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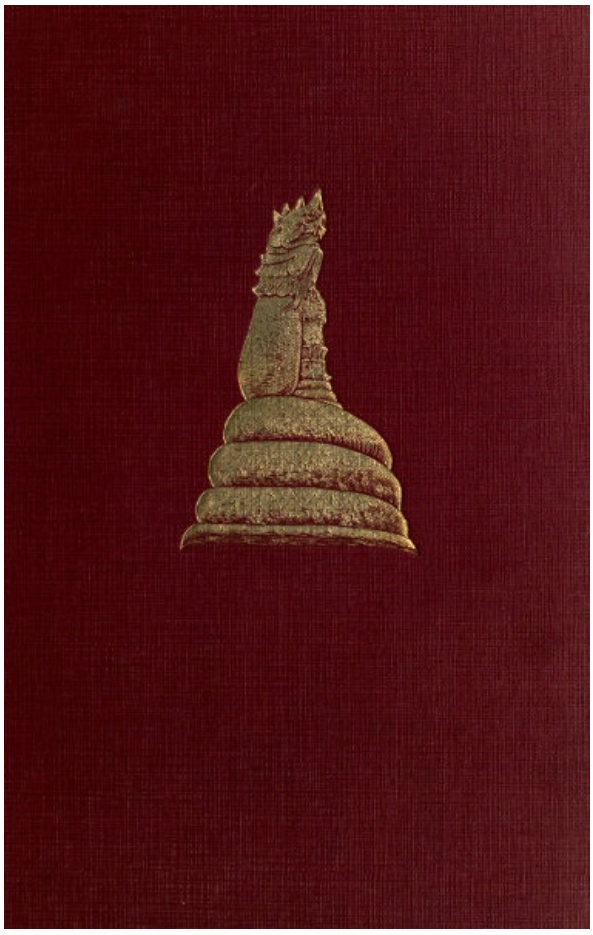

A CIVIL SERVANT IN BURMA

Buddha's Foot.

A CIVIL SERVANT IN BURMA

[Pg iii]

BY
SIR HERBERT THIRKELL WHITE, K.C.I.E.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1913

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TO
MY WIFE
WHO SHARED
MY LIFE IN BURMA
FOR MORE THAN THIRTY-TWO YEARS

PREFACE

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This is not a guide-book, or a history, or a study of manners and customs. It is a plain story of official life for more than thirty years. It does not compete with any of the books already written about Burma, except, perhaps, the monumental work of General Fytche. While pursuing as a rule a track of chronological order, I have not hesitated to wander into by-paths of dissertation and description. I could not write without attempting to give fragmentary impressions of the people and their character. As far as possible I have limited my narrative to events within my own knowledge; my judgments are based on my own observation.

I have to express my acknowledgments to the friends who have given me photographs to illustrate the book. My special thanks are due to Mr. A. Leeds, I.C.S. (retired), for a large number of characteristic and charming pictures.

H. T. W.

September, 1913.

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NOTE

Burmese words are spelt according to the Government system of transliteration. Consonants have the same power as in English. *Y* after *g* combines to form a sound approximating to *j*: *gyi* = "jee"; after every other consonant it is short—*mỳo*. *Yw* is pronounced "yu." Vowels and diphthongs have the sounds given below:

a = *a* in "Ma."
e = *a* in "bane."
è = *e* in French "père," without any sound of *r* following.
i = *ee* in "feet."
o or *ô* = *o* in "bone."
u = *oo* in "fool."
au = *ow* in "cow."
ai = *i* in "line."
ei = *ei* in "vein."
aw = *aw* in "law."

Every letter, except *y* after *g*, is sounded separately, including final vowels. Thus, *lu-gale* is pronounced "loo-ga-lay." These instructions are crude and unscientific, and may excite the derision of purists. They will enable anyone to pronounce Burmese words with some approach to correctness. In the case of Shan names I have as a rule adopted the Burmese forms rather than the Shan forms in official use, which no one who does not know the language can pretend to pronounce properly.

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ERRATUM.

Page 12, footnote *, *for* "Admiral," *read* "General," and *delete* "naval."

A CIVIL SERVANT IN BURMA

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY: A RETROSPECT AND SOME COMPARISONS

Burma is a Province of the Indian Empire. It is not, as some suppose, a Crown Colony administered directly under the Colonial Office. Nor is it, as others do vainly talk, a foreign State where Britain is represented by Consuls. It is the largest, yet the least populous, of Indian Provinces, more extensive even than undivided Bengal. The estimated area is over two hundred and thirty thousand square miles, larger than either France or Germany. According to the last census (1911), the population is about twelve millions. On the west, its seaboard washed by the Bay of Bengal, Burma marches with Bengal, Assam, and Manipur; on the east, with China, French Indo-China, and Siam. To the north, it stretches, through tracts unadministered and unexplored, to the confines of Tibet. The mass of the people are Burmans, a Mongol race akin to Chinese and Siamese. Other races in Burma are Talaings, scattered over the Irrawaddy Delta and the Tenasserim division; Shans, who occupy the great plateau on the east and are also found in the northern districts; Karens, whose home is Karenni, but who are widely spread over Lower Burma; Kachins, people of the hills on the north-east; and Chins, of many clans, inhabiting the hill-country on the north-west border.

From the middle of the eighteenth century Burma was ruled by the dynasty of Alaungpaya, corruptly called Alompra. Alaungpaya seems to have been a Dacoit chief who began his career at Shwebo,[1] and made himself master of the whole country. In his time the Burmese were a warlike people, withstanding the might of China, and carrying their victorious standards into Siam. Ten Princes[2] of his House ruled over the whole, or part, of his kingdom. In 1826, after the First Burmese War, the Provinces of Tenasserim and Arakan were annexed by the East India Company, the central block from the sea to Tibet remaining under the Burmese King. In 1852 the Province of Pegu was conquered. In 1862 Pegu, Tenasserim, and Arakan were combined to form the Province of British Burma, and placed in charge of a Chief Commissioner directly responsible to the Government of India. In 1885 occurred the Third Burmese War. Early in 1886, Upper Burma, all that remained under native rule, was incorporated in the British Empire. Burma continued to be administered by a Chief Commissioner till 1897, when the first Lieutenant-Governor was appointed.

These elementary facts are recorded for the benefit of any who may be thankful for geographical and historical information about distant dependencies of the Crown. We all know the story of Cape Breton. Most of us have met people who think that our connection with Burma began in 1885; that Burma regiments are manned by Burman sepoys; that, to cite an alien instance, Bengalis serve in the Indian Army. Even what was long regarded as the mythical confusion of

Burma with Bermuda was seriously printed in a London weekly last year, and all the newspapers told how an officer who entered the Army in 1886 served in the *Second* Burmese War. Errors like these justify the platitudes of the preceding paragraphs.

When I first became acquainted with Burma, the system of administration was comparatively simple. The Province consisted of three divisions, each under a Commissioner. Subordinate to the Commissioner were Deputy Commissioners, each in charge of a district. Under the Deputy-Commissioner were subdivisional and township officers, in charge respectively of subdivisions and townships. These jurisdictions still remain. In those distant days townships were further divided into circles, the territorial unit of administration, constituted primarily for revenue purposes. Each circle was in charge of a Taik Thugyi,[3] a native official of position and dignity and often of considerable wealth. The Taik Thugyi collected capitation tax and land and fishery revenue, the main sources of the Provincial income, and received a substantial commission on the [Pg 4]
returns. Except as a tax-collector, he had no statutory powers. But he was the chief man in his circle, and, if of strong character, exercised great influence. Every village had its headman, called the Kye-dan-gyi,[4] with onerous duties and incommensurate powers and emoluments. In recent years circle and village organization has been reformed. Taik Thugyis have been abolished or are in course of abolition. The village is now the administrative unit. The Ywa Thugyi[5] is the local judge and magistrate, with extensive powers and a respectable position.

Except of purely Imperial offices, such as Post and Telegraphs, the Commissioner was the head of all Departments in the division. As Sessions Judge he was also the chief judicial officer. In like manner the Deputy Commissioner controlled every branch of the administration in his district. The bulk of petty revenue, criminal, and civil work was done by Assistant Commissioners, Extra Assistant Commissioners,[6] and Mÿo-ôks,[7] in charge of subdivisions and townships. Most of the Extra Assistants and all the Mÿo-ôks were natives of Burma. I think it is true that early in 1878 no Burmese officer exercised higher powers than those of a third-class magistrate, and not one was in charge of a subdivision.

The judicial administration was controlled by a Judicial Commissioner, who was the High Court [Pg 5]
for the whole country except Rangoon, and who was always deputed from another Province. When I joined, the late Mr. J. D. Sandford was Judicial Commissioner. In Rangoon the reins of justice were in the strong hands of the Recorder (the late Mr. C. J. Wilkinson). The Judicial Commissioner and the Recorder sat together in a quaint tribunal called the Special Court, which heard appeals from the decisions of each of its members. When the Judges of the Special Court failed to agree, a difficult position occurred. The High Court at Calcutta exercised anomalous jurisdiction in certain cases. Except the Judicial Commissioner, the Recorder, the Judge of Moulmein, and a Small Cause Court Judge or two, there were no officers occupied exclusively with judicial work. All exercised judicial and executive functions. Divisional, Sessions, District, Subdivisional, and Township Judges, who now flourish in luxuriant abundance, were not even in the bud.

The rank and file of the police were mostly Burmans, with some admixture of Indians not of a very good class. The superior officers, District and Assistant Superintendents, were men of experience, well acquainted with the people. A few military officers still remained in the civil police, Major T. Lowndes[8] being Inspector-General. Perhaps the best-known of the British officers were Messrs. Perreau, Fforde, Jameson, and Dixon, and Major C. A. Munro. The Burmese [Pg 6]
officers—inspectors and head constables—were all men who had risen from the ranks. Every one of them had to enlist as a constable and work his way upward. The system was not without merit, and was well suited to the idiosyncrasy of the Burmese race. One distinguished Talaing officer held the rank of Superintendent of Police, though without a district charge. This was Maung Shwe Kyi, who was a King on the Siamese border at Kawkareik. One of the bravest and most resolute of men, his good service was recognized by his inclusion in the first list of Companions of the Order of the Indian Empire. His son carries on the tradition of his family.

The Forest Department was in its early lusty youth vigorously directed by a single Conservator, Mr. B. Ribbentrop,[9] assisted by a small but very able staff. Burmese teak had long been a staple product of great value; its care and development were the main duties of forest officers. The forest law was, and still remains, complex, logical, meticulous. I venture the humble suggestion that its exceeding obscurity may be due to the nationality of the pioneers of forest administration in India. We were taught forestry by Germans of great ability and high scientific attainments, who framed the statutes of their department as if they were metaphysical treatises. They created a great and efficient branch of the administration. But they enveloped its principles in a mist which baffles the ordinary lay intelligence, and can be pierced only by the philosophic mind, [Pg 7]
made, or at least trained, in Germany.

Supreme over all was the Chief Commissioner (then Mr. Rivers Thompson[10]), assisted by a small but capable secretariat, which worked for long hours in a small office on the Strand Road in Rangoon. The Secretary, Major C. W. Street, was a military civilian of character and ability. The Junior Secretary was Mr. R. H. Pilcher, C.S., who had been Assistant Resident in Mandalay, and was most learned in the Burmese and Shan tongues. My old friend, Mr. G. C. Kynoch, was Assistant Secretary. None of these survives.

The higher officers entrusted with the general administration, as distinct from special branches, constituted the Commission. In the Commission were included the Chief Commissioner, Judicial Commissioner, Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, and Assistant Commissioners. It was

composed of Indian civilians, officers of the Indian Staff Corps, and uncovenanted[11] officers. Civilians were few in number. Burma was not considered of sufficient importance to have men assigned to it after the open competitions. Men were sent thither for their sins, either permanently or for a term of years. A Chief Commissioner's wife is said to have told one of these young men that other Provinces sent their worst men to Burma. However this may be, no doubt [Pg 8] Burma was regarded as a place of banishment, a dismal rice-swamp (or, as was once said, a howling paddy[12]-plain), where the sun never shone. I remember, while still in London, the commiseration expressed with one of our seniors whose deportation to this dreary land was announced. All this was fiction, falser than the Roman's conception of Britain. I found Burma a bright and pleasant land, green and forest-clad, with a climate healthier on the whole than the average climate of Indian plains; its people singularly human, cheerful, and sympathetic; its officers of all ranks companionable and friendly. My own considered opinion is that, in many respects, Burma was one of the best provinces for a public servant. It is true that, at first, with only British or Lower Burma open to us, with but little variety of climate, we were rather cribbed and confined. The rains, lasting from May to October, began to pall about the middle of August. Fungus growth on boots was displeasing. The Province was (it still is) expensive, and promotion was slow. It took Sir Harvey Adamson and myself, who were contemporaries, over seven years to get a step of substantive rank. But there were compensations in the lightness of the work (except in the Secretariat), in the charm and attractiveness of the people, in the excellent good-fellowship of our brother-officers, in the hope that before long we should be in Mandalay, and that united Burma would give ample scope and opportunity. Burmese cheroots, too, cost only eightpence a hundred.

Among the military civilians were men of conspicuous ability, trained in the school of Sir Arthur [Pg 9] Phayre, whose name is still reverenced throughout Burma, and who stands in the first class of Indian statesmen and administrators. Many of them had taken an active part in the pacification of Pegu after the Second War, and were thoroughly familiar with the Province and its people, their language and customs. I yield to none in high appreciation of the men of my own Service. They have done as good work in Burma, and have got as near to the people, as any men in India. But military civilians also have maintained to this day an honourable record, and have furnished to the Commission many valuable officers. I was just too late to know Colonel David Brown (Brown-gyi[13]), whose memory still lives in the Province. Colonel Horace Browne,[14] Colonel A. G. Duff, Captain C. H. E. Adamson,[15] Colonel W. C. Plant, are among the notable soldier-civilians of my early service. Other officers, afterwards well-known, were Mr. de Courcy Ireland, the first officer of his Service in India to become a commissioner; Mr. A. H. Hildebrand,[16] the first Superintendent of the Shan States; and Johnny Davis, of Papun, whose knowledge of Burma and the Burmese was unique. When I joined, all the divisions were in charge of military officers, and with one or two exceptions, military and uncovenanted officers ruled every district.

In 1878 there was one line of railway, 160 miles in length, from Rangoon to Prome on the [Pg 10] Irrawaddy. To and from Toungoo, a station on the Burmese frontier, the journey had to be made by way of the Sittang River, and occupied about a fortnight. Once upon a time, a man started from Toungoo with a friend. They travelled in separate boats, in one of which was stored all the provisions for the voyage. The commissariat boat started first, and my man never saw his friend again till he reached Rangoon. For a fortnight he had to subsist on such scanty fare as he could pick up on the river-bank. When I saw him soon afterwards, he was perceptibly thinner and still full of wrath. Toungoo is now on the Mandalay line, and is reached in a few hours. There are 1,529 miles of railways in Burma; lines to Mandalay, to Myit-kyi-na in the extreme north, to Alôn on the Chindwin, to Moulmein, one of our ports, to Lashio in the Northern Shan States, in mid-air on the way to China, to Bassein and Henzada in the Delta. The sea-borne trade has made immense progress. In 1878 it was valued at £15,684,920; in 1911 at nearly £43,000,000.

The garrison consisted of two battalions of British infantry, one of which gave a detachment to the Andamans, five Madras regiments, and five batteries of artillery. Troops were stationed at Rangoon, on the frontier at Toungoo and Thayet-myo, and at Moulmein. There were no troops in Arakan. There were no military police. The Province was in a state of profound peace, though there were occasional dacoities on the borders, and, as always, Tharrawaddy had a bad name. [Pg 11]

Of Rangoon in those early days, separate mention may be made. One glory it had which still abides. The Shwe Dagôn Pagoda, most sacred and most illustrious of pure Buddhist shrines, dominating the landscape, rose golden to the sky. From far the traveller approaching Rangoon from the sea caught sight of that amazing shaft of gold, and instinctively did reverence. In the bright winter sunshine, in the blue haze of summer heat, in the veiled mysteries of tropic moonlight, it towered awe-inspiring, stupendous, divine. On feast days and sabbaths the platform was thronged with worshippers, surely the brightest, best-humoured, most laughter-loving of all pious crowds. Even now one can imagine no scene more gracious, more mystically serene and lovely, than the pagoda in the light of the full moon, when all that is tawdry and unseemly is charmed away. But thirty years ago, before the platform was covered with modern shrines not all in harmony with æsthetic canons, it was still more gravely and austerely beautiful.

In recent years the erection of new buildings on the pagoda platform, already overcrowded, has been forbidden. This probably is wise and right. Being in the centre of a fort, with an arsenal in close proximity, the pagoda is in military custody. The presence of the arsenal is a menace to the safety of this famous shrine. A serious explosion would shatter the fabric and irreparably destroy one of the wonders of the world. The pagoda would be the natural place of refuge in time of [Pg 12]

serious disturbance. For this reason, among others, the continuance of military control is essential. But the removal of the arsenal to a distance is an urgent necessity.

After its occupation in 1852, Rangoon was carefully laid out on a systematic plan, with straight streets of varying width. The broadest road, edged with shady trees, ran from Soolay Pagoda up to the cantonment, as fine a thoroughfare as could be seen in East or West. In the early fifties some far-seeing benefactor planted along Godwin Road[17] a glorious avenue of padauk, and earned the blessings of men later born. Three times, at the approach of the rains, these stately trees burst forth for a day in petals as beautiful and as fleeting as fairy gold. Then one drives under a canopy of gold, over a golden carpet of fallen flowers, amidst a crowd each bearing a golden blossom. To see this lovely sight you must live in Burma. It comes too late in the season for the casual visitor.

The main lines of the plan of Rangoon have been preserved, and are as at first designed. But the past thirty years have seen many changes. In 1878, though there were many strangers within its borders, Rangoon was still a Burmese town. Now it is the third port in the Indian Empire,[18] a vast city of over a quarter of a million of people, speaking a pentecostal variety of tongues, among whom Burmans are a dwindling minority. Then the cantonment, no doubt of needlessly vast extent, occupying a wide space on every side of the pagoda, was like a picturesque park, studded with little wooden houses, each surrounded by an ample shady garden. Halpin Road, by some sentimentalists called the Ladies' Mile, with a humble but select gymkhana[19] at one end, was restricted to the use of the military and civil community. Now the gymkhana has been quadrupled in size, and far more than quadrupled in membership. Jehus of all races and classes raise the dust of Halpin Road in dogcarts, landaus, and motor-cars. A great modern hotel occupies a large space; houses of a decadent type, planted as close together as suburban villas, have devastated the pretty cantonment; natives of wealth and position live on sites once reserved for the sovereign race. Doubtless all these are signs of progress. But they shock the æsthetic sense. The Pegu Club was housed in Cheape Road, in a wooden building not long ago dismantled. On the Royal Lake a few boats afforded exercise and pastime. If your boat upset, you were fined for illegal bathing; and if you scrambled back into your boat, you were fined for embarking elsewhere than at the prescribed jetty. Dalhousie Park, it may be gratefully admitted, has been much improved, mainly by the devoted attention of the late Mr. John Short. It is now beyond imagination the home of the picturesque, its lovely lawns and winding paths fringing the lake, with the pagoda shining in the middle distance. Except a few public offices, there were no buildings of importance. Government House was of wood, with a small masonry annexe, near the present imposing and luxurious, but hardly beautiful structure. A neighbouring house was used as a guest-house, to accommodate the overflow of visitors, till some years later it was sold by a frugal Chief. The General Hospital, of wood saturated with generations of microbes, was then, and for long after, a disgrace to civilization. It has now been replaced by a magnificent pile, the best-equipped hospital in the East, one of the best-equipped in the world. The race-course, round the parade ground, was about two-thirds of its present size. The little race-meetings twice a year, where one knew all the ponies and riders, when lotteries were of small value and attended by one's friends and acquaintances, when bookmakers were unknown, and we did our mild gambling at the totalizator, were more enjoyable and more truly sporting than the present-day monthly meetings, where more than half the owners are Chinamen or Indians, and almost all the riders professional jockeys. In wealth, in luxury, in comfort, Rangoon has made great advances in the last thirty years. Yet I doubt if it is quite as pleasant a place of abode as it was a generation ago.

