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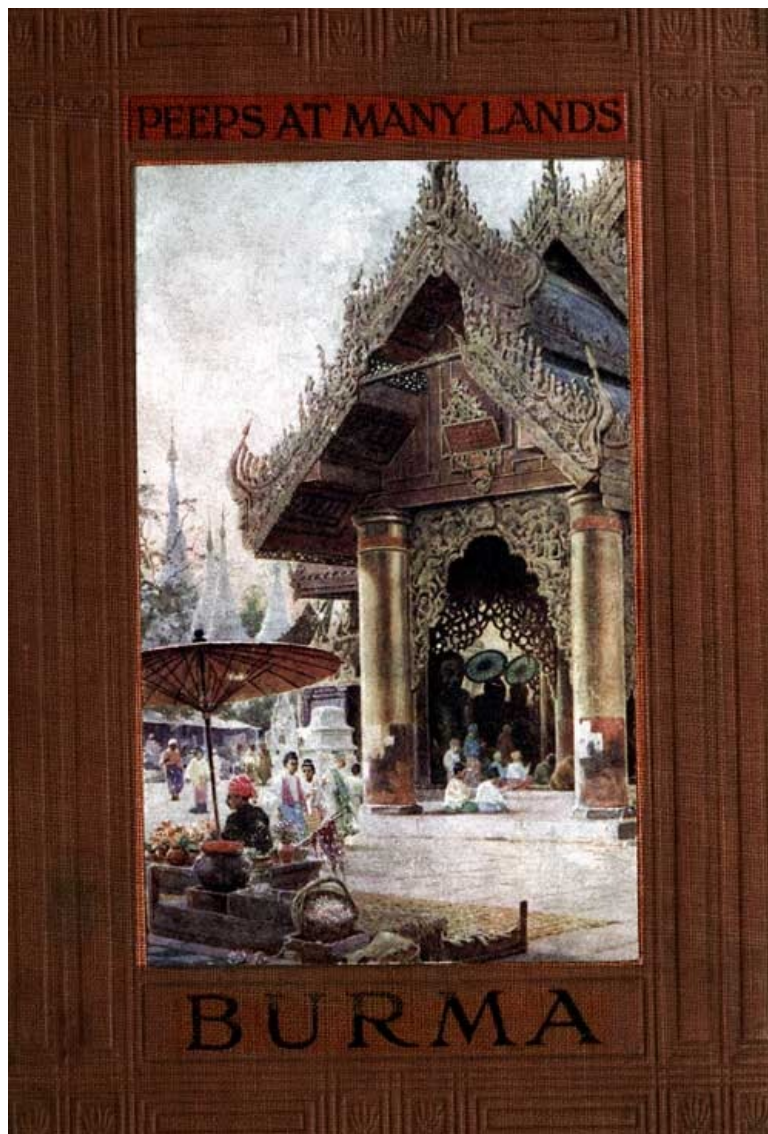
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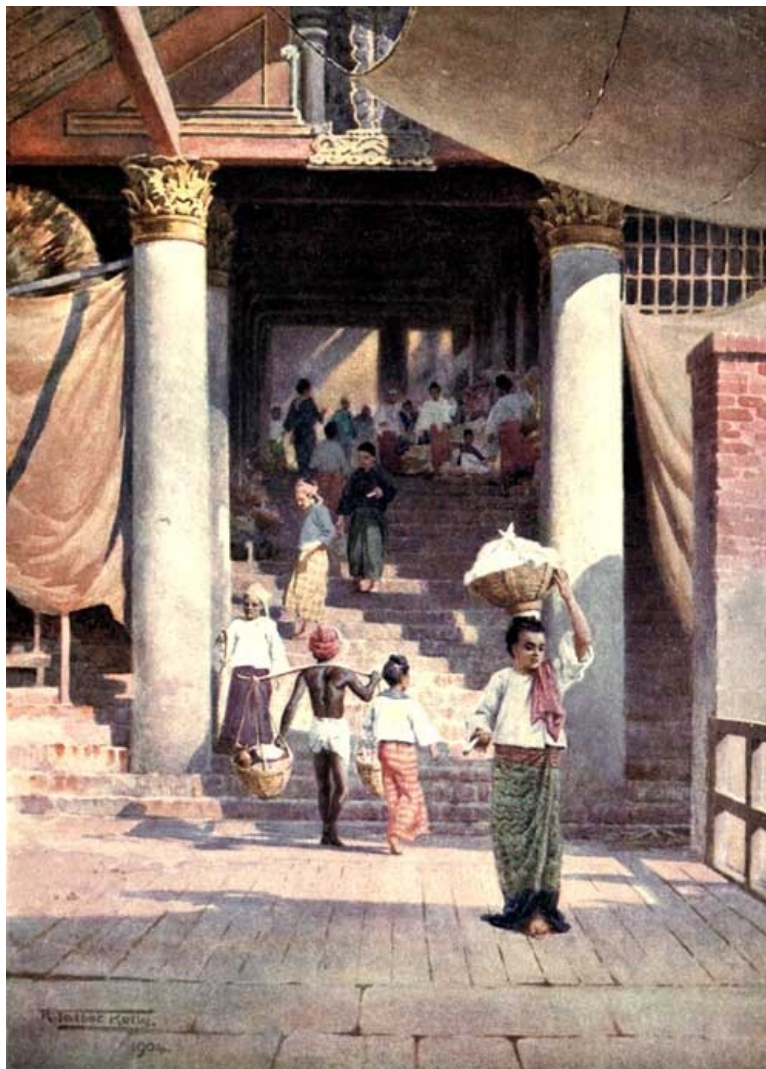
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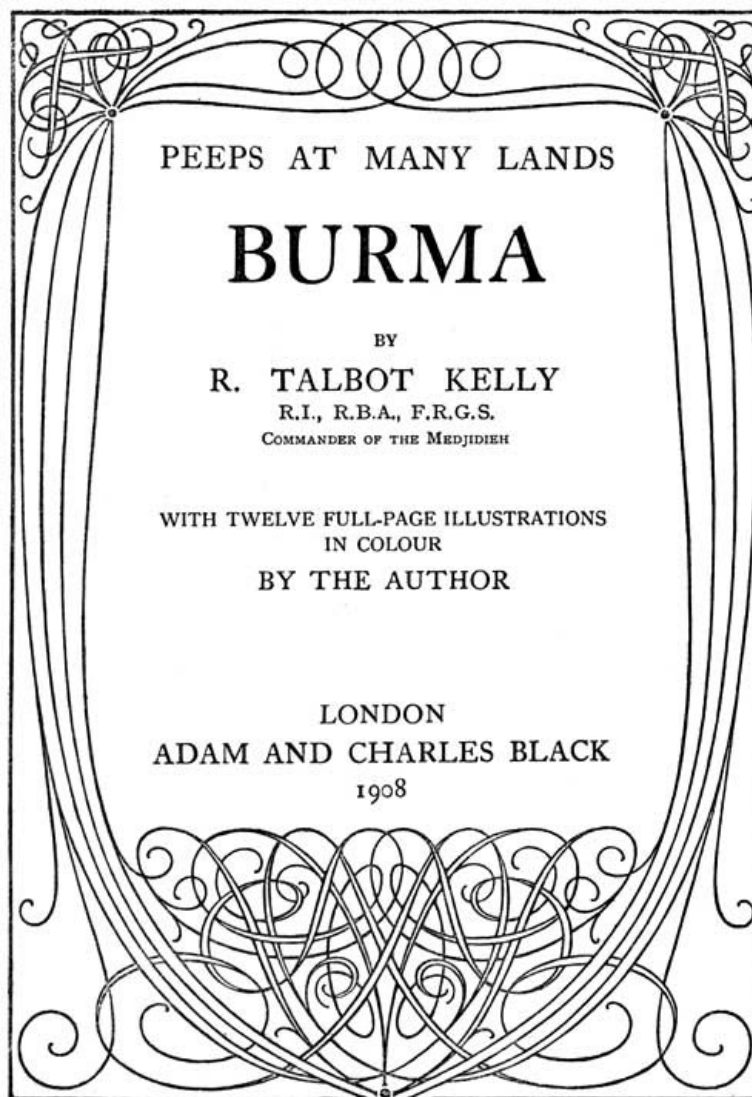
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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

# BURMA

BY

R. TALBOT KELLY

R.I., R.B.A., F.R.G.S.

COMMANDER OF THE MEDJIDIEH

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS  
IN COLOUR

BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1908

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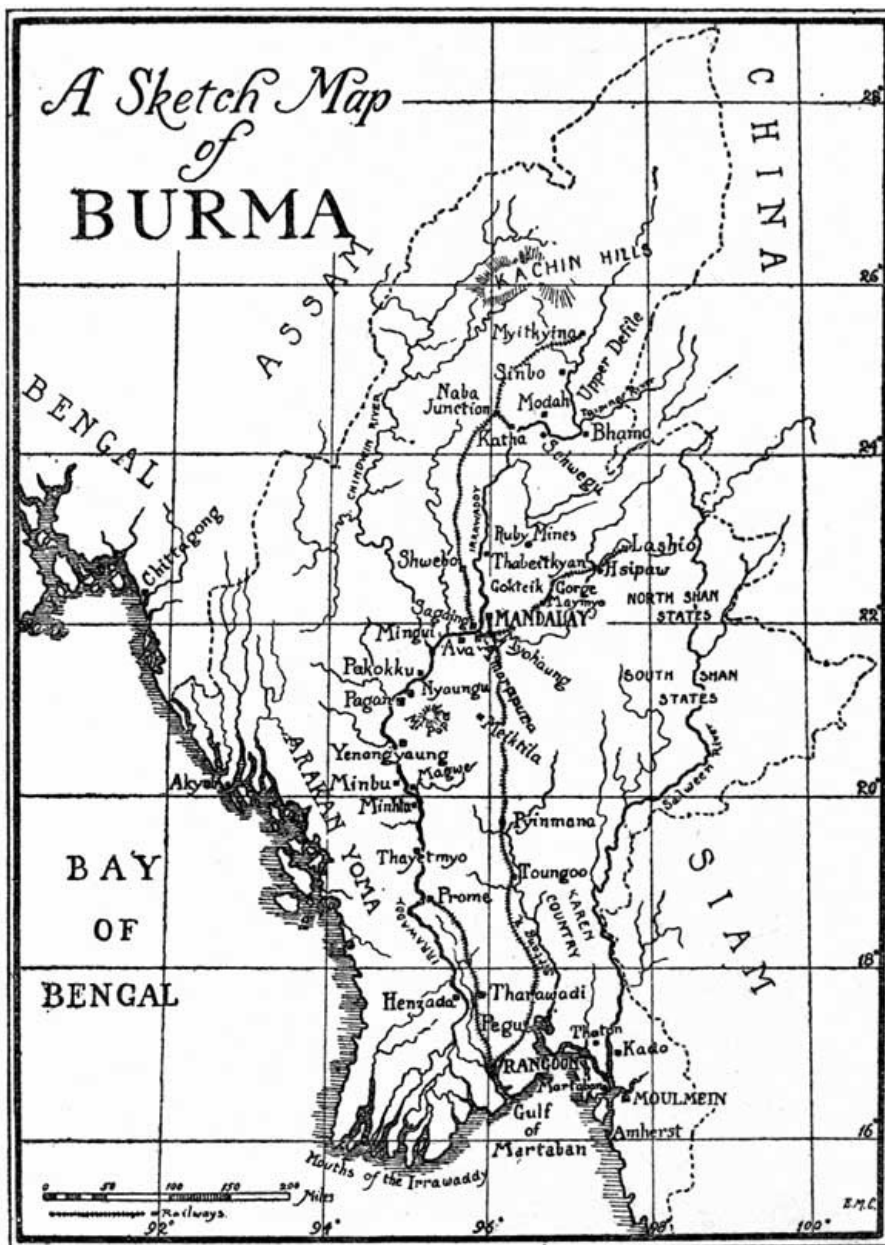
By R. TALBOT KELLY

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A SKETCH MAP OF BURMA

## BURMA

[1]

### CHAPTER I

#### THE LAND

How many boys or girls, I wonder, ever turn to their school atlas for amusement, or try to picture to themselves what manner of countries those might be whose strange and unfamiliar place-names so often make their geography lesson a difficulty?

Yet there are few subjects, I think, which might be made more interesting than geography, and a map may often serve to suggest delightful fancies to a boy or girl of imagination.

Open your atlas at random and see what it has to tell you. Here, perhaps in the heart of a great continent, stretches a mountain range, and from it in many directions wind those serpent-like lines which denote rivers.

Following these lines in their course, through narrow valleys or wide plains, we notice that upon their banks presently appear those towns and cities whose names you so often find it difficult to remember, and at length, frequently by many mouths that cut up the delta it has formed, the river eventually finds its way into the sea. [2]

These are the simple facts our map gives us, but there is a great deal of poetry behind. That mountain range is Nature's means of attracting and holding the moisture-laden clouds which

have been blown in from the sea, and either in the form of rain or snow it stores up the water evaporated from it.

By thousands of little rills, or rushing torrents which score furrows in its sides, the mountain gives up its store of water to feed the thirsty plains, and with it yields also valuable ores and minerals, which are often carried many many miles away to enrich a people too far removed from the mountain to know the origin of their wealth.

These little streamlets are not marked upon your map, but presently they join to form one combined river, by which, through the many hundreds of miles of its windings, the mountain eventually returns its gathered waters to the sea, from whence they came.

How interesting to follow the course of such a river, and try to picture to oneself all it may have to show! What kind of mountain is it from among whose rugged snow peaks first sprang those plunging cascades, which, leaping and tossing over their rocky beds, join each other at its base to form the river itself? Through what wild forests, filled with curious vegetation, may it not flow, and how strange, perhaps, are the people who, together with wild beasts and unknown birds, inhabit its reedy margins!

