

The Garo's Oath:

A STRANGE TALE OF THE ASSAM HILLS.

The author writes: "This remarkable story is based on an incident which is absolutely true. It was related to me by a brother-officer in whose district the affair happened, and who investigated the facts in his official capacity."

Of all the curious races of mankind by whom the vast Empire of India is peopled there are few more strange or interesting than the Garos of Assam. Living in the seclusion of their isolated villages, scattered here and there amid the low, densely-wooded hills which bear their name, these strange, semi-savage tribes of demon-worshippers have retained to this day many of their primitive traits and superstitions. Amongst their extraordinary traditions, and one that forms the subject of this tale, is the belief that if a Garo tells a falsehood he will meet with a sudden and violent death. So strictly do they adhere to this belief that a Garo, if required to take an oath, will solemnly say, "May I be killed by a wild elephant if I do not speak the truth!"

Many years ago there lived in one of the lonely villages above mentioned a Garo maiden remarkable for her beauty and fascination. Michi, for so this village belle was named, was the daughter of a man of no importance, and poor without, even for a Garo; but this in no way detracted from the number of her admirers, which included half the bachelor population of the village.

Amongst them was her cousin Pembu, a good-looking, stalwart youth, who had long loved her with all the fervor of his wild and ardent nature. The girl returned his love as ungrudgingly as it was bestowed, for, added to his comely face and manly bearing, Pembu was possessed of many other virtues calculated to win a savage maiden's heart. He could shoot an arrow farther and with truer aim than any youth or veteran in the village, and was, moreover, a bold and successful hunter, while in running, jumping, wrestling and such like feats of strength there was none to equal him.

But Pembu had a rival, and a very dangerous one—no less a person than the headman's son, Kishito, the youth in question, was one of the so-called "enlightened" type of Garo, an educated savage, despising his less-cultured brethren and holding in contempt the ancient traditions of his race.

This man had long cherished a secret affection for the pretty Michi, and had once been rash enough to declare his passion, an indiscretion which cost him many hours of bodily pain and mental torture, for the girl had complained to her lover, who, mad with fury, had sought out the offender and administered so severe a chastisement that the wretched youth was laid up for a month. Now Kishito, being of poor physique and of a cowardly disposition, dared not retaliate in kind, but none the less resented the treatment he had received, and swore openly to be avenged. Though lacking physical strength and pluck, he was shrewd and cunning to a degree, and it was not long before he had devised a scheme which promised to give him the revenge he thirsted for, and also the possession of the girl. Among the few friends he had in the village was a mean-spirited creature like himself, a man who was also ill-disposed towards Pembu. Finding this individual ready and willing to aid him in his evil project, Kishito resolved to carry it out at once.

A few paces from the hut where Pembu lived was one occupied by a money-lender, an old and feeble man, who lived alone. By reason of the extortionate rate of interest he demanded he was not a very popular person in the village.

One morning, shortly after Kishito and his accommodating friend had arranged the little scheme, a villager going to the old usurer's hut to reclaim some jewelry he had pledged, was horrified to find him lying dead inside. At once he raised an outcry, and soon the whole village had collected. Amongst the first to arrive upon the scene was the headman, who, by virtue of his position, was legally bound to hold an investigation. He ascertained that the old man had been stabbed through the heart, the motive for the crime being evidently plunder, for not a single coin or ornament was to be found inside the hut.

The murderer had left no clue of any kind behind him, and but for a suggestion made by the astute Kishito it is unlikely that any great effort would have been made to trace him. The wily youth, who had evinced the keenest interest in the proceedings, now suggested that the huts of all persons living in the immediate vicinity should be searched. This suggestion was no sooner made than it was carried out, and, commencing with the nearest, the searchers reached Pembu's hut, where, carefully concealed inside the thatching of the roof, was found a blood-stained knife and two silver anklets. A deathlike silence greeted this discovery, for Pembu was beloved by all, and none could believe him guilty of so cruel and dastardly an act as the murder of the old usurer.

But appearances were certainly against him. The knife was undoubtedly his, the one he always used, made for him by his friend the village smith; the anklets, too, were recognized by two women present, who had pledged them with the money-lender a week or two before.