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The outskirts of Rangoon were rustic or, as we say, jungly. About this time a tiger swam across the river from Dalla, then a mere village, and was shot by Mr. G. G. Collins, an Inspector of Police,[20] under a house in Godwin Road. Within the last ten years a similar incident occurred. One morning an old woman, selling cheroots on the pagoda platform, half asleep or half blind, opened her eyes, and saw in the dim dawn moving near her stall what she took to be a large cat. She waved it away, and it went off. It was a tiger which had strolled up the grassy slope of the Pagoda Hill. The pagoda was being regilt, and was encased in lattice-work. The tiger climbed half-way up the trellis and there stopped, till, after some ineffectual attempts, it was shot by an officer of the garrison. This strange event has an explanation. A nat[21] came riding on the tiger to inspect the gilding of the pagoda. He rode half-way up and then dismounted, pursuing his journey on foot. On his return, he was much surprised and displeased to find that his steed had been killed. Some say that he was unable to resume his journey, and is still there. This story was current in Rangoon on the evening of the occurrence.

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CHAPTER II
EARLY YEARS AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

My personal acquaintance with Burma dates from January, 1878. I came to India as a Bengal civilian, attached to the Upper Provinces, liable to serve in the North-West Provinces, the Punjab and Oudh. It was doubtless for that reason and because I had shown some aptitude for the study of Persian that the Government of India were pleased to post me to the Central Provinces, and then, before I had even joined at Nagpúr, to order me to Burma. As in those days our covenants did not bind us to serve elsewhere than in the Province of our choice, I think it likely that, after a

term in Burma, I might have obtained a transfer to the North-West Provinces. However, I went to Burma and stayed there; and so far as my official career is concerned, I do not suppose I should have done as well in any other part of India. Certainly I should not have had elsewhere so interesting a life, or found so congenial a people.

On our arrival in Rangoon, my wife and I were hospitably received by two residents, Mr. E. C. Morrieson, a man of my own year, and Mr. C. F. Egerton Allen, then Government Advocate, [Pg 17] afterwards acting Recorder of Rangoon, and still later in the House as member for Pembroke Boroughs. Their kindness was in accordance with the traditions of the country, which, I am glad to say, are still maintained. A comparatively new Province, in some respects it may be a little behind the times, Burma has always cherished the primitive virtues, conspicuously that of hospitality. Perhaps to some extent this is ascribable to the influence of the *genius loci*. For in the world there are no kinder or more hospitable people than the Burmese. The generous manner in which strangers are received may be one reason why hotels in Burma have, if possible, a worse repute than those of India.[22]

Our first station was Bassein, one of the four ports of Burma, situated on a fair river some sixty miles from the sea, in the midst of the Delta of the Irrawaddy. It was then the headquarters of a district. Not very long afterwards it became the headquarters of the Irrawaddy division, carved out of the overworked division of Pegu. In those days the only approach to Bassein was by river steamer. Even now, though Bassein is linked with Rangoon by rail, the river journey is easier and pleasanter. Our little vessel steamed now on the broad flood of the main river, now through narrow winding channels, called locally “creeks,” which intersect the delta in countless [Pg 18] profusion. Though searchlights in the bows were then unknown, we ran on, by day and night, between densely wooded banks. Now and again the passage was so narrow that branches of trees crashed through our cabin window. Here and there, on the mud of a bank left bare by the tide, we saw crocodiles and bands of chattering monkeys. Except at the large villages, where we halted to take up and set down passengers and cargo, the solitude was perfect save for a few huts on the riverside, a casual fisherman in his dugout, a boat full of men and women going to market, or of monks (pôngyis) in their yellow robes. The hideous sampan and the still more horrible lighter or barge had not yet invaded these sacred recesses. Such larger craft as passed us were the stately Burmese boats, built on graceful lines, propelled by sail and oar, with high carved sterns on which the helmsman sat aloft. Such people as we saw were all Burmans or Karens. The kala[23] was as rare as a black swan.

My Deputy Commissioner was Mr. G. D. Burgess,[24] one of the first civilians deputed to Burma, of the same year as the late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, of lamented memory. Mr. C. U. Aitchison,[25] who succeeded Mr. Rivers Thompson as Chief Commissioner early in 1878, visited Bassein this [Pg 19] year in the course of a tour in the old Government steamer, the *Irrawaddy*. Recognizing Mr. Burgess’s rare ability, he called him to Rangoon soon afterwards to act as secretary in place of Major Street, who went on leave. This was exceptional promotion for a man of about eight years’ service. Mr. Burgess was a man of great capacity, of untiring industry, of immense power of work, of exceptional mastery of detail, of singularly sane judgment, one whose opinion, as Mr. Aitchison said, was always worthy of consideration. For several years he worked in the secretariat, afterwards did excellent service as Commissioner at Mandalay and elsewhere, and in due course became Judicial Commissioner of Upper Burma. In that high office he had full scope for his industry and sound judgment. His rulings, especially on points of Buddhist law, illuminated many dark places, and are still cited with respect. Mr. Burgess’s health was undermined by excessive work in the secretariat. In 1898 he had to take leave, and, by a melancholy accident, died at sea on his way home. He was one of the ablest officers who ever served in Burma, and, if his health had not failed, must have risen to the highest posts. If he had a fault officially, it was a tendency to interfere too much in detail and to do the work of his subordinates. No doubt, as Mr. Aitchison used to say, and as others have often said, the great administrator is he who does his own duty and sees that those under him do theirs. But the defect I have ventured to note is the defect of a generous quality. [Pg 20]

In those days the education of junior civilians was left to take care of itself. There was no Land Records Department and there were no elaborate circulars prescribing a course of training. What sort of training a junior officer enjoyed, or whether he had any training at all, depended entirely on the quality of his first Deputy Commissioner. I need hardly say that I regard as preferable the present system, under which every young officer is passed through a definite course of practical instruction in all branches of his work. But even now a great deal depends on the personality of the Deputy Commissioner. It was my good fortune to begin my service under the guidance of an excellent officer and a high-minded, great-hearted gentleman. Never had green griffin a kindlier or abler mentor. And to the end of his life Mr. Burgess treated me with the kindness of an elder brother. I was placed in charge of the Treasury; given Third Class magisterial powers, that is, power to imprison for one month, fine up to fifty rupees, and, such was the barbaric darkness of that age, to whip; and set to try petty criminal cases, learn Burmese, and prepare for the departmental examinations. I confess that I had a charmingly idle time. In those happy days life was not in the least strenuous. The busiest time was when the head accountant went sick for about a month, and I had to do his work as well as my own. In this way I did thoroughly learn the Treasury system, even if I forgot it afterwards. The zeal of youth betrayed me into a somewhat [Pg 21] serious blunder, whereby I incurred the formal censure of Government. This, though recorded, was never officially communicated to me, and does not seem to have done me any harm. I cannot call to mind anything amusing or interesting in the court or office work. If there are tales, others

must tell them. It was not in Bassein that a Third Class Magistrate sentenced a cattle-thief to imprisonment for one week, the normal sentence then, and, I hope, now being one of two years' hard labour. Called upon for justification, he gravely explained that he had to observe some measure in his sentences. If he gave a man a whole month for cattle-theft, what sentence could he pass if he convicted a man of murder? Nor was it here that a young magistrate fined a woman Rs. 10, or in default rigorous imprisonment for two years. It was elsewhere that an officer fined his own servant judicially for "spoiling the Court's soup" by using an oily cloth to wipe the plates withal. These stories, current in Burma long ago, are possibly all invented. Similarly mythical, I suspect, are the legends of the young civilian who gratefully accepted advice not to try a long shot, lest he should strain the gun; of another who on the voyage out kept under his pillow a revolver wrapped in paper and labelled "Dangerous"; of a third who was persuaded to rise at mess, as the representative of Government, and forestall the President in announcing the toast of "The Queen." But many years later, with my own ears, I heard the health of Her Majesty [Pg 22] proposed, "coupled with the name of General ——," and the gallant General respond on behalf of his Sovereign.

Bassein was a charming station, with that mingling of non-official and official society which doth ever add pleasure. The great rice firms, Messrs. Bulloch Bros., Messrs. Strang Steel and Co., Messrs. Mohr Bros., and others, had mills on either side of the river, and the presence of their representatives helped to form a festive and sociable community. We were all young and all cheerful. Though there was no club, we managed to meet and enjoy life. Besides an inchoate attempt at polo, then just coming into vogue, riding in the fields and jungle, and playing lawn tennis, were the principal amusements. Golf had not been introduced. I am afraid ladies had rather a quiet time, for dances were of very rare occurrence. But bachelor frolics were many, and the spectacled Deputy Commissioner who looked grave enough on the Bench was leader in every frivolity. His Saturday night whist dinners were often more hilarious than the occasion indicates. I refrain from recording instances of light-hearted jests perpetrated from time to time, partly because they were too trivial for immortality, partly lest the serious reader think us more childish-foolish than we were. The survivors of those joyous days will call to mind many a noisy revel. No harm was done. Mr. Kipling would have found no copy for the mildest of plain tales.

There were reminders of historic times. One of the Public Works officers was a veteran who had [Pg 23] fought at Chillianwallah. Another resident had learnt his work under Brunel. Less pleasing relics of the past were a few old men branded on the forehead and sent into transportation from India. Some, but not all, were mutineers. They were not in confinement, but eked out a wretched existence on two or three pence a day.

I saw something of district life. More than once the Deputy Commissioner took me on tour with him, and I had opportunities of learning methods of sound administration. The Deputy Commissioner was the head of the district, and, as already stated, controlled all except the purely Imperial departments. Even over Forests, Public Works, and Education he exercised paternal sway. He was explicitly declared to be the head of the police. And he was the chief executive officer, with as much influence as his personality secured. He cherished his own District Fund, his pet child, and had a fair amount of money to spend on minor works. Often he was his own road-maker. As District Magistrate, with power to try all but capital offences and impose substantial penalties, and as District Judge, with unlimited original civil jurisdiction and wide appellate powers, he directed the judicial administration.

He constantly travelled slowly through the district, and was personally known to all the people. In most districts the volume of work was not beyond the capacity of an able and energetic officer. We in Bassein were fortunate in possessing the ablest Deputy Commissioner in the Province, and the district flourished under his benign and firm rule. It was an invaluable object-lesson to [Pg 24] accompany Mr. Burgess on tour and mark his procedure. Always accessible to the humblest villager, yet strict in upholding the authority of his subordinates, Myo-ôks and Thugyis; halting here and there to investigate disputes in revenue matters, to hear complaints, to try cases; treating the local officials with kindness and consideration, while preserving his place and dignity; inspecting village records; checking capitation tax returns and land revenue rolls; visiting fields on which remission of revenue was claimed; taking a day off now and then to shoot snipe; the Deputy Commissioner's progress tended to the happiness of the people and the peace of the countryside. I have no doubt that this was the best system of administration ever devised or practised. The separation of judicial and executive functions, the curtailment of the Deputy Commissioner's powers, the attempt, happily so far not successful in Burma, to diminish his authority over the police and his responsibility for peace and order, are all steps backward; to vary the metaphor, they are solvents which will gradually destroy the vitality of the administration and weaken the foundations of good government laid by our predecessors. I have no right to speak of other provinces of India. In Burma there is a comparatively simple social organization. With a strong feeling of personal independence and a full measure of self-respect, the people looked up to the officials and recognized that they were better off under authority than if they attempted to govern themselves. Above all, they knew that in the last resort they [Pg 25] could rely on the justice and firmness of British officers. Under this system the moral and material welfare of the peasant and trader was promoted far more surely than by the introduction of Western methods unsuited to the idiosyncrasy of the race. Nor does this proposition preclude Burmans from obtaining by degrees an ever-increasing share in the offices of the administration. As qualified men become available, by all means let them undertake higher duties. But do not let us try prematurely to impose representative institutions on people who neither demand nor understand them. Above all, let us avoid the pernicious cant of thinking that

our mission in Burma is the political education of the masses. Our mission is to conserve, not to destroy, their social organism; to preserve the best elements of their national life; by the maintenance of peace and order to advance the well-being of the Burmese people.

At Bassein, in town and district, I first saw Burmans at home, and laid the foundations of many lasting friendships. My first two clerks were Maung Pe,[26] and Maung Aung Zan. One has long been the respected Second Judge of the Small Cause Court in Rangoon, the Aristides of his race; the other is the first Burman District Judge. A well-known character was U Bya, the Judge of the Bassein Small Cause Court, an officer of age and dignity, who, it was said, had raised himself to his honourable rank from the humble position of peon in the Treasury. Although contact with [Pg 26] foreigners had to some extent begun to affect the Burmese character, it must be remembered that the time of which I write was only twenty-five years after the taking of Rangoon, a shorter period than has now elapsed since the occupation of Mandalay. Even in Pegu the Burman was far less sophisticated than he has become in recent years. The great rice-plains of the delta were not nearly all under cultivation. The farmer worked his own moderate holding with the help of his family and of reapers who came down annually from Upper Burma. The inroad of coolies and settlers from Madras and Bengal not yet begun. The delta was sparsely peopled, and everyone was happy and contented.

After leaving Bassein, I spent a few weeks in Rangoon as personal assistant to the Chief Commissioner. The personal assistant combined the posts of private secretary and aide-de-camp, without the emoluments, and with only part of the work of those offices. Under Mr. Aitchison's tolerant régime, the duties were extremely light, and consisted mainly in ciphering and deciphering telegrams. By him and by Mrs. (now Lady) Aitchison, we were treated with unvarying kindness. The days spent as members of their official family are days of happy memory. Mr. Aitchison was one of the first batch of competition walas, and was rightly regarded as a distinguished ornament of our service. At a very early stage in his career he became Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. That high office he exchanged for the comparative [Pg 27] obscurity of Burma, only because he differed from the Viceroy (Lord Lytton) on points of frontier policy. He was a man of exceptional ability, of resolute character, with the most delicate sense of honour, a chief whom it was a pride and pleasure to serve. The Governor-General being his own Foreign Minister, Mr. Aitchison had been brought into close personal relations with every Viceroy[27] who, up to that time, had held office. In his judgment, among these statesmen, the man of genius, the one who got most quickly to the root of a difficult problem, was Lord Lytton. As the two men were by no means sympathetic, this opinion is of special value.

We came to Rangoon early in 1879, at a time of great excitement. The preceding October had seen the death of Mindôn Min, who ruled the Burmese kingdom for more than five-and-twenty years. King Mindôn, or Min-taya-gyi Paya, was an enlightened monarch, worthy to be placed in the same class, though not side by side, with Solomon and Akbar. He wrested the throne from his incapable brother, Pagan Min, whose headstrong folly had involved his country in the Second Burmese War. With rare magnanimity, he neither slew nor blinded the deposed King, but allowed him to live in peace in his own house for the rest of his days. Indeed, Pagan Min survived his successor. Mindôn Min was an able administrator, and quite master of his kingdom. He held in [Pg 28] his own hands all the threads of government, and kept himself informed of all that happened even in the remotest corners. Peace and order were reasonably well maintained, and projects for developing the resources of the country were initiated. The teak forests were opened out by English firms. Many Europeans, principally French and Italian, were attracted to his Court, and employed in various capacities. Among other reforms may be mentioned the levy of regular taxation on land and incomes, and the payment of salaries to officials. The practice had been for an official to be placed in charge of a local area, which he was expressively said to "eat." After paying his dues to Government, he squeezed as much as possible for himself. In this reign, though the custom was not abolished, its prevalence was restricted. The King was a very pious Buddhist, a generous benefactor of the pagoda at Rangoon, and a steadfast pillar of his religion. He discouraged the taking of life, the use of opium, the consumption of intoxicating liquors. Like Solomon in wisdom, he rivalled him in the number of his wives. Although he declined to make a treaty ceding any part of his dominions to Great Britain, he respected the frontier-line laid down by Lord Dalhousie, he kept on good terms with our Government in Lower Burma, and he had the good sense highly to appreciate Sir Arthur Phayre. So long as he ruled in Mandalay, there was no likelihood of any expansion of British territory at his cost.

The death of Mindôn Min threw the whole of Upper Burma into confusion. By a palace intrigue, [Pg 29] in which the principal actors were Queen Sinbyumashin and the Taingda Mingyi,[28] the Thebaw Mintha,[29] was placed on the throne. King Thebaw was about eighteen years of age. He seems to have been a dull youth, of no character, good or bad. The beginning of his rule was stained by the murder of most of the sons of Mindôn Min, a massacre as ruthless and almost as many-headed as the slaughter of the sons of Ahab. Though the Princesses were not killed, they were consigned to captivity. Of the massacre of the Princes, two extreme views have been held. The young King has been represented as a monster of cruelty, himself personally responsible for this atrocity. The cynical suggestion is that, in Burma as in other Oriental countries, it was a measure of ordinary precaution for the King to remove possible rivals and pretenders; in so doing, Thebaw was no worse than his predecessors. As a matter of fact, most likely neither the King nor his much-maligned Queen had much to do with the massacre. It was, no doubt, the work of his Ministers, chiefly of the blood-stained Taingda Mingyi, a name to all succeeding ages cursed. But it is also the case that this wholesale butchery, though not without precedent, was not in accordance with

the practice of Burman Kings, at least, in recent years. Certainly no such deluge of blood sullied [Pg 30]
the opening days of King Mindôn. The probable explanation is that the title of the new King was felt to be precarious, while his personality did not compensate the insecurity of his claim. He was not the eldest, nor the ablest, nor the most popular, of Mindôn Min's sons. For these reasons, I conjecture, some of the Ministers thought it desirable to remove potential centres of revolt and disaffection. I cannot believe that my learned and mild-tempered friend, the Kinwun Mingyi, though nominally the head of the State Council, approved this savage measure. The stories current at the time, of the King priming himself with drink, and personally directing the slaughter, were certainly false. It is true, however, that in the early days of his reign King Thebaw was much under the influence of a titular Prince, Maung Tôk,[30] and that these two boon companions did hold drunken orgies together. After Maung Tôk's removal there is no record of intemperance in the Palace.