As the river grows in size, the grass huts and dug-out canoes of its upper waters give place to towns which bear names, while large and strangely-shaped boats carry the produce of the country to some great seaport at its mouth, where ships of all nations are waiting to transport it over thousands of miles of ocean to supply us with those many commodities which we have come to regard as daily necessities! If boys and girls would think of such things geography, I am sure, would never be a *dull* study. [3]

Now, to turn from an imaginary case to a real one, I want to tell you something about Burma, a country which, though one of the most interesting and beautiful in the world, is comparatively little known to the majority of people.

This may seem surprising when it is remembered that Burma now forms part of our Indian Empire, and has for many years carried on a large trade with England. We may perhaps better understand this if we turn to our atlas and see how the country is situated. As you will see, Burma lies on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal, just north of the Malay Peninsula, joining Siam and China on the one side and the Indian provinces of Assam and Manipur on the other, while from an unknown source in the heart of Thibet its great river, the Irrawaddy, flows throughout the entire length of the country, and through Rangoon, the seaport at its mouth, forming the great highway for commerce and communication between the world at large and its little-known interior.

Looking at the map again, you will see that on each side of the Irrawaddy, running north and south, are mountain ranges called "yomas" (or back-bones, as the word means), which divide the country, while other large rivers, such as the Sittang and Salween, flowing in deep, precipitous valleys, render any communication with Siam difficult. On the north-west similar ranges of hills form a barrier between Burma and the frontier provinces of India, and when I tell you that all these mountains are densely covered with forest and jungle, and that the rivers are wide, and in many cases unnavigable, you will understand how it is that Burma is not better known, and that so few people undertake the arduous work of exploring its interior. Only by way of one little corner in the north-east, where Burma joins the Chinese province of Yunnan, is access from the land side easy, and here caravans of Yunnanese constantly enter the country to trade at Bhamo and Hsipaw. [4]

Otherwise, separated by its mountain chains and forests from the rest of the world, Burma has for centuries remained untouched and unspoiled, and it is only since the deposition of King Thebaw, in 1885, and the assumption of its government by England that the gradual extension of the railway system is slowly bringing the interior into easier communication with the outside world, and beginning to effect a change in the character of the people.

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## CHAPTER II

### RANGOON

Anyone wishing to visit Burma must land at Rangoon, for it is not only the largest and most important of its seaports, but the only one that has direct steamer communication with England, or by river traffic and railways affords access to the interior. The harbour is formed by the tidal estuary of one of the many mouths of the Irrawaddy. Here it is very wide, and a large number of steamers and sailing ships ride at anchor, loading or discharging their cargoes into lighters and quaintly-shaped native boats.

Huge rafts of teak wood drift slowly downstream to the saw-mills below the town, where trained elephants stack the logs with almost human intelligence, and queer uptilted rowing boats, called "sampans," ferry passengers across the river, or to the various vessels in the stream. Long stretches of timber-built quays and iron-roofed "godowns" (or warehouses) form the wharfs, upon which coolies of all nationalities toil under the tropical sun. European officers in white drill and

sun-helmets superintend the loading of their vessels, longing to be finished and away from a spot where everything vibrates and dithers in the white glare.

On shore the smoke from the rice-mills adds to the already overpowering sense of heat, while from across the water the noise of hammered iron from the repairing yards completes a picture of bustle, heat, and toil. [6]

Yet Rangoon is a very pleasant place to live in, and as many of my readers will, no doubt, have fathers or brothers in the East, they will like to hear something about the place, and how people live there.

Behind the quay and warehouses the city lies, well laid out in broad streets and squares, and having many fine shops and buildings. The houses are mostly of that curious half-Italian, half-Oriental style which we find in almost all Southern and Eastern seaports. They are usually painted white, with green shutters to the windows, and are often surrounded by broad verandas. The roofs are generally of red tiles, which look pretty among the dark foliage of the trees which often line the streets, and in spite of "topee"<sup>[1]</sup> and umbrella, pedestrians are thankful to avail themselves of their shade, for the air is hot and the white glare of the streets is most trying to the eyes.

[1] Sun-helmet.

People of all nations throng the thoroughfares and bazaars—Indians and Singalese, Chinese and Burmans—and one's first impression is a vague confusion of picturesque costumes and unaccustomed types of mankind; for Rangoon is cosmopolitan to a degree, and can hardly be called a Burmese town at all.

Anyone visiting Rangoon for the first time will, I think, be struck by the many strange trades carried on in the streets, and it is interesting to sit in the veranda of your hotel in the Strand and watch the crowd as it passes. Here is a water-carrier, whose terra-cotta water-jars are slung from a bamboo carried on his shoulder, another man bears on his head a tray upon which a charcoal fire is cooking a strong-smelling "tit-bit" some hungry labourer will presently enjoy. Again, a Chinaman, perhaps wearing black skull-cap and loose jacket and trousers, endeavours to tempt you to purchase the fans or sunshades he is hawking. Huge baskets of coco-nuts or vegetables, gaudily printed calicoes and haberdashery, cheap knives and looking-glasses, and baskets of cool melons, are some of the articles carried across the shoulders of the pedlars, while porters pass to and fro bearing huge burdens from one warehouse to another. [7]

Flocks of goats are driven from house to house to be milked at the doorstep, and occasionally a hill-man may be seen wandering about in the hope of finding a purchaser for the freshly-caught leopard he is leading. What will, perhaps, most strike Europeans are the bullock gharries by which the heavy traffic of the town is carried on. These are carts curiously shaped and often carved, with large and very wide-rimmed wheels. They are drawn by a pair of Indian bullocks, sleek cream-coloured beasts with mild and patient eyes, and often bearing enormous horns, which, somewhat after the shape of a lyre, stand four feet above their heads.

Excepting for a single rein which is fastened to a ring through the nose, no harness is used; but, instead, the cattle press against the wooden yoke which is fixed to the pole of the cart, and is kept in position by long pins which lie on each side of their necks. [8]

One thing which distinguishes these bullocks from our own is their hump, which nearly all Eastern cattle have. This hump not only enables them the better to work under the yoke, but, as in the case of the camel, is provided by Nature as a storing-place for surplus fat, upon which they can unconsciously nourish themselves when pasturage or food is scarce.

Large-turbaned Indian police keep order in the streets, where office "chuprassies," or messengers, wearing their broad, coloured sash of office across their shoulders, come and go upon their errands, and, with the white-clad butler of a "Sahib" intent upon his marketing, mingle with a crowd which is composed of all races and all stations of life, from the wizened labourer in his loin-cloth to the wealthy baboo or daintily-clad Burmese lady. It is a wonderful medley of strange faces, costumes, and tongues, and among it all the self-sufficient crow fights with the "pi" dogs over the garbage, to the amusement of the children, who, often quite naked, play about the gutters.

No such crowd in England could possibly have the same charm, for here dirt, hunger, and rags are always apparent, while there the dirt is lost in the glorious sunshine, and, instead of rags, we find bright colours, while the people, though often poor, seldom, if ever, go hungry.

I have tried to give you some little idea of the life of the streets, and now let us see something of the life of the "Sahib" in Rangoon.

You boys and girls whose fathers are in India know that "Sahib" means the Englishman, the merchant or official who carries on the business affairs or government of the country, and many of you may remember something of your very young days out there, before the time arrived when it became necessary for you to leave the East and come to school in England. [9]



**A DAINTILY-CLAD BURMESE LADY. Page 8.**

Well, I may say that the English "Sahib" works very hard indeed, and I am afraid he is already busy at his office long before we in England have thought of getting up. Somewhere about six o'clock, after a light breakfast called "chota-hazri," he is at his office, which he seldom leaves till the evening. The offices are large and airy, and all the windows are shaded by jalousies, or grass mats, which in hot weather are wetted so as to cool the air as it passes through them. Slung from the ceiling in long rows over tables or desks are the "punkahs," or fans, which a "punkah-wallah" outside in the veranda pulls to and fro with a rope in order to keep the hot air moving, and prevent the flies and mosquitoes from settling. Every one, though clothed in the lightest suit, works with his coat off, and in many cases, so as not to interrupt the day's routine, "tiffin," or lunch, is eaten in the office. Work is hard, steady, and continuous, and no one who has not been there knows how well our relations in the East earn its many compensations.

Life there is not *all* work, however, and its social conditions are very attractive. From the time when his "tum-tum"<sup>[2]</sup> arrives at the close of office-hours and the "Sahib" bowls merrily homewards, a new life begins. Town becomes deserted, and the suburbs awake to offer amusement and relaxation to the workers.

[2] Dogcart.

Let us accompany one of our friends on his way home. The sun is declining and the air already much cooler, and the drive through the shopping streets and the squares is very enjoyable. The town is soon passed, however, and broad roads well shaded with many tropical growths lead to cantonments, as the suburbs are called. Here are the military lines as well as the bungalows of the residents. These bungalows are generally large and comfortable-looking, and one can see from their broad verandas and well-shaded windows that they are designed for coolness. Nearly all are built of timber, and each stands in its own compound, which is usually gay with flowers and well provided with shade-trees. Separated from the house but connected with it by a covered walk are the kitchens, and in a corner of the garden are the stables, for horses are an essential in Rangoon.

[10]

As we drive along the quiet roads they gradually become animated. The ladies, who have been resting indoors during the great heat of the day, pass us on their way to their tennis-parties or other engagements, while, in charge of picturesquely-clad Burmese or Indian ayahs, the little ones take their evening walk. Groups of Burmans of the better class with their wives promenade the cool avenues in happy contentment, or wend their way towards Dalhousie Park. The whole scene is pretty and domestic, and the roads themselves form beautiful vistas in the evening light, which gilds the feathery crests of the coco-nuts and gives added colour to the deep-toned foliage of the padouk and other trees which fringe them. Song-birds which are strange to us call each other from the groves, and in the bamboo clumps the grasshoppers are beginning to sing, while floating in the air, which is now fresh and cool, is the scent of many flowers from the gardens.

[11]

Dalhousie Park is one of the many attractions of Rangoon. It is large and well laid out, with a very pretty lake, which winds among the well-arranged groups of forest trees. There is a boat club here, and gliding over the still water are many rowing boats and small sailing craft. Swans and



ducks are swimming about as the swallow skims the surface of the water, breaking its deep reflections with a silver streak. All the paths are thronged with people, some driving, others on foot, and most of them presently congregate about the bandstand to enjoy the music or exchange the gossip of the day. It is quite an interesting sight. All the fashionable life of Rangoon is represented here, and mingling with it are yellow-robed Buddhist priests and natives of all classes; for the Burman loves to come here in the evening, to listen to the band or watch the changing glory of the sky as the sun slowly sets behind his beloved pagoda.

Now the sun has set, and every one hastily puts on overcoats or wraps before driving home, for the air becomes suddenly cold, and neglect of these precautions will probably result in fever.

Many adjourn to the gymkhana club before returning home. This is principally a man's club, but here also on many days a band plays, and the sight is a pretty one indeed as the children and their ayahs play about the lawn, while their parents enjoy their tea at the little tables scattered about it, before the falling dew drives the little ones homewards, and their elders to the club-house for a game of billiards or a chat. [12]

All this side of Rangoon life is very pleasant and very interesting, but it is not Burmese. Rangoon has for so long been a great trade centre that the easy-going Burman is rather overshadowed; but as it is typical of many foreign places where our fathers or brothers are occupied, and where some of my readers may presently have to go, I thought it would be interesting to give you this glimpse of European life in India, and in the next chapter I will tell you something about the Burmans themselves.

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## CHAPTER III

[13]

### THE PEOPLE

Have you ever thought how the character of the various races of the world is more or less determined by the nature of the country of their origin? Rugged mountains and a hard climate produce people of a similar severity of type, and, on the other hand, one naturally looks for poetry and music in a people so pleasantly and romantically situated as are the Italians. In the same way the Burmese are pretty much what their country has made them. The land is so very fertile that almost anything will grow there, and Nature provides food for the people with the least possible effort on their own part. The climate is also damp, warm, and enervating, so that one would not expect to find among its inhabitants much energy or decision of character. Their beautiful religion also makes them kind and gentle, and their isolation, which, as I have pointed out, separates them from the neighbouring countries, has left them almost entirely undisturbed by the activities of the greater world. In fact, on account of their easy-going and contented nature, the Burmese are often called the "Irish of the East," and I am afraid it must be said that the men are rather lazy, and, like their prototypes in some parts of Ireland, leave most of the work to the women. [14]

As a rule, the Burmese women are industrious and clever at business, most of which is conducted by them, while the men are more fond of sport of all kinds than employment. All, however, are gentle in character, light-hearted, and merry, and like to repeat in their clothing the beautiful tints of their forest flowers and gaily-coloured birds and butterflies.

It is not surprising, therefore, that among the alien races so busily engaged in the trade of Rangoon the Burmans should be overshadowed and rather lost to sight; and though in Rangoon itself there are many streets occupied entirely by them, it is in the quieter surroundings of the suburbs that the Burman appears to advantage.

