

HARA-KIRI, JAPANESE RITE

Suicide's Sword Becomes Valuable Heirloom.

IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY

Exhorts the Spirits of His Ancestors to Witness How He Upholds the Family Dignity—Means Taken to Avenge Insult—Suicide's Head Is Severed From the Body.

To the Japanese suicide is the most dignified and honorable of all violent deaths. Where revenge is impossible it is the only means of restoring honor. Elaborate preparations are made for committing hara-kiri. The chamber in which the ceremony is to take place is hung with yellow silk or crepe, the sunlight carefully excluded, the only illumination allowed being that furnished by the everlasting light burning in front of the family god, whose pedestal is placed at a distance of about two feet from the northern wall of the chamber.

A foot high platform about three feet long by two feet broad is placed in preparation in the center of the room, covered in white crepe, and the kahanna (ordinary sword) of the master of the household is laid unsheathed upon the platform, its point wrapped in a yellow lily. On each corner of this platform is placed a small saucer filled with scented oil in which a wick is burning. The family and friends of the noble who is to commit suicide enter, led by the priest, the latter bearing in his hands a full blooming lotus flower, which he deposits across the sword lying upon the platform, and the spectators take seats round the room.

Finally the nobleman enters, dressed in pure white garments, with yellow covered scarf encircling his body, and carrying in his hand a little saucer in which burns a wick lighted previously from the everlasting light which is kept burning in front of the family god. Behind him comes his eldest son, if over five years of age; if not his nearest relative, carrying upon a platter made of sandal wood the wakizashi, a dagger like weapon, nine and a half inches long and obliquely cut on the left side. The blade of this lancet looking weapon is wrapped in yellow crepe, a lotus flower being placed upon its hilt.

The sword generally is a heirloom of the family and is considered the most valuable article in its possession. It is the instrument with which hara-kiri is always committed. The person to commit the act kneels upon the platform with his face toward the north and the wakizashi placed before him. The priest takes the lotus flower from the Japanese sword and cuts the leaves in pieces, strewing the same over the kneeling man. After blessing him in this manner the lights in the corner saucers are blown out by the priest and the light carried by the suicide is extinguished by his son or nearest relative. The time for the final act has come.

The nobleman, after announcing in a solemn voice the insult offered to him by his enemy, invokes the spirits of his ancestors to see in what manner he upholds the family honor entrusted to him at his birth. He rises upon his left knee, takes hold of the wakizashi with his left hand, lifts up his white robe with his right hand, wrapping the end of the yellow sash around his left wrist, and deliberately inserts the dagger like knife above the right hip bone. At the moment he inserts the knife his next kin takes the kahanna (ordinary sword) and with a swift blow severs the head of the suicide from the trunk.

Wireless Not a New Thing.
The idea that wireless telegraphy has originated and grown up during recent years is a popular fallacy. It was nearly a hundred years ago that the possibilities of aerial telegraphy were seen by scientists. In the early half of the last century men of science were busy with experiments by which they hoped to prove that messages could be conveyed from one place to another without the use of wires.

In those days there seemed to be two ways which seemed to show how this might be accomplished. One was known as "induction," or the property an electric impulse has of transferring itself from one place to another. The other is "conduction," by which the conductive properties of the earth and water are turned to account for conveying electric forces. It was not until the end of the century that a third method, known as the radiation of the electro-magnetic waves through space, was discovered, and it is this method which Marconi has successfully developed.

The existence of these electro-magnetic waves has been known only since 1888, and the discovery forms a fascinating page in the history of scientific romances.

A Mountain of Iron.

A mountain which is said to be the most remarkable in the world is situated in the state of Durango, Mexico. It certainly has a claim to this reputation, for it is two thousand feet high, about three-quarters of a mile in thickness at the base and is almost solid iron. Naturally, it has been the dream of iron manufacturers ever since its discovery to lease the mountain and so work it. But this the government has refused to let them do till quite recently, when a contract was signed between it and some New York capitalists for the operation and development of the mountain on a partnership basis. The ore obtained from this mountain is said to yield about eighty-seven per cent pure iron.

RUSSIAN BUREAUCRACY.

Genuine Russian Worse Off Than His Fellow Subjects.

That mischievous distinction between various races subject to the czar was, Russian patriots now affirm, manifest even to the most obtuse. But what most foreigners failed to perceive was that the genuine Russian was even worse off than his fellow subject of Jewish, Armenian, Polish or Finnish extraction. Indeed, the orthodox elements of the population were treated as a conquered race, ever hostile, ever dangerous. And they were accordingly shackled and kept under the ministry of the interior, which was often called the "ministry of war against natives." This is how Russians now describe their own condition in the past:

They had no voice in governing the country, no right to tax themselves, no claim to control or to criticize the administration, no authority to audit the state accounts, no right to remonstrate against measures fraught with ruin to the masses, nor permission to worship God as their consciences dictated. Liberty of public meetings, liberty of the press, of speech, of religious thought displayed in worship, was absolutely suppressed. "With us," writes Vyazemski, "everything ends in a prohibition or a command. When shall we be forbidden to be slaves and ordered to be reputable men?"

