

DISCOVERY OF THE CAVE OF THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

A correspondent with the Anglo Russian Commission on the frontier of Afghanistan sends the following variant upon the story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. It seems that the cave of the Seven Sleepers, which in the Koran is located at Ephesus, is in reality in the Hirak valley, or the Afghan frontier some four miles to the south west of the Anglo-Russian camp at Chahar Samba. The version of the Koran (says the correspondent) is that seven men, firm in their faith in their own God, separated from the rest of their tribe, who had taken to other gods, and, taking refuge in a cave, were caused to sleep there, with their dog, for 309 years. The Eshans of Khwajah Altai Azizan change the scene from Ephesus to Turkestan, and tell a very different story. The King Dakianus, they say, was originally a shepherd of Shibbarghan, and tended his flock in the hills for twelve years, till one day he found a slab of stone with an inscription on it. Not being able to decipher the latter, he showed it to a moollah, who told him that it was a record of hidden treasure. Having possessed himself of the treasure and killed the moollah, Dakianus took service with the king, and after some time rose to the command of the army. He soon got the army on his side, seized the kingdom, and eventually conquered the world. When thus in supreme power, the devil appeared before Dakianus in the form of the Angel Gabriel, and tempted him by telling him that God had sent him to say that he was God of the Heavens, but that Dakianus was God of the Earth. Dakianus, who was a worshipper of the one God, refused to believe the devil, and told the latter that he was not the true Angel Gabriel. The devil then offered to prove that he was, by proposing, as a test, that if a certain fish on the top of the water went down on his approach, he was the true Gabriel, but that if it remained up he was an imposter. Accordingly, Dakianus and the devil went together to the bank of the river, and no sooner did the fish see the devil than it at once dived down. Dakianus believed the test, acknowledged the devil as the Angel Gabriel, left off the worship of the true God, and at the devil's tempting set himself up as a god on his own account. One day, however, when eating his food, Dakianus was bothered by flies, which do what he would, he could not get rid of. His servants said to themselves, "He calls himself God, and yet cannot even get rid of the flies that bother him. He is no God." And they determined to leave him. Six men went off, and on the second day fell in with a shepherd, from whom they begged bread and water. The shepherd gave them all he had, and asked them where they came from and where they were going to. They told him their story, and now they were fleeing from Dakianus and wished to hide, and the shepherd agreed to accompany them in their flight. The shepherd's dog also followed his master, and the men told him to drive the dog back, lest he should betray their whereabouts. The shepherd objected, saying the dog had been his faithful companion for years, but the others insisted, and the shepherd at last struck the dog with his stick, breaking one of its legs. The dog still followed, and the shepherd struck it again, breaking another leg, but the dog still continued to crawl after them, and the men, struck with pity, eventually took it in turns to carry it on with them. The shepherd guided them all to this very cave that he knew of, and once there they all went to sleep, and never awoke for 309 years.

In the Koran it is distinctly stated that the sleepers were seven in number, and the eighth was their dog, but either the Arabic of the Koran is beyond the Sayeds, or they prefer a story of their own. Whichever it is, there is no doubt of the realism of the latter portion of their tale, as anyone who knows the affection the shepherds here have for their great savage shaggy-coated dogs and the huge sticks that the shepherds always carry will testify. Further on in the story, however, the worthy Sayeds get more confused still, and they have it that the sleepers woke twice, once in the time of Hazrat Esa, or Christ, and again in the time of the Prophet. The story is, they say, that when these men and the shepherd awoke they felt hungry, and sent one of their number to go to the city near by, called Shahr-i-Afsoz, to buy bread. On arrival he found the place much altered, and the first baker he went to refused to accept his money. Another to whom he applied asked him where he got his money from. The man said that it was his own and from his own house. He was then told to point out his house, but could not at first, and eventually recognized it by a mulberry tree, and going in he told them to dig in a certain place, and they found, sure enough, his store, a jar full of Dakianus's coins. The then owner of the house protested and claimed the house and coins as his, and eventually both the man and the coins were taken before the King. When the King, who was a Christian, heard the man's story, and found he had been asleep for three hundred and nine years, he looked on the man as supernatural, and offered to resign the throne in his favor. The man declined, and stated that all he wished was to be allowed to return to his companions in the cave. The King thereupon accompanied him. With the King were a hawk and a dog, and a deer being started on the road was caught by these two and brought in, thus making a third animal in the party. On arrival at the cave, not only the original six friends, the Altai Azizan, and the shepherd, but the King and the dog, and the hawk and the deer, all went off to sleep, and never woke again for some seven hundred years, when they were awoke by the arrival of the *chahar yar*, or the four friends of the Prophet—that is, Omar, Osman, Abubakr, and Ali—who, repeating the Mahommedan creed, at once awoke the sleepers. The latter got up, repeated the creed, and then fell asleep again, and there they still remain. All this told me by the Sayeds in the cave, and they pointed triumphantly to the relics in proof of their story. Holding our lighted candles between the palings of the wooden screen which debars nearer approach to the sleepers, we were shown some cloths on the floor, apparently a rough common sheet with a dark-coloured fringed cloth above it, which was said to cover the sleepers. We asked if it was allowed to look

