

The Khyber and the Pathan

(By J Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., in the London 'Daily Chronicle'.)

The Pathan lives in the hills between India and Afghanistan, and is a delightful fellow. He has no bows and salaams. He looks you in the face as one gentleman looks another, and is as interested in you as you are in him. His smile is perfect; his face is as handsome as a woman's. The fact that he is likely to be shot one day by a neighbour from behind a boulder seems to raise his thoughts above the mundane affairs of life, and he swaggers along prepared to take pot luck when it comes. There has been nobody like him since the peace between England and Scotland was cemented and the Borderer and the Highlander both bade the world adieu. Even the blindest Anglo-Indian cannot despise him. He is a man and a brother amongst white men.

A BELIEVER IN RIFLES

He is a devout Mohammedan, and tolerates no new fangled notions either in theology or in politics. He believes in rifles and despises bombs. For the same reason he holds the Babu in contempt. He dearly loves a raid, and if caught red handed he dies like a man. He has no affection for us, but he holds us in great respect. During one of our recent campaigns on the frontier, a Pathan company was blazing away at the enemy from the ancient rifles with which we have armed them, and with old fashioned gun powder. An English regiment with which the company was cooperating, assuming that whoever used black powder was the heathen, poured into their coils a hail of bullets. 'This is too bad,' remarked a Pathan to his officer. 'We do not mind fighting the English if that was the game, but both the English and the others—that is not fair.' That is the Pathan all over.

Four of them were sent out with us as an escort one day, and we fell a talking. They told me of one of their comrades in arms who went to his village on a week end leave of absence. During the two days he was away he had stormed and blown up a fort erected by one with whom he had a feud, killed two men, and burned a village. He turned up at the beginning of the week as though nothing had happened, and as the scene of the exploit was outside the British sphere of influence, there was no sequel as far as we were concerned. I asked one of them if he was the proud possessor of a blood feud. 'No,' he replied, 'I live too near to the British border,' but he looked like a child who has been asked if he has a six pence, and in replying that it has not, indicates 'but would I not like to have one!'

To get into the Pathan's mind one has to go up into the mountains of the frontier, where he lives. There every village is a fort. Strong mud walls surround it and a citadel rises up in its midst. If it is in the neighbourhood of a stream or of a neutral road, like the Khyber, there will likely be a trench dug down to the stream or road for purposes of protection. In some cases the trench may be a tunnel for extra safety. Over the villages tower the hills, bare rocks glittering in the sun, and fiercely hot like ovens. On little plateaux, or at the bottom of river beds small fields of maize and other grain may be seen, and on the bare mountain sides or in the dusty channels that are water courses in rains the village flocks of goats find some thing to eat.

THE DOMESTIC SIDE.

The domestic side of the Pathan is seen in the Khyber. The Khyber road itself is sacred against him. He can walk on it, but he may not fight on it. If he meets his enemy there, both are in sanctuary and greet each other like Christians. A murder on this road is an offense against the British Government, and would be punished. Thus law and order runs in a channel through the country towards Kabul.

True, the law and order still needs the support of the rifle, but not so much as I used to do. On Tuesdays and Fridays the British Government sends an escort of troops up the Pass to protect caravans going between India and Afghanistan, and a special force called the Khyber Rifles has been enrolled for that purpose. Therefore, on those days, and on special occasions when necessary, a cavalcade starts from the Jamond Fort, on the Indian side of the Pass. Hundreds of camels and scores of donkeys and buffaloes, laden with everything, from grand pianos to scrap iron, fall into line. The march to Kabul begins. The dusty-red road ascends and becomes steeper grey in color. The mountains close in. With rifles slung across their backs, the hillmen appear tending their backs or whacking their donkeys, or wandering aimlessly about, thinking perhaps of the good old times when their caravans gave sport and an ampler living. Silhouetted against the sky on every hill top two or three guards are seen keeping watch, and for a frequently passed. As the road winds in its ascent, magnificent views of the Great Indus Plain open out below with a hazy glow in the far distance.

