

Afghanistan



A Caravan in the Khyber Pass.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

AFGHANISTAN, one of the most secluded of the larger countries of Asia, has come more into world consciousness in recent months than ever before because of the visit of its king and queen to Europe. Until this occasion these monarchs had never been outside their native land, and their trip through Europe was made up of a series of amazing adventures. A journey by an American through Afghanistan would be little less amazing.

Authorities differ as to the exact origin of the Afghans, but the old theory that they are of Semitic extraction is now discredited; it seems more probable that they are merely a mixture of Turanian tribes, developed here through many centuries of raids, migrations, and tribal changes.

In physical appearance the Afghan is a sort of Turco-Iranian type, the minor tribal divisions in the east of the country showing also a mixture of Indian blood. (The name "Afghan," or "Aghwan," is of comparatively recent usage.)

The culture of the country is largely Persian; but an eager desire for learning is innate in every Afghan, and of late years not only Indian, but also British, culture and customs have begun to influence the better classes of the people.

The Afghans call their language "Pushtoo." For official matters, however, the Persian idiom is used and understood over most of the country. The Turkish and Mongolian tribes in western and central Afghanistan speak their own tongues. The ruling Amir knows Persian, some Pushtoo and Turkish.

Foreign newspapers, most of them coming from India, are most carefully read at the Amir's court, where they are translated by hired students trained in India. The Amir delights in illustrated newspapers and is himself a fairly good photographer.

Jealous of Harem.
The Afghan is notoriously jealous of his harem, and few, indeed, are the men of the outside world who have ever looked on the face of an Afghan woman of the towns. With the desert women, wives and daughters of the nomads, it is different; the Koran permits them to go unveiled. The breaking of this custom by the queen on her recent journey was deplored by many Muslims.

The Afghan works no more than is absolutely necessary to make his living. The upper classes consider it their privilege to exploit the poor, and the burden of taxation is very heavy.

As for entertainment, the people, especially the wealthy, are fond of games and of sports. Hunting, horse-racing, wrestling matches, and gymnastic games are popular. Recently, football and tennis have been adopted by the upper-class youngsters of Kabul. Raw fights, cock-fighting, and even fights between male quail, are favorite diversions, and throughout all Afghanistan dancing is indulged in and the public declamation of ballads is warmly applauded.

Every better-class Afghan owns a piano, imported from Bombay, which he plays with one finger, keeping his foot on the loud pedal constantly. When an outsider plays for them, using ten fingers at a time, they are overcome with amazement and admiration. A tale is told of one man at Kabul who sawed the legs off his grand piano, so that he might play it while sitting on the floor, Afghan fashion.

Costumes vary in different parts of the country. In the East the garments approach the Indian style, and of late years a few natives have even appeared in European dress. A decade ago the Amir introduced European uniforms and suits for himself and his whole staff of officials.

European hats and uniforms of all styles, imported in quantities from

India, are often worn in the most singular combinations.

The typical national dress of the Afghan consists of a long-tailed calico shirt, white pants, leather shoes or boots, and a tanned sheep-skin coat elaborately embroidered with yellow silk; this coat is sometimes replaced by a long toga of red cloth.

Three kinds of headgear are customary. Some wear a low, many-colored cap; others a blue or white turban, which is frequently gold-embroidered with a flap hanging down behind to protect the neck from the sun. In some provinces men wear the kullah, a colored cap that looks like a Turkish fez, which widens toward the top.

In the house and at work women wear long calico shirts, wide, colored pants like the men, and head-cloths above gold-embroidered caps. Their street dress consists of long, wide pants and a blue or black overdress, the costume being completed by a loose garment that covers the head and upper part of the body, just allowing the eyes to look through a latticed insert like a strip of mosquito bar. The feet are stuck in large red slippers.

Meager Bill of Fare.
The bill of fare of the Afghan is very simple and reflects the poverty of the country. Bread, fruits, vegetables, tea, sweet milk, sour milk, and cheese are the main foods. Rice, mutton, fowl, and sweets cooked in various ways are found on the tables of the well-to-do. The average Afghan has no particular fondness for wine or spirits.

Tobacco raised in the land is of inferior quality; the better sorts are imported from Russia, India and Egypt. The Amir Habibullah Khan always had a good private stock of Havana cigars. Both young and old people take snuff.

Tea, sweetened and unsweetened, is the favorite drink and is consumed in prodigious quantities. When you go to see an Afghan, you can hardly escape before swallowing four or five cupsful of tea; it is, therefore, no trifling gastronomic feat to pay several visits in one afternoon, the more so if the polite host (with a view of honoring the western guests) has the tea served in big Russian glasses.

The right hand is always used in eating and drinking, the left hand being considered unclean.

Dogs, though numerous and useful, are looked upon as unclean, and pious people never touch them.