under the cloth, but that, they said, was impossible. Even they themselves, they said, know not what was there. One man had once tried to look, and was immediately struck blind, but that if we doubted, "there," pointing in the direction, "was the dog and the deer, and hawk." Holding the candles to the right we could then see indistinctly something looking like dried bodies of some animals propped against the wall. They were very small. The first, said to be the dog, was about a foot in height, and the deer a few inches higher, but it was impossible to say in such light what animals they were. The bones of the legs were visible—in fact, the dogs' legs had fallen off, which rather told against its being asleep, but the bones seemed to be covered with dry skin, and yet, on the strength of these relics, some twenty families of Sayeds are kept in comfort, and live on the contributions of pilgrims with, in addition, as much land as they require, free of any rent and taxes.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

ST. JOHN JOTTINGS.

(From our Staff Correspondent.)

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COTTON KING.

I had the pleasure this afternoon of being shown through the cotton mill of Messrs. Parks & Son, and of an interview with one of the proprietors.

The mill is running with its usual force of about three hundred hands, manufacturing, if I understood rightly, thirty six hundred weight a week.

A visit to the engine-room showed us the huge fly-wheel, twenty four feet in diameter, driven by an engine of three hundred and twenty horse-power. In the furnace room were seen seven furnaces, heating as many boilers. From there we went to the room where the cotton is baled, blown and carded, and emerges in light flakes for the roping machines, and thence to the spindles, of which there are fifteen thousand. Comparatively little is woven, but over seventy looms are weaving checked goods of a superior quality. The greater part of the cotton is worked up into thread and yarns of all kinds.

After visiting the different rooms, Mr. Parks asked what was being done in the Repeal business over in Nova Scotia. I replied that as we were not in the confidence of the government I could not tell.

"But what is the matter over there, of what do they complain?"

"Well, they think that they pay too high duties, and get too little from Ottawa."

"They cannot complain that the duty has raised the price of cotton goods, anyway, for cotton that we used to sell for fourteen cents we now sell at from nine to ten."

"How are you enabled to do that?"

"Well, after confederation we had our own markets, we could manufacture more extensively, sell cheaper, and do just as well. Your manufacturers surely cannot favor repeal, for it would ruin their business. If the Maritime Provinces were to be cut off I could not run my mill a month. I should get out of this as quickly as possible."

"But does not the competition from Ontario interfere with the manufactures of these Provinces?"

"No indeed; it is the competition from these Provinces that bothers them up there. I care not a fig for their competition. We have coal here, iron here, and can get everything that we want cheaper than they can there. It is through them that an arrangement was made among the cotton manufacturers to regulate the business, which, by the way, will be an advantage to all concerned. Capital that has been invested in cotton mills has been paying nothing, and we certainly have a right to a fair interest on our money, and one part of the community cannot suffer without all feeling it."

"The most of my trade is with the Western Provinces, I care but little for that here, it is good as far as it goes, but the great bulk of my trade is West."

"Is there any prospect of any export trade in cotton goods?"

"Well, no, I do not think there is at present. The trade of the West Indies is in the hands of the great manufacturers of England, and it is difficult to get hold of it."

"Do you think there are too many cotton manufactories now to supply the demand?"

"No, I think not, we have a beautiful country and it is growing fast, too much capital was invested, but that will soon right itself, and the prospect ahead looks hopeful."

A. M. S.

COMMERCIAL.

September finds trade matters in excellent shape, and the assurance of a very prosperous fall season strengthens as the time approaches. All the indications in that direction continue to grow brighter and more certain. It is evident that values in all lines reached bottom some weeks ago, and since then some staples have shown a marked improvement. Of course, some persons stoutly refuse to look at the situation in the hopeful light that we think that the circumstances warrant, but they are the chronic grumblers who are to be found in every community. The export and the interior trade, and the large crops, all fully justify the buoyant feeling that has been growing since nearly the commencement of the present year, and promises a continuation. Payments, as a rule, receive prompt attention.

The promoters and managers of the now proposed horse-railway have excited much admiration, and elicited generally favorable criticism by the rapidity and energy with which they have pushed the work of laying the sleepers and stringers through the beds of the streets in which it is to pass.