaguey field mice got into it. It was so dark we couldn't have seen it if it had been a ground hog."

A few minutes later Henry appeared at an open window with a black snake fully four feet long, dangling from the end of a stick.

"There you are," he said, laconically. "That's all it was. He was terrible mad, and come at me the minute I let him out. But I tropped the life out of him in no time."

"And I slept all night with that thing in my bed?" gasped the stranger, shuddering from head to foot.

"Shucks!" said the farmer. "He wouldn't 'a' hurt you none if he had bit you. Them kind of snakes ain't pizen."

Servantalism.

A lady who keeps a highly respectable boarding-house in this city caught the recently hired chambermaid kissing one of the boarders, so she told the servant that would never do.

"I saw you kissing one of the boarders on the stairs. I don't want to see that again," said the indignant landlady.

"Well, morn, nobody can doppel ye to kape yer eyes open if ye don't want ter," was the reply.

THE NEWFOUNDLAND CRISIS.

The Question Assuming Alarming and Painful Conditions.

A Brief Statement of the Case.

The Newfoundland question is fast developing those painful conditions which we showed to be probable when the dispute first arose. The Newfoundlanders have all the confidence in themselves and the readiness to defend their rights which belong to their British ancestry. They have, in addition, like all other colonists, an irresponsible sense of power as being part of an empire on whose protection they have a right to insist, whether it wishes to grant it or not. The British self-governing colonies everywhere claim practically the right not only to decide on their own foreign interests, but to use the Imperial power in defence of whatever attitude they may take. The Imperial Government on the other hand takes but a languid interest in remote colonial questions, and looks upon colonists as necessarily bumptious, and on colonial demands as certain to be extravagant. On questions between colonies and foreign countries she is inclined rather to take the view of the foreign country than that of her colony. The reasons for this are twofold. Not only does she naturally, for the reasons suggested, discount the colonial demand, but her interest in the goodwill of the foreign country is altogether greater than in that of the colony. In this way the interests of her colonies have been everywhere and always sacrificed in her diplomacy.

to other interests which pressed her more closely. At this moment France has a serious difference with England with regard to Egypt as well as other differences of more or less importance. Ever since Napoleon fought in Egypt and turned the settlements of the French towards the shrines of Palestine, France has looked upon these countries as her own. When it was found necessary for European powers to interfere in that misgoverned land to protect financial interests, France was asked to share the enterprise with Britain. She declined and permitted Britain to occupy the country alone. This occupation is France's bitterest grievance, next to the German occupation of Alsace and Lorraine and she is determined to worry England wherever she can with the view to securing her retirement from that country. Britain has always promised to retire as soon as the condition of things there is sufficiently stable to make that possible, but it is evident that France has no confidence in that time ever coming, if Britain is alone to decide the question. She therefore brings pressure to bear upon Britain in whatever quarter of the globe she can. She thinks she has found in this Newfoundland quarrel a good opportunity. The interest at stake is, to Britain's view, an infinitely small one, and she would doubtless, make sacrifices there for the sake of larger interests elsewhere. But then to the Newfoundlanders,

THE MATTER IS A GREAT ONE,

and they are not prepared to be sacrificed to remote interests in which they have no concern. They are, it is true, only a small number of people altogether, less by a good way than there are in Montreal or in Toronto, but they have not only self-government but the government of an island strategically important to the British empire, and if they are wronged or their interests slighted they can make things very uncomfortable both for Britain and Canada. The old treaty which gives the French a foothold upon their shore gave to that people the right only to fish and to cure their fish. A later promise in interpretation of the treaty was to the effect that subjects of the English king would not be permitted to interfere with the French in these privileges. This treaty and promise have always been interpreted by the English Government in the French interests and every effort of the Newfoundland people to fish on their own coast has been treated as an interference with French rights. This is quite as preposterous as if a man, having given a neighbor's children freedom to play in his garden and forbidden his own children to molest them, the neighbor should demand that the owner's own children should not play there at all. Nay more, even the lobster fishery, which had no existence at the time of the treaty, and which has become important through the enterprise of the Newfoundlanders, has been suppressed by British commanders as an interference against the French rights on the shore, which at first were only those of building flakes and of drying fish thereon. All this time the British people, embarrassed with a multitude of colonial questions in regions as remote from their knowledge as the orbits of the planets, have paid no attention whatever to the question. They are now, it seems, waking up to its gravity.

Martini-Henry Ammunition.

It is in contemplation to manufacture Martini-Henry ammunition at the Government cartridge factory at Quebec this year. Major Prevost, superintendent of the factory, in a report to the Department, says very little is required in the matter of machinery to enable the factory to manufacture Martini-Henry ammunition. Most of the component parts of the cartridge can be made with the present plant, and a few additions at a trifling cost are all that is wanted to meet a demand actually existing in this country, and which is sufficiently important to make it worth while adding to the yearly output of the establishment, with a view to reducing as much as possible the general expenses, which must of necessity fall heavily on a limited production. Major Prevost's suggestions bear on a point quite distinct from any question of re-arming of the militia with Martini-Henry rifles, which may or may not be contemplated. His proposal is merely to supply a demand which can be met by manufacturing at Quebec what until now has been imported. He says that, if made in Canada, it can be sold to the rifle associations at a cheaper rate than the imported ammunition now costs.

Thievery Somewhere.

Senior Partner—"Keep a sharp eye of Holdfast. I'm afraid he's robbing the firm."

Junior Partner—"Eh? Is he living extravagantly?"

Senior Partner—"Well, I passed him on the street yesterday, and he was smooching a cigar that didn't smell bad at all."