Many little Burmese villages surround Rangoon, where, half buried in the trees and creepers which envelop them, the quaint dwellings lie more or less secluded from the road. All are built of timber or bamboo, and have nothing in their design to make them noticeable. Among them, however, are occasional "kyoungs," or Buddhist monasteries, which are much more ornamental and striking. Like their other buildings, the "kyoung" is constructed of timber, and stands upon a wooden platform raised from the ground some four or five feet by thick posts, which are usually carried through the balustrade which surrounds the platform, and terminate in a carved head, steps leading to the stage upon which the monastery is built. These "kyoungs" are very curious in design, the walls, doors, and windows being ornamented with carving, while their succession of roofs, one above the other, often rise to a great height. To afford shade to the platform below, the roofs project considerably beyond the walls, and the ridges of each are decorated with carved woodwork representing their "nats" and "beloos," as they call their good and evil spirits, and the ends of the eaves terminate in a very striking ornament supposed to represent the peacock, which, as you will see from the picture, gives the building a very quaint appearance indeed. Sometimes the monasteries are gilded, and the doors and wall-panels inlaid with looking-glass, tinsel, and other glittering material, which makes them appear very gorgeous in the sunlight. [15]

These monasteries are occupied by Buddhist priests, who teach the children of the neighbourhood, or instruct the pilgrims who visit them in the beauties of their religion, of which I shall have something to tell you presently. All the priests have shaven heads, and wear a simple robe of cotton, dyed to a bright yellow by the juice of the catch-tree. Gentle and hospitable

themselves, they lead the most simple lives. All the food they eat is given by the people, and it is a very picturesque sight to see the daily procession of priests and novices, each carrying a bowl in which to receive the offerings of food so willingly given by the inmates of the houses they visit. No request for alms is ever made, nor any word of thanks spoken, for such gifts are freely offered by a people who believe in their religion, and do so as an "act of merit."

Close by the monasteries are the "zeyats," or homes for wandering pilgrims. Though their roofs are ornamented in the same way as the "kyoungs," they are more simple in appearance, and often have one side entirely open to the air. Built primarily for pilgrims, anyone may use them, and often a belated traveller is very thankful to take advantage of their shelter against the night dews or tropical rains. [16]



**A REST HOUSE.**

Another striking feature of their architecture is the "pythat," or spire of five or seven roofs, each smaller than the other, which finish in what they call a "ti," or umbrella of wrought iron ornamented with flowers, and from which little bells and cymbals swing and tinkle in the breeze. These spires, however, are only erected over sacred buildings or the palace of a King.

Most beautiful of all their buildings is the pagoda, as their temples are called, and most beautiful, perhaps, of all the temples in Burma is the great Shwe Dagon pagoda in Rangoon. "Shwe" means golden, and this beautiful bell-shaped pyramid, which rises 370 feet above the mound upon which it is built, is entirely overlaid with gold. The mound itself, which is of considerable height, is artificially made, the earth having been carried there in order to form a fortress and a pedestal for the shrine. These pagodas are constructed of solid brickwork, in which is often enclosed some sacred relic. Originally of small dimensions, generations of Kings have from time to time added further layers of brickwork to the gradually increasing structure, until to-day this stupendous Shwe Dagon pagoda stands before us so immense and so beautiful as to be rightly considered one of the wonders of the world. Around the base of the temple is a large number of shrines, each lofty, beautified by carved woodwork and towering pinnacles, richly embellished with gilding and coloured inlay, and each worthy itself to be a separate temple. Fantastic images and carved balustrades connect the various shrines with each other and with the great temple itself, and from ornamental pedestals spring conventional representations of the sacred tree of Buddha, delicately wrought in iron. Tall flagstuffs, 60 or 80 feet high, surmounted by emblematical figures or representations of the Brahminy duck, float their long streamers in the wind, while the sound of tinkling bells descends from the "tis" with which every pinnacle is crowned. Surrounding all is a broad platform fringed with shops and other buildings, for the Burmese love their pagoda, and many spend their days here, and the necessities of life must be provided. [17]

Nowhere in all Burma may a better idea of the Burmese be obtained than on this pagoda

platform. At all times of the day it is thronged by people, not only from Rangoon, but from all parts of the country, who come to pray or wonder at its beauty. At the shrines, in which are always one or more images of Buddha, groups of devout Burmans pray. Lighted candles burn before the images, while the worshippers, among whom it will be noticed women predominate, bear flowers in their hands, which before their departure they reverently lay upon the niche in which the "Master" is enshrined.

These flowers and coloured candles are sold upon the platform, leading up to which are several covered staircases, which form the best bazaar in Rangoon, as in the shops on either side of the ascent almost everything from jewellery and toys to food-stuffs may be bought. The entrance from the street below is very striking. The flight of broad steps leads to a gilded and painted pavilion, on either side of which stand enormous leogryphs, the mythical guardians of the temple. Passing through an archway embellished by figures of "nats" and other imaginary creatures, a long succession of steps, covered throughout the whole distance by ornamental roofs, leads to the temple above, and at all times of the day is thronged by brightly-clothed pedestrians, ascending and descending through the alternate gleams of sunlight and cool shade of the bazaar. Nowhere else in Burma can the people be better studied than here, all classes being represented, and it may be interesting if I describe them more closely. Like their neighbours of Siam and China, the Burmese are Mongolian in type, but, without so pronounced a cheekbone and slanting eye as the Chinese, are more pleasing in appearance. Indeed, the men are often handsome, and among the women and young girls I have seen many of extreme beauty. While the men are often sallow, the women are generally more ruddy in complexion, and all have hair of an almost purple blackness. Their clothing is bright and clean-looking. All wear a short jacket, usually white, though ladies of the better degree sometimes adopt figured velvets and other rich materials. The men commonly wear a "lungyi," or short skirt composed of coloured silk or cloth gathered round their loins, or the more elaborate "petsoe," which is made of coloured silk and in which many yards of loose material twisted into a bunch about the waist serves as an additional scarf or head-dress should it be cold. Short socks and boots of European make are now unfortunately commonly worn, while a silk scarf of bright colour tied round the head completes the male costume.

The women are clad in much the same way, wearing a similar "lungyi" and jacket or the more beautiful "temaine," a skirt of rich figured silk, which is open on one side, exposing the leg up to the knee, to which is added a broad fringe of darker material, which trails upon the ground, giving it a more graceful appearance than the shorter "lungyi." Wooden sandals are worn on the feet, while on their shoulders is thrown a long scarf of delicately-coloured silk. Unlike the men, the women wear no head-dress, but take great pride in their hair, which is always glossy and well dressed, and almost invariably is adorned by a comb or some choice flower. Endowed by Nature with beautiful hands, they love to accentuate the point by a display of jewellery, which, though sometimes worn to excess, is always *good*, for the Burmese lady would scorn to wear a spurious gem. Pretty fans or handkerchiefs are carried in the hand, while, like a halo surrounding the head, dainty parasols, semi-transparent and hand-painted, shield them from the sun. It is difficult to give any true impression of such a Burmese crowd, in which every conceivable variety of tint and texture is displayed, and permeating which is a sense of universal gaiety and lightness of heart. It is like nothing so much as a beautiful flower-garden, while the people themselves would seem to be as free from care as the butterflies that hover above the blooms.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE IRRAWADDY

To all countries rivers serve the same purpose as the veins in one's body, being their great source of life and activity. Not only do they drain and fertilize the land, but also afford the readiest and most economical means of transit for its trade; consequently on their banks are found the largest cities and most active commercial life of the country.

This is particularly true of Burma, for, railways still being few in number, the Irrawaddy forms its great highway for traffic, and a large fleet of steamers plies regularly with freight and passengers between Rangoon, Mandalay, and Bhamo, while thousands of native craft of all shapes and sizes assist in the carrying trade of the country.

For a thousand miles the Irrawaddy is alive with traffic, and on its banks have settled the greater proportion of the population of the country, for with the exception of a few isolated towns and settlements, which are surrounded by cultivated areas of limited extent, the whole country away from the river-banks is densely covered by scrub jungle and primeval forest, practically uninhabited and uncultivable. Throughout the length of the river, however, is one long series of towns and villages, whose pagodas and monasteries crown every knoll, and whose population seems largely to live upon the water.

The Irrawaddy is a stream of great size and volume, and, like all rivers subject to periodic flood, is enclosed by high banks of alluvial deposit, between which the river winds its devious way, laden with that rich and fertile mud which, in the course of ages, has formed the delta at its mouth.

In the case of the Irrawaddy this delta is of large extent, and is everywhere intersected by the deep creeks which form the many mouths of the river, thus breaking up the alluvial plain into numerous islands, between which communication is impossible except by means of boats.

These islands are for the most part covered with a dense jungle, which forms a lair for tigers and many other wild beasts, and so close do these tigers approach to Rangoon that one was recently shot inside the great pagoda, in which it had taken refuge. While there I heard of an amusing adventure which befell the keeper of the lighthouse at the mouth of the Rangoon River. He was enjoying a morning stroll along the beach, reading a book as he walked, and, as the sun was bright, he held his white umbrella before him to shield himself from the glare of sand and water. Suddenly he stumbled over a tiger lying fast asleep upon the shore, and with a yell of terror the lighthouse man, dropping book and sunshade on the ground, fled away as hard as he could run in one direction, to discover presently that the tiger, just as much alarmed as himself, had made an equally precipitous flight in the other. [23]

All these lower water-ways of the Irrawaddy are tidal, for they are quite close to the sea, and at high water the land is scarcely raised at all above the water level. Mango-trees, dwarf palms, and reeds fringe the muddy banks, on which, raised upon poles and built partly over the water, are the huts of the fishermen, who, half naked, ply their calling in quaintly-shaped, dug-out canoes. To the north of the principal creek which connects Rangoon with Bassein stretches a vast plain of fertile "paddy" land, where each year is grown that enormous crop of rice which forms Burma's chief export.

From every landing-place cargo boats of many kinds, manned by crews of different nationalities, drop downstream to Rangoon, heavily laden with "paddy," as the unhusked rice is called, which, after treatment at the mills, will be shipped abroad.

Though hardly beautiful, perhaps, these tidal waters are of great interest to the new-comer, who probably for the first time sees the feathery coco-nut and graceful areca-palm growing in their natural state among the many other strange trees that flourish upon the banks. At each stopping-place, also, is the picturesque native village, often surrounded by banana-groves and gardens of sesamum. High on the banks boats are being built or repaired, in readiness for next season's flood, while on the water the continuous stream of traffic is of never-failing interest.

Above Prome, however, where the river flows between the mountain ranges which form the great backbone of Burma, every mile of the journey is of great and varied beauty. [24]

The banks are high, and cut into terraces by the varying levels of the river, and are crowned by a belt of almost continuous forest-trees, among which, half hidden in the foliage, are the towns and villages which so frequently occur on both banks. Behind, the rising ground, naturally rocky and broken, is entirely enveloped by a dense forest, which stretches in leafy undulations to the lofty mountains which loom in the far distance.

The Irrawaddy is rapid in its flow, and, like all flood rivers, is constantly changing its course, as the scour of the water washes away a portion of the bank from one spot, to form a sand-bank in the stream lower down. Consequently, navigation for large steamers is difficult, and the whole course has to be marked out by buoys of bamboo, which, in some of the more difficult reaches, must be constantly changed. Some of these steamers plying on the Irrawaddy are very large, being over 300 feet long, and nearly 80 feet in width. Many of them carry upwards of 2,000 passengers, mostly deck passengers, who, in the aft part of the ship, conduct a travelling bazaar for the benefit of such towns and villages on the banks as have no regular shops of their own. At each landing-place crowds of people, again mostly women, are awaiting the arrival of the steamer, carrying various goods for sale or barter, while others eagerly board the steamer to make such purchases as they require.

Almost every requisite of life may be bought in these floating bazaars—clothing, cutlery, or hardware, lamps and looking-glasses (which latter are always in great demand), preserved eggs from China, English flour, Indian curries and sweetmeats, cooking utensils, "ngapi" (or rotted fish) from Yandoon, are some of the articles offered for sale, in return for which the villagers have to offer supplies of oil, catch, rice, native silks, and beautifully-made baskets and lacquer-work. [25]



**A NATIVE BOAT SAILING UPSTREAM WITH THE WIND. Page 26.**

At important stations the landing-places consist of barges moored alongside the banks, and these are moved from time to time as the varying levels of the river demand. More frequently, however, the bows of the steamer are simply run into the bank, while its crew of Chittagonians jump overboard to carry the mooring rope ashore. It is amusing to watch the mass of struggling humanity who throng the landing-places on the arrival of the steamer. Every one, whether landing or embarking, strives to be first upon the narrow gangway which connects the steamer's sponson<sup>[3]</sup> with the shore, with the result that many are thrown into the water. Each is intent upon conducting his business to the best possible advantage in the limited time at his disposal, for the steamer's visit does not occur every day, and its stay is short.

[3] The small platform which connects the paddle-box with the steamer's deck.

Along the margin of the river are many who, indifferent to the arrival of the mail, are engaged in washing their clothes or utensils, while boys and girls gambol on the banks, or, swimming with delightful ease, frolic round the steamer in the water.

Interesting though life in the steamer is, that of the river as seen from its decks is even more so. The native boats are most quaint in their designs, the most striking being the "laungzat." This is a vessel often of very large size, and capable of carrying a large amount of cargo. Its bows are sharply uptilted, the cut-water frequently rising clear of the water. The hull is beautifully modelled, and the stern, rising high above the water in a sort of tower, is often elaborately carved. Half its length is covered by a deck-house for the crew, on the roof of which a canopy of reeds or grasses gives shelter to the steersman, who, raised in this way, is better able to steer clear of the shoals and shallows which beset the stream, and which from the lower deck would probably not be seen. The rudder is a long paddle, also carved, which is slung in a loop over the stern, while a further decorative effect is often obtained by inverted soda-water bottles stuck upon poles along the sides. [26]

Coming downstream the vessel is propelled by oars, usually twelve to sixteen, which the crew ply with a slow rhythmic swing. During the monsoons, when strong winds blow upstream, sails are used instead of oars. The mast is composed of two bamboos lashed together at the top, their lower ends being made fast to the gunwale. On this frame, from bamboo yards curved slightly upwards, is spread a curious combination of six or seven square sails, which, though only of use when running before the wind, enable the boat to travel at a great speed. There are many other kinds of boats in use, all equally distinctive in character; and even the dug-out canoe is pretty, its fore-foot rising clear of the water in a slight curve, which lends an element of beauty to what would otherwise have been simply a straight log. [27]

Fishing is frequent along the river-bank, the favourite appliances being nets of various kinds. Often on a sand-bank may be seen a little hut raised high above the ground, and composed of

bamboo and reeds. This is the shelter for the fisherman, who with a drag-net buoyed by sun-dried gourds fishes the neighbouring shallows. Hand-nets are occasionally used, but most interesting, perhaps, is the curious kind of cradle by which a net stretched upon a bamboo frame is let down into the water from the bank, particularly on the passing of a steamer, when the startled fish dart in shore and are caught in the net, which is raised at the proper moment by the watchers on the bank.

