

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY OCTOBER 9, 1897.

## PIRATES OF SUMATRA.

ROBBERS AT WAR WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.

For Many Years the Dutch Have Been Trying to Exterminate Them—How the Pirates do Their Fighting—Their Cannibal Neighbors the Battaks.

The butchery of a ship's crew and passengers in Eastern seas by Achinese pirates furnished a grisly item of cable intelligence in the newspapers the other day. It was related that a boatload of the freebooters boarded the vessel in disguise, a woman carrying concealed under her clothes the knives with which the victims were subsequently despatched. Only one person escaped to tell the tale. Most people who read the story supposed, quite naturally, that the Achinese must be some sort of Chinamen. This notion, however, was a mistake, inasmuch as the pirates, in question are Malays, who live at the north end of the island of Sumatra. Prof. David G. Fairchild, a Government naturalist, has just returned to the United States from that part of the world, and he gives a most interesting account of the war which is going on at present between the Dutch and this nation of robbers.

The Dutch, it seems, have been waging this war without intermission for twenty four years, and they are not much further ahead with it than at the beginning. The name of the province inhabited by the pirates is properly spelled Acheen, or Atschin. Nobody knows how many of them there are, even approximately, for the simple reason that no white man can venture into their territory without being killed. It is supposed that they number 50,000 to 60,000. In former times they were a scourge of the seas in that part of the world, sweeping the waters with their swift sailing praus, capturing merchantmen of all nations, and customarily butchering every soul on board. This method of procedure almost destroyed the trade of England through the Strait of Malacca, and finally the British Government told the Dutch that they must put a stop to the nuisance or else it would take the matter in hand.

The Dutch, of course, own Sumatra, as well as all the rest of the great Malay Archipelago, which extends as far east and west as the distance from New York to San Francisco. It was thought very undesirable that the English should have an excuse for landing troops in Dutch territory, and so an expedition was sent to wipe out the natives of Acheen. That was in 1872. The effort was so far unsuccessful that it is still being kept up, after an expenditure of 30,000,000 guilders and a great waste of valuable lives. Unquestionably the British would have soon put an end to the trouble by furnishing whatever might be necessary in the way of men and money for the purpose, but the Dutch colonial policy is frugal, and thus nothing has been accomplished except the destruction of all the vessels belonging to the Achinese, who are no longer a terror on the ocean.

These piratical people are bigger and stronger than the other natives of Sumatra, excepting only the cannibal Battaks, who are their near neighbors. They are tremendous fighters—long, lean, very muscular, built like professional jumpers and correspondingly agile. Their favorite weapon is a knife of peculiar shape called 'klawong,' with a blade two feet long. The blade is not pointed, but cut off square, and is heavy at the end, so as to give greater weight to the blow struck with it. In some instances white men have been actually cleft from the head through the entire body by a single blow of one of these formidable weapons. Also the Achinese have carbines and winchester repeating rifles, which they have imported with ammunition from Singapore. They even possess a few small cannon.

Thus it appears that these barbarians are too not to be despised. They are fond of night attacks, and rival the savages of America in the mutilation of their victims—cutting off the legs, arms, and ears of captives. Their country is covered with primeval tropical forests, inhabited by orang-outangs, where malaria broods and impenetrable rattan thickets harbour legions of leeches. When the Dutch troops burn their villages and destroy their rice plantations, they simply retire to the inaccessible mountain fastnesses, whither they cannot be pursued. They are very dirty, beastly, in their habits, and are mostly afflicted with disgusting skin diseases which cover them with blotches. Their houses are square or ob-

long, containing only the barest necessities—one or two pots and pans and a few mats. Usually a sleeping place is shut off by a curtain.

There is undoubtedly a great deal of gold in the piratical country, but nobody dare hunt for it, for fear of the ferocious inhabitants. Near the north end of the island and not far from the fortified town of Kota Radja, occupied by the Dutch, is a hill called Gold Mountain, which is said to be full of the yellow metal. A Dutch official showed to Prof. Fairchild a gold coin which was made by the Achinese as far back as the sixteenth century. It was thin and covered with embossed characters. Of late the fighting with the natives has been particularly severe, and has resulted in the driving back of the Dutch outposts. At the time of Prof. Fairchild's visit there were 800 Dutch soldiers in the hospital at Kota Radja out of an army of 8,000 men. Many of the sick, however, were victims of various diseases which attack Europeans in that climate—such as beriberi, a fearful complaint, which begins with a swelling of the legs and creeps up until it attacks the heart and kills.

