

# KARENS OF BURMA



Bre Girls of the Burma Highlands.

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

ALTHOUGH the majority of the Burmese have a well-developed civilization, there are hill tribes in Burma whose members are strikingly primitive. Most of them are classed as Red or White Karens.

In the old days the Red Karen never went out without a sword and gun, and in addition had a small sheaf of spears or rather javelins. Now, the guns remain at home, only to be used when there is a death in the village. They are fired then to scare away the disembodied spirit.

All the dead are looked upon as evil-minded or, at all events, malevolent characters, best driven away.

The Karen spears have vanished so completely that the hunter after curious has difficulty in getting them. They are of a very distinctive character, sharpened on one side only, like a knife-blade, with a male bamboo shaft that had a spike at the butt, so that the owner could stick it in the ground when he was hoeing his fields or cutting his crops, and be ready for any stranger.

But the Red Karen remains a heavy drinker. Early prospectors for teak forests used to say that a genuine Karen-ill never went abroad without taking a bamboo on his back, from which a tube led to his mouth. Apparently they could carry their liquor then, inside and out.

In addition to their liking for spirits from the still, the Red Karens are devotees of the spirits of the air, the flood and the fell. Latterly a few have become nominal Buddhists, and some have even founded monasteries and built pagodas, but none of them give up their belief in nats, to use the Burmese word for spirits.

**Ornaments of Brass.**

The Karen's idea of ornamentation seems to Western eyes to make for anything but comfort. They wear great coils of brass wire and brass rods on their arms and legs. The length of these coils seems only limited by the space available or the ability of the household to pay for the rod, for brass is very expensive.

The total weight carried by the average woman is 50 or 60 pounds, and here and there some manage as much as 70 or even 80.

Burdened with this weight, they hoe the fields, carry water for domestic use, and go long distances to village markets to sell liquor. They brew a great deal of very fiery stuff and sell it to most of their neighbors, carrying it in flasks made of woven strips of bamboo laced over with wood-oil, and dispensed in goblets of the same manufacture. The cups are of most generous size. They hold about half a pint, and those not trained to it usually become noisy after one.

The brass-collar fashion does not seem to affect the women's health. There are plenty of active old crones among them and families of eight or ten are quite common. The only noticeable effect is that the women speak as if some one had them tight around the neck. They wear colored scarves twisted into the hair, jumper coats which slip over the head, have a fashionable V-shaped front and back, and very short sleeves, with occasionally a little embroidery.

The skirts are like kilts, stopping above the knee and striped red and blue. The necklaces are of the usual kind, with corallians and other stones, coins and beads.

The men are not nearly so picturesque. Near main trade routes they wear the baggy trousers and short coats of the Shans. The remote villagers wear shorts and cane leggings. An attempt at decoration is seen in the anklets made of shirt buttons and kaleik seeds (the white seeds of a herbaceous plant), and every man carries a powder-and-shot case strapped to his belt. These are of wickerwork, neatly embroidered with brass bosses and raised scrollwork, and they glitter with wood-oil varnish.

**One Clan of Good Farmers.**

The Kekawngdu clan occupies a tract covering, perhaps, 150 square miles. They are zealous agriculturists. Every available nook of the valley is terraced for irrigation, which is carried out with great skill and eye for contour. They grow a good deal of cotton and make their clothes of it. The average height of their country is between 3,000 and 4,000 feet, with peaks rising to 5,000. Their roads are well aligned, fairly broad, and much used, and are considered very good by those who have traveled over hill-roads, though a bicycle would have to be carried for three miles in every four.

Pack bullocks are kept and caravans go down to Toungoo on the railway. On the whole, they may be said to be the best of the hill races in this neighborhood, and they have great game drives with trained dogs.

Some authorities have doubts as to whether they are Karens and want to place them in the Mon-khmer group. Their language, however, has many similarities with Taungthu.

Some distance to the north of the Padaung country—with the small Red Karen State of Nawngpatal Intervening—is the Bre tract.

Their country is of a different character from that of the Padaungs. It is a much more emphatic jumble of hills, very high and steep, with exceedingly narrow valleys in between.

The dress of the Bre men is more distinctive than that of the Padaungs. They wear a pair of very short trousers, striped red and white, and tied at the waist with a bit of string. A blanket of coarse cotton serves for a coat, and their long black hair is tied into a knot, just over the right temple, and the rest, apparently never combed, hangs over the shoulders and face. On their legs they wear cotton circlets below the knee, with brass rings to keep the coils apart. Many of them also wear necklets or torques of brass.