The massacre of the sons of Mindôn Min sent a thrill of horror through the civilized world. Our Resident at Mandalay, Mr. R. B. Shaw, entered vehement protests. He also sheltered two Princes, the Nyaung-yan and Nyaung-ôk Minthas, who were, I understand, brought to the Residency by M. d'Avéra, and whose lives were saved by their despatch to Lower Burma and thence to Calcutta. In Rangoon the Press and public were loud in condemnation, and clamorous for action. In the interests of humanity and civilization the Indian Government were urgently pressed to [Pg 31]
intervene. They nearly did so. Preparations for the despatch of troops were begun. One regiment, the 43rd Light Infantry, actually came over from Madras, in hot haste and with the barest camp kit, and was sent to the frontier. All its officers expected to be in Mandalay in a fortnight, and sore was the indignation of the British regiment in Rangoon that these new-comers should go to the front while it remained in cantonments. The Rangoon Regiment had its consolation. For all their term in Burma the 43rd stayed on the frontier, and never put a foot across it. The Government of India were fully occupied with troubles in Afghanistan, which some few months later culminated in the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari at Cabul. At home, Ministers were staggered by the disaster of Isandhlwana in February of this year. Both Governments had their hands too full to find leisure for upholding the cause of humanity in Upper Burma. It was a very near thing. Had there not been pressing affairs elsewhere, we should doubtless have occupied Mandalay, and almost certainly set up a protected King. The time was ripe for intervention, but not for annexation.

At Government House we were kept moderately busy by telegrams with Mandalay and Calcutta. One fine morning the Nyaung-yan Prince appeared, with the design of attempting (to speak proleptically) a Jameson raid on Upper Burma. The secret history of this incident I may not tell. Let it suffice to say that the Prince was sent back to Calcutta with all speed in a Government [Pg 32]
ship. To soothe public feeling in Rangoon a Press *communiqué* was issued from the Secretariat, informing the world that in respect of Upper Burma the attitude of the Government of India was one of "repose and defence," a phrase which was received with mingled surprise and derision. The explanation I may perhaps disclose after many years. The telegram of the Government of India authorizing the announcement was signalled, or at any rate transcribed by me, in the words given to the Press. But what the Government of India wrote was that their attitude was one of "reserve and defence." Curiously and perhaps somewhat ingenuously the Rangoon Volunteer Rifles adopted, and for many years retained, as their motto the words "Repose and Defence." Of late they have become more energetic, and this motto has been discarded as inappropriate.

Government House maintained the hospitable traditions of the Province. All the officers of the 43rd were entertained and housed during their very brief stay in Rangoon, and, though tourists were fewer than in later years, we had some visitors. Of these the most distinguished was General Ulysses Grant, ex-President of the United States, who in his voyage round the world touched at Rangoon. With him came Mrs. Grant, their son Colonel Grant, a Cabinet Minister, a doctor, and a man of letters. General Grant seemed to me to talk, in moderation, as much as other people. I had the honour of being instructed by him in the mysteries of the constitution of the United States, and even of discussing with him the possibility of a League of Anglo-Saxon [Pg 33]
Peoples to impose peace on the world. He impressed us all as a man of strength, dignity, and character. The growing port and city of Rangoon interested him, and he foresaw and foretold its early and rapid increase. May I tell here a trivial story? At a reception at Government House in honour of General Grant, whereat all Rangoon was present, one of the highest officers brought down the house by withdrawing a chair on which the Commissioner of Pegu was about to sit. As the Commissioner weighed about twenty stone, he was somewhat seriously annoyed by this frolic, though not, I am glad to say, hurt. I record the incident, and refrain from moralizing.

Though wealth has increased and the standard of living has been raised, there seems to have been more money to spend in Rangoon in those days. The great merchants vied with Government House in their entertainments. One at least left a lasting impression. More than twenty years after I tried in vain for some time to explain to my old native coachman where he was to drive. At last my meaning dawned on him. "You want to go to Leishmann Sahib's house." Now, Leishmann Sahib had opened his doors to General Grant, and about a year later had left Rangoon for ever. Rice and teak were the sole sources of wealth. The oil-fields were as yet unexplored. The price of rice had not risen to its recent fictitious height. There were no limited companies with opportunities for unlimited speculation.

About this time the Diocese of Rangoon was constituted, and Dr. J. H. Titcomb was consecrated [Pg 34]
the first Bishop. Coming straight from England, with no knowledge of the East, Bishop Titcomb's inexperience betrayed him into some pardonable mistakes. Very soon after his arrival, he

surprised some friends with words to this effect: “Though I have been here such a short time, I regret to say that already sorrow has visited my household. I have had to give my cook a week’s leave to bury his grandmother.” For a cook to ask leave to attend his grandmother’s funeral is much the same as for an undergraduate to prefer a similar request in Derby week. I mean no disrespect to a good man’s memory by telling this innocent story. The Bishop won all hearts by his kind and gentle bearing, and was, I am sure, an excellent occupant of the new See. He was the first Prelate with whom I was privileged to play lawn-tennis.

A little earlier had been tried the eccentric experiment of appointing a Forest Officer to the charge of the Education Department in the temporary absence of the Director. The acting Director played the part of Balaam with a difference. In his first and last Annual Report, instead of blessing, he freely cursed the Department and all its works. Mr. Max Ferrars still flourishes. He has returned to his early love, and professes literature at a German University. He will forgive me for exhuming this early incident of his career. The Education Department, from time to time, has incurred much obloquy, for the most part undeserved. Its errors have been due to want of [Pg 35] intimate knowledge of the language and customs of the people. Certainly it has never merited the cynical censure, perhaps unwittingly implied in a Government Resolution which, in removing an officer as an incorrigible drunkard, remarked that he might obtain employment in the Education Department.

CHAPTER III
THE FIRST SUBDIVISION: THE SECRETARIAT

[Pg 36]

My first subdivision was Pantanaw in the Delta of the Irrawaddy. The town from which it was named stands on a narrow creek through which used to pass the steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company plying between Rangoon and Bassein. Long since the mouth of the creek has silted up. When next I visited Pantanaw, as Commissioner, I had to approach the town in a small boat of the shallowest draft. But, in ’79, the arrival of the Bassein steamer was the event of the week. Pantanaw is said to be a Talaing (and portmanteau) word meaning “The abode of the people who have to use mosquito nets.” If the Burma Research Society correct this statement, I must bear it. At any rate, if the etymology is false, the connotation is true. Burma could show places where mosquitoes were more numerous and more valiant, where even cattle had to be put under nets at night and prisoners in jail protected by iron gratings. But the mosquitoes of Pantanaw were plentiful and brave enough. After a short time one seems to become more or less immune against ordinary mosquito bites. The new-comer is more succulent and more attractive [Pg 37] to this friendly insect. It is the song of the creature which is a persistent annoyance. But the mosquito of these parts has no curious taste. To the last he bit me as well as sang in my ears. In those days the local mosquito apparently was not of the kind which carries malaria. Or perhaps, owing to the backward state of sanitary education, he had not yet learned his trade. Cholera and smallpox excepted, the delta was comparatively free from serious diseases. Though swampy and water-logged, it was not beset by malignant fevers.

Our house was humble. In accordance with the usage of the time, it was built on piles, so that the rooms were 8 or 10 feet above the ground. Thus we lived well out of the mud and out of reach of snakes. An open, slippery, wooden stair ascended to the doorway. The walls were of mat, and the roof was of thatch. I am willing to believe that there was a plank floor, though I have a vague impression that we trod on split bamboos. The house consisted of one fairly large room, divided into two by a mat partition reaching nearly to the unceiled roof. One part was the bedroom, with a bathroom attached, the other was a combined dining- and drawing-room. Tacked on was one more room, about the size of a three-berth cabin. This was the study or library. Having mosquito netting over door and windows, it was habitable even after sunset. During our sojourn, Government very kindly began to build a nice new house for us. It was our Promised Land, of which we had but a Pisgah-sight. We watched its progress with interest, often visiting the work [Pg 38] and suggesting small improvements. We were transferred about a week before it was finished. I slept in it once, twenty years after.

Pantanaw was a depot for Ngapi, that malodorous compound of decayed fish in which Burmans delight. The public buildings were a courthouse with a police-station hard by, a hospital, a schoolhouse, and a bazaar, or market. The rest of the town consisted of native houses of fishermen, traders, and brokers. In the dry weather, the foreshore was covered with huts. Bitter and ceaseless were the disputes between brokers and traders about claims to hut-sites on the sands. The streets were causeways of loose bricks. Except through the town itself, we had one walk, over one of these brick paths to the Burmese cemetery. The whole subdivision supported one pony. He lived in ease and affluence, as you could not ride for half a mile without coming upon an impassable stream. We were the only European inhabitants. Two other people spoke English, a Jew shopkeeper named Cohen, whom Burmans, not holding him in high respect, preferred to call Maung Hein,[31] and an Arakanese schoolmaster, with whom I maintained an intermittent acquaintance to the end of my service. Our nearest English neighbours were the subdivisional officer of Yandoon and his wife, who on one red-letter day paid us a flying visit. Our medical attendant was an Indian hospital assistant, or as now he would be called more [Pg 39] appropriately, Sub-assistant surgeon, a very capable, good man. The civil surgeon lived at Maubin, the district headquarters, a day’s journey off. To young civilians of the present time, this

would seem an impossible place for a man with a wife and child. We enjoyed life and were happy. The experience was of use to me, years afterwards, as secretary, when young officers complained of their posting by the Chief Commissioner to remote and unpopular stations. Even the young wife could not be played with effect. But I believe I got myself disliked.

My official colleague was the subdivisional police officer, Maung Shwe O, Inspector, afterwards Assistant Superintendent. He was a very smart, good-looking man, whose subsequent career was distinguished. I maintained friendly relations with him as long as I stayed in Burma. The clerks in my office were Burmans, who spoke and wrote only Burmese. Very capable and efficient were many of these vernacular clerks, thoroughly versed in office routine and management, and well educated in their own language. My head clerk, Maung Shwe Tha, was a man of presence and dignity, with, it was said, a trace of French blood in his veins. The Circle Thugyi still, I hope, survives in honoured retirement. His son became one of the most useful members of the Provincial Service.

The subdivision was of very large extent. Comprising the townships of Pantanaw and Shwelaung, it stretched past Kyunpyathat to the sea. At Shwelaung there was a Myo-ôk, but at Pantanaw I [Pg 40] was my own township officer. I had to try all civil and criminal cases, to copy English correspondence, and to do the revenue and executive work of the township. Though during my year at Pantanaw I had only second class powers as a magistrate, still, without a Myo-ôk at headquarters, and with all these various duties, it might be supposed that I was grossly overworked. On the contrary, I had an easier time there than ever after fell to my lot. Still young and zealous, I believe I did all there was to be done. But I found time to be on tour about half of every month, while in the cold weather I spent more than a solid month in the jungle, walking over rice-fields, inspecting, measuring, and computing the out-turn of every holding in respect of which remission of revenue was claimed. As there had been a somewhat widespread failure of the rice crop, this was a task of some magnitude. The development of the country and the growth of work are impressed on me by nothing so much as by a comparison between the Pantanaw subdivision in 1879-80 and the same area in the present day. Then, with the help of one not very efficient Burmese Myo-ôk, I did all the work of the subdivision with ease. Now that area is a large part of the Ma-u-bin and Myaung-mÿa districts. It occupies half the time of a Deputy Commissioner and District Judge, and half the time of one or two subdivisional officers, who break down in succession from overwork, four or five township officers, and several judicial and additional Myo-ôks. The Shwelaung Township is now the Wakèma Subdivision, one of the most [Pg 41] laborious charges in the Province. A very small, obscure, and swampy village was Mawlamyainggyun, now the headquarters of a township, and one of the most flourishing towns in the Delta. I have always cherished the belief that I was the first European official to discover it.

In those days and in that part of the country there was a remarkable absence of serious crime. During my year at Pantanaw one murder was committed and one dacoity was reported. Of the dacoity I made a full meal. The report reached me when on tour in the middle of the rains. Off I went in a small open dugout to make an investigation on the spot. Arriving, drenched to the bones, with no kit, I held the inquiry, clad in a bath towel, reclining in the balcony of a Burmese hut, partly sheltered by a mat-wall. I fared sumptuously on boiled eggs, rice, and jaggery (palm sugar), fare, which I commend, as, if not noble, yet enough. A mat on a plank floor was a sufficient sleeping-place. I never found any difficulty in sleeping on boards. The really hard bed is the bosom of mother earth with too scanty an allowance of straw. The report of the dacoity was false.

At Pantanaw I learned to talk Burmese with fluency, if not with accuracy, and to read it with ease. I had to talk it or be silent half my days. And all office work had to be done in the vernacular. But too early and too long a stay in the Secretariat and constitutional indolence prevented me from acquiring a profound or scholarly knowledge of the language. Up to a certain [Pg 42] point Burmese does not seem to me abnormally difficult. The written character, though at first sight it looks impossible, is much easier than, for example, Urdu script. But the attainment of real proficiency is a laborious task. The want of good literature is a discouragement at the outset. For, as a literary medium, Burmese is singularly defective. According to one of the best authorities, the high-water mark of Burmese prose is reached in the State papers of the Hlut-daw.[32] As if one should seek for models of prose in Blue-Books. A wealth of idioms, a chaotic grammar,[33] a variety of delicate accents, combine to bewilder the student. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, most of our officers have a good knowledge of the spoken and written language, and some are finished scholars. One thing all can do: all can read petitions and other vernacular papers, and are less in the hands of clerks than officers are understood to be in other Provinces.

Here, too, I had opportunities of learning in practice something about two of the main sources of revenue, land and fisheries. Though the Land and Revenue Act, recently brought into operation, is not the most lucid of statutes, the land-revenue system is free from complexity. Its chief merits were sweetness and simplicity,[34] as an ingenious printer tried to make the Burma Government [Pg 43] plead for its transliteration scheme. The State was the landlord. It was, then, an article of faith that there were no tenants in Burma, that every man cultivated his own moderate holding. Though not literally, this was for a long time approximately true. In the Delta land was to be had in abundance, and Burmans and Karens for the most part cultivated their own farms. A constant and sufficient rainfall and a fertile soil combined to yield a rich harvest. Regular settlements were not begun till a year or two later. Meanwhile the rates of land revenue were absurdly low. Each holding was supposed to be measured yearly by the Circle Thugyi, who had no training in surveying. The Thugyi gathered in the revenue of his Circle and received a liberal commission on

the collections. If crops failed or were destroyed by drought, floods, or rats, generous remissions of revenue were granted after inspection by the subdivisional or township officer, or, where large sums were involved, by the Deputy Commissioner himself. When I hear urged against the proposed nationalization of land the consideration that the State would be an austere landlord, requiring its dues each year without pity or indulgence, I cannot help remembering that it was far otherwise in Burma. It may be, however, that in other countries the system would not be worked by a Service whose members from their youth up are trained to sympathize with the people, to regard as their title to respect the name of the cherisher of the poor. Besides land revenue, the only tax paid by the cultivator was capitation tax. This was paid by all sorts and [Pg 44] conditions of men, except the aged and infirm, at the rate of Rs. 5 for a married man, and Rs. 2/8 for a bachelor. It was a crude and unscientific tax, falling equally on rich and poor. But it was a light burden, and crushed no one. The standard of living among Burmans and Karens in the Delta was moderately high. Luxuries were few, but comforts were universal. Walking over miles of rice-fields in familiar talk with Thugyis and farmers, I became acquainted with the conditions of the cultivators, and I laid the foundation of lasting esteem and affection for the people.

My subdivision included many of the great fisheries of the Delta. All the streams and creeks were divided into fisheries, which were sold by auction once a year. The Court House would be filled with bidders, all fishermen, and the bidding was often reckless. The large fisheries sold for substantial sums, the total annual revenue being about five lakhs of rupees. Inspection of fisheries and examination of the methods of working were among the subdivisional officer's duties. Fishermen destroy living creatures, and by good Buddhists are held to be children of perdition. But they enjoy life, regardless of the doom in store. A visit to one of the great fishing villages was an agreeable incident, pleasantly varying the monotony of official routine. The whole village turned out in boats to welcome us. Boats paddled by girls in bright attire, carrying troupes of dancers gracefully posturing, crowded the stream in picturesque profusion. Races between [Pg 45] canoes filled with crowds of shouting paddlers went on throughout the day. At night would be presented a pwè, or many pwès. Pwè is one of the hardest worked of Burmese words, and represents perhaps the most characteristic feature of the country. In its best-known sense it means an entertainment, usually dramatic, or of the nature of a ballet. But a race also is a pwè, and so, singularly enough, is an examination or a Durbar. The legitimate drama is a puppet-show, the dolls being cleverly worked by strings from behind the stage, and the dialogue hoarsely recited by the manipulator with hardly an attempt at ventriloquial effect. Less highly esteemed by Burmese connoisseurs is a drama played by real actors and actresses. The stock characters are the prince, the princess, and the clown. The princess, unabashed, arranges her hair, makes up her cheeks and eyebrows, and even manages to change her dress in view of the assembly. The clown, by boisterous and often indecorous jest, raises peals of merriment. The ballet pwè is a set of posture dances, performed either by one, two, or three girls, or by groups, generally of girls, sometimes of young boys. Dancing is accompanied by choric songs, often topically composed for the occasion. If distinguished visitors are present, the choral song is written to honour and welcome them. The orchestra consists of drums, gongs, cymbals, and other barbarous instruments placed in a circle round the agile executant. In bygone days no charge was made for admission. That was an essential condition. Now I hear with horror of so-called pwès played in [Pg 46] enclosures where money is taken at the door. A pwè lasted for hours. Almost invariably it was performed in the open air, under the moonlit sky, the spectators, men, women, children, and babies, sitting on mats, smoking cheroots, enthralled from dusk to dawn. For my part I liked best the ballet, danced by groups of young girls, daughters of the town or village, and after that the drama played by human actors and actresses. But I must admit that in a puppet-show the comic white horse gaily prancing over the boards was a joy which never failed. During my year at Pantanaw I was a welcome guest at many pwès, none of which I attended with greater pleasure than a ballet danced by the girls of a large fishing village.