I always say that the escorts now are but persons in which the realities of past times survive. We went through with four

men; whereas, we were told by one of them, a hundred would not have been sufficient a few years ago. And yet one never knows. I doubt if we have heard the last of these Douglas Dalgettys of the border. Gun running from Muscat has become a great trade—we were told of one tibet family that was trying to raise enough wind to buy a caanon; and the hillmen are better armed than our own native levies. It is said that the tribes are getting restive in parts and I have been told tales of religious societies and mullahs most of them probably baseless.

ENJOYING HIMSELF

Of this, however, we may be certain. The Pathan is not in the least afraid of us. He is prepared to play at targets with us or with anybody else if the spirit moves him. And the spirit can easily move him. It is said that he has been following with much head shaking recent events in Turkey, for, unlike the younger Mohammedans for the plans be low, he has his doubts about recent events in the world of Islam. Moreover, we have driven him up into the hills and confined him too much. Life becomes harder for him; time now flows slowly and inertly through his sand glass. The call to action would find him quite willing, and he would have no thought of what the consequences would be. It would be the will of the Lord. It would be the fate of man. It would be the event fore-ordained since the beginning of the world. And the Pathan for a few brief weeks would take his rifle off his back, and the hills would echo and re-echo the crack of guns and the cries of fighting men. The Pathan would be enjoying himself.

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HOW MACHINERY BREATHE

An English writer on engineering subjects, Mervyn O'Gorman, calls attention to the fact that a piece of machinery, such as an automobile, laid aside after being used, is in danger of internal rusting through a kind of respiration which affects cylinders, gear boxes, clutch-chambers, interspaces in ball bearings, and so forth. Every enclosed air place "breathes" by drawing in air when a fall of temperature contracts its walls, and expelling it when the walls expand through heat. The moisture introduced with the air is deposited in the cavities, and may produce serious damage through rust. The popular belief that oil will protect the inaccessible parts of unused machinery is fallacious, since nearly all oils take up about three per cent of water in solution.—The Youth's Companion.

BORING THE ALPS.

When one thinks of the scores of centuries during which the leading nations of Europe dwelt round the feet of the Alps and left those mountains as an all but insuperable barrier between them, and then of what has been accomplished in the last 40 years by means of tunnels penetrating the mighty mass in all directions, the triumph of modern science becomes imposingly manifest. It was no longer ago than 1871 that the first great Alpine tunnel, the Mont Cenis, was finished. Now half a dozen great tunnels, including the gigantic St Gotthard and Simplon, exist, and another, the Loetschberg, connecting Switzerland with the Rhone valley, is pushing toward completion. A new tunnel is projected under Monte Cenero, to shorten the St Gotthard route, and another under Mont d'Or, in the Jura, to abridge the way from Paris to Lausanne. Meanwhile local tunnels are opening on all sides, and serpentine galleries are winding toward the summit of the Jungfrau, and even of Mont Blanc itself.—The Youth's Companion.

Sir William Ramsay On The New Supply of Radium

(The 'Evening Post,' New York.)

Sir William Ramsay announced officially the other day that radium had been produced, for the first time, at the works in Limehouse, from Cornish ore. He added that up to the present, the amount of pure radium actually produced was over half a gramme, or 5,500 milligrammes of 10 percent. radium though the factory had been laid out to produce one gramme of pure radium per month. Apart from the new supply, he said, there were not more than five grammes of radium in the world. From each ton of pitchblende, if it was pure, 530 milligrammes of radium could be extracted, and the loss in crystallization was infinitesimal, amounting to barely one milligramme. The Cornish supply of pitchblende, Sir W. Ramsay said, was, so far as he could judge, very much richer in radium than the pitchblende which could be got in Austria, and there was no other source of supply known at present of the same magnitude as that yielded by the Cornish mines. 'The supply of radium is thus assured,' he remarked. 'From a medicinal point of view alone the demand will be very great; in fact the present demand is much greater than the supply.' At Karlsbad and Joachimsthal, baths containing radium water had been found very serviceable in cases of rheumatism, gout, neuritis, and every form of nervous complaint. The present quoted price of radium was from \$90 to \$100 a milligramme. Sir W. Ramsay further explained that polonium, a newer and rarer element than radium also exists in the pitchblende concentrates which have been taken from the Cornish mines.