It was a terrible position for the unfortunate youth. With such convincing evidence of his guilt before their eyes, how was it possible for his friends to believe him innocent of the crime? It is true he had missed his knife some days before, but, unfortunately, had made no mention of the fact; and to do so now, he felt, was useless. Still, his was not a nature to be easily cast down, and looking at the sea of faces pressing round him, with sorrow and sympathy depicted

slowly down, its dying embers casting a faint and ghost-like light upon the scene. Save for the deep breathing of the sleeping men, there was not a sound to break the silence of the night, and the lonely prisoner, yielding to the influence of his surroundings, at last dropped off to sleep.

It was a curious sight, this group of unarmed, helpless men sleeping peacefully in that dense, trackless forest, all unconscious of the dangers that encompassed them—all but one, who, preferring a safer spot, had selected a small, grass-grown mound some six feet high.

The night went by, and the first grey light of dawn was showing faintly through the trees when suddenly a succession of sharp, clear notes, as of a trumpet sounding the alarm, broke the deathlike stillness. The sleepers started to their feet and listened. Again that dreaded sound was heard, now much nearer. Then, ere the last note of it had ceased, a huge elephant emerged into the open. With trunk raised and ears pricked forward he paused awhile, trying to locate the spot when proceeded the scent he had detected. Then, with a savage scream of rage he charged down upon the helpless group. But they had anticipated the attack and, before the furious beast could span the distance that divided them, had already gained the shelter of the trees. There was no one left but Pembu and the trembling wretch upon the mound. The former, lying bound and helpless within the shadow of the tree, remained unnoticed. Not so the other, who, paralyzed with fear, made no attempt to escape. Perched on the summit of the mound he was a conspicuous object, even in that uncertain light, and the infuriated elephant sighted him at once. In a stride or two it had reached the mound, and, seizing the wretched man with its trunk, dashed him to the ground, placing one huge foot upon his chest, and fairly tore him to pieces, limb by limb! His comrades, watching the awful spectacle from their retreat, were powerless to assist him, and it was not until the savage beast had completed its ghastly work and moved away that they ventured to come out.

The sight they then beheld was one to fill the stoutest heart with terror, for there at their feet lay all that was left of their late comrade—a shapeless mass of flesh and broken bones. They gazed at the terrible spectacle in speechless horror; then one of them pointed to the prisoner, still lying where they had left him, but unharmed! The others read his meaning in the gesture, and wondered, too, why he of all others had been spared—the murderer and violator of the sacred oath, who had so well merited the vengeance of the dreaded beast.

Kishito wondered, too, but for many different reasons—reasons which filled him with dire alarm, despite his vaunted scepticism and contempt for the traditions of his race. The incident had wrought an extraordinary change in the man. He was no longer mindful of the prisoner, but, starting at every rattle of a leaf, looked anxiously around, as if expecting the elephant to return and claim another victim. His companions could not but notice this sudden change, but attributed it to the tragic death of his friend. Collecting their belongings they unfasted Pembu from the tree and all proceeded on their way.

By midday they arrived at Tura and took the prisoner to the court. Kishito, who by this time had regained his ordinary composure, was now directed to state his case. Refusing with scorn to take the Garo oath, he was sworn in the ordinary way and proceeded with his tale. He told his story well until he reached the incident in the clearing, but here he faltered and seemed unable to proceed. Looking helplessly around the court, his eye fell on the prisoner gazing at him accusingly; in an instant the expression of his face changed, and, apparently obeying a sudden impulse, he threw himself at the magistrate's feet and begged to be forgiven. Then rising to his knees he placed his hands together, and in this humble posture related the true story of the crime.

He told how he and his friend had planned the murder, and how the latter had stabbed the old man, while he slept, with Pembu's knife, which they had previously secured. They had concealed it and the anklets in the roof of Pembu's hut, and then falsely accused him of the murder. They would have sworn away his life but for the vengeance of the gods, which had so promptly overtaken his accomplice. Kishito then went on to describe the terrible scene he had witnessed in the forest, and how the recollection of it had haunted him, and ultimately forced him to confess the share he had taken in the crime. Trembling, he paused awhile; then, as if impelled by some feeling he was powerless to resist, he repeated the ancient oath he had just so scornfully rejected.

Pembu and his sweetheart were duly wedded, while the villainous Kishito was hanged for the murder of the old money-lender. And in that little village amid the forest-clad hills the Garo's oath is held more sacred than ever.—The Wide World Magazine.