The dress of the women varies for the three groups, but the differences are not great. The chief garment is a gaberline called thindang by the Burmese, perhaps more like a poncho, since it is slipped over the head, and has either rudimentary sleeves or none at all. They also wear a short kirtle which reaches within a hand's breadth of the knee, but some dispense with this. It is red and blue in stripes.

**Decorations of the Bre People.**

The women in the northern section of the Bre tract have brass tubing coiled round the leg from the ankle to the knee, and from above the knee to half way up the thigh. The southern Bre women have to content themselves with cotton coils instead of brass. Both wear large brass hooks or torques round the neck, and enormous ear-plugs are fixed through the lobes of the ears.

They have no head-dress, and their hair, which is unkempt as that of the men, is tied in a knot at the back of the head. They marry very early—the girls at about thirteen, the youths at fifteen years of age.

It is an easy matter to determine whether or not a man has a wife. The unmarried wear pebble necklaces which have been handed down from father to son for generations. Some of them are valued at 50 rupees, which is wealth for these hills.

Besides these, large brass rings encircle the man's neck, hang from the ears, and are inserted in the cotton garters on his legs. The northern Bre bachelor adds to these ornaments a twisted bamboo band round the head, studded with mother-of-pearl shirt-buttons or small red and green beads, as a sort of setting to the shards of large green beetles.

All this finery goes to the wife when he gets one, and as a husband he is reduced to a pair of trousers, a blanket, and some unornamented black rings around his legs. A rudely carved wooden comb sometimes remains fixed in his top-knot as an ornament, not for use.

Both sexes stain their teeth black, using for the purpose the leaves of a tree which the Bre call Thupo, mixed with lime-juice.

The rest of the Karen tribesmen of these hills form much smaller groups, but they all have their distinctive patois, due, no doubt, to the detestably rugged character of the country.

## OREGON STATE NEWS OF GENERAL INTEREST

### Principal Events of the Week Assembled for Information of Our Readers.

Celebration of completion of Portland's \$2,500,000 seawall project was featured recently.

Baker will soon have the tallest building between Portland and Salt Lake, ten stories.

The preliminary survey of the proposed railroad from Butte Falls to Klamath Falls has been started.

There will be a very small crop of loganberries this year, according to Senator Sam Brown of Marion county.

More than 1200 delegates and visitors to the 56th annual session of the Oregon state grange met at Medford.

The loop road from Klamath Falls to Medford by way of Crater Lake park has been opened to automobile traffic.

The National League of District Postmasters of Oregon held their annual convention in Portland June 17 and 18.

Charged with passing counterfeit silver dollars, four men were arrested in Redmond and are in the Deschutes county jail.

The gasoline schooner Azalea, a two-masted craft used in halibut fishing, went ashore about 15 miles north of Newport.

Because of the high per capita cost of maintenance, the trustees of Philomath college voted to suspend college for a year.

Olive drab will replace blue when members of the uniform division of the Portland police bureau appear in their new outfits.

Edgar Rogers, 55, and William Van Dusen, 73, both of Multnomah county, escaped from the Oregon state hospital farm at Salem.

George Temple Thompson, pioneer blacksmith at The Dalles, is dead at the age of 78 years, after a residence in The Dalles of 50 years.

A large herd of elk have made their appearance on Hunters Head, six miles below Gold Beach. There are more than 30 in the herd.

The city council of Medford has passed an ordinance prohibiting the locating of any more used car lots within the inner fire limits.

Joseph Gifford, 79, a Talent farmer, is in a hospital in a critical condition from injuries received when he was attacked by a maddened bull.

Petitions are in circulation at Salem to compel the city council to refer to the people the granting of a bus franchise to the Southern Pacific.

Old-time scenes of miners stepping up to the "bar" were re-enacted at Canyon City when the three-day Whiskey Gulch celebration opened.

Because his companion shot when ordered to do so, James Boyd, 30, is in a Bend hospital with a bullet wound in his neck. He may recover.

Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks and the Ashland chamber of commerce will cooperate with Ashland Lithians in putting over a big Fourth of July celebration.

Dick Reed, ex-University of Oregon football star, was charged with hog stealing in a secret indictment returned by the Klamath county grand jury.