Any defeat of the Dutch in Acheen damages their prestige all through Sumatra and Java, and this is one reason why they have been willing to devote so much attention to a region which is worthless to them producing nothing whatever that is of value. With all their efforts they now hold only a very small part of the province—that is to say, the extreme northern tip of Sumatra, embracing only a few square miles. Across this tip of land they have built a string of little forts, to the south of which all the country is in the possession of the pirates. They have to keep a mighty sharp look-out too, lest these forts be gobbled up by the enterprising natives. All of the forts are connected by a railway and by a telegraph with the town of Kota Radja to the north, which is probably the most curiously fortified place in the world. It is a city of soldiers' barracks, with officers' residences in the middle, the whole being surrounded by a fence of iron pickets twelve feet high. Inside of the fence is a stone wall.

The city can only be approached by the savages from the south, inasmuch as they have no vessels, and from that direction they must pass the line of forts, which are fourteen in number. Each fort is surrounded

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is what a young man lately said of his first dose of SHORT'S DYSPEPTICURE. Better still, a few more doses cured his indigestion.

## Many Workers Fail

HOW often we hear of a flourishing business for sale on account of the ill-health of the owner. He has been so absorbed in his fight for wealth that he has forgotten another account that needs balancing—his health account.

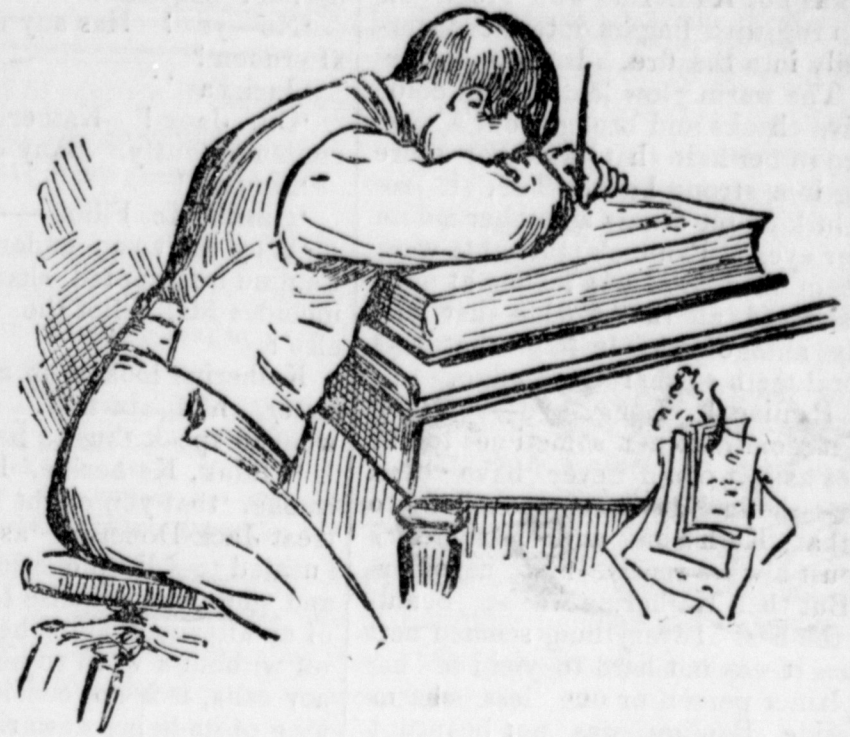
He has been paying out and not taking in until he finds the balance on the wrong side of the ledger. Little disorders that might easily have been cured have become startling diseases. Now, broken in health, nerves unstrung by pain, what might have been a brilliant and useful career is ended. Many are ruined thus. Many whom a little care of self and a little toning of the system would have saved, are lost.