Very interesting also are the rafts, composed of logs of teak and pyingado, which, cut in the forests far inland, are constructed in the creeks, as the forest streams are called, and are then launched into the Irrawaddy upon their voyage of often many weeks before Rangoon is reached.

These rafts are frequently of enormous size, and are manned by crews of Shans, whose numbers vary according to their size. Without means of propulsion, the rafts simply drift with the stream, but are guided to some extent by a number of paddles fixed at either end, by which the crews endeavour, not always successfully, to keep them clear of shoals and their heads downstream. [28]

In many cases the population of a raft is so considerable that quite a little village of huts is built upon it, and I have seen cows, goats, and fowls, as well as the wives and children of the crew, housed upon it. In one case at least I remember seeing a raft upon which was erected a bamboo pagoda, and frequently upon the sand-banks in the river small pagodas of the same material are erected for devout watermen.

Not least among the many beauties of the Irrawaddy are the glorious sunsets behind the "Yomas," when the colours are repeated in the limpid water, which perfectly reflects the pinnacles of "kyoungs" or pagodas, or the pretty village that lies half hidden amidst the varied foliage which in rich masses crowns the banks.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE IRRAWADDY (*continued*)

Almost every morning dense mists hang upon the river, screening everything from view until the sun, slowly gaining power, presently dispels the fog and reveals the beauty of the scene.

Very beautiful indeed are some of these panoramas disclosed in the early sunlight.

Close beside the high and clear-cut bank, crowned with flowering kine-grass, our steamer lies, the silently-flowing river gurgling and bubbling under our keel. The water is quite still, and repeats every detail of the opposite shore, behind which, rising terrace upon terrace, are the wooded "Yomas," in whose ravines and valleys still hangs some remnant of the fog. The foliage is of many kinds, the feathery tamarind and acacia contrasting well with the more heavily leaved banyan; betel-nut and toddy-palm rise above the mulberry or mimosa, and conspicuous among the varied tints of the forest is the delicate green of the bamboo, to the Burman the most useful perhaps of all the forest growths, and everywhere abounding.

Life awakens with the sun. Herds of cattle roam along the shore, while in the fields from raised platforms half-nude men and boys scare wild-fowl from the ripening crops. The smoke of many fires on shore and from the craft upon the water rises perpendicularly in the still air, as the frugal morning meal is being prepared ere another day's work begins. [30]

Between its banks the Irrawaddy sweeps in splendid curves, producing an ever-growing sense of bigness and dignity. Some of its reaches are very wide, and have more the appearance of an inland lake than a river. On such sand-banks as are not already occupied by fishermen, flocks of wild-goose, storks, and other waders are roosting or fishing in the shallow pools. Kingfishers dart hither and thither after their prey, and wild-duck in great numbers settle upon its smooth surface, to feast upon the teeming fish with which the river abounds.

In general the scene is one of placid beauty: even the rugged mountain sides are smoothed and softened by their covering of greenery, and the warm air and limpid water combine to produce an effect of quietude and repose, which the contented character of the Burman does little to disturb.

At certain places, however, as in the defile above Mandalay, the scenery is of a more vigorous character.

Here the river narrows considerably, and in its deep and silent flow winds for many miles between high hills which closely confine it, and in one place rise in a perpendicular cliff 800 feet sheer above the water.

I was fortunate in approaching the defile in the early dawn, when the morning mists still hung heavy upon the hills of lurid blackness which marked its entrance. Between them was an impenetrable gloom, which seemed to promise no means of egress, and as we steamed rapidly towards it, one unconsciously felt that here was the end of all things, and that nothing could possibly lie beyond. It was a most weird sensation, which the river, so darkly flowing between banks we could hardly see, served to emphasize. [31]

Presently the rising sun lit up the clouds of vapour piled high above the hills, and then for half an

hour continued the most beautiful and ever-changing play of colour imaginable, as the slowly-moving fog wreaths wound about the mountain tops, now rosy in the sunlight, or again in pearly shade, while alternate gloom and gleam tipped the hills with gold or enveloped them in a purple mystery.

By the time our steamer entered the defile full daylight better enabled us to observe our surroundings.

Here, as elsewhere, the vegetation was luxuriant; every crevice in the rocks afforded foothold for some tree or creeper, while the hilltops and more sloping sides were densely covered with forest trees.

The passage of the defile occupies about two hours, and the course of the river is very tortuous.

At the bends little beaches of bright shingle lie against the tree-roots. Fishing cradles, such as I have described, are frequent, and cormorants in great numbers share with the fishermen the spoils of the river, for nowhere on the Irrawaddy are the fish of better quality than here.

Altogether, in the impressiveness of its scenery, the quiet, irresistible flow of the river, and the bright tints and varied growths of the forest, the lower defile of the Irrawaddy forms one of the most striking scenes I have ever enjoyed; and if the river had no other beauty than this to show, it alone would amply repay the traveller for his journey.

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**THE IRRAWADDY. Chapters IV and V.**

Though in general so fertile, there is one part of the river where the hills which lie on its western side are entirely barren, and the reddish-yellow rocks appear very hot and uninviting by comparison. Yet this forbidding district is one of the busiest and richest of all Burma, for this is the great oil-field of the country, and the chimneys of pumping stations which stretch for miles along the hills and river-bank show how actively the trade is being worked. Formerly Burma was obliged to import all her lamp-oil from America, but now, although a certain amount of American oil is still imported, Burma not only produces sufficient for their own use, but is able to export a considerable quantity to other countries, and many of the steamers on the river use the crude or unrefined oil as fuel.

Here and there in the river are moored curious-looking dredgers engaged in pumping up the river sand, from which is separated the gold dust with which it is so freely mixed. The gold comes from unknown veins hundreds of miles away, and is to be found in greater or less quantities all down the river, and though the natives have always been in the habit of "washing for gold," it is only within the last few years that any real attempt has been made to work it on a large scale.

The Irrawaddy has many tributaries, but though the larger streams, such as the Chindwin and Mu Rivers, are always flowing, most of the smaller forest streams are dry, excepting during the monsoon, which continues from May until September. At this season, swelled into torrents by the rains, they pour into the Irrawaddy, quickly raising its level 40 to 50 feet, and the peaceful river which I have described becomes a mighty flood, in places 2 miles in width, full to the top of its banks and overflowing the fields and flooding the village streets, and sweeping away from its sand-banks those huts and pagodas and other temporary buildings we have noticed, while the mud which its turbid waters carry each year adds a little to the delta at its mouth.

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Very often crossing the mouth of these tributaries you may see a framework of bamboo, over which fishing-nets are spread as the river rises, and in the pools of slack water which lie at the mouths of the forest creeks a great collection of logs lie floating. These logs have been cut in the forest long before, and have gradually been collected at some such convenient spot, where a large number of natives are busily engaged in building them into one of those huge rafts so

constantly met with on the river. These rafts have a long journey before them, and constantly grounding as they do, no ropes would hold them together through all the wear and tear of their weeks upon the water, so instead of ropes rattan is used. This is a peculiarly long, tough, and flexible cane, which grows all over the forests, and is often a hundred yards or more in length. The logs are mostly of teak (about which I will tell you more presently) and pyingado or iron-wood, which is so heavy that it sinks in the water, and consequently rafts of bamboo are first built, and beneath them the pyingado logs are slung. [34]

An interesting place is Bhamo, the last station for the river steamers and close to the frontier of China. The town is more Chinese than Burman in character, though on the banks of the River Taiping are the remains of pagodas and other buildings of purely Burmese origin.

Then, again, there are other defiles on the river beside the one I have already described, and many other points of interest which I might mention. Thabeitkyan, the landing-place for the ruby-mines, three days' journey inland; the rocky island with its monastery and pagoda, whose priests are said to be able to tame the fish in the river, which they feed by hand; the great bell at Mingoan, or the water-side fair at Shwegu, and a host of others. It would be impossible for me to tell you about everything of interest that the Irrawaddy has to show, but perhaps I have said enough to give you some little idea of how beautiful and interesting a river it is.

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## CHAPTER VI

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### VILLAGE LIFE

Leaving the river, let us go ashore at one of the many villages on its banks, and see how the Burmese live.

Our steamer lies alongside of the bank while the cargo is being landed, and its fuel of eng-wood is put on board. This is hard work, and is generally done by girls, who are paid by piece-work, and generally lose no time in the operation. Bales and cases lie upon the bank, and are being loaded into bullock-carts or carried to the top of the "bund," as the bank is called, where pack-ponies are waiting to carry them to more distant destinations.

The villagers "shikoh"<sup>[4]</sup> as we land, and swarms of youngsters follow us on our tour of the village; but though greatly interested in ourselves and our hardly-concealed curiosity, they are always polite and never annoy us in any way.

[4] The Burmese form of salute.

The village lies close beside the river, and is, as usual, bowered in trees, which overhang the bank. Its other three sides are enclosed by a stockade of thorns or wooden palings as a protection against wild beasts or attack by dacoits, bands of robbers who until recently lurked in the jungles, and often raided outlying and unprotected villages. [36]

The stockade is nearly always overgrown with creeping plants, yellow convolvulus, tropæolum, and a charming little climber like canariensis. On each side is a gate built of barks of timber, and so heavy that it must run on wheels. This gate is always shut at nightfall, so that no one can enter the village unknown to the watchman, who is called "kinthamah" and keeps his "kin" in a little booth called "kinteaine" erected close beside the gate.

By the gates and at intervals along the roadside are little cupboards raised above the ground and thatched with grasses called "yaiohzin"; these contain jars of drinking water for the use of wayfarers, and are always kept replenished by the villagers. The drinking cup is usually made of a polished coco-nut shell with a long handle of some hard wood, and it is noticeable that the water is never spilled or wasted, for Burma is a thirsty land and some of these watering-places are far from the river, and every one drinks with due regard to the necessities of the next comer.

Entering the large compound which the stockade encloses we are in the village itself. Here the houses of the Burmans are pleasantly situated among rows of toddy-palm, mango, padouk, and other trees, among which the peepul, or sacred ficus, is almost always found.

The houses are more or less arranged so as to leave a lane or street between them, and are generally built of bamboo, though many have their principal timbers of teak or eng-wood. The floors are usually of split bamboo, and the roof of elephant-grass, or "thekka," as the thatch of dried leaves is called, forms a good protection against the summer sun or monsoon rains, while the walls are formed of bamboo mats, often coloured and woven into some pretty though simple design. [37]

As the front of the house is generally more or less open, we are able to see much of the interior arrangements. Sleeping mats of grasses supply the place of beds, and no chairs are to be seen. On a low stand of carved wood is the tray upon which their simple meals are served, and cooking-pots of bronze or earthenware lie about the "chatties" which contain the fire. Painted and carved boxes contain the family wardrobe, and in one corner is the stand for the large jars in which their supply of drinking-water is kept. Mat partitions perhaps screen inner rooms which we cannot see, but all the domestic appliances visible are of the simplest character, but ample for the needs of



the people.

All the buildings are raised several feet above the ground as a protection against snakes, floods, and malaria, and the space below often forms a stable for the cattle and a useful storing-place for agricultural or other implements. These simple homes of the Burmans are often very pretty as they lie among the trees which cast their broad shadows across the straggling lane, grass grown and deeply rutted by the cart-wheels. Bougainvillæa and other creepers spread luxuriantly over the roofs, or drop their festoons of flowers from the eaves. Bananas wave their broad leaves gracefully above the houses, in cool contrast to the richer foliage of the larger trees, and among all this greenery, alternately in sunlight or shadow, move the brightly-costumed villagers themselves, most interesting of all. [38]

Here comes a pretty young mother clad in "lungyi" of apple-green and dainty white jacket. Cross-legged over her shoulder is her infant, to whom she talks softly and endearingly as she walks. Presently her home is reached, and all the joy of motherhood shines in her happy face as she gently swings her child to sleep in its cradle of rattan which is slung from the roof above.

Again, an old man passes, guided by a little boy, who is proud to assist his grandfather; for respect for the aged, no less than love for their children, is a dominant trait in the character of the Burman.

While many are working in the paddy-fields, other of the villagers find their occupation nearer home, and employ themselves in such work as mat and basket making (in which the children assist), the weaving of silk, and the manufacture of pottery. In sheds made for the purpose oil or sugar mills are being turned by bullocks, while in some few villages is made that pretty red and gold lacquer-work we know so well in England. Notice also the village blacksmith, who, with primitive tools, hammers out those curiously shaped "dahs" and knives used by the wood-cutters, while beside him, with equally simple implements, the carpenter puts the finishing touches to the carved yoke of a gharry.

In the streets the naked youngsters are playing at their games. Many are like our own, and marbles, peg-tops, leap-frog or kite-flying each have their turn, while in the ditches and puddles the boys hold miniature regattas with their toy sailing-boats. [39]

In the monastery or some private dwelling in the village the children go to school, and as they become older some occupation employs their time. While the boys are engaged with the cattle or about the boats, the girls are occupied in cutting firewood in the jungle, or from the pools in the forest collect the crude oil which they burn in their lamps.