How Orphans Are Prepared For Farm Homes.

Pennsylvania Parentless Boys and Girls Made Self-Supporting and Sent Into the World Trained to Lives of Usefulness.

By I. WINSLOW FEGLEY.

Where an average crop of 350 bushels of wheat, 50 bushels of rye, 300 bushels of oats, 600 bushels of corn, 500 bushels of potatoes, 50 bushels of grapes, 125 bushels of turnips, 25 bushels of beets, 100 bushels of string beans, 50 tons of hay, 1000 head of cabbage, 2000 stalks of celery, 2500 bushels of apples, 50 bushels of cherries and lots of other fruits is raised annually, there is ample evidence that orphan children can run a farm.

At Bethany Orphans' Home the larger boys and girls of the 135 inmates run a farm of about ninety acres successfully. From the fruits of their toil they live and at the same time receive that physical exercise which has kept them the healthiest boys and girls in the State. A broad assertion, but for the last twenty-five years there has been practically no illness at this place, and the slight attacks were such as whooping cough or heavy colds. Epidemics are kept away by that watchword "cleanliness" and by the exercise they get on the farm in the open air.

Their farming experience starts early. The little boys begin with gardening when they are six, when they learn how to grow flowers in a garden of their own. When they get a year older and a little stronger they accompany an elder boy—who has charge of one of the farm teams—to one of the fields, and they begin to pick stones, learning that to raise good crops the ground on the surface at least must be free of stones.

Another group at this stage begin to learn the ins and outs of the poultry business. Here they are allowed to construct miniature poultry plants of their own, and the profits they derive they are allowed to keep. They have poultry houses of every description imaginable. Some of them are not larger than a large dry goods store, others are from six to eight feet in diameter with a height of ten feet. Usually two of the boys club together and form a partnership and raise chickens and pigeons. It is surprising what success they make out of it. They pay close attention to their stock, and by the end of the year they are always on the credit side of the ledger account. This teaches them to be careful business poultrymen, and not a few have gone from Womelsdorf, Pa., and have become practical poultry farmers, and have not been afraid nor ashamed to acknowledge that they obtained the first principles at Bethany Orphan Home Farm.

Where 135 orphans are at home there is always plenty of work, and the space required for their welfare has to be commodious. The trustees of the institution lately decided that it was necessary to erect another building for the welfare of the little folk, from the ages of five to eight years. This means work for the little farmer boys. In the first place, it gave them a way to clear a large tract of land they had long contemplated clearing. The land was lately forest land and was full of roots and stumps. They, however, saw the practical end of the matter and figured if they cleared the land of the stumps everything removed from the tract would be useful. They went to work with a vim. One of the elder boys was put in charge of several younger boys with a stump puller. "Yep," he cried, and all hands were at the stump-puller, carrying it over a big stump. Another command, and dozens of hands were outstretched and, with another yell of "Yep!" the levers came down slowly but surely ascended. In this manner those industrious farmer boys reared a large tract of land, the stumps they hauled off and formed a stump fence. They say this fence will last twenty-five years, and then the stumps can still be used for fuel purposes. The stones they dug out of this tract were used for the foundation walls of the new cottage to be used by the little ones. Finally the reward was apparent; they would have a clear piece of land upon which they could raise good crops; and how delighted those boys were that their farm was increased by at least four five acres! In the same manner they cut down the giant trees standing on the other side of the present buildings upon which the new building is to be erected. The larger logs they hauled to the sawmill, or they made beams out of them to be used in the construction of the new building.

They are fearless little toilers, and never seem to get tired of their work. They love gardening, and the large garden they keep in a systematic order, where each one of the boys has a certain duty assigned. One does this and the other something else. Three little boys are known as chicken minders. They do nothing except watch that none of the chickens get into the garden. Another trio are the weedeaters, and they keep the weeds out of the respective parts of the garden assigned to them. Another group does the planting. Another attends to the drainage and watering of the plants. Others do the hoeing, and the girls come in to do the gathering of the vegetables and prepare them ready to be put on the table.

The farm buildings are complete in every respect. The barn is large and commodious, and is equipped with all the improvements. The interior is handily arranged. The boys know how to care for their cattle, and they keep them nice and clean. The horses are always well curried.

