

## OUR TROUBLESOME NEIGHBOURS IN THE EAST

(From the Times)

Between the river Indus and the great mountain chain on its western bank lies a long belt of cultivated and fertile territory. This land forms part of our dominions, which are thus carried up to the very foot of the hills. The inhabitants of the plain are our subjects, relying upon us for protection and security. The hills are inhabited by tribes of Affghan descent, but owing only a nominal allegiance to the rulers of Affganistan. These highlanders are a brave and martial race, gaunt and hungry, lodged in almost inaccessible regions, inured to war, and trained from infancy to regard rapine and pillage as the business of life. Here, then, we have the first eternal motive which impels the inhabitants of a mountain range to prey upon the plains below. They descend from the hills, exactly like wolves, to get what they cannot find at home. Affghanistan is one of the poorest and least productive countries in the world, and its inhabitants, famished and fierce, look down upon the scene of plenty beneath with a determination to get some of the spoil for themselves. But this is not the only motive operating with the highlanders in question. They are of the same race and the same religion as those Asiatic tribes which in time past descended from those very hills to the conquest and possession of India. The traditions which tell of Affghan victories and the capture and plunder of opulent cities are not yet forgotten, and, besides this, the element of religious fanaticism has been quickened among them by a singular course of events, until it has become a consideration too important to be overlooked. About 40 years ago a half crazed Mahometan devotee settled among a hill tribe in the north-western angle of the Punjab, and proclaimed a religious war against the Sikhs. The colony founded by this adventurer was represented five years ago by the fanatics of Sitana, against whom we despatched a considerable expedition, and it exists still, with an avowed mission of expelling us from India and restoring the Mahometan rule. When we state that these fanatics never numbered above a few hundreds, and only boast at this minute to be four thousand, the reader will be disposed to smile at their pretensions; but the fact is, that this little leaven sets a whole swarm of mountaineers in a ferment. The colony or school itself is recruited from our own territories, and principally from Bengal, whence men and money are despatched with an absurd but lively faith in the pover of the mission. Now, as the highlanders are all Mussulmans, and imbued at any rate with that doctrine of their creed which proclaims war against infidels, this little band of fanatics can easily add fuel to flame, and persuade the borderers to make common cause in a holy struggle. This combination of the principles of crusaders with the pursuits of caterans constitutes, as will be easily discerned, a strong motive power; and to all this we must probably add a certain impulse from behind. In the rear of these semi-independent mountaineers are the Affghans proper, and in the rear of the Affghans now stands Russia. It is not necessary to presume that either the Russians or the Affghans are actually inciting the borderers to war, but the belief that the English have a powerful enemy already in Bokhara may have its

weight in determining the results before us. As a matter of fact, we are told that a force comprising no less than 20,000 of the best troops in India is already massed in these parts and prepared for action.