Animals that go badly lame on the march or camels that get snowbound in the mountain passes are abandoned to their fate. Afghans never kill such animals, as we might do, to put them out of their misery. They believe that the lives of all living things are in the hands of Allah, and that man sins if he presumes to interfere with the supreme will. Afghans will not even kill fleas or other vermin; they merely pick them off and throw them away!

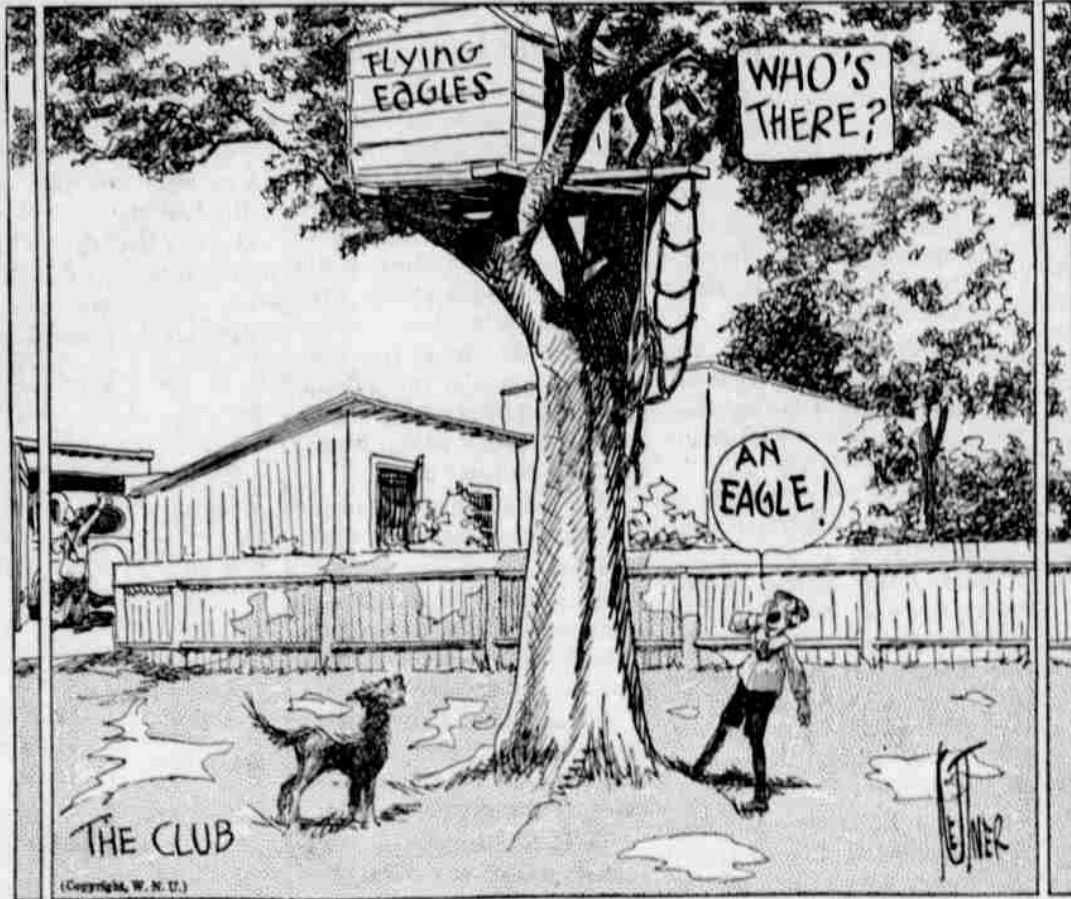
The trade of Afghanistan is moved entirely by caravans and is largely in the hands of Hindus and Tadjiks. The chief route lies through the famous Khyber pass, the great gateway from India, which has been fortified by the British government.

This pass is open every week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, except in very hot weather, when it is available to trade only on Fridays. A most rigid scrutiny is exercised by the Amir's agents on all who come and go. As soon as caravans from India enter the country, their Indian leaders are turned back and heavily-armed Afghan guides take their places.

Some of these Afghan caravans, organized with military precision, number thousands of camels and a proportionate number of guides and camel-drivers. In the morning the Khyber pass is open for caravans coming into Afghanistan, and in the afternoon for those routed in the opposite direction.