What does such an army of little busybodies do in winter time? Lots of work, to be sure! They have their own school on the premises, where they have school ten months of the year. The school day is divided into two periods. One of those is granted to them as a recess period, and the smaller boys devote this period to

A Legend of Ireland.

By BOLTON HALL.

There was a King in Billigland in the old days that had three sons, and fine lusty fellows they were. Now, one day the three fell disputing as to which of them should be king when their father was dead; and from words they came to blows, till they were all black and blue.

After they had hammered the fight out of one another, they agreed to leave the matter to their father. But the old man had seen before how referees fare at the baseball games, and he would not decide; so they fell to fighting again till they had hammered some sense into one another, and then agreed that each was to go his way for three years and learn what business he liked, and when they should return the father was to have the Kingdom.

After three years they met again, and the father said to the youngest, "What have you learned?" And he said, "I've learned to be a farmer."

"Let's see you raise two crops for your brothers," said the King. So he raised two crops with half the labor and twice the produce as any man's in Ireland.

"Very good," said the King. "You have the difference for your reward;" he said to the second, "I've learned to be a carpenter." "Let's see you make two houses for your brothers," said the King. So he made two houses half as dear and twice as good as any man's in Ireland.

"Very good," said the King. "You have the difference for your reward; but if your brother is as good as you two, I can't decide after all."

"And what have you learned," he said to the oldest, "I've learned to be a handkerchiever." "Let's see you make two handkerchiefs for your brothers," said the King.

So he made two loaves, and he raised the rents twice as much and made the plots half as big as any man's in Ireland.

"Faith," said the old man, "now I don't have to decide at all, for you're the King already."—Puck.

With the Funny Fellow.

The Proper Filling.

To the girl who does not longer care in loneliness to linger.
Why even a "filled" gold ring looks fair.
He filled with her third finger.
—Nixon Waterman, in Sunday Magazine.

Patience — "Are they close friends?"
Patience — "I should say so! They live in the same flat!"—Yonkers Statesman.

Offered Funeral Expenses.
He—"I told your father I couldn't live without you!"
She—"And what did he say?"
He—"Offered to pay my funeral expenses."—Ally Sloper's.

No Handicap.
"What are your prospects, young man?" asked the cautious father.
"Fine," replied the confident youth.
"I am neither an English duke nor a French count."—Cleveland Press.

The Only Way.
"How do you like your hair cut?" asked the barber, who was anxious to please.
"Off," replied the customer, who was a man of few words.—Cleveland Press.

Expected It.
Mrs. Jimmy—"Did you see my sun-burst yesterday?"
Mrs. Kidder—"No, but I knew he would if he ate any more of that turkey and mince pie."—Cleveland Leader.

Easily Satisfied.
"Notoriety is dearer than anything else to that man."
"Yes. He's all puffed up for an hour if he happens to see his name in the city directory."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Incomprehensible.
Willie—"What does mommer mean by Bernard Shaw and Henry James, pop?"
His Father—"Hush, my son! You're not old enough to understand such things."—Puck.

Rustic Wit.
Pedestrian—"Can I get through the gate, my man?"
Countryman—"I dare say you could, I saw a load of hay go through this morning."—Moonshine.

Spreading Herself.
"Bridget, we are to have company for dinner to-morrow, and I do hope you'll spread yourself!"
"Never fear, ma'am; and if I can find a hoop skirt I'll put that on, too!" Yonkers Statesman.

Possibilities.
"It is a pity they can't equip detective departments with automobiles."
"What good would that do?"
"Then they could run people down easily."—Baltimore American.

No, Indeed.
Church—"Do you suppose they'll ever have women on the police force?"
Gotham—"Never; couldn't possibly get 'em to appear as plain-clothes women!"—Yonkers Statesman.

Not Lovelorn.
"Johnny, do you love your teacher?"
"Naw."
"Why, I'm astonished."
"Aw, what's the use? She's turned down six boys."—Courier-Journal.

His Bad Memory.
Mr. Crimsonbeak—"When I was a boy in school I was always forgetting my letters."
Mrs. Crimsonbeak—"And now you are a married man, you're always forgetting mine!"—Yonkers Statesman.

His Experience.
"After all," said the philosopher, "the real joy of a thing is in the anticipation of it."
"Well," replied Henpeck, "if there's any joy in matrimony that must be it."—Catholic Standard and Times.