All our travelling was by water. There was not a steam-launch in the Delta. Even the Deputy Commissioner did all his journeys in a rice-boat. Such a luxury as a houseboat had not been designed even in a vision. An officer going on tour hired a fairly large boat with three or four rowers, and with a helmsman (pènin) perched aloft in the stern. Often one had the same boat and crew for successive journeys. My pet pènin was a man of authority (awza) and presence, traditionally reputed to be an ex-dacoit. I hope he did not relapse in the troubles which came a few years later. The forepart of the boat was for the crew and servants. The after-deck, covered by an arched roof of bamboo, formed a chamber sufficiently roomy wherein was space to sit or lie but not to stand upright. Privacy was secured by arrangements of kalagas (curtains). In such a [Pg 47] boat I travelled for a week, a fortnight, a month at a time, halting at infrequent villages, interviewing headmen and Thugyis, trying cases, and doing revenue and executive work. As a rule I travelled alone, always unarmed and without a guard. No precautions were needed in that time of profound peace, when we felt, and were, secure from danger. Propelled by long oars, the boat moved generally with the tide. But I have known Burmans row with, and against, the tide for hours at a stretch, a fact which may surprise people taught to regard the Burman as an idle fellow. He is neither idle nor lazy. When occasion demands, he will work as hard as anyone. The farmer and fisherman each has seasons when he must rise up early and late take his rest. What the Burman does not care to do is to make toil a pleasure; to work merely for the sake of doing something or for the purpose of amassing wealth beyond his needs. With a fertile country, with no pressure of population on subsistence, with few wants, why should he strive or cry? For him progress and the strenuous life in themselves have no attraction. We are trying to teach him our ideals, to show him how far superior is our civilization. When we shall have succeeded, we shall have spoilt the pleasantest country and the most delightful people in the world.

But let us resume our tour. By day or night, as the tide serves, our boat moves on the bosom of the wide river or threads the windings of narrow creeks. In the rains I have been rowed against a storm of wind, in a shroud of thick darkness. Again, I have skirted miles of forest-clad banks, [Pg 48] each bush alive with myriads of fireflies, an amazing and memorable sight. When villages were scarce, a halt would be called and breakfast taken under the shade of a mighty tree on the grassy margin of the stream. If we stayed at a village for a day or two, our temporary home was a zayat, one of the many rest-houses built by pious hands for the comfort of wayfarers. Every village had on its outskirts at least one zayat, where the traveller could rest as long as he pleased. With the help of a few kalagas and mats lent by the villagers, a zayat could be made quite comfortable. It was somewhat startling to have a snake drop from the thatched roof on to one's plate at chota haziri.[35] But such an unpleasing incident was rare. Twice in the dry season I ventured to take my young family on tour, and each time we were swamped by cataracts of abnormal rain. Once we were putting up in a roomy zayat, when, soon after dark, a hurricane of wind arose, and a deluge of rain began to fall. The kalagas were blown in, and the baby almost blown out of his cot. We were rescued by the headman, who came with a train of lantern-bearers, and hospitably bore us off to his house. The rest of the night we spent under the family mosquito-net, the family finding quarters elsewhere. The mosquito-net was of stout opaque cloth, and covered the space of a fair-sized room. My wife went no more on tour in the Delta.

[Pg 49]

Burmese houses.

A pleasant interlude was an occasional visit to Father Bertrand at his mission-station in a remote corner of the subdivision. It is a common pose for the man of the world to profess to regard missionaries with suspicion, if not dislike, and to hold native Christians in abhorrence. My experience has led me far from these conclusions. The longer I lived in the Province, the better I came to like, the more to respect, missionaries, and the more esteem I felt for Burmese and Karen Christians. The principal missionary bodies in Burma are Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and American Baptists. Among all these I have found valued friends. One of the most venerable personalities of my early years was the saintly Bishop Bigandet, whose name will always be held in reverence. Apart from the religious aspect, the educational and civilizing value of mission-work cannot be overrated. Some of the best schools and one of the only two colleges are maintained by missions. Though Burmans generally adhere to their own creed, those who have become Christians are for the most part men of good standing. I do not think there are many bread-and-butter converts among them. In an Upper Burman village I found a Christian headman, who told me that his progenitors had been of the same faith. A mission, it was said, had been established there in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the altar-fire had been kept alive for three centuries. It seemed a creditable record. But the most abundant harvest of mission-work is yielded by Karens. The heathen Karen, the missionaries call him, is an uncouth, savage person. The Christian Karen, [Pg 50] though lacking the grace and charm of the Burman, is a law-abiding citizen, with many sterling virtues. Even by Burmese officers it is recognized that there is very little crime among Christian Karens. For this backward race missionaries of all denominations have done a vast amount of educating and civilizing work. Without wishing to make any invidious distinction, I know nothing more praiseworthy than the devotion of Catholic missionaries, who live ascetic lives in solitary places, sacrificing the world to their vocation, subsisting on nothing a month, and giving alms out of that wage. While on this subject, I may mention the admirable work done among lepers by Catholic missions in Mandalay and Rangoon. At each of these places is an asylum for these hapless outcasts, where all the nursing and attendance are done by nuns and sisters. The devotion of these gentle ladies is beyond all words of reverence. Another excellent Catholic foundation is the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Rangoon. Here aged and helpless men and women, without distinction of race or creed, are received and kept in comfort. It is pleasant to record that the Home has been warmly and liberally supported by a Burmese Buddhist, my worthy friend the Honourable Maung Htoon Myat.

The memory of Father Bertrand has led me far from Pantanaw. Our first year in a subdivision was full of novelty and variety, not of an exciting kind, and perhaps not of interest except to

ourselves. Though I learned something of the people, my stay was too short. I have no claim to [Pg 51] intimate knowledge of the Delta, such as that of my successor, Mr. de la Courneuve, or my lamented friend Colonel F. D. Maxwell,[36] who knew every creek and channel, and, apparently, every man, woman, and child, and who was the leading authority on all questions relating to fisheries. While at Pantanaw I made the acquaintance of the remarkable man who planned and executed the Irrawaddy Embankments, the late Mr. Robert Gordon. The mere financial value of this colossal undertaking to the people and to Government may be reckoned by millions of pounds. The work has stood the test of time, and still remains a monument of skill and foresight, and a source of enormous revenue.

In 1880 I spent a year in the Secretariat. After acting for a short time as Assistant Secretary, I was retained as third man to prepare the Annual Administration Report and see through the Press the departmental Reports and Resolutions. My friend Mr. Burgess was acting as Secretary, the Junior Secretary was Mr. E. S. Symes,[37] one of the most brilliant men of his time. He became in succession Secretary, Chief Secretary, and Commissioner. When the highest prizes of the Service were within his grasp, a career of great distinction was prematurely ended in melancholy circumstances early in the year 1901. *Sunt lacrimæ rerum.* Whatever of Secretariat work I knew, I learned from Mr. Burgess and Mr. Symes. The Chief Engineer and Public Works [Pg 52] Secretary was Colonel Colin Scott-Moncrieff.[38] This year, Mr. Aitchison went to Council, and was succeeded by Mr. C. E. Bernard.[39] One of the last civilians from Haileybury, a nephew of John and Henry Lawrence, Mr. Bernard came to Burma with a great reputation. After serving for a short time under Sir John Lawrence in the Punjab, and later with unprecedented distinction in the Central Provinces under Sir Richard Temple and in Bengal under Sir George Campbell, he became Secretary to Sir Richard Temple's Famine Commission, and then Secretary to Government in the Home Department. He was much trusted by Lord Ripon, with whose political opinions he sympathized. To him, I believe, is mainly due the wide extension of Municipal Administration in India. This, perhaps, can hardly be regarded as his title to fame.

In the period covered by my recollections Mr. Bernard holds a foremost place, and will be often in the story. He was one of those rare souls who are the salt of the earth. Bearing, I believe, in appearance some likeness to John, in character he was akin to Henry Lawrence. Deeply and sincerely in sympathy with the people, despising the gaud and glitter which some regard as essential in dealing with Orientals,[40] hating the shadow of injustice or harshness, his sole desire [Pg 53] was to do his duty to the utmost of his strength. His kindly consideration was no mark of weakness. On occasion he could be stern and unbending. He exacted, as he yielded, obedience. Combining with the finest moral and intellectual qualities eminence in all manly pursuits, he stands forth as an ideal figure among the men who have built up the Indian Empire. No more chivalrous, high-minded gentleman ever served the Crown. As an administrator, his knowledge of detail, his extraordinary memory, his power of rapid work, were almost unparalleled. It is ungracious to suggest even minor defects in one to whom I owe so much and who inspired in those privileged to be near him all reverence and affection. It may be that impatience of delay and of any failure from the best led him to do the work of his subordinates and that sometimes his judgment erred. But what nobility of soul, what zeal for righteousness, what effacement of self, what courage and resolution, what fervent, unaffected piety! Twenty years later, when mourned by all good men, Sir Charles Bernard had long gone to his rest, his widow was again in Burma. On the eve of her departure, entirely of their own initiative, representative Burmans of Rangoon brought her an address and a piece of Burmese silver-work as a token of respect for her husband's memory.[41]

No one but Mr. Pepys could make interesting the record of daily journeys to the Secretariat and [Pg 54] the compilation of Blue-Books. Let it suffice to say that we established a precedent by observing the prescribed date for the issue of the Administration Report, a gloomy volume which no one save the compiler of Moral and Material Progress has ever been known to read. Mr. Regan, the indefatigable Superintendent of the Government Press, who never once failed in any undertaking, or in the fulfilment of a promise, risked his life in a sampan and hurled the copies for India on to the mail-boat a few minutes before she left her moorings at midnight. The Report was not lightened by the statement that "a little tasteful carving relieves the baldness of some of our police officers." That was not the fault of the printer.

[Pg 55]

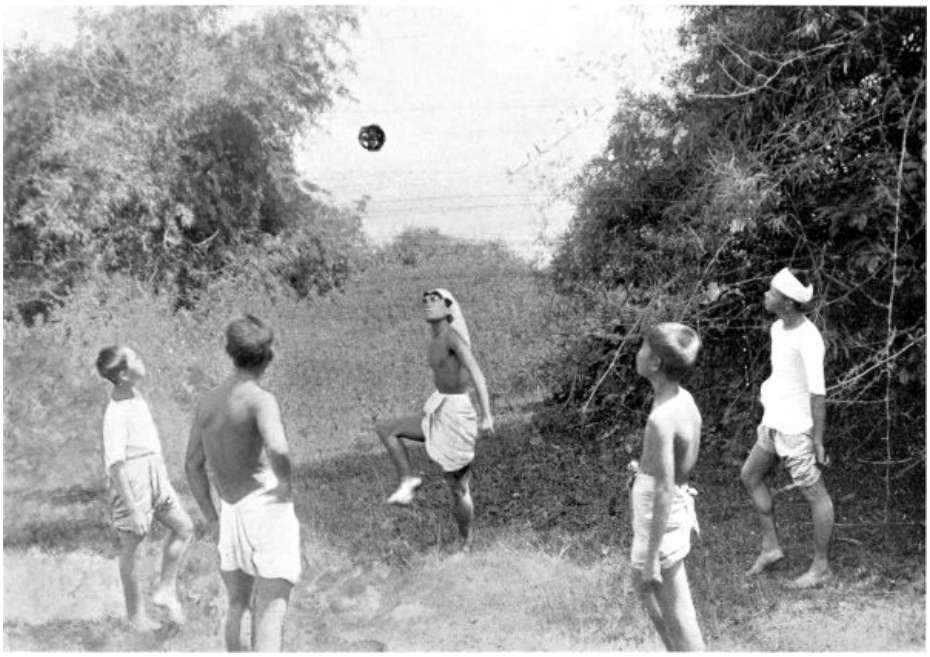
CHAPTER IV
SOME ASPECTS OF BURMESE LIFE AND CHARACTER

One of the odd jobs which fell to my lot in my first year was to consult the Elders of Bassein on the opium question. They were unanimous in their condemnation of opium in every shape. Some races consume opium in moderation, as Englishmen drink beer, without visible harm. Indians, Chinese, Shans, Kachins, may be consumers of opium, and none the worse in health or morals. The Burman is differently constituted. Perhaps by temperament he lacks restraint, doing nothing without overdoing it. Whenever a Burman takes to opium, he drifts into excess and becomes an outcast from decent society. The feeling of the better classes is perfectly consistent on this point. The term "bein-sa" (opium-eater) is among the most opprobrious epithets that can be applied to anyone. Among other races people of decent standing use opium as a relaxation without loss of

caste. Among Burmans it is not so. Throughout my service I knew only one man of position who was reputed to be a bein-sa. Even in his case the reputation may have been undeserved. In Upper Burma, in the King's time, the use of opium by Burmans was strictly prohibited, and I believe the [Pg 56] prohibition was generally enforced. Exceptions were made in the case of Chinese and others. But the suggestion that when we occupied Upper Burma we found a flourishing though illicit opium traffic in full swing is quite unsupported by facts. As a race, it may be said that Burmans are singularly free from the opium vice. The more difficult it is made for Burmans to procure this drug, the better it will be for the country.

Similarly, but in a less marked degree, intoxicating drinks are avoided by good Buddhists. I was many years in Burma before I saw a drunken Burman. I am afraid that the habit of drinking is on the increase. The most popular liquor is what is vulgarly called "toddy," no relation to the concoction dear to Britons. It is not a spirit, but a juice extracted from the tari palm, and should rightly be called tan-ye, or tari. Unfermented, freshly drawn from the tree in the cool of the morning, it is a pleasant and refreshing drink, if somewhat oversweet. It ferments rapidly of its own accord. Fermented, it is a heady liquor, stealing away men's brains. In dry tracts, where the tari palm abounds, the consumption of tari is very common, though still, I think, not among the better classes. The Burman has no head, and succumbs at once to a comparatively small quantity of liquor. In his cups he is a quarrelsome, truculent savage, one of the most dangerous of created beings. Hence, in districts where palm-groves decorate the landscape, violent crimes, murders, cuttings, stabbings, are lamentably frequent. It has been suggested that if all tari and kindred [Pg 57] palms were destroyed, the golden age would come again. Besides tari, country-made spirits are consumed in large quantities, and illicit distillation is commonly practised, a lucrative trade which fine or imprisonment fails to suppress. For European liquors, except, perhaps, bottled beer, as yet little taste has been acquired. I should like to say that the habit of drinking is confined to labourers and peasants; but it cannot be denied that many people of position, who should set an example, indulge in it. Yet, on the whole, to drink is the exception; to abstain is the rule.

Let us turn to pleasanter topics. The amusements of the people are many and various. In the village street you will see men sitting over a chess-board playing a game very much like the chess known in Europe. The moves and rules are similar, though the shape of the pieces and their names are different. A bad habit prevails of finishing each move by thumping the piece loudly on the board. Card games are also in high favour, the most esteemed being the game called "ko-mi," literally, "catch the nine." Of course, cards are played for money. The Burman is a born gambler, and indulges his propensity on every available occasion. We have austerely set our faces against gambling in every form, especially gambling with cards, and interfere not a little with this fascinating pastime. Perhaps, contrary to the current opinion derived from tales of travellers and legends from the hills, the real defect of the Englishman in Burma is that he is too serious, too [Pg 58] little inclined to make allowances for a joyous, light-hearted people. Public gambling is sternly discountenanced. For many years the Legislature has been occupied in devising measures for its suppression, meeting by fresh enactments the ingenious efforts of the Courts to find means to rescue the gambler from the meshes of the law, of the gambler to sail as near to the wind as possible without capsizing. To the impartial observer these alternate struggles of the Legislature to make its prohibitions effective, of the Courts to provide loopholes for the gambler to escape, afford much healthy amusement. I have taken a hand in the game on both sides in progressive stages of a varied career. Let me not be thought too flippant. If Burmans would be content to have quiet little ko-mi parties of friends in their own houses, I for one should be the last to object. But it is a well-known fact that gambling parties are not conducted on these principles. Practically it may be said that in every gambling party someone makes a profit apart from the chances or skill of the game. This is the essential distinction of a common gaming-house, and the practice is properly discouraged. When it is added that gaming parties constantly lead to brawls, affrays, violent assaults, and indirectly to thefts and embezzlements, perhaps the attitude of the earnest official may be regarded with sympathy. Pitch-and-toss and other forms of gambling in public places are prohibited, as in most civilized countries. Lotteries are exceedingly popular; they are for the most part promoted by the intelligent Chinaman, to the detriment of the guileless [Pg 59] Burman. A pleasing form is that known as the "thirty-six animal" lottery. The punter stakes on any of the animals on the board; the winning animal, having been previously secretly determined, is disclosed when the stakes have been made. There is room here for deception. King Thebaw is supposed to have ruined half Mandalay by State lotteries established for the purpose of raising revenue. No one will be surprised to hear that lotteries on races, to which the authorities are discreetly blind, are warmly supported by Burmans of all classes; they are of a mild description, tickets are cheap, and really hurt no one, like the capitation tax. It is almost superfluous to record that cock-fighting is a favourite pastime; this, too, is against the law, but it is hardly on this account less popular. I have heard of, but never seen, fights between buffaloes and even elephants.



CHIN-LÔN.

An innocent game in which so far no one has found the taint of sin is Burmese football (chin lôn). It is played in the village street or any open space, with a light, open-worked bamboo ball, by any number of players. Some Burmans attain great proficiency, kicking the ball with toe or heel, catching it on their shoulders, making it leap unexpectedly by mere exertion of the muscles. Real football is, of course, an exotic, but has attained great popularity. It is seldom that the introducer of a national game can be identified, but in this case due credit can be given to the right person. British football was introduced into Burma some forty years ago by Sir George Scott. When his statue adorns Fytche Square, among other trophies a football must be carved at his feet. The [Pg 60] game is played with zeal and enthusiasm by countless Burman boys and young men. To see Burmans kicking a football with naked feet is a lesson in the hardness of the human sole. Football matches attract great crowds of Burmans in Rangoon and elsewhere. Mercifully the adoption of the Association form of the game has been ordained. To think of hot-headed Burmans engaged in the rough-and-tumble of Rugby excites lurid imaginings. As it is; the referee has an arduous and anxious time. For the most part, however, good-humour and a sporting spirit prevail.

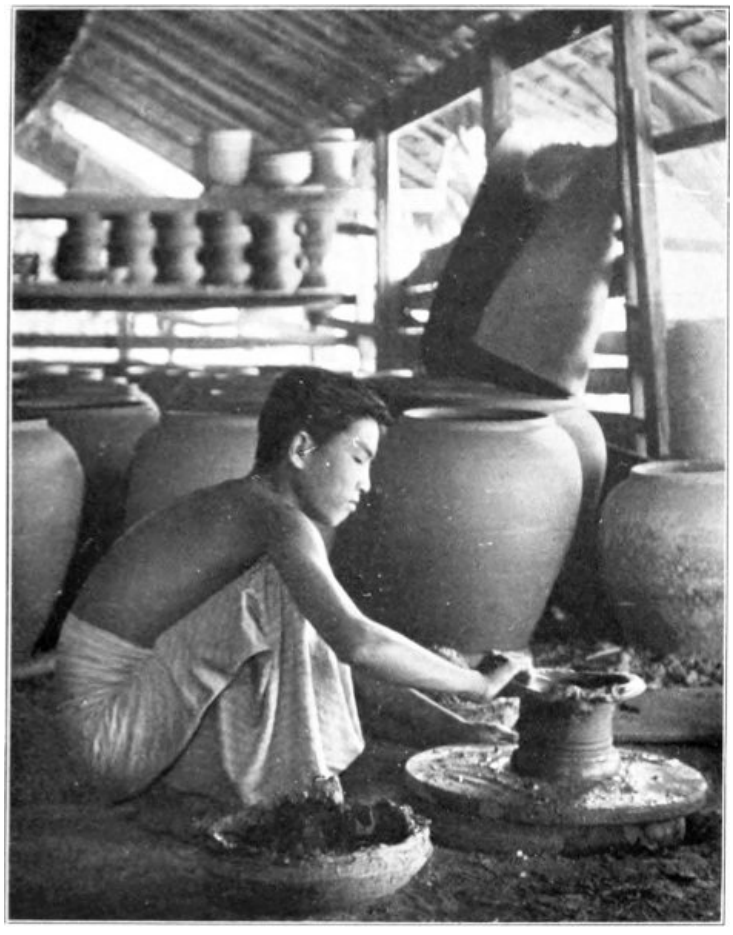
Pony-races, races of trotting bullocks drawing light carts, elephant-races, boat-races, are among the most popular sports. These also, here as elsewhere, give opportunities for gambling; but, apart from this, great interest is taken in them. In one of my subdivisions on one day of every week a local pony race-meeting was held, attended by the whole population of the small headquarter town, and often graced by the presence of the leading officials. In those parts of the country which are comparatively or absolutely dry Burmans are good riders, accustomed to ponies from their childhood. Their saddle is horribly uncomfortable to a European, their stirrups short, their knees near their noses. The favourite pace is a smooth amble, untiring, it is thought, both to rider and to steed. I have seen a Burman, to avoid a soft place, ride a pony for some yards along the parapet of a bridge with a good drop below.

