

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1901.

STORIES OF THE LATE AMEER.

The death of the Ameer of Afghanistan has recalled many stories of the despot, of which the following are selected at random from the many that have been printed during the week.

Once on a time the Ameer was very angry with one of his pages or slave boys—great swells they are, these little fellows fagged out in splendid clothes, who flit about the court, and behave themselves very badly like most boys, black, white, brown or yellow. This was a very unruly boy, and his master ordered him out of doors, though it was a bitter Afghan night with the wind howling and the snow deep on the ground. The boy was quickly freezing to death, and the Secretary ran into Miss Hamilton's room and told her. They held a consultation, the result of which was that the Secretary was persuaded into bearding the Ameer. He begged him to award a less severe punishment and at last succeeded in assuaging the Ameer's wrath—which was probably righteous enough. But he had never heard of the headmate who never flogged a boy until he had slept. He is no procrastinator. Well, the Secretary returned to the doctor smiling. The Ameer had relented. The boy was to remain outside one hour more.

Hanging was a merciful sentence from the Ameer if half the stories told of him are true. And the light way in which this punishment was dispensed is shown in another story.

The beggar in Cabul plies his trade without any interference by the authorities. One day a patriarchal professional threw himself in the way of the Ameer on one of his afternoon journeys through his capital, and begged.

'What are you?' said the Ameer. 'A beggar,' replied the supplicant. 'But how do you get your living?' 'By alms.'

'What I do you mean to say that you do no work?' 'Never!'

'Then it is time that we were relieved of your presence.' And the Ameer nodded to the High Executioner.

Another story shows the capricious monarch inclined to mercy by the wily flattery of a courtier playing upon his vanity and his sense of humor.

A man was once condemned to have his ears sliced off (quite as a minor punishment). He had a powerful friend, however who was much attached to him. This friend begged the Ameer, in duly submissive tones to allow him to perform the operation, a favor which was granted.

However, the amateur begged the Ameer to show him what portion of each ear he wished to be removed. The Ameer accordingly touched them lightly. Whereupon the ingenious—and courageous—person proceeded (in tremulous tones, one cannot help thinking) to quote a passage in the Koran which said that anything touched by the representative of the Almighty became sacred. The despot smiled grimly and forgave them both.

Miss Hamilton, who was the Ameer's physician for years, wrote of him before his death. 'I never met any one more fond of scenery or, indeed, of anything that is beautiful, than is the Ameer. He occupies much of his spare time in gardening, and cultivates Japanese pumpkins on account of their bright colors and carrots for their foliage but for flowers, especially sweet scented ones, he has a perfect passion, and contrives to have plenty all the year round.'

It may seem strange to many that a man with his reputation for cruelty should occupy himself as much with the refinements and elegancies of life, but it is nevertheless one of his chief characteristics. Beside his love of flowers, he is very fond of singing birds, which he keeps in wonderful French cages in all of his verandas. He is very particular in the arrangement of his household. There is nothing of that slatternly untidiness, combined with lavish expenditure, in the Ameer's establishment that characterizes the residences of Indian princes. Except on state occasions, when he dresses in a sort of European

uniform, he wears a long loose coat made of some lovely pale colored French brocade or satin, lined in winter with fur—sable, stone-marten, or red foxes' feet perhaps—and in summer with the shaggy silks that come from Bokhara. Harmonizing with these, but seldom matching them, are his skull cap and handkerchief, the whole making a charming mass of color with his couch, which is draped in the most elaborate style, and is constantly being altered. In summer it is generally covered with silks and satins, and in winter with cashmere shawls, furs, &c., and has a velvet valance bordered with a massive gold fringe. I have constantly seen him throw off shawl that offended his eye because it did not harmonize with the rest, and order in another; and when he chooses his handkerchief for the day he mechanically, as it were, holds first one and then another up against his coat, and if he does not fancy the shade, that one down and takes up another, and so on until he is satisfied taking all the time as if he were hardly conscious of what he was doing.

Lady Dufferin has also borne witness to the combination of gentleness and ferocity in the Ameer. She saw him on the occasion of the celebrated conferences with her husband (then Viceroy) at Rawalpindi. He went about with his chief executioner, a gentleman in red velvet, girt with a strangling rope. 'I must tell you,' said Lady Dufferin, in one of her letters, 'one nice, gentle, little trait in the Ameer's character. He spent three hours yesterday morning arranging cut flowers in forty vases, and he expressed a wish to have large supplies sent him daily. And this is the man who cuts off heads and hangs people when at home.'

Miss Hamilton has given this picture of the Ameer's daily life when she was at his court:

There is on sort of regularity in the Ameer's household. When he is ready in the morning work begins; when he is tired work ceases; when he wishes to eat, dinner is served; when he feels inclined to sleep, the court is closed. He seldom rises be-

fore noon, but he may be astir by 8 or 9 o'clock even sooner, and then everyone is expected to be on instant attendance. The most important of officials keep a servant waiting at the court door, so that he may leap on to his horse and fly off to his master with the news the moment the Ameer awakes, for, unless there is some good excuse, he would be sure to be censured if absent when wanted. One day when I had been sitting with him I noticed by the clock that it was about my lunch time, so I got up and went out, explaining where I was going. 'Are you hungry?' the Ameer asked.

