THE MINE SORCERER.

MALAY FAKIRS WHO WORK THE IGNORANT AND SUPERSTITIOUS.

They Are Not So Potent as They Were Some Years Ago—Ceremonies Observed by the Pawang In Invoking the Hantu, or Tutelary Spirit, of the Mine.

Miners in all countries have been noted for their superstitious beliefs as to various matters affecting their good or ill luck. Soothsayers, sorcerers, or at least lode finders, were in past ages trusted to secure the satisfactory results which are now nowadays more reasonably hoped for on the report of the mining expert and engineer. The latest survival of belief in the occult powers of the "medicine man" or sorcerer is probably to be found in the Malay peninsula, which contains the most important tin workings yet known to exist. The individual who thus guides his employers to fortune, or the reverse, is known as a pawang.

Until the practical termination of independent Malay rule throughout the major portion of the peninsula, about 19 years ago, the pawang was a recognized member of every mining staff, and recognized not only by the mine owners but by the petty chiefs, who alternately encouraged or obstructed mining enterprise.

So potent was he that he could foretell the prospects of a mine, levy fines (which went into his own pocket), direct the offering up of animal sacrifices and enforce rules respecting the workings of a mine which but for him would have been simply ridiculed by the miners. Although in many districts his pretensions are now discredited, he still lingers on, superstition with the existing generation of miners having yet a firm hold in the more remote districts.

The pawang may or may not be the hereditary successor of a predecessor. In some cases he is self made, and attains his position by a few lucky forecasts as to the value of a projected mine. In a territory where, as is sometimes said, "If you dig up the highway, you are sure to find tin," the supernaturally gifted prospector has a tolerably easy task. Not that tin is always found when a hole is sunk. But a moderate acquaintance with the usual indications is quite sufficient. Chinese of limited means do not often trouble a pawang in the initiatory stages. But when the mine—"stream tin," or tin sand, with an overburden of 10 or 20 feet earth and gravel—is fairly started, the pawang suggests that he alone knows how to keep good luck in sight. Sometimes he is politely informed that his services are not wanted, and he leaves in wrath, predicting all sorts of disaster to the unbelieving towkay or manager. Upon the whole, however, he manages to get his way.

A fine physical appearance is indispensable. When engaged in any duty, such as invoking spirits or offering sacrifices, he is allowed to assume only one of two positions—with his hands resting on his hips or with them clasped behind his back. He alone is allowed to wear a black coat in the mine. As in the case of camphor hunters in Formosa and gutta percha hunters in Malaya, he uses a peculiar vocabulary. Thus cats, elephants, tigers, buffaloes, etc., must not be mentioned by their usual designation, nor are such animals (tigers unfortunately sometimes prove unpleasant exceptions) ever allowed upon a mine. Perhaps the oddest article in the pawang's "index expurgatorius" is the lime fruit or lemon, which under no circumstances may be brought to a mine, and should the juice be thrown into the mine water dire results are dreaded. Raw cotton, glass and earthenware or an unsheathed spear or kris are equally anathema, all the articles mentioned being offensive to the hantu or spirits which haunt the mine.

Assuming that the pawang is engaged by a mine owner at a fee varying from £15 to £30, his first business is to erect a platform or altar, constructed of a special kind of wood. The four branches, which serve as supports, have the bark peeled off for about 4½ feet from the ground to where the twigs begin. The leaves on the latter are not removed. A square platform, measuring 15 inches each way, of peeled sticks is fixed to these supports at about three feet from the ground. A foot above this comes a railing round three sides of the platform, while a railed ladder with four rungs reaches from the open side of the platform to the ground. Fringes of cocoanut ornament the railing, and the whole construction is bound together with creepers, rattan, however, being forbidden. Upon it offerings are laid, and the pawang invokes the hantu or tutelary spirit of the mine to bless it with good fortune. A bag of tin sand from the first washing is the fee paid for this service.

Sometimes a cheaper kind of altar is made by placing in the ground a single peeled stick with its upper end split in four, upon which is placed the little platform above described. The next process is to hang an ancha, or square frame, about 18 inches each way in the smelting house just under the eaves of the roof. This serves as an interior altar, upon which the miners place their offerings to the hantu. The accurate hanging up of the ancha is a matter of special care.