And the consequence was that enterprise in trade, originally in thought, imagination in literature, sincerity in religion and self-reliance in everyday life were often atrophied and sometimes wholly destroyed. Legislation was a straitjacket woven by the privileged few for the purpose of crippling the inarticulate millions.

But even these laws were made only to be broken. There was hardly a pretense of applying them for the benefit of the people. Violated when invoked against the privileged, social layers, they were stretched, twisted and intensified when employed to scourge the masses. Russian law says: "No one shall be deprived of the rights of his status, nor shall any person be curtailed otherwise than by a tribunal as punishment for a crime." Yet since Prince Svyatopolk-Mirski has become minister numbers of men, women and youths have been brought back from exile or liberated from prisons, among them lawyers, physicians, students, officers, workmen, peasants and sixty strikers of age, who were deprived of their rights and liberties without trial, without charge, without crime, without appeal.



Major-General Iijichi.

Who, on behalf of the Japanese, arranged with General Stoessel's representative of the terms of the surrender of Port Arthur.

Simple Barometers.

Country people have a great contempt for those who cannot tell what the weather is going to be till they have looked at their expensive barometers or seen the weather indications in the morning paper. They have so many simple ways of finding out what they wish to know about the weather and are so accustomed to doing this that they make the observations almost technically. Ask one of them how to do this and he will give you a long list of simple weather gauges. For instance, if you are a smoker, look at your cigar tip. If it burns with a clear, red glow the day will be fine, but if it has a charred end that refuses to burn brightly take out your umbrella. If a slipper cracks it is sure to be fine; if it is silent it will be damp. In damp weather newspapers are easily torn, gloves contract and are difficult to put on, matches will not light easily, silk hats become dull, awning cords are tight, boot laces snap and a score of inanimate things tell to the initiated that there is rain to come.

No Tips For English Guards.

The guards of the London, Tilbury and Southern Railway have received orders to refuse in future to accept tips from passengers. The position has been thrust upon the guards by the efforts of certain well-meaning philanthropists. The London-Tilbury trains between 8 and 8 o'clock in the evening are generally overcrowded, and it often happens that twenty or thirty people travel in the guard's brake. It has become customary on these occasions for some one to pass around the hat for the benefit of the guard. Complaints have reached headquarters from time and the guards have been warned, but have pleaded their inability to prevent the collections undertaken on their behalf. The new order has occasioned deep dissatisfaction, as the collections have come to be regarded by the men as a recognized part of their salaries.—London Express.

SAILING SHIP CAPTAINS

Nearly All of Them Have Dislikes for Land Lubbers.

ARE UNWELCOME GUESTS

Difficult for Them to Secure Passage—One Must Furnish Certificate of Good Character and Be Willing to Pay Handsomely For the Privilege—Rules to Observe.

Nearly every one has at some time or other been seized with the desire to go to sea on a sailing ship. The wish comes on often in the summer vacation, when the so called "sea birds" flit by the beaches and stretches of country shore. Oftener than not, the passion fades out of mind, but there are still enough people who hang to the notion, to cause captains of sailing craft a good deal of trouble. The fact is, most of them have a suppressed horror of "land lubbers" in general, and the fact that they may have occasionally carried passengers who proved exceptions to the rule seldom softens their demeanor when a stranger steps up and asks if he can be taken along with the cargo.

It might be well here to restate a fact known to many that passengers are taken solely at the pleasure of the captain. The sailing agents, or the mate, or others, might recommend, but they would go no further, and there have been frequent cases in which captains have turned down would-be sailors bringing letters from the owners of the vessels in which the trip would have been made. Living aloft and ashore develop different qualities in men, and so a certain incompatibility springs up between the sea faring and land faring classes, until it often becomes an impenetrable wall. Money, as a rule, is not over plentiful among captains of the smaller vessels, yet they frequently refuse amounts of money for passage that would pay first class fares on the best steamers for corresponding ports. "I just didn't take a notion to that rooster," is the reason usually assigned. This, too, is occasionally the case when there are several spare staterooms or berths aboard. Sometimes the boat is on the other foot and it is the landsman who backs out.

Get your trunk packed a month ahead and put on board before all the cargo is extricated. Then, by getting on the craft yourself two or three days before she can possibly start, the chances are that you will not be left behind should a little favorable weather come loafing around between snow storms. Make it a point to like all the provender that is dumped on the general board.

Never observe that the cabin stove would scorch an iceberg brown in ten minutes, or that the fire has gone out altogether. As for bed clothes, be thankful you have got any. Observe occasionally that the tobacco smoked aboard is not rank enough to please you. And above all, don't draw the color line on the vermin. If you will carry out these suggestions on a few trips, you may some time live to have a pleasant voyage.

Where Prunes Come From.