'No, I can't say I am,' I said. Had I entered into full particulars I might have added: 'But I am deadly tired.'

'Then why are you going to eat? What a strange idea' he said.

'This is my lunch hour,' I explained. 'Lunch time? Who made it your lunch time? And what has time to do with it?' he asked. 'I should have thought appetite was what had to be consulted, not time.' I tried to explain the principles on which our households in England are carried on. He was much amused. 'Ah!' he said; 'I understand now. You eat when it suits the servants. A strange idea, that. Do all English people eat when the servants bring the food, whether they are hungry or not? Do the Queen and the Prince of Wales submit to these regulations?' No explanation that I could give ever satisfied him. It was the subject of perpetual chaff every time I went to a meal.

English officials, employees, and traders who came into contact with him are full of stories of his conversation. At the time when the amount of the British subsidy was being fixed with him, it was explained that he must do this and that and the other.

'You remind me,' said the Ameer, of a Persian tale. A certain man took a piece of cloth to a tailor and said, 'Make me a morning dress out of it, and an evening dress—and, while I think of it, a working coat. The tailor did his best, and brought them all as he was told. But they were of doll's size. What more could he do with the cloth?'

The Ameer was not a great admirer of the British system of government. On one occasion a very high personage was conferring with him and said, in relation to some matter, 'That is a very grave question, and I must refer it to her Majesty's Government.' The Ameer, who did not clearly distinguish the parts of the British Constitution replied: 'When you ask me a question I am able to answer it

at once; when I ask you, you say you must first ask 700 other gentlemen. I prefer our Afghan way of doing business.'

In many respects the Ameer was the typical eastern potentate of romance—among others is his fondness for stories. In some memoirs, written by himself, he has given the following account of his literary tastes. He considered, it will be seen, that the real function even of the gettonist, who sometimes takes himself or herself, so very seriously, is to be taken as a sleeping draught:

'I do not go to sleep directly I lie down in bed, but the person who is specially appointed as my reader sits down beside my bed and reads to me from some book, as, for instance, histories, geographies and biographies of great reformers. I listen to this reading until I go to sleep, when a story teller takes his place, repeating his narratives until I awake in the morning. This is very soothing, as the constant murmur of the story teller's voice lulls my tired nerves and brain.'

In the Brevity of a Wink.

A German savant reports with the solemnity due to a statement of an ascertained scientific fact that the wink of a human eye occupies four tenths of a second in time. To the slothful man, accustomed to seize 'his forty winks' after the proper hour of awakening to a new day, this item will bring comfort. He only wastes 16 seconds of precious mortality at this reckoning. But the servant does better than compound the time larceny of the lazy. But by means of his discovery he impresses us with the brevity of time space within which the history of men, cities and peoples may be moulded.

Introduction in Milwaukee.

The teacher of an intermediate grade in the Third Ward school was 'showing off' her pupils before a number of visitors.

The spelling class was on the floor, and one small, red headed boy was given the word 'introduction.'

He paused, twisted his lips, started, and then in a faltering way spelled it correctly, and seemed rather surprised that he had done it.

'Do you know what the word means?'

'No'm.'

'What? You know what introduction means?'

'No'm.'

'Well now I'll explain it to you. Does your mother ever have any callers?'

Yes madam.

Well, now, suppose that two ladies

came to call on your mother. Your mother knows one, but does not know the other. She has never seen the lady and does not even know her name. Now, how would she become acquainted with his lady and find out her name?'

She would send me for a can of beer.

As that was the correct answer, the teacher had nothing further to say.

Bishops on the Road.

Bishop Watterson of Nebraska was once mistaken for a travelling salesman by one who met him in a railway train.

'Do you represent a big house?' asked the traveller of the bishop.

'Biggest on earth,' replied the bishop.

'What's the name of the firm?'

'Lord and Church.'

'Hum! Lord and Church! Never heard of it. Got branch houses anywhere?'

'Branch houses all over the world.' That's queer. Never heard of them. Is it boots and shoes?'

No.

Oh, dry goods, I suppose?'

Yes, they call my sermons that sometimes.

It is told of another bishop that he was mistaken for a salesman and when asked what line he represented, replied, spiritus.

Is that so? said his questioner, but my what an awful price you've run gin up to—'

How Roosevelt Receives Visitors.

In the short time that he has been in the White House, President Roosevelt has demonstrated that he has lost none of his traditional ability to receive a goodly number of callers in a limited interval of time. He can do this because he can make every caller come to the point and discuss the object of his visit without wasting a minute in unnecessary formalities. It is on record that one applicant for a position who sought to preface his appeal with a few remarks complimentary to the president was met with the terse comment, 'Never mind that. Come to the point with what you have got to say.'

President Roosevelt is quite the peer of his predecessor in his memory for names and faces, and all old friends among his callers are greeted in a frank, open-hearted manner that is cordial in the extreme.

She said you were going to kiss me, she asserted.

Quite right he averred, but you said you would be very angry, and I am too much of a gentleman to do anything objectionable.

A gentleman, she retorted, does not break his word. Then she got it.