These preliminaries accomplished, the mine is considered sure of luck.—Pall Mall Gazette.

Under the Monroe Doctrine.

Should European vessels land their forces and interfere in the affairs of Brazil, there is no escape from the conclusion that such act would constitute a cause of offense to the United States government. Under the light of the Monroe doctrine the administration can construe such acts as nothing less than an offense. If Europe can without let or hindrance land troops in Brazil and menace the security of that republic, Europe can do likewise in every American republic.—Minneapolis Tribune.

TRIAL BY ORDEAL.

Remarkable Story From India About Catching a Postal Thief.

The narrator of the following story some years ago had charge of a postal division on the western coast, parts of which had seldom been visited by a European officer. The people were for the most part simple country folk and very superstitious. One [illegible] the narrator received information that a considerable sum of money, the greater part of the contents of the mail from a head to a suboffice, had been stolen on the road. The whole affair was wrapped in mystery.

The only clew the police had been able to obtain was that one runner, whom we shall call Rama, had since the theft paid off certain debts in the village which had long pressed upon him, but there were no other suspicious circumstances, and the man had 10 years' good service. As a last resource it was determined to resort to trial by ordeal and for this purpose an aged Brahman, who was supposed to possess occult powers and to be in daily communion with the gods, was consulted and readily undertook to discover the thief. All the runners—a goodly array of sturdy Mahratta peasants—were summoned to the office, and under the guidance of a cheyla, or disciple, of the old Brahman we all proceeded to a small deserted temple of Mahadeo, situated at some distance from the village.

It was a desolate spot and bore an evil reputation. The temple, owing to some act of desecration in the past, had been abandoned and was almost buried among weeds and tangled brushwood.

The hour selected was about 6 p. m., and the long twilight shadows gave the place a weird, uncanny look. The old Brahman was awaiting us, and as we approached appeared to be busy muttering incantations. The runners all seemed to be more or less under the spell of the hour, but the look of real fright in Rama's face was quite distinct. The Brahman, having finished his incantations, rose and addressing the men said:

"You are about to face the gods. To the innocent the trial will be nothing, but to the guilty much. In the temple a magic wand has been placed on the altar. Each of you must go in by turns, take up the wand and turn round three times, repeating the name of Mahadeo. The wand will stick to the hand of the guilty one." By this time it was nearly dark. I glanced in through the door of the temple. A solitary oil buttee threw a fitful light on the altar, on which an ordinary bamboo stick about two feet long reposed among grains of uncooked rice and nut limes, the whole sprinkled with red powder.

A curtain was drawn across the door, and the men entered one at a time. As each one appeared the Brahman seized his hands and raised them to his forehead, and then allowed them to pass on and join his fellows. Coming to Rama, he went through the same pantomime, but instead of allowing him to pass on bade him stand aside. When the last man had gone through the ordeal the Brahman turned to Rama and said quietly:

"Tell the sahib how you stole the money."

"To my utter amazement," continues the writer, "Rama fell on his knees, confessed that he was the thief, and offered to show where he had hidden the balance of the money. He had succeeded in opening the mail bag without seriously disturbing the seals. The postmaster had not really examined them and so their having been manipulated had escaped notice. Needless to say, the Brahman was rewarded and poor Rama was sent to repent at leisure in the district jail."

Now the natural question is: "How was it done?" Very simply. The temple, the lonely glen, the uncanny hour, the incantations, all were merely accessories to appeal to the superstitions of the ignorant peasants. The "magic wand" was thickly smeared with strongly scented sandalwood oil. Rama's guilty conscience prevented him from touching it, as he firmly believed the wand would stick to his hands, and his of course was the only hand that did not smell of oil.—Times of India.

Overdressed For His Part.

A justice of the peace, who exercised the functions of that office in a portion of the state where such officials are permitted great latitude, had before him a suspicious character arraigned upon a charge of vagrancy.

The prisoner, who was quite well dressed, secured the services of a lawyer in court to defend him. The man pleaded not guilty, and the lawyer in concluding his remarks said:

"What, your honor, that man a vagrant? Oh, no! I insist upon his discharge. Why, see the good clothes he is wearing!"