As might be expected in a country where the waterways are many, Burmans are an amphibious [Pg 61] race, good swimmers, at home in the water, and expert in the management of boats with oars and sails. Wherever there is a stream, the whole population bathes either at dawn or dusk. Men, women, and children swim about together, and perfect decorum is observed. Of course, boat-races are a popular amusement. Long shallow canoes, paddled by twenty or thirty men, all shouting a boastful song, contend in these races. At the goal is a wand suspended through a hollow bamboo. The man in the bow of the leading boat carries off the wand. There is thus never any dispute as to the winner. The pace is pretty good, but not nearly so fast as that of a good English four or eight.

As strict Buddhists, Burmans are supposed to abstain from animal food, or, at least, from taking life for the purpose of providing food. For fishermen, who must break this precept daily, special uncomfortable hells are reserved. Hunting and shooting are practised at grave risk of future disaster, and usually by the younger men who think they have time to make up for these derelictions, or are giddily thoughtless of the hereafter. A pious friend of mine in Upper Burma used to be much scandalized at the levity of his aged father, who persisted in coursing hares when he ought to have been making his soul. But as regards the consumption of flesh of birds, beasts, and fish, there seems to be no practical restraint among any class. So long as you are not instrumental in causing death, you may safely eat the flesh. Beef and poultry are freely eaten [Pg 62] when available. Often stolen cattle are slaughtered and eaten. The flesh of no creature which has died a natural death, except perhaps dogs and tigers, is despised. Things which to our taste have weird scent and flavour are highly appreciated. The most popular article of food is ngapi, a composition of fish suffered to decompose and prepared in many ways, all equally malodorous in result. This is universally used as seasoning of rice at all meals. Then there is a dreadful fruit which grows in the south, called a “durian,” a large green fruit, bigger than an average cocoanut,

with a thick rind, containing big seeds embedded in a sort of custard. It emits a disgusting odour, which cannot be described in polite language. Of this fruit Burmans are inordinately fond. In the King's time, every year as the season came round, His Majesty used to charter a steamer solely to bring up a cargo of durians. When, in later years, I told the Ministers that we were about to build a railway to Mandalay, the Prime Minister's first remark was: "Excellent; then we shall be able to get our durians fresh." To my mind the taste is worse than the smell. Yet many Europeans regard this fruit as a delicacy, and eat it freely, even greedily. My theory is that the taste was painfully acquired by officers stationed in remote places where durians grow, and where there is nothing to do. By these pioneers others were persuaded to essay the high adventure. Of a habit so difficult of acquisition and so morbid, the devotees are naturally a little proud. One might [Pg 63] suppose that the nostrils of people who love ngapi and durians were proof against any smell. On the contrary, Burmans are very sensitive to the smell of oil burnt in cooking, which they regard as *odor nervis inimicus*, particularly hurtful to the sick, but grievous to anyone. The third characteristic article of diet in Burma is let-pet (pickled tea). So far as I know, this is the ordinary tea of commerce, grown almost entirely in the Northern Shan State of Taungbaing. It is not used to make an infusion; the leaf is prepared for use as a condiment. The trade and cultivation are entirely in the hands of Shans and Palaungs. Let-pet was brought down from the hills packed in long baskets borne on bullocks, now more commonly by train. It was formerly an article monopolized by the King. I have not heard of any European professing to like the taste of let-pet.

The Burman is first of all an agriculturist. He is only a moderately good carpenter, though he can put the bamboo to many uses. As a boat-builder he excels, fashioning large boats on lines of grace and beauty. Also he can, of course, make his own flimsy house of mat and thatch, or a more substantial dwelling of teak or jungle-wood. But the few manual industries in which Burmans really shine are those which have an artistic basis. Where the secret of a glaze is known, as at Bassein in the delta, and at Kyaukmyaung, the port of Shwebo, pottery is practised as an hereditary art, and many gracious shapes and designs are fashioned out of ductile clay. Silk is grown by an obscure race called Yabeins. But it is as dangerous to cultivate the silkworm as to be [Pg 64] a fisherman. More often, therefore, imported silk is used on Burmese looms, where cloths of lovely mingled colours and delicious wavy patterns are still produced. Alas! this charming domestic industry is on the wane, and both silks and cottons are now as a rule imported from Europe. The fine natural taste of the people is deteriorating. One of the saddest signs of this degeneracy is the substitution of the ugly gingham or silk umbrella for the darling, bright-coloured little tis,[42] which used to preserve the complexions of Burmese maids. This cruel sacrifice to economy and utility has almost succeeded in spoiling the incomparable dazzling glory of mingled colour which used to characterize a Burmese crowd. On the occasion of a royal visit to Mandalay, when boat-races were being held on the Moat amid the most picturesque surroundings, the delightful effect of rows upon rows of gaily dressed Burmans lining the farther edge was marred by a forest of imported umbrellas reared hideous to the sky. However, word was sent along the line that it was disrespectful to raise an umbrella in the presence of royalty. And as if at the touch of an enchanter's wand, the horrible excrescences disappeared and light and beauty reigned once more.



The Potter.

The Myo-ôk-gadaw.

An extraordinarily effective art is the lacquer-work of Pagan. Bowls of exquisite shape, boxes for sacred books or for carrying the necessary betel, offer choice specimens of the artist's skill. The [Pg 65] designs in rich colouring on these lovely works are full of vigour and originality. Lacquering is a laborious art. A really fine box or bowl takes months to complete. The most elaborate work is based on a foundation of horsehair, the finished product so flexible and supple that a bowl can be bent till the opposite sides meet without the fabric cracking. I confess that, as regards my own treasured specimens, I am content to know that this can be done without putting them to the test. Even at Pagan the hateful modern spirit has begun to shed baleful influence. Mingled with bowls and boxes, consecrated by use and wont, may be seen cigar cases of Western shapes and other signs of decadence.

Burmese silver-work and wood-carving are world-renowned. These fine arts are still flourishing. Besides fashioning portable articles, such as figures of men and elephants, or ornamented boxes, wood-carvers show their skill and taste in elaborate designs on monasteries and other public buildings. Some of the carving on monasteries in Mandalay, the Queen's Monastery in A Road, and others of earlier date, is of the highest æsthetic merit. The specimens of wood-carving in the Palace have never appealed to me so intensely. In the presentation of figures the execution is bold and dignified. Wood-carving seems to me to have preserved its native simplicity, to have been less affected than other arts by devastating Western contact. Silver-workers still produce fabrics of grace and beauty in the best indigenous fashion; but too often degenerate teapots and [Pg 66] decadent toilet-sets give evidence of debasing utilitarian propaganda. I grieve to hear that electric light has been installed on the Great Pagoda in Rangoon as well as in the temple of the Yakaing Paya.[43] Much have we done for Burma. But it is sad to think that we have sullied and smirched the tender bloom of Burmese art and artistic ideals.

Of the national character, indications will be found scattered over these pages. It is a mass of apparent inconsistencies. Kindness and compassion are noticeable virtues. Children are treated with indulgence, not always according to discretion. You will see a constable come off a long spell of sentry duty, and straightway walk about with a child perched on his shoulder. No orphan is left desolate. No stranger asks in vain for food and shelter. Yet these good people have a full mixture of original sin. They produce dacoits who perpetrate unspeakable barbarities on old men and women. Sudden and quick in quarrel, the use of the knife is lamentably common. Gay, careless, light-hearted, with a strong if uncultured sense of humour, they can be cruel and revengeful. The statistics of the Courts reveal a mass of criminality as shocking as it is surprising. Murders, dacoities, robberies, violent assaults, are far too numerous. I can understand the prevalence of crimes of passion and impulse; but in a land flowing with milk and honey, a fair and fertile land where there are work and food enough for everyone, I cannot understand why there should be any such sordid crimes as theft and embezzlement.

Two characteristics distinguish Burmans from most other Eastern races. They have no caste, and [Pg 67]

there is no seclusion of women. Socially, therefore, we can meet on equal terms. A Burman does not shrink from eating and drinking in our company, or need to undergo elaborate and expensive purification if by accident or design he is sullied by our contact. If I go to visit a Burman, I am received by his wife and daughters, and in turn when, often with the ladies of his house, he comes to see me, he is welcome to associate on friendly terms with my family. The absence of caste does much to facilitate the task of administration. Partly owing to the intelligence and docility of the people, but mainly on account of this lack of caste, we were able, for instance, to carry out, with no serious trouble, measures for suppressing plague. Our real difficulty, I may say parenthetically, was to find the right measures to take. In the end what some people call the disgusting practice of inoculation seems to have been found most beneficial. In some places people were encouraged to be inoculated by making the occasion a festival; pwès were held, small presents given to children, prizes distributed by lotteries in which the chances were free. In Sagaing last year, out of a population of ten thousand, eight thousand were inoculated. The local officers and their wives underwent the operation, often more than once, by way of inspiring confidence, as for the same purpose my wife and I were vaccinated years before at Pantanaw. Among those inoculated there were no cases of plague. The ridiculous suggestion that inoculation [Pg 68] tends to spread plague has been, we might almost say, disproved by specific experiments in Burma and, I doubt not, elsewhere.

To resume. Burmese women hold a position as dignified and assured as in any country of the world. Every Buddhist believes that women are inferior to men, that a really good woman may have the luck to be born a man in a future incarnation. Every Burman knows that a woman is as good as a man, and often better. It was in my experience that occurred the pleasing incident elsewhere told not quite correctly. A young woman came to me for a reduction of her income-tax. She said she earned her living by selling in the bazaar.

“What does your husband do?” I asked.

“He stays at home and minds the children.”

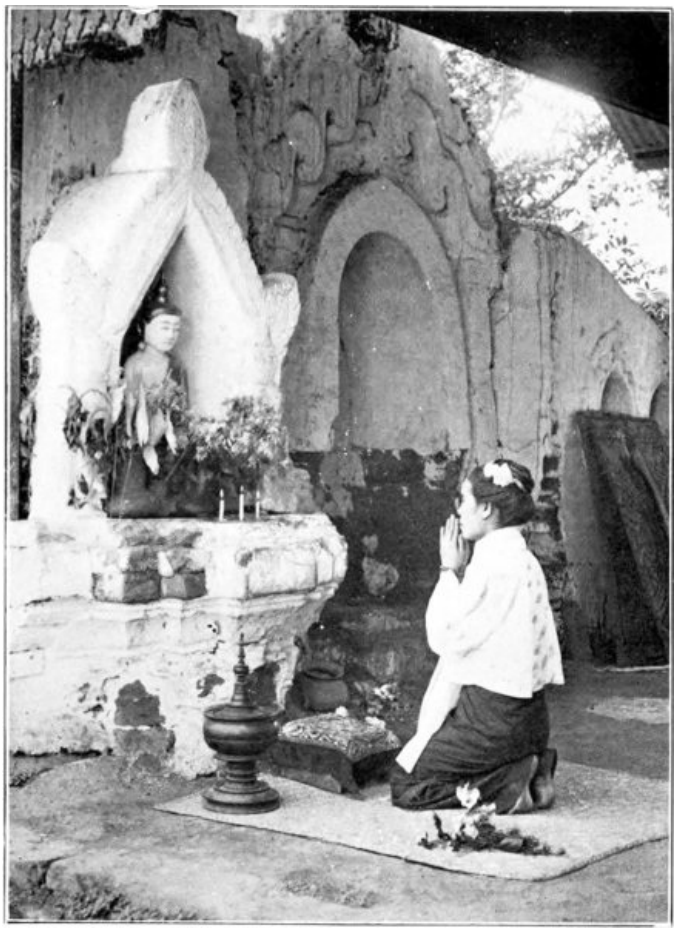
This was an exceptional case, but it illustrates the relative position. Burmese women take an active part in the business of the country. Most of the retail trade is in their hands; sometimes they manage more important commercial affairs. The control of a stall in bazaar or market is regarded as a very desirable occupation. Is it indiscreet to suggest that opportunity for gossip is an attraction? Often a wife takes great interest in her husband’s official or private work. If one has business with a police-sergeant or Thugyi, and finds him absent, one does not seek a subordinate, but discusses and settles the matter with the Sazin-gadaw or the Thugyi-gadaw.[44] It is on record that, prisoners being brought to a police-station in the absence of any of the force, [Pg 69] the sergeant’s wife put them in the cage, and, herself shouldering a da, did sentry-go till relieved. After these instances it need hardly be said that in her own household the Burmese woman is supreme. Her position is equalled only by that of a French mother.

Girls may not go to monasteries for instruction, so elementary education is not universal among women as among men. But many girls, especially of the richer classes, learn to read and write. I think more women are literate than among other Eastern people. Practice in the bazaar, at any rate, makes them ready at mental arithmetic. One day I was holding an amateur examination of a monastic school. The mothers sat round, admiring the academic gymnastics of their infant prodigies. Presently I set in Burmese form a variation of the old theme of a herring and a half. All the boys and all their teachers took slates and began to figure laboriously. Almost before they had begun the bazaar women in the circle laughed and gave the answer. One pleasing characteristic of Burmese ladies, rare among people of warm climates, may be mentioned. Those who have not lived roughly, but have been properly housed and tended, preserve a youthful appearance in the most surprising manner quite to mature age. Very rare among women of all classes is the aged appearance of comparatively young women.

An admirable trait is the remarkable absence of serious crime among women. It is quite rare to find a woman in prison, and I remember no instance of the execution of a woman. While gaols in [Pg 70] Burma provide quarters for 15,000 men, they can accommodate only 354 women. These seem to me very remarkable figures. There is no crowding on the women’s side of the gaol. Indeed, if imprisonment of women were abolished in Burma, no harm would be done. I suppose Burmese women produce fewer criminals than any other civilized race. Not that they are all angels; they are apt to be hasty and to offend with their tongues. Sometimes the bazaar is the scene of actual conflict between angry fair ones. But on the whole Burmese women are strikingly innocent and well-behaved. Good mothers and honest wives, light-hearted and sociable, they are justly held in high esteem.

Burmese girls enjoy much freedom. You may see them laughing and talking at the village well, sitting at the domestic loom, walking in the roads, engaged on household duties. Infant marriage is unknown; no Burmese girl marries except to please herself. Like other Orientals, girls come early to maturity, and marriages at fourteen or fifteen are not uncommon; but as often as not a Burmese maiden does not marry till she is eighteen or nineteen, or even older. She must not wait too long, or she will be laughed at as an old maid.[45] The relations between the sexes are much the same as in Western countries. Boys and girls and men and women fall in and out of love and break one another’s hearts after the best traditions of romance. Jealousy is a prevalent vice, and many die for love.

Snake Pagoda.



Burmese girl worshipping.

Buddhism recognizes and allows polygamy, and it is incorrect to say that plurality of wives is uncommon. Several different kinds of wives are described in the Law of Manu, which contains even an account of the popular modern character, the wife like a mother. But many, probably most, men live happily with one wife all their lives. In any case, the first or principal wife has a distinct and honoured place in the household. No ceremony of marriage is necessary or, among the mass of the people, usual. The high Buddhist theory, how different from the practice of this [Pg 71]

joyous people, regards life as a mistake, this world as a vale of tears, transitory existence as the supreme evil, and bids us all aim at the goal of eternal rest. Therefore no Burmese monk would bless a marriage; he is more at home at a funeral. Mutual consent is the sole essential of a marriage. Similarly, divorce is easy. No Court need intervene. Ordinarily, separation is effected by arrangement between the parties, sometimes in the presence of the village elders. Although the Courts have not, perhaps, said the last word on the law of the subject, it is commonly accepted that, even without fault on either side, one party to the marriage can insist on divorce against the wish of the other party to the contract. In this respect men and women are on equal terms. The safeguard against capricious divorce is supplied by strict rules for the division of property at the dissolution of a marriage. In the case mentioned above, the one who insists on separation must abandon all property to the reluctant partner. Though so easy, divorce is far less [Pg 72] common than might be expected. Most married people live together till death parts them. It is not unusual for divorced people to come together again. An appreciable proportion of the crimes of violence is due to the refusal of a woman to rejoin her divorced husband. I do not suggest that the Burmese law and practice of divorce would be suitable in communities of a more complex type. The comparatively even distribution of wealth, the fertility of the soil and the scantiness of the population, the absence alike of great fortunes and of abject, pinching poverty, the kindly disposition of the race, probably combine with more obscure elements to render somewhat primitive conditions possible. It is quite certain that in the stage which Burmese civilization has reached the simple marriage law works well and produces no obviously ill-effects. It need hardly be said that there is no bar to the marriage of widows.

CHAPTER V
ON THE FRONTIER

[Pg 73]

Early in 1881 I went for a very short term to Myaung-mÿa, in the Delta. The subdivisional officer having suddenly broken down, I was sent to superintend the taking of the Census. At Myaung-mÿa, newly constituted the headquarters of a subdivision, there was no house. I lived in a zayat near the Court. Myaung-mÿa is now the chief town of an important district, with a Deputy Commissioner as well as a Divisional and District Judge. Having finished the Census, I went to Bassein, riding most of the way over bare rice-fields. Everywhere I was received with the generous hospitality characteristic of the Burmese people, and I made many pleasant acquaintances among Thugyis and villagers. One village headman lives in my memory, a stalwart Karen who in his youth had been the champion boxer at the Court of Mandalay. He said so, and he ought to know. Probably his position was not one of high eminence; Burmese and Karen boxing is a mild game. The challenger leaps into the ring; slapping his chest, he dances round, bidding all come on. It is one of the rules of the game that the players should be equally matched [Pg 74] in size and weight. With much difficulty a competitor is found to fulfil the requirements and accept the challenge. At last preliminaries are arranged, and the boxers face each other in the ring. They may kick, and they may slap with open hand, but not with closed fist. As soon as a drop of blood is drawn from the slightest scratch, the fight is at an end. Gloves are not worn. This may sound barbarous, and should be exciting; as a matter of fact, it is very harmless and extremely dull. In my experience, Karens are better at the game than Burmans.

