The Daily Morning Astorian.

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WATER IN THE DESERT.

The Massacre of the Kalmucks.

The Soudan campaign, from first to last, has been a comment on the vast value of water in the east. One of the most terific episodes ever recorded in history is the flight of the Torgote Tartars from the Russian frontiers to those of China, about a century ago. Throughout this awful journey across the pathless, waterless desert the Bashkirs and Khirghises followed on the heels of the flying Kalmucks, and the continuous trail of corpses told a fearful story of unceasing conflict and perpetual massacre. The desperate persistence of escaping hosts in pushing on was equalled by the frenzied cruelty of those who pursued them, until the scenes of the carnage and brutality that ensued were such that it seemed as "if a nation of madmen was flying before a nation of fiends." But the horrible climax was only reached at the end of their 2,000 miles of disastrous pilgrimage, when, after a loss of 400,000 of their number, the Kalmucks, mad from thirst, came in sight of the lake of Tengis. Hundreds of the pursuers and pursued had already lost their reason from their dreadful sufferings. Thousands were being borne along upon camels and horses, helplessly exhausted by two days' want of water. But as soon as the lake came in view the Bashkirs and Kalmucks alike seemed to forget their pitiless hatreds, and the vast hosts, reduced now to about two hundred thousand, rushed in a body, with frantic eagerness, to the anticipated solace. In DeQuincey's terrific pages the story is told with consummate tragic force. The Chinese Emperor, happening with a force of cavalry to be at the very spot, saw what was happening, and sent out his soldiers to protect his returning subjects. But there was time enough before the horsemen reached the scene for one of the most ferocious conflicts ever recorded against man.

In the general rush towards the saving water all discipline and command were lost—all attempts to preserve a rear guard neglected—the wild Bashkirs rode in among the incumbered people and slaughtered them by wholesale, and almost without resistance. Screams and tumultuous shouts proclaimed the progress of the massacre; but none heeded, none halted—all alike, with faces blackened by the heat and with tongues drooping from the mouth, continued with maniacal haste towards the lake. The Bashkir was affected by the same misery as the Kalmuck, and into the lake the whole vast body of enemies rushed, forgetful of all things but one almighty instinct. The absorption of their thoughts in one maddening appetite lasted for a single half hour, but in the next arose a final scene of parting vengeance. Far and wide the waters of the solitary lake were instantly dyed red with blood. Here rode a party of savage Bashkirs, hewing off heads as fast as the swathes fall before the mower's scythe; there stood unarmed Kalmucks in a death grapple with their detested foes, both up to the middle in water. Every moment the lake grew more polluted, and yet every moment fresh hosts came up to the water and rushed in, not able to resist their frantic thirst, and swallowing large draughts, visibly contaminated with slaughter. Wherever the lake was shallow enough to allow of men raising their heads above the surface there, for scores of acres, were to be seen all forms of ghastly fear, of agonizing struggle, of spasm and death, and the fear of death—revenge and the lunacy of revenge—until the martial spectators, of whom there were not a few, averted their eyes with horror, as they rode down to the lake to the rescue of the hapless fugitives.

This undoubtedly is one of the most striking instances of catastrophe arising from the absence of water in the desert ever chronicled, but who cannot recall, from works of travel, or, indeed, from history, numerous other illustrations of the same fierce peril of thirst? We ourselves can not have failed to note how, in recent campaigns in Egypt, everything hinged upon the water supply. The army moved in detachments, so as best to economize it; camps were pitched so as to utilize it to the utmost; the hours of battle were arranged in obedience to its inexorable and all-important demands. It was at the wells of Teb and of Tamai that the Arabs fought their fiercest. Our soldiers in Egypt were astonished, when tramping along the apparently hopeless desert, to see how luxuriant crops and gardens alternated with bare sand, how a mere rill of water turned the wilderness into a farmstead and charmed up to the surface of the soil all the latent magic of its fertility. In the Saharahs of the earth, whether in the eastern hemisphere or the west, water is indeed a magician, as wonderful in the suddenness and completeness of its work as any genii of lamp and ring. It has the potency of the philosopher's stone, and is striven for as the sum of all that is to be desired. Industry without it is a paralytic, a cripple. With it, it possesses a talisman that transfigures everything, makes man a giant, and blesses every work of his hand. Speaking of parts of western America, a recent writer says: "Water here is everything that is precious. Without it, the sage-brush laughs at man, and the horn of the jack-rabbit is exalted against him. With it, corn expels the weed, and the long-eared rodent is plowed out of possession. Without it, grease-wood and grophers divide the wilderness between them. With it, homesteads spring up and gather the orchards about them. Without it, the silence of the level desert is broken only by the coyote. With it, come the laughter of running brooks, the hum of busy markets and the cherry voices of the mill wheels by the stream. Without it, the world seems a dreary failure. With it, it brightens into infinite possibilities. No wonder then that men here prize it, exhausted ingenuity in obtaining it, fought about it. I wonder they do not worship it. Men have worshiped trees, wind and sun with no greater cause." Change the phrases here and there, and the passage might stand for Asia, for nothing is so striking in many parts of the east, notably Arabia and the eastern provinces of Africa, as the supreme importance of water.—*London Telegraph.*

A Political Key Note.

NEW YORK, May 16.—The *World* this morning foreshadows its campaign policy. It says: "The nation has been hurt by the degradation of an ex-president of the United States and ex-general of the army becoming a speculator, a Wall street borker; by an ex-governor of New York making a fortune out of his friends through a "blind pool and staking it in Wall street adventures; by an ex-secretary of the United States treasury plunging into the muddy waters of Wall street gambling; by seeing a United States senator, chairman of the Republican national committee, figuring as manipulator of a bankrupt corporation; by the spectacle of bank presidents betraying their trust and speculating with other people's money. These are evils from which we cannot escape, unless we change the moral tone of the community. To do this we must begin at the fountain head of corruption. There must be a change at Washington." The *Sun* is following in the same track.

Randall Continues Good Humored.

WASHINGTON, May 16.—The tariff reformers and the protectionists in the house have within the last two days commenced charging each other with the responsibility for the panic in Wall street. Opinion is therefore divided whether the defeat of the Morrison bill or the agitation of the tariff reformers can be held to account. Randall has been charged with causing the trouble by several democratic newspapers. It is claimed the passage of the bill would have created a hard squeeze in Wall street by preventing a shrinkage in railroad stocks. When asked about the matter to-day Randall smiled good humoredly, and showed no disposition to become angry. "That's all nonsense," he said, "and positively silly. I do not pay any attention to these things."

John Sherman says: "We are neither in a panic nor on the verge of it, unless my judgment is seriously at fault. I look upon the present trouble as simply the result of the overtrading in securities, that for a long time have all nearly been the football of Wall street. While there is business depression there is no real financial distress, and the resources of the country are plenty and staple. The present troubles will have no bearing on the presidential campaign. I do not think they will extend into the country, or have an influence on the political parties."

The keepers of tan games at Portland are said to have made an open offer of $500 for the death of any one who gives information to the police by which they may be arrested.

The Rule.

In church and in state
It is rule or be ruled;
In courtship and marriage
It is fool or be fooled;
In logic and law
It is nick or be nicked:
In gambling and trade
It is trick or be tricked;
In treaty and war
It is beat or be beaten;
In the struggle for life
It is eat or be eaten.

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