"Yes, I see them," replied the justice, "and in consequence of their excellent condition I shall discharge him on the charge of vagrancy and bind him over for simple larceny."—New York Herald.

Uses For Rats.

Of all living things rats seem to be among the most repulsive, and even when dead what can be their use? But even they are the subjects of production in the industrial arts. The fur is valuable and finds a ready sale. The skins make a superior glove—the gant de rat—and are especially used for the thumbs of kid gloves, because the skin of the rat is strong and elastic. The thigh bones were formerly valued as toothpicks for clubs, but are now out of fashion, while the tendons and bones are boiled up to make the gelatin wrappers for bonbons.—North American Review.

A Battered Legend.

A hotel in Switzerland bore on one of its walls the time honored inscription, "Hospes, salve!" ("Welcome, stranger!") After rebuilding the legend had to be restored, but the painter, who must have had some experience as a traveler made a very slight alteration in one of the words, and it came to read, "Hospes, solve!" ("Pay, stranger!") — San Francisco Argonaut.

ELECTIONS IN CORSICA.

The Loss of a Life or Two Apparently Not of Much Account.

The elections for the council general were going on all over the island of Corsica. The canton of Soccia comprises several villages, among others Guagno, noted for its famous mineral springs and also for the turbulence of its people. The elections took place in each village, and on the morrow the presidents of the several bureaus were to meet at Soccia for the formal declaration of the poll. In consequence of certain disorders that had already occurred, the mayor of Soccia issued an edict to the effect that none of the inhabitants of Guagno was to enter the village that day.

The inhabitants of Guagno chose to ignore this order, and 60 of them, all armed, and all angry that their candidate had been defeated, marched upon Soccia, headed by their mayor. Two gendarmes—not armed—had been placed at the entrance of the village and warned the advancing troops that they were to come no farther. The mayor of Guagno cried "Fire!" There was a general volley from his followers, and the two gendarmes fell dead. "They both bore excellent characters. One of them had been 24 years in the service, had been proposed for the military medal and leaves a wife and three children."

Such was the first account in the daily paper of Bastia. It occupied about seven inches of one column. The next day the editor had had time to reflect (or he, too, may possibly have had a significant warning), for in an article three inches long the account was somewhat qualified, and there was this important emendation, "It seems we were not correct in stating that it was the mayor of Guagno who gave the order to fire upon the gendarmes."

The third day there were just two lines, "In consequence of the unfortunate affair at Soccia it is probable that the mayor of Guagno will send in his resignation." That was all. I took in the newspaper regularly for a week, for I was curious to see how the affair would end, but there was nothing more—apparently no inquiry, no prosecution of the offenders.—Contemporary Review.

The Tower of Silence.

The Parsees will not burn or bury their dead, because they consider a dead body impure, and they will not suffer themselves to defile any of the elements. They therefore expose their corpses to vultures. One sees nothing but the quiet, white robed procession (white is mourning among the Parsees) following the bier to the Tower of Silence. At the entrance they look their last on the dead, and the corpse bearers—a caste of such—carry it within the precincts and lay it down, to be finally disposed of by the vultures which crowd the tower.

Meanwhile, and for three days after, the priests say constant prayers for the departed, for his soul is supposed not to leave the world till the fourth day after death. On the fourth day there is the Uthanna ceremony, when large sums of money are given away in memory of the departed. The liturgy in use is a series of funeral sermons by Zoroaster.

Of superstitions the Parsees have had more than they retain. Connected with burial is the popular conception as to the efficacy of a dog's gaze after death. Dogs are sacred and supposed to guide the souls of the dead to heaven and to ward off evil spirits; hence it is customary to lead a dog into the chamber of death, that he may look at the corpse before it is carried to the tower.—Nineteenth Century.

Eccentricities In Palaces.

The King of Siam, who, according to late reports, has had a palace constructed which he can submerge in the sea at will and so live under water whenever he chooses, is not the only monarch who has indulged in eccentricities of this sort.

For instance, history has preserved the memory of the ice palace built by the Russian Empress Anne, who punished several of her dainty courtiers by compelling them to pass the night in this great chamber of state, where they were almost frozen to death.