For the rest of my time as subdivisional officer, I stayed at Bassein as the guest of Colonel William Munro, the Deputy Commissioner, an officer of the old school who had spent his life in Burma. Colonel Munro made use of the aptitude presumed to have been acquired in the Secretariat during the past year and set me to write all his annual reports on the sole basis of the figures in the appended statements.

My next charge was the frontier subdivision of Mye-dè in the Tha-yet-mÿo district. The headquarter town was Allan-mÿo, called after Major Allan who was Quartermaster-General when the frontier was demarcated. Allan-mÿo lies on the Irrawaddy, just over five miles north of Tha-yet-mÿo,[46] the district headquarters. The distance had to be more than five miles, or travelling allowance for the journey would have been inadmissible. Above Allan-mÿo were the villages of [Pg 75] Myedè and Mobôn. Long ago were two young Princes, blind. It was foretold that if they went down the Irrawaddy they should recover their sight. So they set out on a raft. Presently, at a place where they landed, they perceived a glimmering of the sky and exclaimed: “Mo-bôn; there is the sky above.” A few miles farther on, landing again, they saw the ground on which they stood, and cried: “Mye-dè; there is the earth beneath.” Thus was the prophecy fulfilled and the places received their names. Six miles north of the flagstaff on the fort at Myedè, then no longer a place of arms, was the starting-point of the frontier-line laid down by Lord Dalhousie’s personal direction.

The subdivision was a compact area of about a thousand square miles. A comparatively barren land, fringed by hills of no great height, intersected by many watercourses, now beds of dry sand, anon rushing torrents. These mountain-streams come down with sudden violence. Often returning from a walk or ride, one sat awaiting the subsidence of a river bubbling over a sandy bed where an hour or so before one had passed dry-shod. Sad stories were told of travellers cut off in mid-stream by a rapid flood and forced to spend the night on a diminishing islet of sand. As a rule these chaungs[47] were not too deep to ford on pony-back, though as often as not the pony created a painful diversion by sitting down unexpectedly and wallowing in the waves. In these [Pg 76]

northern wilds were no teeming rice-fields, no fat fisheries. The people were poor and unsophisticated, raising scanty rice-crops with the aid of primitive irrigation works, earning a precarious livelihood by boiling cutch (catechu) or cultivating taungya[48] on the hillsides. One valuable crop they had, sessamum (hnan); but the farmer could not reckon on a good hnan season every year. Scattered among the hills were villages of tame Chins who had drifted down from their own land in the distant north-west of Upper Burma. Here were to be seen women with faces tattoed in close blue lines, according to legend a precaution against the too demonstrative admiration of their Burmese neighbours. The effect was singularly unbecoming, and already the younger women were organizing successful resistance. Chins were excellent settlers, careful and frugal cultivators, their villages models of neatness and cleanliness as compared with Burmese villages similarly situate. Much as I love Burmans, I cannot honestly commend the state of their villages. Fenced in as a protection against dacoits, the houses closely jammed together with no respect for order; the paths, especially at the gateways, trodden into pulpy masses of mud by the trampling oxen; the ground-floor of each hut a pen where cattle are installed each night; a Burmese village is an insanitary though often picturesque abode. Even the odours seem to me [Pg 77] less fragrant and pleasing than to some more enthusiastic votaries. In the simple agricultural conditions of this primitive community, the revenue work was very light. The only trouble arose from disputes about irrigation and rights to water. Bench work in criminal matters was not excessive, and most of the civil cases were tried by the Mỹo-ôk (township officer). There was ample leisure for travelling. All the touring was done on Burman ponies, strong and willing little creatures, averaging about 12½ and never exceeding 13½ hands. At that time it was an article of faith that horses, or even ponies of Waler or Arab or country-bred classes, could not live in Burma. We have learnt better in recent years. Most of the riding was along jungle paths through *in*-tree forest on sandy soil, quite good going even in the rains; but there were craggy bits in the hills and quick-sands in the streams. Touring in Burma has always been less luxurious than camp-life in India. We travelled at every season of the year, carrying no tents, but finding abundant shelter in monasteries and zayats, or in frequent police-stations. Everywhere monks and villagers were hospitable and friendly. Circle Thugyis flourished, men who held office in succession to a long line of forefathers. Save in one respect, the people did not seem to have many criminal tendencies. It was natural to see the stocks near the village gate; it would have been surprising to see them occupied.

We marched with Sinbaungwè in Upper Burma. The border was marked by stone pillars at set [Pg 78] intervals and by an actual line cut in the turf, which had to be inspected periodically and kept in visible repair. Along the frontier at intervals of four or five miles was a series of police posts. Picture a quadrangular enclosure girt by a kya-hlan[49] of stout bamboos interwoven with a bristling array of bamboo-spikes, quite an efficient protection against a rush if the heavy wooden gate was closed. Beside the gate stood a watch-tower. In the midst was a station-house and office, with a barred wooden cage for prisoners. Round this were grouped the small but sufficient houses of the constables and native officers. The posts were garrisoned entirely by local Burmans armed with das[50] and muskets. The policeman of those days was a picturesque person, in Burmese dress, of a pattern to some extent dependent on the taste of the Superintendent. A red-striped paso or lôngyi[51] marked the servant of the Queen. He wore his hair long, surmounted by a gaungbaung,[52] and was not expected to pose as a Gurkha sepoy. With all his many and pleasing virtues and vices, one quality his warmest admirers have never claimed for the average Burman, respect for discipline. You may drill Burmans till they look as smart as soldiers of the line, and you can teach them to shoot excellently. But so far it has not been found possible [Pg 79] successfully to train them in habits of discipline and method. It was, therefore, never a surprise, though it excited clamorous if unreasonable wrath, when, on reaching a police post a few hundred yards from the frontier, one found the great gate ajar, the watch-tower empty, and the sentry either absent on his own more or less lawful occasions, or peacefully sleeping with his musket by his side. This was well enough in quiet times, but when the war came the result was seen in the desertion of the frontier posts, and their destruction by roving bands of dacoits.

The frontier-line started from a pillar on the bank of the Irrawaddy, on a spot visited by the great Governor-General himself. Hard by, on each side of the boundary, was a telegraph office. Though the wires ran from Rangoon to the border, and from the border to Mandalay, there was not sufficient comity between the Governments to allow the line to be linked. Every message to and from Upper Burma had to be carried by hand across the intervening space of a few yards and resignalled. Our telegraph office was the place where the subdivisional officer met the Wun[53] of Sinbaungwè for the discussion of frontier affairs. With that official, who was of about the same standing as myself, my relations were somewhat stiff, civil but hardly cordial. It is a mistake to suppose that the relations between Europeans and Burmans are less intimate now than in earlier days. Twenty years later, in similar circumstances, I should certainly have asked the Wun to [Pg 80] breakfast or dinner. Then, our meetings were rigidly formal and official. The Wun used to annoy me by coming into the room wearing Burmese shoes, a studiously discourteous act.[54] I could think of no better retort than to keep my hat on during the interview. I dare say it was unworthy, but I think it was human to feel a thrill of satisfaction when, four or five years later, my old friend Maung Lat came to me in my office in Mandalay crouching on the ground in the Burmese attitude of respect. Maung Lat was a handsome man, of the usual type of Burmese district officials. After the annexation he took service under our Government and became a Mỹo-ôk. He did good work, and *felix opportunitate mortis*, died before he was found out. At our meetings at Myedè, cattle-driving raids across the frontier were among the most frequent subjects of discussion. This was the darling sin of adventurous spirits on each side of the border. In a country where cattle are the

most valuable of the farmer's possessions, cattle theft is one of the crimes which most sorely vexes the magistrate's righteous soul, and is most rigorously punished. All possible steps were taken to suppress it, and offenders were visited with stripes and imprisonment. Yet one could not help recognizing that to drive whole herds of oxen across the border, to evade police posts, to [Pg 81] carry the spoil by unfrequented paths through the heart of our districts till it could be sold many miles away, perhaps in a cattle-market under the eyes of officials, was an attractive and exciting adventure. On the whole, our men had the worst of the game. If they were caught driving cattle from across the frontier, they were punished as if they had committed the offence in British territory, while cattle-thieves from Upper Burma who got over the line with their plunder were seldom brought to justice. Hence many wrangles with Maung Lat. Once only I really had the best of the encounter. I bluffed him into handing back to me on the spot a man who had been seized on our side and carried off to Sinbaungwè. At the time the incident seemed to me of international importance.

The man who had set his stamp on the subdivision was my friend Mr. Burgess, who spent there the first seven years of his service, greatly to the benefit of himself and of the people. He made roads, kept the peace, and impressed the countryside by his zeal for justice and good order. Even in those dark days, before the light of a Decentralization Commissions had shone, needless transfers seem to have been avoided. The township officer, my old and valued friend and colleague, Maung Tet Pyo, held his charge for many years. He was an official of the very oldest school, not very learned, with only a working knowledge of codes, but thoroughly acquainted with every inch of his township, and with every man, woman, and child of his people. He had, of [Pg 82] course, no English. I doubt if he was ever required to pass a departmental examination. His handwriting was so bad that my Burmese clerks often had to come to me to decipher it. Maung Tet Pyo was a man of courage and energy, who somewhat shocked the straighter sect of Buddhists by being an ardent sportsman. Burmans told with admiration that he shot birds on the wing. He filled the measure of his days, was decorated, and many years after his retirement died honoured and lamented. Curiously enough, though so nearly illiterate, he will probably be remembered as the compiler of a book on the "Customary Laws of the Chins," a treatise which attracted the attention of Mr. Jardine,[55] the Judicial Commissioner, and was translated under his direction. The manuscript was beautifully written out by my clerk, Maung Po, afterwards a Myo-ôk, one of my many Burmese friends, who, I suspect, was responsible for more than the transcription.

At Tha-yet-myo, then a military station of some importance, were half the 43rd Regiment, still on this side of the frontier, the 44th Regiment, two battalions of Madras Infantry, and guns. The fort, north of the town, was duly garrisoned. At Allan-myo we had a detachment of British infantry in barracks on the hills east of the station. The civil officers were the Assistant Superintendent of Police, the late Mr. B. K. S. MacDermott, afterwards in the Commission, best of comrades and good fellows, and the Assistant Engineer, Mr. H. W. James, now Superintending Engineer. A [Pg 83] small Customs Office was maintained for the registration of inland trade. The subdivisional officer was Collector of Customs, without fee or reward. In that capacity he had the use of the Customs boat, a stout English gig, very convenient for crossing the river, here about two miles wide. I have often seen, by the way, an elephant swim across with just enough of his head above water to seat the mahout.[56] At Allan-myo there was a decent little house, close to the river-bank. When the Irrawaddy rose, the room on the ground-floor was generally flooded. At the beginning of the rains this room used to be invaded by swarms of tiny land-crabs, more pleasing visitors than scorpions. Sometimes for a few days the whole town was under water, and we went about in boats.

Myedè, traversed by the Pegu Yoma, was pleasanter, but less healthy, than the Delta. Here I had an attack of malarial fever, of no great severity, which left me subject to a recurrence for the next fourteen years or so. After that it seemed to be worn out. We had also in my time a dreadful outbreak of cholera throughout the subdivision. Deaths were reckoned by scores, and villages were almost depopulated. Riding to visit the infected parts, we expected to find the dead lying unburied in streets and houses; happily the expectation was not literally fulfilled.

Speaking from my personal experience, I regard Burma as a healthy country as compared with other regions of the tropics. Much depends on the comfort in which one lives. The very bad name [Pg 84] which Burma no doubt has acquired is due to a great extent to the rapid succession of the three Burmese Wars. After each of these wars, troops, military and civil officers, and police suffered many hardships and privations, bivouacking under the stars, and often irregularly fed. In these conditions sickness ensued, and much mortality and invaliding. For people properly housed and assured of a square meal at the right time, Burma is healthy enough. For those who work all the year round in the jungles of Upper Burma, it is rather sickly. On the whole, Lower Burma, except Arakan and the tracts bordering on the Yomas, is healthier than Upper Burma. Cholera and plague are not peculiar to Burma, and are not more deadly than in other parts of India.

When the floods are out.

Of the wealth of insect-life much has been written. Besides mosquitoes, ants, white, red, and black, flying and merely creeping, abound in copious variety. Once at least they stopped a ball at Government House, flying in hosts, dropping their wings and therewith their bodies, and reducing the floor to a mucous mass. For me, at Allan-mỹo, others of their species eviscerated all my books during my brief absence. At the beginning of the rains strange creeping, crawling, flying things, slimy things with legs, appear in swarms. The centipede makes his nest in your sponge; the scorpion lurks in your boot. Snakes, too, are fairly numerous and of many kinds, from the hamadryad who chases the wayfarer, to the Russell's viper who lies dormant in his path, and when trodden on turns like any worm. Apart from these disadvantages, I have no complaint to [Pg 85] make of Burma as a country to live in.

While discussing these generalities, I may say a few words about the climate. Naturally, in so large an extent of country, this is subject to considerable variations. The Delta is hot and steamy with an abundant never-failing rainfall, and no cold weather to speak of. Much of Upper Burma is an arid plain, with frequent hills, hot and dry, but relieved by a pleasant cold season. Even here we do not seem to get the constant stifling heat, day and night, of which we hear in the plains of Northern India. I suppose some people find the heat trying. An old friend of mine had the habit after dinner of calling his neighbour's attention to a picture on the wall, while he surreptitiously emptied his finger-bowl down his (own) neck. In Mandalay for some months of the wet season (not so very wet) a tearing wind rages, and is apt to shatter one's nerves. In Lower Burma the persistent rainfall is impressive. People who have lived there hardly notice that it ever rains in England. But it seldom pours both morning and evening. Generally it is possible to get out for exercise either at dawn or at close of day.

To return to my subdivision. By an arrangement which seems anomalous, but which worked well enough, for a substantial part of my sojourn in Myedè I was also Cantonment Magistrate at Thayet-mỹo. The Commanding Officer most kindly supervised the establishment which dealt with hedges and ditches. My duty was to try civil and criminal cases, keep the accounts, and attend the periodical meetings of the Cantonment Committee. These were friendly gatherings where, [Pg 86] unless the secretary officiously intervened, many pleasant stories whiled away the tedious hours. If I worked very hard, my duties on an average occupied about five or six hours a week, for which I drew an allowance of Rs. 200 a month. I spoil no one's market by revealing the existence of this fat sinecure; the stipend was reduced by an economical Commission in 1887, and has since been abolished. My Deputy Commissioners were Colonel Horatio Nelson Davies, who had been Sir Arthur Phayre's secretary, my friend R. H. Pilcher, and Captain (now Colonel) W. F. H. Grey, from all of whom I received much kindness. Nor can I forbear to mention the hospitality of Captain William Cooke,[57] whose house was always open to me, and with whom the friendship begun in those distant days still flourishes. The chaplain, the Rev. J. D. Briscoe, one of the best of men, was also among my allies. He died, most sincerely mourned, in the flower of his age, I believe from the effects of asceticism practised from no doctrinal motives, but for the sake of example to the soldiers among whom he worked.

Some excitement was caused by the coming of a Burmese embassy accredited to the Viceroy. Among them was the Kyaukmyaung Atwin-Wun,[58] son-in-law, of the Taingda Mingyi, whom afterwards I knew well at Mandalay. Mr. Pilcher, who was deputed to accompany them to Simla, had met them all frequently when Assistant Resident at the Burmese Court. But though he was distinguished from his fellows by a flowing beard, they declined to recognize him, professing that in their eyes all kalas were alike. Robert Pilcher had other attributes besides his beard which might have commended him to Burmese officials. His knowledge of their language was scholarly and profound, while his sympathy with the people was infinite. Nothing that concerned them was alien from him. An instance may be given. Once in after-years he was with a column on march. Halting the column, he sat down by the wayside to get some information from a Burman passer-by. Presently the patient Commanding Officer asked gently if the information had been extracted. "I am so sorry," was the reply; "I forgot all about it. He was telling me such an interesting story about his aunt." The Mission was hospitably received and entertained at Simla, but returned without having effected any useful purpose. Which reminds me of the Burman schoolboy who, asked to translate *mortuus est re infectâ*, ventured to reply: "He died of an infectious disease." [Pg 87]

But by far the most thrilling incident of my stay at Allan-mŏyo was the visit of Sir Frederick Roberts. He came as Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, the troops in Burma being in the Madras command.[59] Attended by his staff, among whom were General Godfrey Clerk,[60] Captain Neville Chamberlain,[61] and Captain G. Pretyman.[62] His Excellency came to inspect the frontier stations, and marched from Allan-mŏyo to Toungoo across the Yôma,[63] which parts the Tha-yet-mŏyo and Toungoo districts. Fresh from the glories of Afghanistan and the march to Kandahar, though then but midway in his illustrious career, Sir Frederick Roberts was a hero in all men's eyes. It was my happy lot to make arrangements for his march and to accompany him through my subdivision. Thus as a young man I had the privilege of experiencing the unrivalled charm and personal attraction or this great soldier. To the end of my days in the East I have seen the eyes of old native officers light up at the mention of Lord Roberts Sahib. Not Nelson himself inspired more affection and enthusiasm in officers and men who served and followed him. [Pg 88]

At the close of this year, being sent to represent the Tha-yet-mŏyo District, I saw the first of many Viceroys who visited Burma, Lord Ripon. I need hardly say that I was too junior to be brought into immediate contact with His Excellency or his staff. Mr. Primrose[64] was private secretary, and Major Evelyn Baring,[65] Finance Member, was of the Viceroy's party. The most obvious result of Major Baring's visit was the stoppage of most of our remunerative jail industries. The order for discontinuance was of general application throughout India; Burma, still an unsophisticated place, under a ruler who had learned to obey, was the only Province which made a serious effort to carry the order into effect. The usual festivities were held in honour of the Viceroy's visit, a ball, a levée, and a garden-party. The most picturesque incident that lingers in my mind is the posting of venerable Burmese officers, in fur coats, clasping to their breasts silver-mounted das, in the corridors of Government House, as a-thet-daw-saung[66] to Their Excellencies. [Pg 89]

At Tha-yet-mŏyo, for the first and last time, and only for a few days, I held charge of a district as acting Deputy Commissioner. For various reasons there was a temporary lack of senior officers in the district. For a short period I was not only Deputy Commissioner, but also Cantonment Magistrate, Superintendent of Police, and Superintendent of the Jail. I did not succeed in drawing the pay of all these offices.

CHAPTER VI
THE SECRETARIAT: THE LAST SUBDIVISION

[Pg 90]

Early in 1883 the acting Chief Commissioner, Mr. Crosthwaite,[67] very considerately gave me the option of coming to Rangoon as Junior Secretary. In those days it was usual for officers, especially young officers, to go where they were sent, without previous reference and without room for remonstrance. Nearly twenty years passed before I was again consulted as to my posting. Recently a different practice seems to have developed. Although from a financial point of view the move to Rangoon was ruinous, we decided to risk it and went down. Except for two brief intervals, I stayed in the Secretariat till early in 1891. Altogether I spent in the office eleven years, a period surpassed only, I think, by my friend Mr. C. G. Bayne.[68] In 1883 Mr. Symes was Secretary, Mr. Burgess being on leave.