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by tall wooden palings. Outside the palings are two barbed wire fences ten feet high. The fences are only four inches apart and the barbs are closely set. Outside of this is a queer sort of a barrier of wire net twenty feet in width, and not very high, but so intricate that to go through it is practically out of the question. Outside of this barrier again is a hedge of plants known as Spanish bayonets, set as thick as possible and thirty feet wide. This is considered impassable by the natives, who can neither scale nor go through it. A small passage way, closely guarded, gives access to the fort. If one of the forts is attacked or threatened, notice is at once sent by telegraph to Kota Radja, and reinforcements are despatched by the railroad from the city.

Sumatra is one of the largest islands in the world, and has a population of 8,000,000. Respecting some of the tribes in the interior hardly anything is known, inasmuch as the island has been crossed by white men only two or three times. The immediate neighbors of the Achinese are the Battaks, a most interesting race of cannibals, who are quite civilized in their way, having a written language of their own. They know how to make firearms, even boring their own gun barrels. And they carve gun stocks in correct style, and are acquainted with the art of making powder. They find their own sulphur and saltpetre, using pieces of bamboo for cartridge cases and bits of coral for bullets. They are excellent agriculturists, and raise cattle. In addition they are clever gold and silver smiths, making filigree work and weaving gold thread.

The Battaks only eat prisoners of war or bad criminals. Formerly the habit of cannibalism among them was universal, and human flesh used to be sold in their country in open market, some chiefs eating it daily as a matter of liking. It is considered the greatest possible insult to a foe or punishment to a person guilty of a grievous crime to eat him. Besides, the question of economy is considered. At a least it was cheaper to slaughter six slaves at 100 guilders than to kill six buffaloes at 150 guilders. When a distinguished person died two individuals customarily went through a lot of buffooneries at the graveside, after which they were killed and laid in the excavation, the coffin being placed on top of them. Cannibalism is more or less mixed up with the religion of these people, who have their wizards and witch doctors to practice incantations.

The Battaks build houses of planks and strong beams, placing them on piles for the advantage thus given in defending

them. Many of their villages are on almost inaccessible pinnacles in the hills, favorite spots being little plateaus formed by the broadening of a mountain range. Commonly they are surrounded by palisades, with watch towers. Much art and industry is put into carving and painting of the woodwork of the houses. An outbuilding serves as a sleeping place and council house, rice, being stored in the upper part. No light is kept at night for fear of attracting ghosts, but in emergency candles of resin are used. Communal houses serve as sleeping places for the unmarried men, sometimes 100 of them together. Here are hung up the heads of slain enemies and other trophies.

Nearly all of the highest peaks in Sumatra are volcanoes, and most of these are active. In the immediate neighborhood of these mighty chimneys, which hurl out masses of ashes and stone, are the fertile lowlands, with a dense population. The destruction of 40,000 human lives by the eruption of Sunbawa in 1815, and the washing away of 16,000 people by 'tidal waves,' following the eruption of Krakatoa in 1863, are not solitary instances.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

### ROUTED BY BEES.

The Dress was not Suitable for the Encounter Which Took Place.

The Scottish Highland dress, with its kilt, in which the trousers are totally lacking, has certain advantages for a soldier, and certain disadvantages—as the Highlanders who accompanied Lord Roberts on one of his expeditions to Afghanistan once found out to their cost. Lord Rob-

erts tells the story of the occurrence in his 'Forty-one Years in India.'

As the troops were advancing, Lord Roberts was employed for a little time within an enclosure at Alambagh, when he heard great confusion, as of a panic, among the troops without on the plain. Getting on the roof, he looked out over the plain, and saw the troops flying in every direction. There was no firing, and the enemy was not in sight, but evidently something serious had happened to throw the men into such confusion.

The general mounted and rode to the scene. There he found that the enemy was not the Afghan, but a mass of infuriated bees, which seemed to penetrate everywhere, and which were especially active against the Highlanders, who were peculiarly vulnerable to their attacks.

The general promptly decided that discretion was the better part of valor in such a contest, and withdrew the command in as good order as possible to a position remote from the scene of the attack. Then he instituted an inquiry, and found that the stampede had been the result of the thoughtfulness of an officer of the 9th Lancers, who had thrust his lance into a hive of bees. The intrepid insects had instantly rushed to the assault—as they would have done if the whole British army had been present.

'There were no serious consequences,' Lord Roberts concludes; but 'the Highlanders were heard to remark on the unsuitability of their dress for an encounter with an enemy of that description.'

## Drs. Maybe and Mustbe.

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