Football Experience.
"Education enables a man to make his way in the world."
"Yes," answered the man who always sneezed, "there is no doubt that a little football experience helps out on a crowded street car."—Washington Star.

Pleasure by Authority.
Hostess—"Goodbye, darling. So sorry nurse has come for you. I hope you and Monty have enjoyed yourselves!"
Darling—"Thank you. Mother says we've enjoyed ourselves very much."—Punch.

Married Flings.
"I had been kneeling at my feet before I ever met you," she remarked as a sort of climax to their spat.
"Yes?" he responded, with the suggestion of a sneer. "Hard luck for me all those shoe clerks were married or mere kids, wasn't it?"
Of course, this spoiled the climax, for the end was not yet.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Cat's Tail in Court.
The question whether the tip of a chinchilla Persian cat's tail was single or cut again occupied Mr. Justice Kennedy and a special jury all day yesterday.

Mrs. Isobel Wilson, owner of the cat, states that the tail was singed by accident while the animal was romping before the fire. She sues to recover damages for alleged slander and libel from Mr. T. B. Mason, of Bradford, a judge at cat shows. The allegations are in connection with the Southern Counties Cat Club Show at Bath, where Mr. Mason disfigured the cat, and the Northern Counties Cat Club Show at Manchester last January. The cat which caused the trouble is known as " Evelyn of Arundale," and the indorsement was attached to her. "Disfigured—cut tail!"—London Daily Mail.

London's Health.
During the year 1905, compared with the decennial average, 1891-1900, there has been a saving of 19,584 lives, representing a gain to the community of 757,016 years of life capital. There has been a continued fall in the London death rate, which is now nearly thirty per cent. lower than at the coming into operation of the Public Health (London) act, 1891.

Out of a population of 4,684,794 the actual number of deaths during the year was 70,442, or 15.1 per 1000. In 1841-50 the rate was 24.3, and in 1891 17.1.

Both marriage and birth rates of London are decreasing, touching the lowest on record in 1905.

The death rate from consumption is one-half that of forty years ago. A vacancy census taken on the night of February 17 revealed 13,698 men and 312 women sleeping in the streets, in staircases or under arches. On the same night 23,690 persons slept in common lodging houses and shelters.

It is exceptional to find children who use a tooth brush. Among 1000 children were found two who did.

Newspapers are the healthiest of boy workers, barbers' boys the most unhealthy.—From the Medical Officer's Report.

Life History of the Eel.
The mystery which has so long shrouded certain important facts in the life history of the eel are being gradually cleared up. It is now some time since a group of small-headed transparent and ribbon-shaped fish, named by naturalists Leptocephalia, were identified as the young of various species of eel. Among these Italian naturalists recognized the one named Leptocephalus brevirostris as the young of the common eel. It was further determined that eels spawn in the Mediterranean in comparatively deep and warm water. The most recent information as to the spawning place of the eel is to be found in the Journal of the Marine Biological Association, Dr. Schmidt and Peter-Sen of the International Fisheries Investigation Association have found large quantities of "Leptocephali" and young eels, in the depths of the Atlantic. They conclude that eels spawn in deep and relatively warm water northwest and west of Scotland.

Free Alcohol Stimulates Agriculture.
Although the United States is a vastly larger country than Germany, we raised a potato crop in 1905 of only 269,741,294 bushels, as compared with the potato crop of 1,775,579,973 bushels which Germany raised. These bushels were of sixty pounds each.

The explanation of so immense a production of potatoes by Germany is found in the fact that the free distillation of alcohol for use in the arts has been a powerful stimulus to farm industry. Farming in some districts of the empire has been made possible only because of the ability of the people to produce cheap alcohol, and many farmers owe their very existence to their distilleries.

Not only has free alcohol been a stimulus to agriculture, but it has been of incalculable value in many lines of commercial development, and has added greatly in raising Germany to her present industrial station.—Boston Globe.

The Bosnian Roasting Jack.
A curious variety of the old-fashioned roasting jack is used by the peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina when roasting sheep whole, as on the occasion of a wedding ceremony. One often sees, near a running stream, a long pole having one end revolving freely in a socketed peg, while the other, overhanging the water, is equipped with miniature paddles. This is the Bosnian roasting jack. The sheep to be cooked is impaled on the log, a fire is lit underneath, and while the current spins the paddles and the pole merrily round the big joint is cooked literally to a turn.—Wide World Magazine.