### BRIGAND CHIEFS.

A correspondent of the *Fall Mall Gazette*, who recently visited some of the Italian brigands in the prison of Salerno, gives an interesting sketch of some of the chiefs. He says.—Three deserve especial notice—namely, Nunziente d'Agotino, Antonio Fortunato, and Guiseppe Apuzzo. Nunziente d'Agotino was Captain of a band consisting of ten brigands and one woman, Chiara di Nardo, and for many years troubled the neighbourhood of Monte di Postiglione, not very far from Pastum. He is now 27 years of age, and in appearance and manners would pass for a gentleman: He has not the dark eye and dark skin so common in southern Italians, but a fresh, healthy complexion, bright brown eyes, a broad forehead, and a tawny beard and moustache; were he to be met in London the probabilities are that he would be taken for an English officer. I had a long conversation with him of the frankest character. He talked with perfect openness about brigandage; did not seem at all distressed at his capture; exposed to view with an apparent feeling of pride three places on his body where bullets had entered—one on his arm, another below the shoulder, and a third behind it—all received during his capture. As he talked he shrugged his shoulders, raised his eyebrows, and gesticulated in the easy manner of a loungeur at a cafe. How many murders or what atrocities this man had committed. I do not presume to tell. He admitted none, though he did allow that he had taken away life in self defence. His accusers say he murdered his own infant. When that charge happened to be mentioned he smiled pleasantly, and said the child had died early, which, he thought, was a good thing for the little one, since a brigand's camp is not a good kind of nursery. When this gentleman's fingers were within a quarter of an inch of one's watch-guard or thrown out in the earnestness of conversation towards one's arm or chest, it was impossible not to feel how disagreeable such proximity would have been a few miles distant in the country. It may also have occurred to him how different would have been the character of our interview had we met in the region of his former rule. As it was, the conversation was interesting to the visitor, and an agreeable change to the brigand, perhaps, considering the tedium of prison life. For he has now been in jail some fifteen months, and only awaits the final decision of the superior court of Naples before he is transported to one of the numerous prisons where convicts are confined. He is now condemned for life; and there is little prospect of any mitigation of the sentence. Before he had taken to brigandage my friend had worked in the fields as a labourer; but he soon discovered that such a life was only fit for a slave. What could he do? He wanted to become rich. There was no path open to him but brigandage, and for many years he had been successful in it, commanding his band not only with profit but with pleasure. Now that he was taken, however, and all

his companions were either captured or killed, he supposed he must submit to whatever penalty the stronger party chose to impose upon him. In his opinion it was evidently only a struggle of parties, and for the present he had got the worst of it. When, after some time, I made him a bow and bade him adieu, he returned the compliment in the manner of a man perfectly at his ease. Should we meet at some future day near Monte di Postiglione, I trust he will recollect our brief friendship and act accordingly. Antonio Fortunato is a man of an entirely different stamp. There is no pretence of chivalry about him. With his long black hair, black short beard and moustache, deep set black small eyes, thin aquiline nose, sallow complexion, and somewhat sunken cheeks, he is not particularly engaging, and yet has nothing absolutely forbidding in his countenance. He began life in the peaceful and confidential capacity of a barber, but he afterwards entered the army, and when he got into some difficulty with one of the officers of his regiment, he deserted, and took to the hills. He here formed a band of nine or ten robbers, and had led them to plunder with more or less of glory and gain for eight years, when at last he was taken. His band is now entirely destroyed, and whatever may be his real feelings on the subject, he displays little or no regret at their end. It seems absurd to feel any sympathy for any of these brigands or their chiefs, men who have committed the grossest atrocities and who would doubtless do so again had they the opportunity; but, as a matter of fact, it is impossible to converse with them without feeling a sort of compassionate interest in them. If this applies to the generality of them, it applies with especial force to Guiseppe Apuzzo, captain of a band which for some five years after 1862 infested the neighbourhood of Castellamare, Sorrento, and Amalfi. He is now about 30 years of age, and is very respectably connected. In his youth he was extravagant, rapidly spent a small fortune, and then, being a Bourbonist, took to brigandage in the cause of Francis II. There seems to be no possible doubt that this religious exmonarch has many friends among the brigands, and that he had done much to maintain and assist them. In appearance and manner at last Apuzzo is a gentleman. He has a fine face, with good forehead and particularly intelligent eyes. He seems to regard his career as a brigand as a mere political necessity, and believes that had the Bourbons returned he would have been rewarded instead of punished. He told me, with an air of polite sauvity, that he would never touch a *forestiero*, and that when on one occasion his band seized an Englishman near Sorrento, who had risen at an early hour to see the sun rise, he had the stranger liberated, and allowed nothing to be taken from him. This statement, though it sounds somewhat dubious, is, it appears, perfectly correct.

The following story is told of the battle of Chickamauga:—During the heat of the battle, an owl, alarmed at the unusual tempest of sounds, was frightened from his usual haunts. Two or three crows spied him at once, and made pursuit and a battle ensued. The contest was observed by an Irishman of the Tenth Tennessee, which was at the time hotly engaged. Pat ceased firing, dropped the breech of his gun to the ground and exclaimed in astonishment, "Moses, what country! the very birds in the air are fighting."