Roaming at will through the village are pigs and poultry, geese and cattle, and the inevitable "pi dog" of the country. These dogs are peculiar, being wild, yet attaching themselves to some particular house, whose interests they seem to make their own, and which, by vigorous barking, they make a pretence of guarding. In some villages, also, the pigs, which are long-legged and fleet of foot, seem to act in the same capacity, strongly objecting to the intrusion of strangers, and even when riding my pony I have been attacked by them and forced to retire.

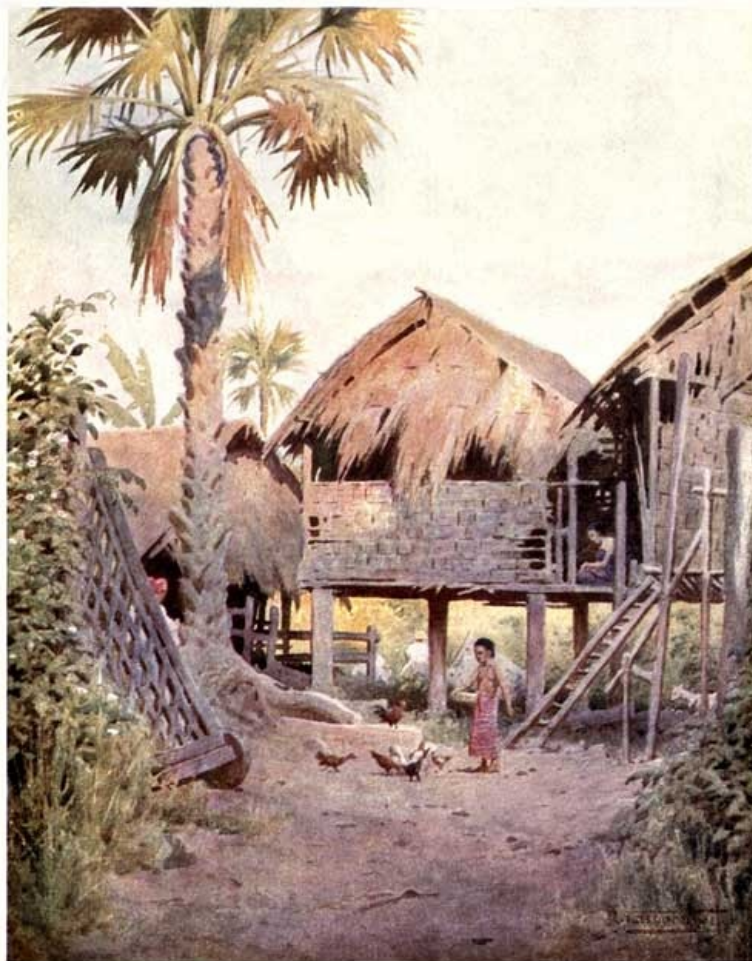
During the day many of the villagers have been busy in the rice-fields, for rice is their staple food and the only crop generally cultivated; even infants of a day old are fed upon it, the rice being first chewed by the mother, and each tiny mouthful washed down by a few drops of water. Towards evening, when the tired cattle draw their creaking carts homewards, the streets are thronged with the labourers returning from their work, ready for the simple meal of rice and "ngapi" their wives have prepared for them. [40]

It is a simple, happy life which these villagers lead, graced by many pretty customs of domesticity.

Rising with the sun, with it also they retire to rest, and as the last sweet tones of many gongs from the village monastery proclaim the close of their evening prayer the stockade-gates are closed, and, save for the howling of jackals outside, or the yapping of a dog, silence reigns throughout the village.

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ENTRANCE TO A BURMESE VILLAGE. Page 10.

## CHAPTER VII

### TOWN LIFE

Owing to their primitive methods of building and choice of materials, a Burmese town differs very little from a village except in point of size, though occasionally the houses are of two stories and timber-built throughout.

The stockade is absent, and in its place deep ditches, partly filled with water, surround the houses, and run alongside of the streets, which are, perhaps, somewhat wider and more regularly planned.

The approach to the town is often very pretty, the water reflecting the waving palm-trees and picturesque buildings, while the roads, which in Burma are usually nothing but a track, have, as they near the town, some semblance of solidity.

Little bridges cross the ditches, and give access to the houses, round about which are often raised paths or causeways of burnt brick set "herring-bone" fashion. These prove a comfort in the rains, when the streets of the town are rivers and the whole country a sea of mud.

Trees in plenty shade the road and houses, and shops and small bazaars give an air of business to the town, whose principal street, however, is largely covered with grass, and affords a convenient place in which to try a pony's paces. [42]

Some of the streets have side-walks, a shade less dusty (or muddy, as the case may be) than the road itself, and in the least frequented of them dwarf palmettos enjoy a lusty existence.

Enclosed by low palisades in front of many houses, cannas, hibiscus, poinsettia, or lilies are growing, and rare orchids hang from the eaves, to provide in their strange but lovely blossoms a flower for some woman's hair. Indoors, in coloured pots or stands of often elaborate design, are other flowers, always most carefully tended, for the Burmans love what is beautiful in Nature.

In the streets the life of the people is only a slight amplification of that of the villages, the shops with their attendant customers marking the principal difference, while in bullock-carts of more ornamental design than those of the villages, the families of the well-to-do enjoy their outing.

Though always two-wheeled and drawn by a pair of oxen, there is a certain amount of variety in the native carts. The wheels are generally large, and are placed very wide apart, in order to lessen the risk of capsizing in the terribly rough roads they often have to travel.

In the common country carts the wheels have very wide rims, across which is fastened a single

flat piece of wood instead of spokes, and in many cases the wheels are quite solid. The body is plain, but the yoke and yoke-pins are often carved, and the pole usually finishes in some grotesque ornament.

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When travelling the carts are covered by a hood of matting, and a mattress inside eases the jolting by day, and serves as a bed at night.

The pleasure gharry, however, is quite a pretty vehicle. The wheels have a very large number of thin spokes, and the hub is always ornamental. The sides consist of an open balustrade, and the rails sweeping backward in a fine curve, to terminate in a piece of carving high above the rail.

In Mandalay another pretty cart is used by the ladies when out calling or shopping. This is a closed carriage built entirely of wood, each panel of which is carved, and is just high enough in the roof to permit the ladies to sit upright upon their cushions. We can see them through the little unglazed windows, looking pretty or dignified, as the case may be; but dignity disappears so soon as they attempt to dismount, for this can only be done through a small door at the back, through which the rider must crawl backwards and then drop to the ground.

Games, as usual, figure largely in the young life of the place. A curious kind of football called "chinlon" is very general, and the instinct for sport comes out early in the boys, who, while flying their kites, attempt by skilful manœuvring to saw through each other's lines and so prove a "conqueror." The little girls have their amusements also, and it is pretty to see a little one being drawn about in a diminutive go-cart, or, squatting on her haunches by the doorstep, endeavouring to fathom the intricacies of doll-dressing.

Let us wander round the streets and see what we can find to interest us. First it will be noticed that beside every house are two long poles; one has a hook at its end, and the other is formed into a sort of broad paddle. These are provided in case of fire, when with the hook the thatch is pulled down, or the fire beaten out with the other. Fires are constantly occurring, for though every house is supposed to have a separate cooking shed, carelessness, or the habit of cooking indoors, is largely responsible for them, and there is very little hope for dwellings built of such inflammable material once a fire starts. Consequently in all parts of the country roofs of galvanized iron are slowly taking the place of the picturesque "thekka," even the "kyoungs" and "zeyats" being roofed by it; and unfortunately, as creepers do not take kindly to this new form of roofing, it will, I am afraid, always remain an eyesore among what is otherwise so picturesque.

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AT THE WELL.

In many of the streets are wells, surrounded by a wall and crossed by a heavy beam of wood to which pulleys are attached, through which run ropes with hooks at their ends, by means of which the water-pots are lowered. This is a great place of congregation for the young people, and is always surrounded by animated groups of young men and maidens, who, with pretty courtesies or coyness, carry on their youthful flirtations.

The Burman is always delightfully natural, and seems to live in the open daylight. At the doorstep of one house are mother and daughter, busy sewing up cloth, their red lacquer box of sewing materials between them. At another a dainty housewife entertains her guests at tea, for tea is now largely drunk in Burma.

All the shops are open to the street, and we may see the various trades in operation.

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It is interesting to see the umbrellas being made. They are almost flat when open, the frame consisting of a multitude of thin bamboo ribs formed by splitting *one* bamboo into many sections, so that the knots of the cane occur at the same regular distances on the ribs, so forming a kind of pattern. The common kinds are very large, some of those in use in the market-places being as big as a small tent. These are covered with calico, oiled or varnished, and form an excellent protection against sun or rain. More delicate sunshades are made of the same materials, or of silk; these are smaller, and are often painted in rings of flowers or foliage, which has a very pretty effect, and the sun shining through them throws a rich orange shade over the head and shoulders of the bearer.

Then, there are the silk-weavers and silversmiths, whose work is probably the best of its kind produced in any country, and in Thayetmu and Rangoon I have seen silver-work produced which, in my opinion, is unequalled for beauty of design or excellence of workmanship.

Turning enters largely into their decorative woodwork, and the turners, who use a very simple form of foot-lathe, are busily engaged in providing the various articles required—pilasters for a balcony, hubs for a cart-wheel, or the turned finials of a baby's cot. In a kindred trade the wood-carver is busy producing embellishments for the "kyoung" or "zeyat" which some wealthy resident is erecting.

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Though the Burmans occasionally become drunk on "toddy" (a beverage made from the flower of the toddy-palm), they are by habit abstemious and simple livers; rice and vegetable curries, bananas, jack-fruit, papaya, and other fruits, form their staple food, and, forbidden by their religion to take life, fish is practically the only variant to their vegetable diet, the fisherman excusing himself by saying that "*he* does not kill the fish: they die of themselves."

All smoke, however, and men, women and children equally enjoy their huge cheroots, composed of the inner bark of certain trees mixed with chopped tobacco, which are rolled into the form of a cigar in the spathe of Indian corn or some similar husk, and no meal would be considered to be properly set out without the red lacquer box containing betel, which is universally chewed. Betel is the nut of the areca-palm, and before being used is rolled between leaves on which a little lime is spread. The flavour is astringent and produces excessive expectoration, and, by its irritation, gives to the tongue and lips a curious bright pink colour. Still, it is considered an excellent stomach tonic, and so far as one can judge has no worse effect than to blacken the teeth of the user.

Every village or town has its pagodas, which in some cases are very numerous. The Burman spends little upon his home, which is always regarded as of a temporary nature, and in the erection of a pagoda or other religious building the wealthy native finds an outlet for his energies, and earns "merit" for himself. Few of the modern village pagodas are of any particular beauty, and I cannot but think that the money spent upon them would be far better employed in restoring and preserving the many beautiful and ancient temples scattered all over the country.

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In many towns is a sacred tank or reservoir, so entirely covered with lotus and other plants that the water cannot be seen. Large fish and turtles of great age inhabit them, but are seldom seen, on account of the heavy screen of leaves and flowers which lies upon the surface of the water, which, however, is often strongly disturbed as some ungainly monster rolls or turns below them. On the outskirts of the towns are the gardens, enclosed by hedges of castor-oil or cactus, where many kinds of fruits and spices are grown: bananas, pineapple, guava, bael, citrons, etc., are some of the ordinary kinds, while the coco-nut, tamarind, jack, and papaya grow everywhere about the streets and houses. Many vegetables, such as cucumber and vegetable-marrow, are also grown, and among the shops or stalls in the market-place none are so attractive as those which display their many-coloured and sweet-smelling fruits and vegetables.

Every few days a market is held in one or other of the large towns of a district, and attracts to it country people from a considerable distance around. Here one has a chance of seeing many other tribes and types beside the Burman: Shans, Karens, or Kachins, different in feature and costume from the natives of the town, together with Chinese and natives of India, give a variety to the population, and help to swell the crowd which from early morning till sundown throngs the market-places.

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**THE MARKET PLACE.**

The market is generally held in the open space outside the town, and is generally enclosed. In it are wooden buildings, or booths of sacking or "tayan" (grass-mats), in which each different trade is gathered, so dividing the bazaar into sections. Between the buildings rows of people squat upon the ground, protecting themselves and the odd assortment of wares they have for sale by screens of coloured cloth or the enormous umbrellas I have already mentioned. Up and down the lane so formed move the would-be purchasers, a motley crowd in which every type and race in Burma is represented. No less varied are the articles offered for sale—cotton goods and silks, cutlery and tools, lamps and combs, and various other articles of personal adornment, including the ornamental sandals which all the women of the town affect. Fruit, vegetables, and food-stuffs have a ready sale; nor are sweetmeats for the children forgotten.

Cooking-pots and all kinds of domestic utensils may be purchased and carried away in baskets beautifully made, and often of immense size, which form a striking feature of the bazaar.

All the more important stalls are kept by women, who, as I have already said, are the business backbone of the country. Many of them are women of good position, but they like their work, and are very clever at driving a bargain; but though dainty enough in appearance, they can be very abusive on occasion.

I have already said that the Burman is not permitted to take life, and in consequence meat enters but little into his diet; but in all bazaars frequented by natives of India, who are under no such prohibition, the slaughter and sale of cattle is of regular occurrence, and among the most eager buyers of the meat thus offered for sale are the Burmans themselves. [49]

Among other articles which I have noticed are "dahs," and knives of many sorts and degrees of excellence. No Burman travels without his "dah," which serves as a weapon of defence or enables him to clear his path where the jungle is thick, while the heavier knives are used for chopping the domestic fuel. Some of these "dahs" are very finely finished, the handle and sheath of wild plum being bound by delicately plaited bands of bamboo fibre, in which the ends are most skilfully concealed, and the blade, often 2 feet long, is excellently wrought and balanced.