Life was much the same as when we were here two years before. Rangoon was still a pleasant social place. We rode in the mornings, and played polo or tennis in the afternoons, gave a good many hours to dancing and whist, went to the races twice a year, and in the rains to hunts once a week. Some were even so energetic as to play tennis two or three times a week before breakfast, a practice which our less hardy successors have abandoned. We drove to office and out to dinner in dogcarts. Not in those days did the Junior Secretary or his wife regard a brougham as indispensable. Among the pleasantest meetings were hunt finishes, hospitable gatherings where, at the end of the run, riders and their friends were rewarded with pegs and encouraged to dance. Jests and laughter filled the air. The cheerful subaltern leant over the veranda, encouraging a reluctant rider at the last show-jump: "Give him his head, sir; can't you see the pony wants to [Pg 91]

jump?" Poor Cockeram; one of the first to fall in the guerilla warfare in Upper Burma. The lotteries on the races were still fairly select meetings of friends and acquaintances. In 1885 I attended them for the last time, and bandied quips with a famous special correspondent. In reply to his remark that we were making history, I made the obvious and unluckily too true reply that we left that to him. I am still somewhat surprised that he, an Irishman, should have thought it necessary gravely to explain the origin and meaning of his observation.

The work in the Secretariat was hard enough, but not so overwhelming as in later times. There was a staff of good old-fashioned clerks, most of whom had been in the office many years, whose [Pg 92] experience compensated the somewhat primitive methods inherited from days when Sir Arthur Phayre himself went daily to the Secretariat in Godwin Road. The office was quite efficient, bearing the impress of three excellent Secretaries, Major Street, Mr. Burgess, and Mr. Symes, each of the finest quality in his own way. Mr. Crosthwaite, whose name is associated with Burma more intensely than that of anyone save Sir Arthur Phayre, acted as Chief Commissioner for a year in 1883-84, during Mr. Bernard's absence on leave.

About this time India was violently agitated by the Ilbert Bill. In all parts of India the bulk of the magisterial work is done by native officers. Living in places more or less remote were many Europeans, planters and others, whom it was thought undesirable to subject to the jurisdiction of Indians. The law therefore ordained that only magistrates themselves Europeans and of proved experience should exercise powers in criminal cases over persons classed as European British subjects. This was, I venture to say, a wise and necessary provision. By the Ilbert Bill it was proposed to abolish this distinction and to place Europeans and natives on the same footing in respect of criminal procedure. It was a doctrinaire proposal of the worst kind, subversive of the prestige of the ruling race, and quite uncalled for by the circumstances and exigencies of the time. One thing only can be said in its favour. It was offered as a voluntary boon, not as a concession to seditious clamour and agitation. By all classes of Europeans the proposal was [Pg 93] vehemently opposed. In many parts, especially in Bengal, passionate excitement was stirred up. The Viceroy, believed to have been the only begetter of the Bill, seated on the Olympian heights of Simla, failed to realize the extent and force of the opposition to his project. Not till he came down to Calcutta did he understand the situation. In the capital there was enough visible ferment to indicate the seething passions beneath. Wild stories are told of the intentions of the European community, had the Bill been pressed. If Lord Ripon had not come to Calcutta, he would have continued in ignorance, surrounded only by officials, unblest by the saving grace of contact with living public opinion. In Burma alone among the Provinces of India, the subject failed to kindle a spark of vital interest. There were few Europeans scattered through the country likely to be affected by the proposed change in the law. And, for reasons which it would not be difficult to analyze, Europeans in Burma have seldom been very clamorous in expression. By some of the more ardent spirits, however, it was felt that Rangoon ought not to be left entirely out of the movement. After much delay, a meeting to demonstrate and protest against the Bill was convened at Mr. Fowle's new Town Hall for one fine Saturday afternoon. On the morning of the appointed day, the *Rangoon Gazette* published in advance an account of the meeting, with the names of the speakers very thinly disguised, and with parodies of the speeches they were expected to deliver. The plot was hatched in the Secretariat. Though I was *pars exigua*, the [Pg 94] account was mainly written by Mr. Bayne. The secret was never disclosed, and the incident has no doubt long ago been forgotten. At the time our *jeu d'esprit* had a *succès fou*. This we knew by the wealth of abuse heaped on our unknown heads by correspondents of the rival newspaper, the *Rangoon Times*. Further ill-luck attended the meeting. Just before it opened, news came that a compromise had been effected, and that substantial modifications were to be made in the Bill. The meeting was held, and speeches, much as we had foretold, were delivered, but as the measure was already dead the demonstration fell rather flat.

For two or three months in 1884 I acted as Revenue Secretary and Director of Agriculture. In that capacity I signed and issued the first of the annual forecasts of the exportable surplus of the rice-crop. Candour compels me to confess that the signature was all that I contributed to this or any later forecast. For the first Mr. Bernard was entirely responsible. With some misgiving he raised the figure to 975,000 tons. These forecasts have been issued year by year ever since, and on the average have been so close to the actuals as to evoke the expressed admiration of the mercantile community. The latest forecast predicted a surplus of over 2,600,000 tons, a remarkable increase in less than thirty years.

By another stroke of luck I acted as Secretary for three months early in 1885 in place of Mr. [Pg 95] Symes on privilege leave. Later in the year, owing to Mr. Burgess's return for a short time to the Secretariat, I had my last experience of subdivisional work. Mÿanaung, just above the Delta, but not in the dry tract, was one of the most charming subdivisions. The Deputy-Commissioner, Mr. A. M. B. Irwin,[69] was most able and genial, an admirable chief whose knowledge of district work has never been surpassed. These months were pleasant and restful after the somewhat strenuous life of the Secretariat. The duties were light, the house comfortable, the riding good. Now a railway runs through the subdivision, but till recently all travelling was by unmetalled roads, jungle paths, and along the embankment which restrained the river. Two township officers, one at Kanaung, one at Kyangin, shared the ordinary work.

Among the reforms introduced by Mr. Bernard was the selection of a certain proportion of Mÿo-ôks by competitive examination. Mÿo-ôks, it will be remembered, are officers, generally natives of the Province, who have charge of townships. Previously they had been appointed by Government solely on the recommendation of Commissioners and other high officers. Mr. Bernard devised a

system combining nomination and competition. But a great many direct appointments were still made. The system is still in force except that recently I threw the competitive examination open to all young men of good health and character. On the whole the plan has worked well. A great many of the Mÿo-ôks appointed after examination have proved themselves very valuable officers. [Pg 96] I agree that many of our best Mÿo-ôks and Extra Assistant Commissioners have been men of character and integrity, well educated in their own language, but hardly likely to secure appointments by open competition. No one appreciates these men more highly than I do. But the scheme of administration becomes yearly more complex. And in an increasing number of offices a good knowledge of English is essential. By the competitive system, if a high standard is maintained, some of the best among the educated youth are attracted to Government service, while the reservation of a number of posts for direct appointment keeps open the door for those who are distinguished by birth and character rather than by academic aptitude. The objection that under the open competitive system we have no guarantee of candidates' social standing has very little weight in Burma. It is a country where fraternity and equality are realities, where class distinctions are of little value. One of my Mÿo-ôks was of the old school. Formerly a pleader, he had earned his appointment by being instrumental in the capture of the Myingun Prince.[70] The other was a competitioner, and not perhaps a good example of my thesis. A man of good education who had been a schoolmaster, he seems to have missed his vocation by becoming a [Pg 97] Judge and magistrate. His wife, a clever bustling woman, was thought to supply some of her husband's deficiencies. It was said, probably untruly, that on occasion she would come into Court and stir up the peons[71] and punka-pullers. The Mÿo-ôk's house was a pleasant place to visit. He had two charming little daughters of tender years, who, in a most engaging way, used to stand up and recite to visitors "Lord Ullin's Daughter," and other English verses. My friend afterwards resumed his original profession, which no doubt suited him better. His son is an officer of great ability and distinction.

Recalling my quiet life at Mÿanaung, I am reminded of some instances of Burmese superstition. Some fishermen of that place before starting work made the customary offerings to nats. One of them placed his offering of rice in a dish from which the dogs were fed. His companions exclaimed at this impious act and warned him of the consequences. That day, when they were all in their boats, a monstrous crocodile appeared. "See," said the fishermen, "the result of your wickedness." The offender took no heed of the warning, but next day repeated his insult to the nats. So he filled the cup of his iniquity. That morning, in the midst of the fishing, the crocodile again appeared. This time the contemner of nats was knocked out of his boat and perished in the waters.

Burmans are firm believers in ghosts, know well the danger of passing graveyards after dark, and [Pg 98] are convinced of the existence of good and evil spirits. I remember one curious case in which superstitious terror had a lamentable issue. In the middle of the rains a man was cutting grass in a field. The rain pattered noisily on his kamauk.[72] Suddenly he heard close behind him what sounded like an unearthly voice. In a panic he turned hastily and made a cut with his sickle-shaped knife, unhappily with fatal effect. The speaker was a harmless villager, whose voice, by evil chance, was singularly gruff. In a moment, recognizing the catastrophe, the grass-cutter gave his best attention to the victim of his fear, but in vain. The police quaintly reported that the man had cut in the direction of the sound, "thinking it was a devil, but admitted that he was mistaken." I am glad to say that we were not so pedantic as to bring the grass-cutter to trial for his misadventure which he sincerely regretted.

CHAPTER VII
THE TAKING OF MANDALAY

[Pg 99]

Mr. Burgess having gone to act as Commissioner, I was recalled to the Secretariat in some haste, in my former capacity as Junior Secretary. It was in the midst of the excitement of a probable rupture with Upper Burma. Our relations with the Court of Mandalay had long ceased to be cordial. So long ago as 1879 our representative had been withdrawn, and such communications as were necessary with the Burmese Government had been conducted by letter. In the absence of the Resident matters gradually drifted from bad to worse. British subjects, travellers and traders from Lower Burma, were subjected to insult and violence by local officials, and representations to the central authority demanding redress were generally fruitless. In contravention of the express terms of the Treaty of 1867, monopolies were created to the detriment of trade both in Upper and Lower Burma. Owing to the weakness and corruption of the Burmese Government, society became thoroughly disorganized, so that turbulent tracts on the frontier became a standing menace to the peace of our districts. At the same time, the Burmese Government showed a [Pg 100] marked and persistent anxiety to enter into alliances with foreign Powers, in such a manner and to such an extent as to give ground for apprehension that grave political trouble might result. While the Indian Government was unrepresented in Mandalay, representatives of France and Italy were welcomed, and two separate embassies were sent to Europe, one under the guise of a merely commercial mission, for the purpose of contracting new and if possible close alliances with European Powers. Neither of these missions visited England or showed any desire to win the friendship of representatives of the British Government at the Courts to which the Burmese envoys were accredited. Throughout the reign of King Mindôn, young scions of families of leading

men about the Court were sent to England, France, and Italy to study the language and manners of European countries. In the reign of his successor this policy was continued, with the studied omission of England.[73]

Having no Resident, we had to find means of keeping ourselves informed of events in Mandalay. One of our correspondents was Mr. A. E. Rawlings, the Postmaster, who for a moderate subsidy wrote periodical news-letters to the Secretary. He sent much useful and interesting matter. There was also another correspondent whose reports were extraordinarily accurate and instructive, and from whose keen vision no secret transaction was hidden.

It has always seemed to me that the proximate cause of the annexation of Upper Burma was the [Pg 101] patriotic and enlightened Minister known as the Kinwun Mingyi. Some years before, this gentleman had travelled in Europe as head of a commercial mission, and had been received with great distinction. His progress was a triumph; insignia of Continental orders, illuminated addresses of English manufacturing towns, were showered upon him as if he had been Minister of the Great Mogul. To us who realize the insignificance of the King of Burma as a potentate, these proceedings savour of the ridiculous. During this visit the Kinwun Mingyi obtained some superficial knowledge of European politics and of the relations between the Great Powers. Many years later, when there was no longer a British Resident at Mandalay, and when the path seemed clear of obstacles, the Mingyi conceived the ingenious plan of contracting political relations and making treaties with several States, such as France, Germany, and Italy. The subtle intention was to play off one against another, so that, while none would have predominant influence, all would be interested in opposing and thwarting the ambitious designs of Great Britain. There was some statesmanship in the project, but not quite enough; and with the best intentions the Mingyi compassed the downfall of the dynasty of which he was a devoted servant. By the autumn of 1885 negotiations with France had made good progress. A French Consul was appointed to Mandalay, and plans for the foundation of a French bank were initiated. A treaty was provisionally [Pg 102] concluded, though never formally ratified. The ostensible cause of the rupture with the Burmese Court was the imposition of an enormous fine on the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation, a British company carrying on extensive operations in Upper Burma forests. Probably in any case the British Government would have intervened, on account of the treatment received by the Corporation. But the ultimate cause of intervention was the apprehension lest France or some other European Power should establish a preponderant influence in Upper Burma, and create a situation which would render our position in Lower Burma intolerable.

When I got back to Rangoon, the preliminary correspondence with India and Mandalay was starting. It was all desperately urgent and deadly secret, and the Chief Commissioner and his Secretary were more than fully occupied. The Burmese answer to our first representation was deliberately curt and discourteous. Under the orders of the Government of India an ultimatum was therefore sent to the King of Burma. He was required to suspend the execution of the decree against the Corporation, to receive at Mandalay an envoy from the Viceroy with a view to the settlement of the matter in issue, and for the future to permit the residence at the capital of an agent of the Indian Government, who should be received and treated with the respect due to the Government which he represented. It was further intimated that the Burmese Government would be required to regulate its external relations in accordance with advice of the Government of [Pg 103] India, and to afford facilities for opening up British trade with China.[74]

The ultimatum was despatched on the 22nd of October, 1885. It was taken by Captain Cooper, of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, on the steamer *Ashley Eden*, which went specially to Mandalay for the purpose. An answer was required by the 10th of November. In default of receiving a reply Captain Cooper was instructed to leave Mandalay on a fixed date. The mission was of a hazardous nature. Captain Cooper discharged it with intrepidity and skill. He remained with his steamer fires banked, and he returned bearing the haughty and uncompromising answer of the Burmese Government. As he passed down the river he ran the gauntlet of the fire of forts on the bank. Such was the Burmese notion of the courtesy due to envoys. The answer was received in Rangoon on the 9th of November. Two days earlier the King of Burma issued a proclamation calling on his subjects to rally round him to resist the unjust demands of the British Government, and expressing his determination to efface these heretic foreigners and conquer and annex their country.[75]

When the ultimatum was considered by the Burmese Court and Government, there seems to have been a division of counsel. The two highest officers of State were two Mingyis, the virtuous and temperate Kinwun, the corrupt and blood-thirsty Taingda. The Queen, Sûpăya-lât, was certainly present when the situation was discussed. The Kinwun advised moderation and diplomacy; the [Pg 104] Taingda was for blood and fury. The Queen's voice was for resistance. She had the unexampled impertinence to tell the Kinwun Mingyi, a man of mature and reverend years, her father's trusted Councillor, that when she had beaten the English she would dress him in a tamein[76] and send him to live among the women. The counsels of unreason prevailed. The proclamation was issued, and futile resistance was undertaken.

Meanwhile, in anticipation of an unfavourable reply to the ultimatum, preparations for the advance on Mandalay had been rapidly made. The speed with which the expedition was organized and set in motion was almost incredible. The first orders for the mobilization of troops were issued by Government of India on or about the 19th of October; the expeditionary force crossed the frontier on the 14th of November, 1885. The force was of all arms, including some Madras Cavalry and some mounted infantry. Except the detachment of the Rangoon Volunteer

Rifles, which patriotically volunteered for active service, all the troops were sent from India. For the promptitude of the despatch from Rangoon, the chief credit is due to Mr. Bernard himself, who placed all the resources of his position and all his personal energy and experience at the disposal of the military authorities. Every day saw him on the river-bank supervising and urging on the preparations. Much praise is due also to the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, which made every vessel of their fleet available and carried the whole expedition. Of course, this was not all [Pg 105] pure patriotism on the part of the Company; but the service rendered by them was of inestimable value, and contributed largely to the brilliant success of the operations. The command of the force was entrusted to Major-General Harry Prendergast, V.C.,[77] a most gallant and distinguished officer, who had already served in Burma, and was thus specially qualified for the appointment. Already, in the pursuit of intelligence, he had even penetrated into Upper Burma in peaceful guise. In command of brigades were Brigadier-General G. S. White, V.C.,[78] Brigadier-General Norman, and Brigadier-General Forde; while the staff included Major W. P. Symons,[79] then at the beginning of a glorious career. The troops were specially enjoined to treat the people of the country with kindness and consideration. One precept directed that in addressing a Burman the soldier should say "Kinbya," not "Hey, Johnny!" A book of Burmese phrases, laboriously compiled by a gentleman unacquainted with the language, was profusely distributed. It is pleasant to be able to record, with perfect honesty, that never did army of occupation behave with more restraint and moderation, or more readily win the esteem and respect of a subject people.

The Chief Civil and Political Officer with the expedition was Colonel E. B. Sladen[80] of the Burma [Pg 106] Commission. Four young officers Mr. R. Phayre, C.S.,[81] Mr. A. S. Fleming, C.S., Captain G. S. Eyre, of the Commission, and Mr. G. G. Collins accompanied the force as civil officers. Mr. R. C. Stevenson, also of the police, one of the foremost Burmese scholars, was attached to General Prendergast as chief interpreter.

On the 14th November the frontier was crossed, on the 17th Minhla, on the 23rd Pagan, on the 25th Myingyan were successively occupied. Except at Minhla, where the fort which still stands on the river-bank was not taken without a brisk fight, scarcely any resistance was encountered. And as the flotilla moved up the river, even in Mandalay the determination to resist began to fail. Just before the expedition reached Ava the Kinwun Mingyi arrived, and after some negotiation arranged the unconditional surrender of the capital and of the Royal Family. On the 26th and 27th November the forts at Ava and Sagaing were given up, and the troops at Ava laid down their arms. On the 28th the flotilla moored off the town, and General Prendergast occupied Mandalay. The city and the palace were surrounded, while Colonel Sladen, with the cool courage which was his best distinction, entered the palace alone, and remained there for a day and a night, settling the details of the King's surrender. Next day, in a little summer-house in the palace garden, King [Pg 107] Thebaw gave himself up to the victorious General, and the dynasty of Alaungpăyá ruled no more. After all, it was a mushroom growth, having held sway for little more than 130 years.[82] The King and his two Queens, with their mother and her eldest daughter, were driven through the streets of Mandalay in little bullock-drawn carriages, the only vehicles available. They were placed on board the steamer *Thooreah*, and conveyed to Rangoon. The flimsy little summer-house fell into decay, and no longer exists. The tablet which marks its site, and commemorates the most striking [Pg 108] event in its history, will doubtless remain as long as the British flag flies over Mandalay.