In the United States 100,000,000 pounds of prunes are eaten yearly. Prior to 1886 the supply came wholly from France and the Danubian provinces and sold under the designation of "French" or "Turkish" prunes. In the year referred to prunes of American growth appeared on the market and with each succeeding year the supply has increased until the importation of foreign fruit has been reduced to extremely small proportions. Much the larger portion of the prune supply is from the southern part of California, where climatic peculiarities are extremely favorable for its production. In Santa Clara county alone there are 3,700,000 trees growing on 37,000 acres, 100 to the acre. The quantity of prunes somewhat exceeds 110,000,000 pounds—more than enough for the requirements of the whole country, but the excess, with that raised in other localities, is needed to supply the export demand from Great Britain, Germany and France. The first plum trees planted 40 years ago in California were shoots from the "Petite" and "Epinouse" varieties from France. The original varieties have been greatly improved upon.

After the planting, which is usually done in the rainy season, the shoots are cut down to a uniform height of about two feet. In the second year the trees are pruned, from three to five branches being left, and are again pruned in the third and fourth years. Twice during the spring and summer the soil is cultivated. In September the fruit ripens and is gathered by spreading sheets under the trees and shaking the branches. The green fruit is taken to the warehouse, where it is graded in size and passed through a boiling hot liquid, in which process it is cleaned and the outer skin softened. It is then spread out in trays eight feet in size and exposed to the heat of the sun for three to eight days, depending upon weather conditions.

Ten thousand trays of fruit spread out in one unbroken tract may be seen in Santa Clara in the drying season. When sufficiently cured the prunes are stored in separate bins and there are allowed to "sweat," this process taking from ten to twenty days, when they are ready for marketing.

The bridegroom at a wedding always has the appearance of being a rank outsider.

The emergencies that we are always prepared for never seem to turn up.

HISTORY OF A FAMOUS BELL.

Cast in a Spanish Foundry. It Had Many Adventures.

The famous old bell of the Roman Catholic church in St. Joseph, Tazewell county, again "tolls the knell of parting day" after being temporarily silent, following the transfer from the old edifice to the new one recently dedicated. The bell has a remarkable history and has had many owners. For forty years it has been the property of St. Joseph parish, ringing out the hour of weddings, of masses and of funerals without distinction. The age of the bell has been variously estimated between 200 and 300 years. It is but a trifle larger than the ordinary locomotive bell, but the metal contains a certain portion of silver, which not only gives it a peculiarly sweet tone but also one of great strength, so that the sound is heard from one end of the township to the other.

According to an inscription upon the bell, it was cast in a foundry at Valladolid, Spain, early in the sixteenth century. The bell was conveyed to Vera Cruz, Old Mexico, by monks, where it hung in the cathedral until the Mexican war in 1847. When Vera Cruz was captured by the United States army, three young men of Company G, 4th Illinois Infantry, which was recruited in central Illinois captured the bell and sent it home.

After reaching Peoria the bell was sold to the owner of the Peoria State, an Illinois River steamboat, and was carried between Peoria and St. Louis for five years, until, on April 15, 1852, the Peoria State, while racing with the steamer Avalanche, blew up opposite Peoria and went to the bottom with heavy loss of life. The bell lay at the bottom of the river for two years, when it was fished out, and the finders sold it to the Methodist congregation, who were about to dedicate a new church. From 1854 the bell hung in the tower of that church until 1867, when the Catholic people of St. Joseph decided that the historic and Catholic associations of the bell were sufficiently important to warrant its restoration to that faith. They asked the Methodists to set a price, and the latter denomination willingly gave up the bell for the price of another, which was of less value from a historical standpoint.—Chicago Record-Herald.



John L. Sullivan.

The former champion pugilist of the world, as he appears on the lecture platform.

Curious Freaks of Lightning.

One of the fantastic tricks which lightning plays upon its unfortunate victims is a kind of flashlight photography. There are numerous instances of this which are more or less "authenticated," but they seem almost too wonderful to be believed. One of these is a young man in New Jersey who was struck by lightning and was taken in an ambulance to the hospital at once. There seemed to be no wound except a small mark on the back, but while the doctors and nurses were examining him a picture began to develop on the skin. Soon before the wondering eyes of the watchers appeared a perfect picture of the figure of Christ nailed to the cross. The explanation is that on the wall opposite the bed on which the young man lay was the picture which was reproduced on his skin.

Another instance is of a man who was struck by lightning, and on his chest were red marks resembling a tree with all its branches under which the man was standing when he was killed. From France comes the story of a peasant girl who was driving a cow from the pasture when she was overtaken by a storm, and she and the cow took refuge under the tree. A bolt killed the cow and stunned the girl. When she recovered consciousness she found on her chest a picture of the cow she had been driving.

The chateleine of the castle of Benatonnaire was sitting in a chair in her salon when the chateau was struck by lightning. She was quite uninjured, but on the back of her dress was found a perfect copy of the chair on which she had been sitting, down to its minutest ornament. These are a few of the many strange pranks which lightning plays upon us.

Fortunate is he who sees the point of a joke instead of feeling it.

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