At various times of the day groups of priests and novices move up and down the market collecting offerings from the people, while some "original" or buffoon gives the scene its touch of humour.

At sunset, when the bazaar is closed, long lines of people, some on foot, some in hooded carts, wend their ways towards their distant homes; and long after darkness has fallen on the land may still be heard the faint creaking of some laden cart as it slowly disappears along its lonely forest path.

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## **CHAPTER VIII**

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### **FIELD WORK**

If you are up very early in the morning you may see large herds of buffaloes and bullocks being driven to the paddy-fields. These surround the village, sometimes extending for miles in different directions; but often they are simply small clearings scattered through the jungle. The cattle are always driven by the children of the village, and it is curious to see how docile these huge buffaloes are under the control of some diminutive native, while with Europeans they are obstinate, ungovernable, and often dangerous.

The children always ride the cattle to the fields, sitting well back on the haunches, for they frequently have to travel a long, and often broken, path to their destination, and during the rains they are thus enabled to cross the streams and flooded areas, which it would have been impossible for them to do on foot.

It will interest you to know something about the manner in which the Burmans produce their rice-crop. Rice, as you know, requires a great deal of moisture, especially in the early days of its growth; consequently the ground upon which the rice-crop is to be sown must be *level*, so that the water with which the fields are covered may flow equally over the whole surface. The water is kept in by little dikes, or "bunds," as they are called, which surround each field, or the part of it to be irrigated; and as during a considerable portion of each year these cultivated areas are under water, and are always more or less in a boggy condition, these "bunds" form the most convenient, if not the only, means of traversing the district. Tortuous and winding as they are, it is not easy to decide upon your route, and you need not be surprised if the little causeway upon which you have set out eventually brings you back to your first starting-point, and you must make another attempt in a different direction. I remember once being hopelessly lost among the "bunds" in my endeavour to cross a patch of paddy-land, and although it was not more than a mile in width, two hours of valuable time were spent before I solved the problem of this labyrinth, and struck the road on its farther side.

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Rice cultivation begins towards the end of the monsoon, when the rains have thoroughly saturated the soil and filled the fields with water, often to the top of the dikes. Then ploughing begins, and the grass with which the fields were recently covered is turned over in clods, as we do at home, by means of a curious wooden plough shod with bronze or iron.

These ploughs are drawn by the bullocks and buffaloes, or by elephants when they are available, the operation being often carried out under water. After this all the cattle in the district are driven on to the fields in order to break up and trample down the clods, and sometimes harrows, much like our own, are used for the same purpose.

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Then the sowing begins, the rice being scattered very freely over one or two selected portions of the whole area, for which they serve as nursery gardens; for the rice is not sown generally over the fields, but the young plants transferred from these small nurseries to the larger fields. This work is done by the men and women, who, wading in the water, plant out the young growth 5 or 6 inches apart, and one may notice that during this operation all wear leggings or stockings of straw as a protection against the leeches which in enormous numbers infest the muddy water.

The rice now may be left to itself, excepting for the necessity of keeping it constantly supplied with water, which is raised from the neighbouring river or creek by many ingenious appliances, and carried to the fields by pipes of bamboo or channels in the mud.

While the crop is growing the cattle have an idle time, for with the exception of the bullocks which draw the market-carts, and a few which may perhaps be working in the oil or sugar mills, there is nothing for them to do. For the rest, the time between the sowing and reaping is passed enclosed in large pens or roaming by hundreds in the jungle.

The harvest begins in October, and lasts until December or later, according to the district. When ripe, the rice is 3 to 4 feet in height, each plant growing several ears, the grain being slightly bearded, like barley; and in good soil, where the water-supply has been continuous, its growth is so dense that it is impossible for weeds to grow.

I know few prettier sights than a harvest-field in an early autumn morning. Through the steamy exhalations from the ground, and dancing on the dewdrops which hang heavy upon every blade or ear, the early sun is shining. Everything is mysterious in the haze, through which the belt of forest which surrounds the cultivated land is grey and ghost-like; huge cobwebs hang between the bushes laden with glittering beads of moisture, and the whole scene is bathed in a curious opalescent light in which all sense of distance is destroyed. Scattered through the fields are the harvesters, whose brightly-coloured "lungyi" and gay head-scarf are the only spots of definite colour.

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The rice is cut with sickles a little above the ground, so as to leave sufficient straw to serve as fodder for the cattle or to fertilize the land. The grain is bound into sheaves much as we do at home, and after remaining in the fields for a day or two in order to dry, it is carried to the threshing-floor. This is simply a piece of selected ground where the surface is dry and hard, on which the sheaves are placed in the form of a large circle and the grain trodden out by cattle. When the threshing is complete and the straw removed, there remains a huge pile of grain and husks freely mixed with dust. This has to be cleaned and winnowed, which is done by a very simple process, the grain being thrown into the air by means of large shallow trays made of bamboo, when the wind, blowing away the dust and loose husks, leaves the grain tolerably clean in a pile at the worker's feet.

The rice is not yet fit for use, however, the grain still being enclosed in its hard husk, which has to be removed by another process. In travelling through Burma one may often notice standing outside a native dwelling a large and deep bowl composed of some hard wood in which lies a rounded log about 4 feet in length, much like a large mortar and pestle. These are the "pounders," in which by a vigorous use of the pestle the husk is separated from the rice, which is again winnowed and washed, and is then ready for use. Though generally eaten in its simple state, bread and cakes are often made from rice-flour, which is ground in a hand-mill consisting

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of two flat circular stones, and is identical with the hand-mill of Scripture.

From the large areas the bulk of the rice-crop is shipped to Rangoon, sufficient for the needs of the people being stored in the villages in receptacles formed of wicker-work covered on the outside with mud.

I have described the process of rice cultivation which is followed in districts where a perpetual water-supply is available, but in other and drier zones a different kind of rice and other crops, such as sugar, maize, and sesamum, are grown; but while these, as well as many fruits and vegetables, are cultivated in the neighbourhood of every town or village, rice may be considered to be practically the only agricultural crop in Burma, and forms perhaps its most important article of export.

Though not cultivated by man, the country produces another crop which to the Burman is second only to rice in value. I mean the *bamboo*, which grows in enormous quantities in every forest or jungle in the country. There are many varieties of bamboo, some comparatively small, others growing to a height of 60 or 70 feet, the canes being often upwards of 2 feet in circumference at the base. Each species has its separate use, and, as we have already seen, there are few things for which the Burman does not employ it. His houses are very often entirely built of it: canes, either whole or split, form its framework and flooring; the mats which form the walls are woven from strips cut from the outside skin; the thatch is often composed of its leaves; while no hotter fire can be used than one made from its debris. Split into finer strands, the bamboo furnishes the material of which baskets are made, while its fine and flexible fibres, plaited and woven into shape, form the foundation for their beautiful bowls and dishes of red lacquer. Bows and yokes for the porters, sheaths of weapons and umbrella frames, and a host of small articles of domestic furniture, are of the same material, and a section cut from the giant bamboo forms an excellent bucket, which is used all over the forests.

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## CHAPTER IX

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### THE FOREST

And now I want to tell you something about the forest, which, as we have seen from the river, practically covers the country.

We all enjoy our English woods, but these, lovely though they are, convey no idea whatever of the luxuriant and bewildering beauty of a forest in the tropics.

How shall I give you an idea of it? It is so big, so magnificent, and at times so solemn. Everywhere you are surrounded by trees of many kinds and immense size, whose huge trunks, springing from a dense mass of undergrowth, rise 200 feet or more into the air. All are bound together by a tangled mass of creepers, which mingle their foliage with that of the trees to form one huge canopy of leaves, in which birds of bright plumage and beautiful song live out their happy lives. Monkeys also make their home there, and strange insects and butterflies of rare beauty flit among the flowers, or hover in the few stray sunbeams which penetrate the gloom.

It is all very impressive, very beautiful, and still, except for the drone of insects or soft note of the songbird. Perhaps the silence may be broken by a herd of wild elephants crashing heavily through the canes, or the shrill cry of the squirrel startles the forest and warns its fellows of the nearness of a snake.

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**IN THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST.**

Bewilderment and wonder grow upon anyone riding through the forest for the first time, but after a few days one gradually becomes accustomed to these luxuriant surroundings, and is able to appreciate the forest in detail.

How beautiful the undergrowth is! Palms and bamboos wave gracefully above a mass of flowering plants, among and over which climb convolvuli of many kinds, *tropæolum*, honeysuckle, and a variety of other creepers, forming natural arbours, with whose blossoms mingle those of the festoons hanging from the trees.

Teak, india-rubber, and cutch trees rise high above the undergrowth, and in turn are dwarfed by such giants as the pyngado and the cotton-tree. These grow to an enormous size. The pyngado, straight and smooth, often rises 150 feet before it puts forth a branch, and I have seen ponies stabled between the natural buttresses which support the huge trunk of the silk-cotton tree, sometimes 250 feet in height.

Orchids of great size grow upon the boughs, and add to the wealth of foliage, in which the large-leaved teak or rubber trees contrast with the feathery pepper or acacia; and it is interesting to notice that most of the feathery kinds bear thorns.

Though generally straight and tall, the trees are often twisted into curious joints and elbows, which give them a very fantastic appearance; but most strange of all are the creepers which bind these forest growths. Some are very large, and stretch for immense distances, linking tree to tree in twining loops, from which their hanging tendrils reach the ground, or perhaps crossing some forest glade or stream to form an aerial bridge for the lemurs or the monkeys.

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One creeper in particular I must tell you about. This is called "Nyoung-bin" by the natives, and is a very strange plant. It very often springs from a seed dropped by some bird into the fork of a tree, where, taking root, it sends its suckers downwards until they become firmly bedded in the ground, then, growing upwards again, it slowly envelops the parent tree until it is entirely enclosed by the new growth, which kills it, but which in its stead becomes a *new* tree, larger and more lofty than the one which first supported it. This is one of the many species of ficus, of which its equally strange cousin, the many-trunked banyan, is another common feature of a Burmese forest.

Naturally these forests are alive with birds. Parrots and parakeets live among the tree-tops, and doves and pigeons, jays and mynahs, and a great variety of small birds, find their home here. Woodpeckers are busy among the tree-trunks, sharing their spoil of insects with the lizards and the tree-frogs, and among the lesser growths tits, finches, and wagtails rear their young broods.

The birds are not the only occupants of these wilds, however, for in no country is there a larger variety of game than in Burma. Herds of wild elephants roam the forests, in which are also tigers, panthers, and bears. Many kinds of deer are there, to be preyed upon by man or beast, from the pretty little gyi or barking deer to the lordly sambur. Wild pig also are very numerous, and lurking in the dank undergrowth or fissures of the rocks are many venomous snakes and large

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pythons.

But though so abundant, all these wild creatures are shy, and one may travel many days without adventure, and any sense of danger is soon lost in admiration of the beauties of these wilds.

Riding through such a forest is very fascinating in the early winter months. Then the ground is fairly hard, and riding would be easy were it not for the thorny vines and fallen tree-trunks which lie among the thickets. At this time, also, foliage and flowers are still luxuriant, and all kinds of wild life abundant.

But from May to October the south-west monsoon, bringing in the heavily-laden rain-clouds from the sea, pours upon the country its torrential rains, which change this beautiful forest into a swamp. The quiet creeks become turbid rivers, while the hill-sides are torn by innumerable torrents, which, washing away the earth from the roots of the trees, cause them to fall crashing among the dripping undergrowth. Bridges are swept away, and the paths become morasses. Travelling in the forest is then wellnigh impossible, though it is this time that the native woodman and the large number of young Englishmen engaged in forest-work find the busiest of the year.

Gradually the rains cease, and with the return of sunshine birds and flowers spring into renewed life, more beautiful than ever, and at no time of the year is the forest more lovely than immediately after the monsoon rains. [60]

Presently the hot weather of March and April comes to strip the trees of their leaves, while the dak and other flowering trees are a blaze of crimson among the autumn tints. Then, when everything is dry and withered, forest fires break out in many parts of the country, consuming all but the larger trees, and leaving a blackened waste where once was a paradise of flowers. It is sad to ride in the track of such a fire, but this is no doubt Nature's way of *cleaning* the country, and destroying a vast amount of decaying vegetable matter and keeping in check many venomous insects and reptiles. The forest appears to be dead until the advent of the next monsoon restores to the sun-bleached skeleton its usual luxuriant vegetation.

But I hear some one asking, How do you live and travel in such a country? All through India and Burma at intervals along the main routes of travel dâk bungalows have been erected for the use of travellers. These are small houses, containing two or three rooms, raised on poles above the ground. They are built of timber, with matting walls and thatched roof, much like the Burmese dwellings I have described. Native custodians are in charge of them, and although specially intended for the use of Government servants, any traveller may use them. In the forest similar houses, called "tais," smaller and often built of bamboo, are erected, though sometimes very small huts indeed, formed of bamboo and reeds, are the only shelter available. These are draughty dwellings, and even the best-built "tai" is partly open to the air, and affords little protection from the night cold, which is often so intense that sleep is almost impossible. [61]

After a scanty breakfast by candlelight, a start is made in the early dawn, when the air is cold and damp, and the heavy dew dripping from the reeds and kine-grass quickly soaks you to the skin. The sunrise is curiously sudden, and very soon the sun is hot enough to compel the traveller to leave the open glades and seek the shelter of the denser portions of the forest. Hardy little ponies, sure-footed and willing, are our mounts, while elephants carry the stores and provisions, cooking utensils, and bedding, which every traveller must take with him.