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A DAILY THOUGHT.

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F. W. Robertson.

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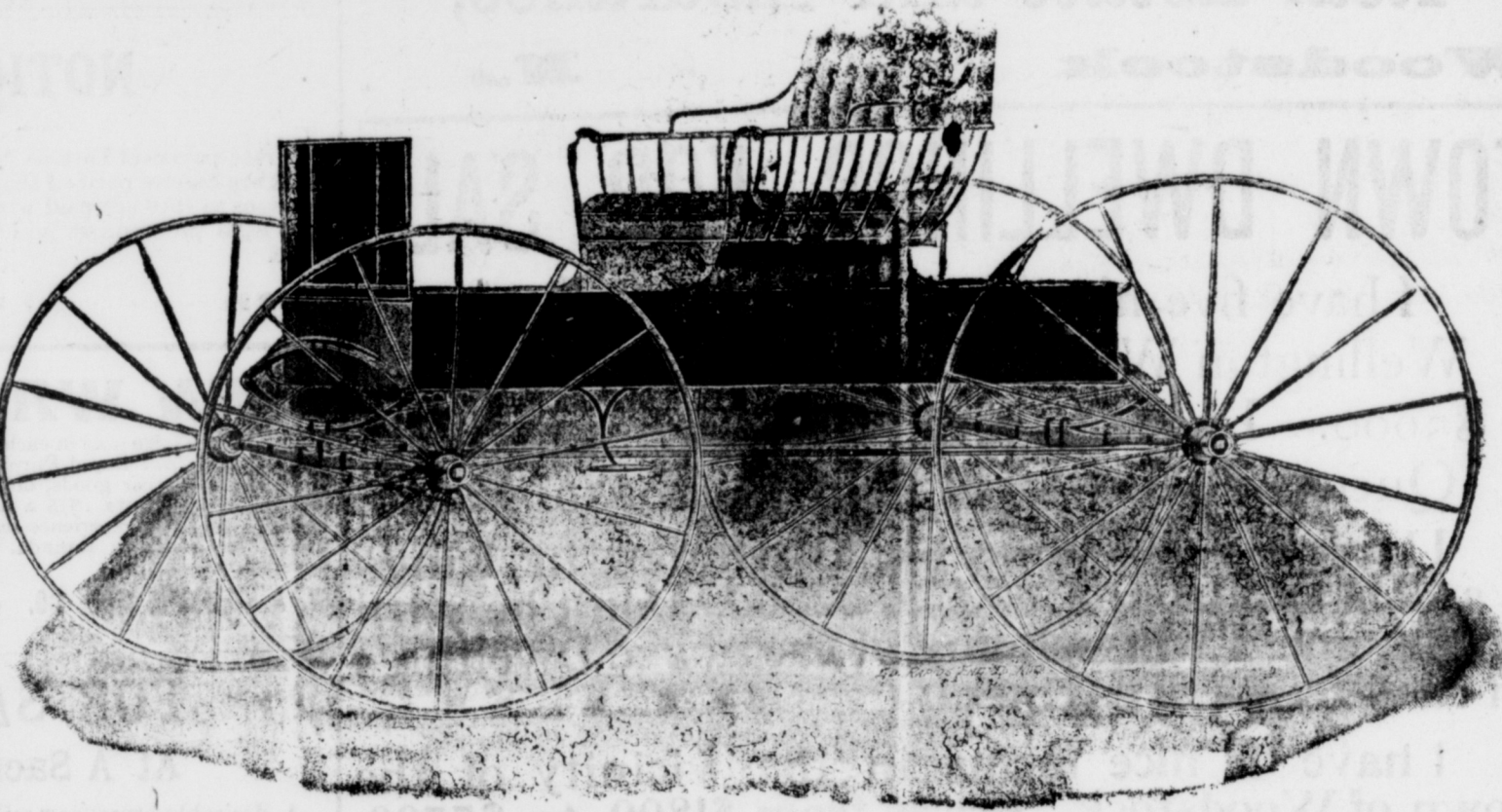
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