Commencement exercises of the Dayton school have been indefinitely postponed because Professor D. Lynn Cubser came down with the smallpox last Friday.

Although his throat was pierced by a bullet, James Boyd, 30, of Bend, confined to a local hospital as the result of an accidental shooting, will recover.

The annual auction of wool at Shaniko marked the disposal of 709,000 pounds. Many years ago as much as 4,000,000 pounds of wool was sold annually at Shaniko.

The county commissioners and the county engineers of Washington will hold their annual joint meeting at Walla Walla during the week of the Pendleton Round-Up.

The Oregon state grange, in annual convention at Myrtle Point, went on record as endorsing action of the Marion county Pomona master in enjoining payment of \$5 a day additional expense money voted for legislators at the last session.

Pursued through Eugene's business section after he had cashed a worthless check, Cecil Dunham, 26, San Francisco, was captured by Julian Ash, manager, and G. A. Hillbrand, employe of the store which he victimized.

Ivan Pearson, chief of the McMinnville fire department, was elected president of the Oregon State Fire-chiefs' association at one of the final meetings of the tenth annual conference which closed with a clam chowder breakfast at Tillamook.

**THE MARKETS**  
Portland

Wheat—Big Bend bluestem, hard white, \$1.24; soft white, western white, \$1.06; hard winter, northern spring, western red, \$1.03.

Hay—Alfalfa, \$21 per ton; valley timothy, \$22; eastern Oregon timothy, \$24@25; clover, \$20; oats, \$23; oats and vetch, \$23.

Butterfat—43@44c.

Eggs—Ranch, 29@32c.

Cattle—Steers, good, \$11.50@12.50.

Hogs—Good to choice, \$10@12.50.

Lambs—Good to choice, \$13@13.75.

Opponents of the Eugene school district budget, which exceeded the 6 per cent limitation, won a sweeping victory when the budget was rejected by a vote of 889 to 510.

Secretary of Interior Wilbur, en route west to attend the interstate oil conference at Colorado Springs, will visit reclamation projects in eastern Oregon, it is announced.

Albany school district No. 5 has sold a \$50,000 serial bond issue at a premium of \$325. The bonds bear 5 per cent interest and are retired serially over a period of 20 years.

Log towing operations have been very successfully carried on since the first of the year between Newport and Siletz bay. Up to date 89 rafts have been delivered without a mishap.

Roseburg has waived its claim for the first annual turkey show to be staged by the Douglas County Turkey Breeders' association. It will be held at Oakland in December or January.

Oregon's candidate for a four years' scholarship in the Thomas A. Edison laboratories at Orange, N. J., was selected at a meeting of the committee appointed to judge qualifications at Salem.

Bend's new sheep bridge cost a total of \$161.23, but the city will have to pay only \$150, in accordance with an agreement whereby Mayor Gove will pay the excess out of his own pocket.

Real singing frogs will be added to the resources of Deschutes county. The first installment of breeding stock has been brought to Bend from Canyon City as a gift from District Game Warden Hazelaine.

Announcement is made that 36 stores in Coos, western Douglas and Curry counties have joined the United Purity Stores, an organization of grocery store owners formed for the purpose of group buying.

A new-born seal, that drinks milk out of a nipple and rubber tube and is of an unusual soft pearl color with silvery gray spots, and soft, deep fur instead of hair, is attracting a great deal of attention at Seaside.

Fire losses in Oregon, exclusive of Portland, for May aggregated \$229,833, according to a report prepared by Clara A. Lee, state fire marshal. There were 92 fires reported during the month. Thirty-eight fires were of incendiary origin.

Construction on the new \$4,000,000 sawmill and logging layout of the Edward Hines Western Pine company in and near Burns is well ahead of schedule and should be completed by December 1, according to F. W. Pettibone, company manager for Oregon and Mississippi.

One hundred and eleven business men and residents of Tillamook have signed a petition to relieve Night Officer George Robinson of sweeping downtown streets early in the morning, so that he may devote his time to check the petty thievery that is sweeping the city.

From every section of Jackson county along the foothill and mountain stream settlements come complaints of ranchers to local game wardens that deer are eating garden and grain crops. Even residents of Ashland complain that deer come down from the game refuge and destroy gardens.

Boyd and Verner Heim, 14, were hunting ground hogs near Redmond. One of the little animals was chased into a metal pipe. Verner was to fire when Boyd gave the order. "Shoot," ordered Boyd while peering into the pipe, attempting to locate the marplot. The bullet struck him just below the right jaw.