In distinction to the working elephants, those employed on a journey are called "travellers," and are used for no other purpose. Their drivers are called "ouzies," and sit astride the animals' necks, with their legs hanging down behind their ears. There are several ways of mounting, each pretty: sometimes the elephant will hold up its fore-foot to form a step for its driver, or will drop upon its knees and bend its trunk to form a step, by which the "ouzie" is able to reach his seat.

When travelling they have a shambling sort of gait, half walk, half amble, but manage to get over the ground very quickly, and for such cumbersome animals are very nimble-footed. It is almost ludicrous to see the huge beasts picking their way along a narrow "bund" or crossing some ditch by a bridge of fallen logs, but they always do so successfully. [62]

Soft and boggy land, however, is a great trouble to them, their great weight causing them to sink deep into the mud; and elephants will often show their dread of such places by loud trumpeting and great unwillingness to attempt the passage. Occasionally they will tear up tufts of reeds or boughs of trees to make a foothold for themselves, and I heard quite recently of a case where a friend of mine, while out shooting from elephants, came to such a marshy place, which at first they refused to cross. Then, before anything could be done to prevent it, his elephant seized the driver with his trunk and, placing him in the mud, used the poor native's body as a "stepping-stone." The driver was, of course, crushed to death, and my friend only escaped a similar fate by scrambling off his elephant by the tail. Generally elephants are docile enough, but are not always fond of Europeans and very much dislike a rider to approach too closely; but they rarely give trouble to their drivers, for whom they often have a genuine affection.

Roads in the forest are few, and at best are only bridle-tracks, difficult to ride over, and through which a way has often to be cut with knives, so rapid is the growth.

Travelling is slow and often difficult, and towards the great heat of midday men and animals are glad to rest, while another march in the afternoon brings us, towards sunset, to our next halting-place. Then fuel for the fires must be collected to prepare the evening meal, beds made ready, [63]

and the animals attended to. The ponies are tethered underneath the "tai," while the elephants, wearing a wooden bell called "kalouk," are turned loose into the forest, where their drivers quickly track them down again in the morning by the sound of their bell.

About sundown a strange hush comes over the forest, and the leaves hang limply after the great heat of the day. Insects and birds give up their activities, and are preparing to roost or lying in the various hiding-places they frequent. All Nature seems to be *tired*, and little wonder when the thermometer has shown 105° of moist heat!

Suddenly with the cooling of the air a shiver and a rustle passes over the tree-tops as the sundown breeze brings relief to the tired world. Immediately the forest is alive again, but with new inhabitants. The dancing fireflies weave rings of bluish light around the tree-trunks, already half lost in the gathering darkness; crickets and tree-frogs contribute to the growing sounds of the woody solitude; while the stealthy tread of some prowling animal is faintly heard among the withered debris of the undergrowth. It is no longer safe to wander from the camp-fire, whose flames, shooting upwards in straight tongues, light up the nearer trees in contrast to the blackness beyond, in which many a dangerous wild beast lurks. Within the circle which our camp-fire lights is safety, and in the now cold night air its warmth is grateful. No one who has not experienced it can at all appreciate the romantic pleasure of a forest camp, never more enjoyable than in the hour before "turning in," when, in the light of our blazing logs and surrounded by the dark mystery beyond, the last pipe is smoked while listening to many exciting tales of adventure, before we stretch our tired limbs in bed.

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A DAK BUNGALOW. Page 60.

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## CHAPTER X

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### THE FOREST (*continued*)

Though human habitations are not often met with in the forest, little native settlements occur from time to time, where, surrounded by small clearings, over which a primitive scarecrow mounts guard, sufficient rice is grown for their needs. These little hamlets are occupied by woodmen, or little communities of Chins, a kindred race to the Burmans, though differing from them in many customs, most curious of which is their habit of tattooing the faces of their young women *black*.

Here and there one meets a fowler, who, with primitive snare or decoy-bird, seeks to take his toll of the forest; and in the most remote districts may be met some picturesque Burmese travelling-cart, toiling laboriously over tracks which would almost seem to be impossible for wheels. I have already mentioned the creaking of the cart-wheels which no Burman would oil, for they believe that the horrible groanings they produce, together with their own loud voices, serve to ward off the evil spirits of the woods; for the Burman is superstitious, and at frequent intervals may be seen tiny wicker-work representations of pagodas and "zeyats" erected to propitiate the forest "nats," and passers-by will deposit in these diminutive shrines some offering of food or ornament, and in the Shan States I remember seeing one whose enclosing fence was hung with spears and "dahs," and other weapons of considerable interest and some value.

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By the wayside the lonely grave of some traveller or woodman, marked by its simple fence of twigs, gives a touch of pathos to the forest; and among its natural wonders are the giant ant-hills, often 9 feet or more in height.

Ants are probably the most destructive of all insects in Burma. Voracious wood-eaters, they will attack fallen logs or growing trees, which they will entirely consume till only the hollow bark remains. This is one great reason why the wood of the teak-tree is so highly valued, as it is the only timber these ants will not touch, and consequently is the one of which all the more important buildings and dwellings are constructed.

In many districts, within reach of some beautiful forest creek, teak-cutting may be seen in full operation; and it is interesting to watch the elephants at work, hauling logs or loading them on to the little trollies, by which they are carried down to the water, where, floundering along the muddy bank, they launch them in the stream.

Some of these creeks are very lovely, fringed as they are by flowering grasses, behind which the forest rises tier on tier above the shimmering water and gleaming sand-banks.

On the banks are the footprints of many wild animals who have come down to water during the night. In the water are fish and water-snakes, which alert herons constantly harass, and, strange as it may seem, in the river-bed itself are the marks of cart-wheels, for the Burmans often make a highway of these forest streams, which in the dry season are generally easier to travel than the roads. [67]

The forest itself is never monotonous, its growths varying according to the levels of the hills. Sometimes the enormous trees and heavy foliage I have already described produce a depth of gloom which might well excuse the superstitious fear of the Burmans, and often recalls to me the pictures in our fairy-books, where some bold knight is depicted entering the depths of an enchanted wood, in search of the dragon that well might dwell there. Descending the hill-side with a suddenness which is almost startling, you may find yourself in a bamboo forest, which is a veritable fairyland for beauty. From a carpet of sand, on which lilies grow, these giant bamboos spring, fern-like, in enormous clumps, spreading their arms and feathery crests in all directions, and, meeting overhead, form avenues and lanes, which remind one of some beautiful cathedral aisle.

Different in many ways from the forests I have described are those of the cooler plateaus and mountain ranges of Northern Burma. On the higher levels oak and pines are found among the other trees, and bracken grows around the wild plums on the more open slopes. Sparkling rivulets spring from the mountain-side, and, overhung by ferns and mosses, flow gurgling over their pebbly beds to the deep valley below, there to join the swiftly-flowing river, which, by many waterfalls and rapids, eventually reaches the level of the plains. [68]

From the river's edge, where reeds and wild bananas grow, the purple wistaria spreads itself over the mass of vegetation which covers the precipitous hills from base to summit.

Bamboos of many kinds wave among the trees or grow in masses by themselves, and climbing geranium and ferns mount from one foothold to another over tree-trunks or rocks, rooting as they go.

Nests of wasps and weaver birds hang from the canes. Jungle-fowl and pheasant, snipe and partridge, are there to provide the traveller with food, and often, flying heavily from tree to tree, a peacock offers a welcome addition to your larder.

The forest is dense, and in places almost impenetrable, and as you ride or cut your way through the thick undergrowth, monkeys of large size follow you through the tree-tops, scolding and chattering at your intrusion; and lemurs, fear overcome by curiosity, approach you closely, as though to see what kind of creature is this that penetrates these wilds.

Wildness best describes these leafy solitudes in which roads are almost unknown, and which the larger beasts as well as men appear to shun.

Along the river-bank, however, are many little hamlets, where in dug-out canoes the natives fish the rivers, using many ingenious nets and traps, or weirs which stretch from bank to bank.

Carts are never used here, and such traffic as is carried on must be done by means of pack-ponies, whose loads are so contrived that, should they stumble on their rugged path, they can easily free themselves of their burden. [69]

We are now near to the Chinese frontier, and many straggling groups of Chinese, Shans, and Shan-tilok (which is a mixture of the two) may be met bearing bales or baskets of produce on their backs to some distant settlement; or occasionally a family party, bent upon some pilgrimage or journey, carry their household goods and young children in baskets slung from bamboo poles, which cross their shoulders.

On the lower levels, where paths are more frequent, little bridges of picturesque design cross the streams, from which rise warm miasmatic mists. In the early morning dense fogs fill the valleys, often accompanied by frost; but as the sun gains power and the mists are sucked up, the heat is intense; and these extremes of heat and cold, combined with the smell of rotting vegetation and exhalations from the ground, render this region a perfect fever-den, in which no white man can safely live.

Though the general character of the country consists of lofty mountains and deep valleys, through which wide rivers flow, there are at intervals considerable stretches of flat land, which are under partial cultivation. Here villages of some size are found, and among the people which

inhabit them are strange types we have not previously seen in Burma, and customs which are curious. The Shans, for instance, have the habit of tattooing their faces and legs and centre of their chests, while, their scanty clothing not permitting the use of pockets, they carry upon their backs little baskets of wicker-work, in which are placed their knives, tobacco, and such other articles as a pocket might have accommodated. The Yunnanese, wearing huge plaited hats of straw and curious slippers of the same material, but whose other garments are so thin and baggy as to mark them indifferent to the cold, are in marked contrast to the Kachins, who wear an elaborate costume of heavy woollen material of many colours. The men, whose hair is long and tied in a knot on the top of the head, after the manner of the Burmese, wear a simple scarf tied round the head in place of a hat, while the women, who wear a costume much like the men, have as their head-covering a handkerchief or scarf folded flat upon the head. All have their ears bored, the lobes being so large as not only to enable them to wear ear ornaments of unusual size, but often to serve as a handy receptacle for a cigar! When travelling the Kachins usually carry in their hands double-ended spears, whose shafts are covered with a kind of red plush from which large fringes hang; but these are only ceremonial weapons, and show that their intentions are pacific. Like the Shans, they dispense with pockets in their clothing, but instead wear suspended under their arm a cloth bag, which is often prettily embroidered.

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Though, as I have mentioned, the forests of Mid-Burma—and, indeed, generally throughout the country—abound in game, which ranges from elephant and rhinoceros down to the smallest deer, and while every tree and thicket is a home for birds, all forms of animal life appear to avoid the fever-infested highlands of North-East Burma. In some places, however, strange freaks of Nature occur. On the high plateau through which the Myit-nge River flows, though the forest and jungle is more or less deserted, scattered over the plain are conical limestone crags, which are alive with monkeys; and while the innumerable species of insects which infest the warmer forests are absent, nowhere in all Burma have I seen butterflies more numerous or more beautiful than here. It is singular, also, to notice how human habitations will attract certain forms of animal life, and in some mysterious manner, though the surrounding forest may be otherwise deserted, pigeons and doves and the various kinds of crow quickly install themselves in the neighbourhood of a newly-established settlement or camp.

[71]

It is impossible in two short chapters to describe the infinite variety and charm of these Burmese forests—the rushing mountain torrents, the sweeping rivers, and noble waterfalls; the sluggish streams, which reflect the glories of the surrounding forest; its teeming life, its solitude, and the wonderful effects of light and colour; but perhaps I have said enough to convey to you some idea of that wealth of exuberant beauty which has forced upon me the conclusion that nothing in all the world is quite so beautiful as a tropical forest.

So far I have not given you any example of the many adventures which may befall a traveller in such wilds, but they are naturally of frequent occurrence.

Often while painting, and quite unarmed, I have found myself in unpleasantly close proximity to wild beasts of many kinds, and on more than one occasion I have narrowly escaped the fatal bite of some deadly snake which I have killed. Every one has a natural horror of poisonous snakes, but sometimes an adventure with them has its element of amusement. I remember an instance where one of my companions, having come into camp from his work in the forest, lay down outside his tent to rest, and, the better to enjoy it, took off his riding-boots and loosened his breeches at the knee. While his "tiffin" was being prepared he went to sleep, but presently awoke with a horrible sensation of something lying cold against his thigh. To his alarm, he discovered this to be a large cobra, which had sought shelter from the sun. Remaining quite still, he called his native servant, and explained the position, and the snake was soon secured and dispatched, while my friend suffered nothing worse than a fright.

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THE QUEEN'S GOLDEN MONASTERY, MANDALAY. Page 79.

Though so docile as a rule when tamed, elephants in their wild state are most dangerous, and I have heard of many narrow escapes from them in Burma. Panthers, also, though shy of human beings, are fierce when at bay, and I have been told that a scratch from their claws nearly always results in fatal blood-poisoning.

It is the tiger, however, which is most to be feared. General throughout the country, a traveller through jungle or forest must be ever alert, so stealthy are its movements, and so audacious is it in its depredations. Its great strength, however, which is not so generally recognized, the following will serve to show. Close beside our lonely camp on the Nan-Tu River a tiger killed a sambur, upon which the natives saw him feeding. Being unarmed themselves, they ran for the "Sahib" to come and shoot him; but, on regaining the spot, they found that the tiger had gone, carrying the huge carcass with him. Following the trail, they came up with their quarry at the river's bank; but the tiger, still retaining its hold upon its prey, took to the water, and, although impeded by its heavy burden, succeeded in reaching the opposite shore. The sad part of the story is that a native, armed with a "dah," who had followed the tiger into the river, though an extremely powerful swimmer, was swept away by the current, and drowned in the rapids below.