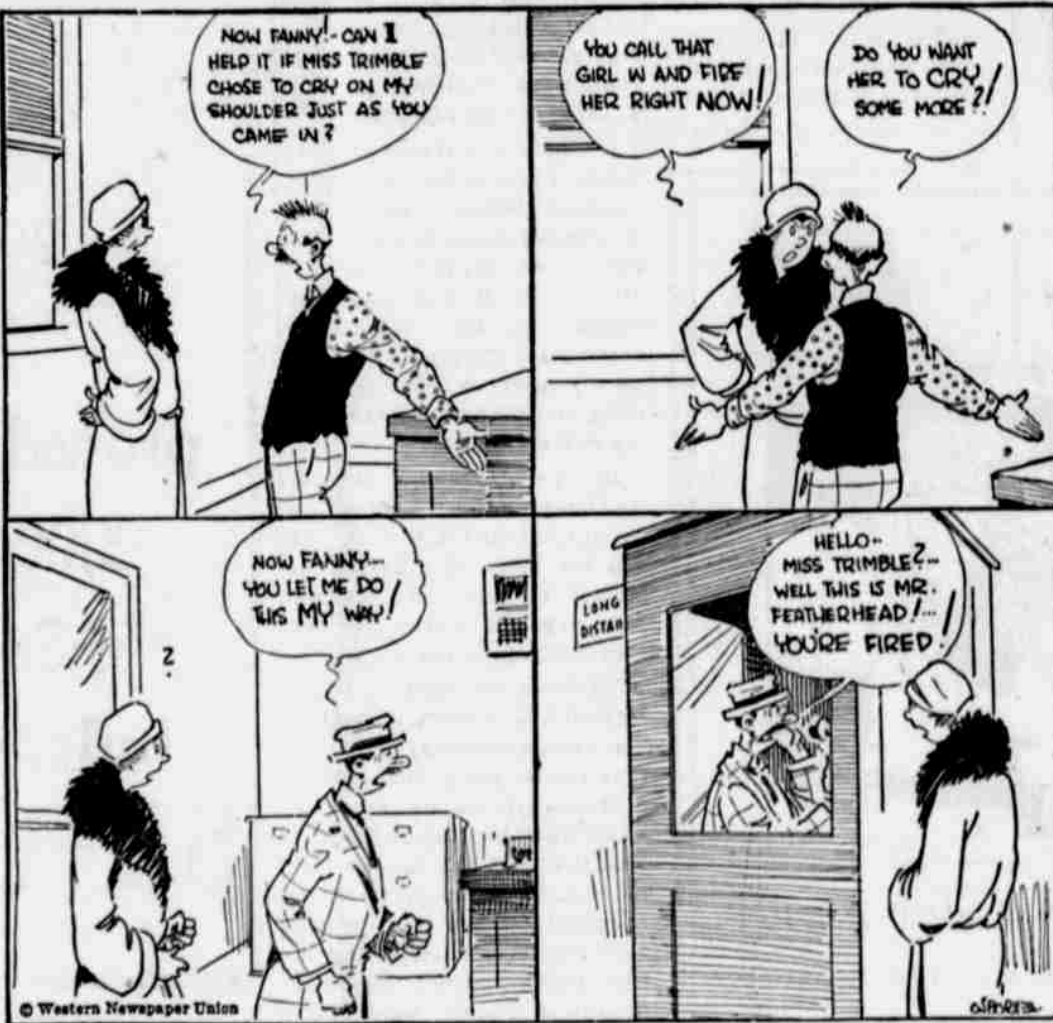
OUR COMIC SECTION

Events in the Lives of Little Men



THE FEATHERHEADS

At a Safe Distance



FINNEY OF THE FORCE

A Thing of the Past



Tweed Silk

Soft purples and rich greens can be had now in tweed silks which make the most satisfactory of summer suits. White pique is a good material for blouses.

Gathered Skirt

A lemon yellow georgette, with orange and cherry traceries in delicate blue, has a skirt that is gathered all around in quaintly mid-Victorian fashion.

Navy Blue for Evening

Very, very new and original are evening gowns of blue and white flowered chiffon. The pattern is large, the flowers being of very dark blue, and some of the frocks have the pattern outlined in crystal beads upon the waist.

Velvet Coat Modish

Sheer velvet coats in three-quarter lengths are suitable for both afternoon and evening wear.



The Aviator

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Champion is the better spark plug because it has an exclusive all-metal insulator specially treated to withstand the much higher temperatures of the modern high-compression engine. Also a new patented solid copper gasket-seal that remains absolutely gas-tight under high compression. Special analysis electrodes which assure a fixed spark-gap under all driving conditions.



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Fire Ball Caused Panic

When a fire ball fell in a field at Murtle, near Aberdeen, Scotland, where a picnic was being held, many children and adults were thrown prostrate, and panic ensued. One boy was temporarily blinded. Another bore the imprint of a fern on his thigh. On a woman's arm was a mark resembling twisted wire. Some of the children were so terrified that they injured themselves by rushing heedlessly against barbed-wire fences.

Pleading Belief

One of the most valuable qualities which the average man possesses is the belief that he is above the average.—Ottawa Citizen.

Oregon & California Directory

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