Ted Roy, "the singing blacksmith of Pilot Rock," was married recently to Miss Barbara Edmunds of Pendleton. The marriage took place on the Roy lawn at Pilot Rock among the "Hills of Home," one of his popular singing numbers. Roy is a graduate of Oregon state college and Miss Edmunds of the University of Oregon.

Portland celebrated the inauguration of its new 61 1/4-hour passenger train schedules to Chicago. Approximately 12,000 people turned out at the North Bank station during the day to inspect the crack new Empire Builder of the Great Northern.

The expenditure of \$45,000,000 by the secretary of interior to protect and develop the Umatilla rapids in the Columbia river for reclamation and navigation purposes, was asked in a bill introduced in congress by Representative Butler of Oregon.

**FLASH THE LEAD DOG**  
By GEORGE MARSH

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### CHAPTER XIII—Continued

If this was so—if this man was the father he sought, there was a mystery behind it, for Pierre Lacroix would never have spent the summer on the Carcajou with these men, while his son mourned him at Hungry House. What was behind it all?

Then Gaspard's dark face knotted with pain. Could he be hurt—so wounded that he was helpless—unable to travel? But Nipissing assured Gaspard that this stranger was actively working around the camp.

Thus ran Gaspard's thoughts as they traveled through the small spruce of the low ridge to a point commanding the river. Nipissing, in the lead, suddenly stopped and beckoned with his mitten. Joining him, Gaspard followed with eager eyes the arm which pointed. On the opposite shore, high above the river ice, stood a schooner, blocked up by heavy spruce logs where it had been warped up from the river by yond the reach of the spring freshets. Some distance upstream, rose the white roof and the snow-banked log walls of the traders' camp.

"Ah-hah!" murmured the halfbreed. "There will be few men there now," said Nipissing.

"How many?" asked the other in Cree.

"Three—four."

"Any dogs?" asked Gaspard.

"No, they are away on the trap lines."

"Ah-hah!" And the eyes of the halfbreed glittered as he swiftly made his plans.

That night, through the murk under a thick sky, three shapes crossed the Carcajou above the camp and cut back from the shore. Approaching from the rear, three hooded figures stopped in the scrub, a hundred yards from where two yellow sneers lit the wall of gloom. Then one of the men left the others and faded into the murk. Shortly, Gaspard strained against the log walls of the cabin, against a window. Slowly he moved his head until he gained a partial view of the interior.

His father! Was he to see the loved face of the man for whom he had come so far? The heart of the youth shook him with its beating. His breath tortured his lungs. Was he in there—Pierre Lacroix—or was it all a grim joke—this tale of Nipissing's?

To his straining ears came voices and laughter. He moved his head farther, and looked.

In a chair fashioned from spruce saplings, sat a hulk of a man with a red beard. Across a slab table, on which stood a bottle and glasses, a swart-faced halfbreed studied a hand of cards through close-set, evil eyes.

Instinctively the one who watched through the frosted window, gripped the gun in his right hand, while his left mitten found the horn handle of his knife. Those men there, who sat at their cards, drinking, would pay to Gaspard Lacroix! Pay for the father they had taken from him. There, where they sat, he could wipe them out, now, with but two crooks of his finger.

But—was his father there? Presently Gaspard's eyes widened, breathing checked, as another joined the table—but it was not the man he sought.

The man he sought was a servant—a prisoner. He would not sit with the others. The cabin seemed to have one room only, but there was a loft above the large room, for Gaspard saw the ladder leading to the opening in the door. He moved to the opposite side of the window where the sheetrock stove would not obstruct his view.

Then his eyes were drawn to the top round of the ladder. A moccasined foot was thrust from the open trap door and rested on the round. Then a peeled spruce stick passed the foot on the top round—a short spruce stick followed by . . . the stump-of—a leg!

Breathless, the one flattened against the log wall in the freezing air, watched the body of the one descending the ladder, sliding, lowered hand under hand. Reaching the floor, the tall figure of the cripple turned, and the light from a lantern lit the bold features of Pierre Lacroix.

"Father! . . . Father!" With a sob Gaspard Lacroix watched the tall figure limp from sight.