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## CHAPTER XI

[74]

### TEMPLES AND RELIGION

Burma has been called the "Land of Pagodas," and nothing could be more true, for from Syriam, below Rangoon, to Myitkyina, in the far north, is one long succession of these beautiful temples. Not only on the river-banks do these pagodas crown the hills, but in every town and village throughout the country; and in many remote districts, far from present habitations, some shrine, however simple, has been raised.

We have seen something of the great Shwe Dagon pagoda in Rangoon, but there are many others almost equally beautiful, if not so large: the exquisite Shwe Tsan Daw at Prome, the Arracan near Mandalay, while in old Pagan, Pegu, Moulmein, and a host of other places, are temples which one might well think could not be surpassed for beauty. I have told you that these pagodas are usually bell-shaped—a delicate and most elegant form of design, which gains very much in effect from the habit the Burmese have of building their temples on a hill, so that the gradually ascending ground, on the different levels of which the pinnacles of the "kyoungs" are visible above the trees, leads gradually upward from one point to another until the temple itself is reached,

towering gracefully above the other forms of beauty with which the hill is sometimes covered. [75] Another pretty effect is gained by building them close to the water, either on the river-bank or beside some artificial pool or "tank," in which they are reflected. Nothing could be more beautiful than the effect of these golden piles glittering in the sunshine among the deep green of the trees, especially when repeated in some placid sheet of water, dotted over perhaps with pink and purple lotus.

And, then, the little bells which hang from every "ti"—how they tinkle as they swing in the breeze, in their numbers forming one general harmonious note, most musical, and with a strange sensation of joy and contentment in its sound.

These little bells are not the only ones in the temples, however, for in all of them are others of very large size, which, raised a foot or more from the ground, hang between two posts set in the platform which surrounds the "zedi," as the bell-shaped temple is called.

These are used by the worshippers, who, with a stag's horn, strike the bell after praying, to call the attention of the "nats" of the upper and lower worlds to the fact that they have done so. You will see these bells in one of the pictures, but there are some others of immense size, that at Mingun weighing eighty tons; but, as a rule, the tone of the very large bells is poor, and not to be compared with that of those of more moderate size.

There are one or two places in Burma particularly rich in pagodas—Pagan, Sagaing, and Mandalay. I want to tell you just a little about each. [76]

Let us go to Mandalay first, for I have no doubt that you have been wondering why I have not already told you something about the capital of Burma.

As a matter of fact, Mandalay is little better than an enlarged village, and is built much in the same way as the towns I have already described, and has really only two points of great interest—its religious buildings and the "fort."

I am referring, of course, to the *Burmese* town, for surrounding the fort are a large number of well-built bungalows, and streets of shops built of stone or brick; but these are for the use of Europeans and Indian or Chinese traders, the Burmans here, as elsewhere, contenting themselves with their thatched houses of timber. It may appear surprising that a people who could erect their marvellous temples should be satisfied with such poor dwellings. The reason is to be found in their custom of removing their capital on each change of dynasty, and since A.D. 1740 the capital of Burma has been moved no less than eight times! Mandalay itself is only fifty years old, so that it hardly appeared to them worth their while to build more substantial dwellings, which might so soon have to be deserted; and in this way they came to regard their homes as temporary, expending their energies and wealth in the building of temples and monasteries instead.

The streets of Mandalay are wide, and laid out in rectangles, as in Rangoon, and, like all towns in Burma, the roads are heavily shaded by trees. Foreign types are common in Mandalay, but the Burmese life here is very pretty. Nowhere else are the people better dressed, and the ladies rival [77] the silk bazaar in the variety and beautiful colour of their clothing. Until recently this was a royal city, and the ladies pay great attention to the demands of fashion, whether it is in their delicately-tinted garments, their embroidered sunshades or fan, or the lace handkerchief with which they love to toy; and nothing in the way of crowd could be nicer than these daintily-dressed and usually prepossessing men and women. Fashion, however, has always *some* drawback. The ladies in many cases smear their faces with a paste called "thannakah," which has the effect of whitening the skin. The result is very unfortunate, for it is not always put on evenly, and only serves to make the ugly more forbidding, while it destroys the soft warmth of colour and skin texture which so often makes these women beautiful. Another unfortunate custom is their habit of smoking such huge cheroots, which no mouth of ordinary size could possibly hold without distortion.

All roads in Mandalay lead to the fort, lately the residence of the Court. This consists of a huge square, 1-1/4 miles each way, entirely surrounded by battlemented walls, and further protected by a wide and deep moat. Quaint bridges cross the moat, and lead to gateways, each surmounted by a "pyathat." Within the walls are the palace of the King, and many other buildings of highly ornate and purely Burmese character. Many of them have lately been destroyed by fire; but what will interest us most is the rambling but most picturesque palace, the lofty "pyathat" which is [78] erected over Thebaw's throne being the finest in the country, and so much admired by the Burmans as to be called "the centre of the universe."

All these buildings are of timber, only the finest teak being used, and the many columns which support the roofs of the halls of audience consist of single tree-trunks of unusual size and great value.

The moat serves to supply Mandalay with its drinking-water, and is fed by a conduit from the hills. I am afraid the water is not very clean, but it is a very pretty sight to see the people coming to fill their jars from the little stages which jut from the banks, while the whole surface is at some seasons of the year a mass of purple lotus and white water-lily, and, although in the middle of the city, paddy-birds and other ibis wade about its margins.

Mandalay is a station for our troops, who are quartered inside the fort, which was only captured after severe fighting. The stockade, which offered so great an obstacle to our men, has been

swept away, and "Tommy Atkins," as well as Indian troops, now inhabit the palaces of King Thebaw's time! But it is an unhealthy station, and nowhere in Burma have I seen such crowds of mosquitoes, the common cause of fever in Europeans.

The most beautiful of Mandalay's pagodas, "the Incomparable," has been destroyed by fire; but a large number remain, one of which is very interesting. This is the "Kuthodaw," a temple built by Mindon Min, King Thebaw's father. The central dome is not remarkable, but on each side of the large flagged space which surrounds it are rows and rows of miniature temples, each with an ornamental cupola, supported upon pillars. Each of these 729 cupolas contains a slab of alabaster, on which is inscribed a chapter of the Pali Bible. The entrance-gates, also, are large, and unusually ornate in design. [79]

Each quarter of the town has one or more large pagodas, and others surround its outskirts from the river-bank to the top of Mandalay Hill; but these differ from the others we have noticed in one respect, being covered by carved plaster-work, each stage of which is beautified by some elaborate or striking pattern, so that the dome of pure white, broken by sharp contrast of light and shade, is quite as rich in effect as the gilded temples of Rangoon or Prome.

Most remarkable of all the buildings in Mandalay, however, are the monasteries, of which there are a large number, many of great interest, the principal one being the "Queen's Golden Monastery," for beauty of design and elaborate embellishment unquestionably the finest structure of its kind in Burma.

Across the river from Mandalay is a very pretty scene. Low conical hills rise from the banks of the river, each crowned by a pagoda, around which are many "kyoungs" and "zeyats." Scattered over the hill-sides are many others, gleaming white against the warm earth tints and the foliage which surround them. This is old Sagaing, once a capital of Burma; but the city has gone, and only its temples now remain. Crossing the river in sampans painted red, blue, and yellow, or landing on the pearly shingle of the beach, are crowds of well-dressed Burmans from Mandalay and Ava, bent on a pilgrimage to one or other of the many shrines, which are reached by long flights of steps, whose entrance is guarded by enormous leogryphs. [80]



**THE SHWE ZIGON PAGODA, PAGAN. Page 82.**

A pretty legend gives the origin of these monsters, which, often of enormous size, invariably guard the entrance to a temple. Long ago in the dim past a Princess was stolen by "nats," and hidden away in the dark recesses of the forest. The King made every effort to find the hiding-place of his daughter, but without success, until one day a lioness rescued the Princess, and restored her to her home. Ever since then the lion, which in the course of centuries has gradually become changed into the leogryph (or half-lion, half-griffin), has been accepted by the people as the emblem of protecting watchfulness.

Close to Mandalay on the south is Amarapura, another of Burma's many capitals, and though we cannot hope to see all the many interesting monuments that remain, it has one pagoda in particular which well repays us for our long and dusty journey.

This is the Arracan pagoda, one of the most famous shrines in Burma, and the one most frequented by the Shans and other hill tribes, whose time of pilgrimage occurs "between the reaping and the sowing."

There is no ascent to this temple, which, through a series of ornamented doorways, is approached by a long flat corridor, which, as usual, serves the purpose of a bazaar. Here perhaps the best Burmese gongs may be purchased, and the stalls for cut flowers display a rich profusion of blooms, whose scent fills the whole temple precincts. The temple itself is different in design from any others we have seen, being built in the form of a square tower, above which rises a series of diminishing terraces, each beautified by carved battlements and corner pinnacles, the [81]

whole being richly gilt.

Beneath the central tower is the shrine, before which a constant stream of devotees succeed each other in prayer. This contains an enormous brass image of Buddha, 12 feet in height, thickly plastered with the pilgrims' offerings of gold-leaf. Behind the temple are the sacred tanks, whose green and slimy water is alive with turtles, too lazy or too well fed to eat the dainty morsels thrown to them by the onlookers, but which are pounced upon by hundreds of hawks, who often seize the tit-bits before they reach the water.

The courtyards are, as usual, thronged, and pastry-cooks and story-tellers, soothsayers and musicians, provide refreshment and amusement to the ever-moving crowd of happy people, at whom we never tire of looking.

And now, having seen something of the principal pagodas, with their crowds of worshippers or loiterers, let us take one glimpse of the ancient city of Pagan.

Splendidly placed upon a commanding site on the river-bank, Pagan was at one time a populous and wealthy centre. To-day it is the city of the dead, and the domes and pinnacles of its temples, which cover an area of 16 square miles, remain silent monuments to its former greatness. Save for a few priests and scattered families of the poorest of the people, its population has disappeared centuries ago, and the land, once fertile, is now covered with aloe, cactus, and thorn, while an air of weary heat and desolation envelops it. Some idea of its size may be formed when I tell you that a thousand of its pagodas are known by name, while as many more are little but a heap of ruinous brickwork. [82]

Many of its temples are of the greatest historical interest. The Ananda, built 800 years ago, is larger than St. Paul's, and its elongated dome and innumerable pinnacles render it as graceful as it is imposing. There are other temples even larger, while the picture facing page 80 will give you some little idea of the beauty and interest of the Shwe Zigon.

Throughout the country temples abound, and in lonely places where no temple has been built, the lofty "tagundaing" marks some holy spot. You will find no statues to her Kings in Burma, but in every temple, in little wayside shrines, and even in the most unfrequented wilds, the Burmans have erected images of Buddha, founder of their faith.

Nearly one-third of the world's population are Buddhists, and this fact alone would seem to show how beautiful is the religion they profess. Buddhism was founded by an Indian Prince called Gautama, about 600 years before the birth of Christ. This Prince, though heir to a kingdom, and surrounded by every luxury, left his palace and his beautiful wife and their little son, to become a wanderer in the search for truth, and for six years he lived as a hermit in the wilderness, attended only by a few disciples. One day, while seated beneath a "bo" tree, lost in contemplation, revelation came to him, and from that time he became a preacher, striving to raise men and women to his own lofty and pure standard of what life should be. [83]

Few Europeans really understand Buddhism, but many of its principles we can all appreciate. Thus, men are taught truthfulness, purity, obedience, and kindness, which forbids the giving of pain to any living creature. Charity, patience, humility, and the habit of meditation are early instilled into the minds of the boys, who, without exception, spend at least a portion of their lives as inmates of a monastery, and with the priests and novices are not ashamed to collect the daily offering of food.

In their consideration for animals, their love for their children, and great respect for age, as well as in their consideration for each other, the Burmans act well up to the beauty of their faith; for a beautiful religion it is, beautifully expounded in Arnold's "Light of Asia," which I hope many of you will presently read.

It is not difficult to understand how their religion, combined with their own happy, contented natures, and the enervating effect of climate, renders the Burmans little able to withstand the pressure from without which has lately been brought to bear upon them.

Largely content with what Nature provides for them, and without social grades to spur them to ambition, their sports and races and amusements of many kinds occupy the chief attention of the men, who quickly succumb to their more energetic and businesslike rivals from India or China. The women, more capable and rather despising the idleness of the men, are more and more prone to marry among other races, while Western civilization also is doing much to destroy the primitive charm of the people. [84]

Sad it is to think that the Burman as a pure race is slowly disappearing, and there are few, I think, who know them but will view this prospect with sincere regret. But if it is inevitable that this picturesque and lovable people must be in time replaced by others, at least their beautiful country always will remain.

And now, as I close this chapter, there recurs to my mind a pretty picture which embodies so much of the spirit of the country that it may well form our last peep at Burma.

Far away in the jungle on the crest of a lonely hill stands a ruined pagoda. The white ornamental plaster-work which once beautified it has long since disappeared, and in the rents and fissures which seam its rich red brickwork venomous serpents hide.

The niche which formerly contained a Buddha is unoccupied, but, as though to soften its decay,



kindly creepers have covered its rugged exterior with a bower of foliage and flowers, while the leogryphs which once marked the entrance to its enclosure are buried in vegetation. All around are trees of many kinds, which tower above the jungle, among which large and beautiful butterflies flit among the flowers, while birds of gay plumage gambol among the tree-tops to the distant song of the bulbul. It was a pretty scene, but sad in its loneliness, to which a touch of pathos was added by the figure of a solitary priest praying before the empty shrine. Wondering what had brought him so far from any known habitation, I watched him long as he prayed. Just as the sun set and the day closed he plucked a lovely flower from the scrub and placed it reverently on the shrine where Buddha once had stood, and as I turned my pony's head in the direction of my distant camp, the slowly-retreating figure of the "hpungi" became lost in the glory of the sunset.

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