The Czar Paul, ancestor of the present Emperor of Russia, constructed a room formed entirely of huge mirrors, where he spent hours walking to and fro in full uniform—a singular taste for the ugliest man in Russia.

One of the native princes of Java cooled his palace by making a stream fall in a cascade over the gateway, and the Indian despot Tippo Sahib placed beside his dinner table a life size figure of a tiger devouring an English officer, the roar of the beast and the shrieks of the victim being imitated by hidden machinery.—Harper's Young People.

Triple Pillar Saw Frame.

Among the recent mechanical constructions of note is a triple pillar saw frame, conveniently designed to occupy a space not much wider than an ordinary vertical log frame. In carrying out this plan the cross girder, which carries the saw frame and the crank shaft bearings, is in one piece, the whole being supported on three turned pillars, on which by means of screws connected by suitable gearing they are raised and lowered together. In order to limit the distance between the pillars as much as possible, the connecting rod is attached to the saw frame that is farthest from the crank shaft. There is a bell crank and flywheel at each end of the crank shaft, which enable the machine to work steadily at high speeds without excessive vibration.—New York Sun.

One For the Turk.

One of the stories that drifted out of the plaisance is of the mosque where prayers were said daily at regular intervals for the natives. A pious woman passing accosted a young Oriental and chatted with him, finishing with a nod toward his prayer house and the remark, "I hope you go to church every Sunday, like a Christian." "No," was the quick reply, "I go every day, like a Turk"—which must score one for the heathen.—New York Times.

A BALLAD OF LIGHT HOUSEKEEPING.

'Tis a subtly sweet suggestive phrase,
But the simple soul who is lured thereby
Will make a sorrow for many days.
In secret oft will he moan and cry
And vote the thing a tremendous lie,
For it means, this phrase that sounds so fair,
A world of trouble and toil and care
And a wild distracting wish to go
Away from it soon and anywhere.
I speak of the things whereof I know.

It means all little transparent ways
To hide away from the common eye
The fact that your bread and butter stays
In your desk; that you bake and boil and fry
In a single dish. It means to try
To hang your garments, the best you wear,
In a folding bed, that last despair
Of honest souls; and, bitterest blow,
It means a kitchenу parlor air.
I speak of the things whereof I know.

It means to shrink 'neath the stern amaze
Of the lordly butcher's and baker's eye,
Apologizing in meek dispraise
For your modest wants. To rave or sigh
Over the pangs of the boughten pie.
'Tis to pray a strong, heav'n reaching prayer
For the meal a man pronounces "square,"
And to be once more in life below
Free from that peace destroying snare.
I speak of the things whereof I know.

ENVOY.

Ye who have 'tempted this life to share,
Pause ere ye enter the tiger's lair;
Consider the truth I fain would show.
For with hand on heart I firmly swear
I speak of the things whereof I know.

—Carlotta Perry.

A Mother's Way.

When the Rev. Horace Bushnell was a boy, he was very desirous of knowing something about music. No one in the family could teach him, however, and his mother, with that divine patience and insight which belong to mothers in general, found that if the lad was to have his wish at all it must be through her. She obtained a book and soon taught him all she knew—the scale, the keynote and how to find it, and the time of the notes.

This was only "book learning," however, and the question was to adapt it to the use of the voice. Little Horace wanted to sing by note, and that his mother could not teach him. She could sing by ear, however, and the two hit upon a species of reverse process. The mother sang familiar tunes, and the boy watched the notes, observing how the intervals and time ran along, and, as he expressed it, "soon began almost to sing with us."

And from singing airs they knew into notes that bore no meaning they finally learned to sing airs they did not know out of similar notation. The method had been unlocked, and further progress was easy. The mother's heart had found out the way.—Youth's Companion.

A Lost Bride.

An absentminded groom in Rome, Ga., forgot that he was to be married the other day, and when the time for the ceremony arrived he was not present. An examination showed that he had overslept himself. He apologized, but the father of the bride refused to accept him as a son-in-law, and the engagement was broken.—Detroit Free Press.

London has a new organization, whose name indicates fully its purpose. It is called the National Society For the Checking of Abuses of Public Advertising.

It is said that two-thirds of all the cotton duck produced in the world is made within 20 miles of Baltimore.

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