Then a wave of grief and rage swept the one outside the window. Stepping back, steel clicked on steel as he threw the rifle to his shoulder and covered the chest of the big man, who sat, ten feet from flaming death. For a space, the steel tube in the murk menaced the unsuspecting "Red" Macbeth, as reason fought with hate for mastery of the emotions of the half-crazed youth. Then, slowly, the gun was lowered and the watcher by the window faded into the darkness.

Shortly Brock was seized by a pair of arms like steel cables. Holding Brock in a bear hug, Gaspard poured out his story.

"He sees here! He sees here! I saw heem!" cried the overjoyed boy. "He was hurt! He could not travel! So deo do not watch heem!"

In turn, Brock hugged Gaspard, in his delight at the news. "Your father! At last! Old partner, put it there! Golly, that's great!"

Then Gaspard stiffened. "You know 'at dese peopl' do to heem? Dey tak 'off hees leg! On hees face ees a

beeg scar! My fader!" And the chest of the son of Pierre Lacroix rose in a deep sob.

That night, at their hiding place back in the timber, three men sat long in a council of war.

### CHAPTER XIV

#### The Vengeance of Gaspard Lacroix

The night following, in the blackness of the scrub behind the cabin of "Red" Macbeth, two men waited beside a dog team. That the dogs might not betray their masters, each was gagged with hide. A half-hour before, a third man had left the two who now waited impatiently for his coming, as they watched the yellow glow of the windows of the cabin. At last, the absent one returned.

"Any trouble, Gaspard?" asked Brock. "You've been away hours."

"Ah-hah! Little trouble! all right now!"

"What was it?"

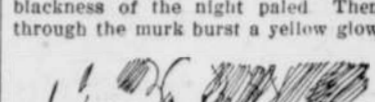
"I meet some one."

"Too bad! What shall we do?"

"He weel not tell—now."

The grim significance of the answer closed Brock's mouth. He understood. Then, leaving Brock with the dogs, Gaspard and the Cree disappeared in the murk. With Flash's collar in his mittened hand, while he soothed the dog who resented the strapping of his jaws with rawhide, Brock strained anxious eyes toward the river shore. At last he saw it.

Gradually, beyond the cabin, the blackness of the night paled. Then, through the murk burst a yellow glow,



"The Boat Go—the Shack Go!" Rapped the Frenchman in Cree. "Where Are Your Dogs?"

throwing into relief the dark hulk of the schooner, as red flames licked up over its bilges. The free-traders' boat was afloat!

Shortly there rose a cry in the night, outside the cabin. "Iskutew! Fire!" And Joe Nipissing burst wild-eyed into the shack.

"Iskutew! De boat burn!" he cried to the startled Macbeth and the gray-faced men who reached for coats and moccasins.

Running to the door, the red-bearded leader stared in dismay at his blazing schooner. Then the three rushed out to the shore.

Turning at a sound, the excited Joe Nipissing saw a tall figure slide down the ladder, open the door of the great box stove, and seizing a half-burned stick, throw it on the bedding of a bunk. Lunging like a flash on the speechless boy, the steel fingers of Pierre Lacroix closed on his throat.

"The boat go—the shack go!" rapped the Frenchman in Cree. "Where are your dogs?"

But the choking Cree could not explain.

"You understand?" fiercely demanded the other. "We'll load your sled with grub and blankets and make for Hungry House! Quick!" And Lacroix pushed the protesting Nipissing through the door, then turned back into the already burning room for blankets and food. Then to his startled ears came a familiar voice from the door.

"Father!" And Gaspard had the man he loved in his arms.

For a space, oblivious of the licking flames slowly filling the room with smoke, father and son gripped each other in a fierce embrace. Then, recovering his senses, Gaspard turned with: "The dogs! call Brock! Quick!"

"Brock and I are here with the team," Gaspard explained to the puzzled man who stared at his son in wonderment.

Then the Cree burst into the room, followed by Brock, who wrung the hand of the lost Lacroix. The shack, now, was burning in earnest. Slipping on capote and mittens, and carrying his rifle and some blankets, Pierre Lacroix followed his rescuers to the waiting sled.

"Marche! Flash!" called Brock to the lead-dog, and they headed up the river shore.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Changeable**

Most of us live in fear of being thought changeable. We act as though we were baseball umpires and didn't dare to change our minds even after a bad decision. The sensible program is to change your mind as often as you get new facts enough to justify it.—Grove Patterson, in the Mobile Register.

When musing on companions gone we doubly feel ourselves alone.—Scott



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