The first report of the King's surrender reached Rangoon in a non-official telegram. By luck or good management we were enabled to telegraph the tidings simultaneously to the Secretary of State, and to save his Lordship from the shock of receiving the first intimation of the fall of Mandalay from his morning paper. Of course, the telegraph line was interrupted. This message came from Tha-yet-mŏyo, brought thither by the King's steamer.

As the junior officer in the Secretariat, I was told off to board the *Thooreah* on her arrival. I was thus the first officer in Rangoon to see the ex-King and his Queens. King Thebaw was in appearance a Burman of very ordinary type. He looked neither dissipated nor cruel; nor did he show any emotion or feeling of his melancholy position. His somewhat heavy features were unmistakably those of the House of Alaungpăyá. Both he and his elder sister (who died not long ago) closely resembled the familiar picture of Mindôn Min. Queen Sūpăyá-lāt's features were more finely marked than is usual with Burmese ladies. She bore no appearance of special depravity, but she certainly looked a little shrew. The legend of Sūpăyá-lāt is that she was a monster of cruelty and wickedness, and that she was mainly responsible for all acts of State during her husband's reign. From all that I heard in Mandalay, where I had many sources of information, for the most part unfriendly to the ex-Queen, I believe that both her wickedness and her influence have been much exaggerated. She seems to have been of a jealous temper, and to [Pg 109] have checked any inclination on the part of her husband to follow the footsteps of Mindôn Min. Doubtless it went hard with any maid who attracted the King's attention. On one of the golden doors of the palace used to be shown bloodstains, marks of a little hand, signs of the tragic end of a Princess who had incurred the Queen's wrath. (I am aware of the learned explanation of these marks, but the legend is far more interesting.) Beyond this there is no credible evidence of her cruelty, nor is it well established that she ruled the State. Clearly she wielded some influence; but apart from the story of her speech to the Kinwun Mingyi, the most arrogant action imputed to her was that she used to have her meals before the King. Of course, this was very unusual and unseemly for a Burmese woman of any class. It hardly shows that she was paramount in the direction of the kingdom. The royal exiles were transferred to the R.I.M.S. *Clive*, and, after remaining for a few days in Rangoon, were taken to Madras. They were finally transferred to

Ratnagiri in the Bombay Presidency, where King Thebaw and Sūpăyá-lāt still live. The poor little second Queen, of whom nothing, good or bad, has ever been heard, died last year. An irresponsible journalist lately suggested that Ratnagiri was an unsuitable place of abode for these fallen dignitaries. It is one of the best places that could be chosen. They and their family have been quite healthy. As they cannot be allowed to return to Burma, they are likely to be as [Pg 110] contented there as elsewhere. Two of the Ministers and a few retainers were with difficulty persuaded to accompany their fallen master. The Ministers speedily returned to Mandalay. So did most of the retainers after one little Chin maid had given some trouble by running up a tree and declining to come down, because Sūpăyá-lāt, whose temper misfortune may have sharpened, had smacked her.

The rapidity with which the conquest of the Burmese King was effected must always be a subject of astonishment. Many times in the previous wars Burmese soldiers had offered stout resistance, fighting fiercely behind stockades. That the martial spirit still survived was abundantly shown afterwards in the years of desultory fighting described in Sir Charles Crosthwaite's classic history of the pacification of Burma. The truth is, the central Government was rotten at the core, corrupt and inefficient and singularly impecunious. The balance found in the Treasury at Mandalay was about £5,000, not a very large sum to finance a war. There was no organized Burmese army, with captains versed in the art of war, capable of meeting in the field disciplined troops under trained leaders. But the main cause of the downfall of the Burmese kingdom, with hardly a blow struck in its defence, was no doubt the speed with which preparations for the advance were made, and the skill, swiftness, and resolution with which General Prendergast directed the progress to Mandalay. If a little more time had been allowed to the Burmese, the [Pg 111] ascent would have been more arduous, though not less effectual. The celerity with which the operations were carried out is probably paralleled in history only by the advance of the Balkan armies towards Constantinople.

While opposition to the main force was feeble and faint-hearted, at the outset of hostilities reprisals were taken on Englishmen employed in the forests or on the river. It was, indeed, only by the humanity or prudence of some local officials that any of these isolated Englishmen escaped. A Thandawzin[83] was sent to deal with Bombay-Burma men on the Chindwin. Four of them were barbarously murdered. The murderer was Thandawzin So Bôn, who disappeared immediately. I sought him diligently, but in vain, for nearly twenty-five years. If he still lives, this record of his name may yet bring to him the reward of his crime. Four other forest men were saved by the intervention of the Wun[84] of Mingin.

Upper Burma had long been the refuge of persons who had pressing reasons for leaving Lower Burma; in fact, as one departmental Report said, it was a "perfect Arcadia." Not only thieves, robbers, dacoits, and murderers, but the bailiff who had lost at Komi the proceeds of Court sales, the Postmaster who was short in his collections, the clerk who had stolen witnesses' subsistence money, all found an asylum across the border. Demands for extradition were made, but [Pg 112] practically never with any effect. The Wun of Mingin was among many who felt it necessary to take measures for their security if, as seemed likely, Upper Burma came under British rule. Long years ago, this astute man had been Akunwun[85] of the rich district of Rangoon or Hanthawaddy. One morning, having packed on elephants the contents of the Treasury, some lakhs of rupees, he fled with his plunder across the frontier. There, with his wicked prize, he was a man of importance, obtained office, and in process of time was placed in charge of Mingin on the Chindwin River. Partly moved by humanity, for he was as kindly a man as ever scooped a Treasury, partly, I surmise, because he was shrewd enough to foresee the downfall of the Burmese Government, he protected the Bombay-Burma men who fell into his hands, saved them from ill-usage and death, and made them over to a small British force which early visited the Chindwin. The Wun's humanity was suitably rewarded. His delinquency was condoned and he became a Mўo-ôk. Though he was believed always to be tainted with the corrupt habits of Upper Burma, he served us moderately well. The fact that he had saved the lives of our countrymen was never forgotten and would have covered many sins. Finally, he died in his bed, up to the day of his death in receipt of a pension from Government. I knew very well both him and his wife, who had accompanied him in his flight from Rangoon. Naturally, we did not in plain words discuss that incident. But reference to early days was sometimes made, and the old lady admitted that [Pg 113] the Wun had been frivolous and light-hearted in his youth. When I knew him, he was grave and reverend. This is not the only instance in which persons guilty of past offences in Lower Burma purged their guilt by good service in troubled times and were received back into Government employ. I found it convenient to keep in mind their histories.

Another case of the cruel treatment of Europeans was the seizure of a Flotilla steamer at Moda, between Mandalay and Bhamo, and the imprisonment and ill-treatment of crew and officers. Daily was Captain Redman led out as if to execution. He, too, escaped by some friendly intervention, or the hesitation of his captors to proceed to the last extremity. He was, however, very badly used. The two local officers responsible for these barbarities were brought down to Mandalay, fined and imprisoned, and publicly whipped by the Chief Commissioner's order.

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CHAPTER VIII
EARLY DAYS AT MANDALAY

As speedily as possible, Mr. Bernard went up to Mandalay, leaving Lower Burma practically under the administration of the Secretary, Mr. Symes. He went up in the old R.I.M.S. *Irrawaddy*, embarking at Prome. With him were a few civil and police officers, destined with those who had accompanied the expedition to form the nucleus of the Civil Administration. Colonel T. Lowndes, [86] Inspector-General of Police, Captain C. H. E. Adamson,[87] of the Commission, Mr. G. M. S. Carter, and Mr. M. J. Chisholm, of the Police, were on board, and I had the luck to go as Junior Secretary. We landed at Minhla and inspected the fort, now garrisoned by Bengal Infantry, and the scene of the fight; at Myingyan, where we saw marks of our cannonade; at Pakôkku, where the Chief Commissioner was received by the Mÿothugyi-gadaw,[88] a lady of large bulk, of high spirit, and of cheerful humour, who was administering the town and district in the name of her [Pg 115] son. The old lady was extremely affable, and professed loyalty to the new Government. To the best of her ability, I believe she carried out her engagement. Her position was quite in accordance with the practice in Burma, where, as already stated, women take a prominent part in public affairs. She survived for some years, and was always our good friend.

On the 15th of December, 1885, Mr. Bernard arrived at Mandalay, and, with his staff, took up his quarters in the Palace where Sir Harry Prendergast and his officers were already installed. Mr. Bernard occupied a set of rooms behind the Eastern Audience Hall. Colonel Lowndes and I shook down in some good masonry buildings hard by, which had been used as waiting-rooms by the Ministers coming to transact business with the King. My abode was immediately under the wooden tower in the south-east corner of the palace, whence Queen Sūpăyá-lāt is said, the legend is apocryphal, to have viewed the march of the British force from the shore to the city. Behind me was the shed of the White Elephant, which had died a few days after the occupation, feeling, no doubt, that his use was at an end. Opposite, fronted by a pillared terrace, in the midst of which played a fountain, was a charming pavilion faced with white stucco, of modern design and construction, used by the King as a morning-room. Mr. Bernard adopted it for the same purpose. We were all most kindly made honorary members of the Headquarter Mess, established in spacious rooms adjacent to the Royal Theatre. There, with the chief military officers, we dined [Pg 116] every night, and often played a quiet rubber. For breakfast and luncheon, during his stay in Mandalay, Mr. Bernard kept open house for his staff. Mr. Bernard's breakfasts were refreshing interludes in the busy round of official work. Round that hospitable board often sat welcome guests, visitors of distinction, officers passing through Mandalay bringing a breath of the old world to our new heritage. From time to time every member of the Viceroy's Council came to see the latest kingdom added to the Empire. Perhaps the visitor who made the deepest impression was Sir George Chesney, Military Member of Council, a man of wide culture and literary distinction, moving on a higher plane than the ordinary Indian official. (No offence to the ordinary official, honest man, whose stock of late years has unjustly depreciated.) Sir George Chesney seemed to have a wider range, a more extensive outlook; his premature death deprived the world of a statesman. In very early days came to Mandalay, as the Chief Commissioner's guests, some charming Americans, among them a lady of exceptional grace and beauty. Warned by secretaries and aides-de-camp that she could not possibly go to Mandalay, where conditions of war still obtained, she is said to have gone pouting to the great Lord Sahib, by whom she was assured that she should certainly go, and that her path should be strewn with roses. 'Twere churlish not to believe this pretty story. My impression is that the men of the party tried to buy the Palace as it stood, and succeeded in acquiring a gilded sentry-box. I may wrong them. [Pg 117]

Most strange and almost incredible it seemed to range at will the halls and corridors, where hardly a fortnight before the Lord of many White Elephants had kept his State. The Palace was in exactly the same condition as when occupied by the Burmese Court. As a Burman official said, in another place, the scene was the same, the actors only were changed. Barbarous Byzantine mirrors of colossal size still lined the walls; a motley heap of modern toys, French clocks and fans, mechanical singing birds, and the like, mingled with lovely specimens of Burmese carving, gold and silver and lacquered trays and boxes, forming a heterogeneous collection characteristic of degenerate taste. Rooms so lately tenanted by King, Queens, and their butterfly attendants, aglow with light and colour, were now occupied as sober offices and quarters. Khaki uniforms, boots, and the ringing of spurs replaced gay pasos and tameins and soft pattering of naked feet. The Palace, it must be confessed, was a mass of somewhat tawdry buildings, mostly of wood and of no great antiquity, desecrated by corrugated iron roofs, yet of interest as a unique specimen of Burmese domestic architecture. Perhaps the most striking features were the great halls of audience, supported by mighty pillars of teak, red and golden, the several Royal thrones often described, and the Pÿathat, the graceful terraced spire surmounting the eastern throne-room, which travellers have been taught to call the Centre of the Universe. The title was invented by an [Pg 118] enterprising journalist, but will, no doubt, always be cited as a mark of Burmese arrogance. Besides the rooms reserved for the King, then occupied by Sir Harry Prendergast, the Palace afforded accommodation for the Queens and for Ambassadors, attendants, pages, maids of honour, and the usual entourage of an Eastern Court. For some years the Palace continued to be inhabited. The King's audience-hall was used as a church; the corresponding hall on the west, the Queen's, as a club house. A few of the buildings on the Palace platform were of masonry work, built for the King by some of the foreigners who swarmed at the Burmese Court. Like the famous A-tu-ma-shi[89] monastery, these made no pretence of being in Burmese style, and were grievous to the æsthetic eye. In the Palace enclosure was the Council Chamber where the Hlutdaw[90] deliberated. Opposite was a model of the Kyaung,[91] where King Thebaw spent his novitiate. This also was for some time used as a church. All round the Palace were charming gardens, intersected by watercourses, with many a grotto and pavilion, where gay young Princes and

Princesses, pages and maids of honour, idled away the pleasant hours. Girdling and protecting the Palace and its precincts was an inner wall of masonry, and round this again a palisade of stout teak logs. The main gates of the palace corresponded with those of the city. Just within the eastern gate stood a white tower, the Bohozin, whereon was a mighty drum, the Bohozi, struck by [Pg 119] hereditary beaters to record the hour and to assure the world that the King was in his palace. After the occupation, the beaters fled. We were gravely warned that the silence of the Bohozi would be interpreted as a sign that anarchy prevailed and that there was no Government. The beaters were sought out and reinstated. As soon as the periodical sound of the drum was heard once more, we were solemnly advised that this would never do. The beating of the Bohozi indicated that the *Burmese* Government still existed, and that we were merely temporary sojourners. So the beaters were retired on suitable terms, and the Bohozi was sent to the Phayre Museum. I need hardly say that it did not matter a brass farthing whether the drum was beaten or not.

The Palace stood in the middle of what we came to call the city. Built on somewhat high ground about three miles from the shore, the city (myo) was a perfect square, surrounded by a rampart of earth, battlemented walls, and a moat on which water-lilies floated in lovely profusion. Each face of the walls measured one mile and a quarter. Between the walls and the moat was a stretch of turf, as if expressly provided for a morning gallop, but somewhat spoilt by sudden holes. Five great gates, two on the west, one on each other side, opened through the wall, each approached by a bridge over the moat. At every gate was a red wooden pillar, with an inscription recording the date and circumstances of its erection. Stories, which we need not believe, are told of the burial of living victims beneath these pillars. Within the city walls, all round the palace, the space [Pg 120] was closely packed with Burmese houses. Here were the dwellings of Ministers and other high officers, each surrounded by an ample compound (win) where lived a whole village of relations and retainers. Here also were the humbler dwellings of minor officials, soldiers, and the miscellaneous rabble collected about an Eastern Court.

Now all is changed. The Palace remains a melancholy memento of Burmese sovereignty. The halls are tenantless, and the footstep of the infrequent visitor rings hollow on its floors. A fragment of the teak stockade is preserved. The rest is replaced by a neat post and rail fence. All the native houses have disappeared. The space within the walls is occupied by barracks, mess-houses, dwellings, polo-ground, and the like. The last Burmese house, now removed, was that of the Kinwun Mingyi.

The City Wall, Mandalay.

The town, as distinguished from the city, extended to the river on the west and to Amarapura on the south, peopled mostly by non-officials living in wooden houses and bamboo huts, with here and there a white masonry building, the dwelling of an Indian trader. In the midst was the great bazaar, the Zegyo. An embankment protected the low-lying land from the river in flood. Through the town crept the Shwe-ta-chaung, a malodorous stream, on whose banks still stood the old British Residency in a grove of tamarind-trees. While in the city the roads were straight and hard, the streets of the town were unmetalled, alternately dust and mud. The first work undertaken by [Pg 121] the army of occupation was the construction of four roads to the shore. With military simplicity, but perhaps with some want of imagination, these were called A, B, C, and D Roads, names which still cling to them. To the south was the Yakaing Paya, commonly called the Arakan Pagoda, the shrine of the great image of Gaudama Buddha, brought across the hills from Arakan. Second only in interest to the Shwe Dagôn Pagoda, it attracted throngs of pilgrims. In one of the courtyards reclined battered bronze statues of magic virtue. If you had a pain, you rubbed the correspondent part of one of these statues, and obtained relief. In a neighbouring pond were sacred turtles, who came at call to be fed.

East of the city rose the Shan Hills, with the little hill of Yankintaung[92] alone in the middle distance. The evening glow reflected on the Eastern Hills misled the unobservant to rhapsodize on the beautiful effect of the sun setting behind Yankintaung. North stood Mandalay Hill, a cool and pleasant height, ascended by stone steps or by a winding bridle-path; near its pagoda-covered summit towered a stately upright statue of the Buddha, his right arm extended towards the city, as it were the palladium of the capital. At the foot lay the A-tu-ma-shi (the Incomparable Monastery), a large white masonry structure of modern design, built by an Italian. Here sat another colossal image of the Buddha, in whose forehead sparkled a diamond of unequalled size [Pg 122] and lustre.[93] Hard by stood the Ku-tho-daw Păya,[94] surrounded by a multitude of small shrines covering alabaster slabs, on which was inscribed the Law of the Buddha. This pious work commemorated its founder, the Einshemin, Mindôn Min's brother, who lost his life in the rebellion of the Myingun Mintha in 1867. Gone now are the Incomparable Monastery and the statue on the hill, both accidentally destroyed by fire some years later.

In December, 1885, the situation in Mandalay, and, indeed, in Upper Burma generally, was very curious. Sir Harry Prendergast was in supreme military command. Colonel Sladen was the chief civil authority. The future of Upper Burma was still under discussion between the Chief Commissioner, the Government of India, and the Secretary of State (Lord Randolph Churchill). It might be decided to annex the country, or it might be thought better to set up a new King, and to make Upper Burma a protected State. Pending the decision, an attempt was made provisionally to carry on the Government on the same lines as before the occupation. Although the King of Burma was an absolute, not a constitutional, monarch, there was a Council of State (the Hlutdaw), an advisory and executive body with no legislative powers. It consisted of the Wungyis, or Mingyis, the four highest officers of State; four Atwin Wuns, high officers of the Palace; and [Pg 123] four Wundauks, props or assistants of the Wungyis. Under their orders was a crowd of secretaries or clerks (Sayedawgyi). The country was governed by Wuns, each of whom administered a local area, and received orders from the Hlutdaw collectively, or from individual members thereof. Mandalay was in charge of two Myowuns (town magistrates), the Myowun U Pe Si,[95] and the Shwehlan Myowun. Temporarily, the Hlutdaw was maintained in its powers and functions, the place of the King being taken by Colonel Sladen. There was one important innovation. Over all was the Chief Commissioner. The Hlutdaw issued a proclamation to all Wuns and local officers, directing them to carry on their duties as before under the command of the Central Government. British officers in charge of districts Captain Eyre at Pagan, Mr. Robert Phayre at Minhla, Mr. Collins at Myingyan, Mr. Fleming at Shwebo were not subordinated to the control of the Hlutdaw. Mandalay also was removed from their control. At first Mr. Fforde[96] as District Superintendent of Police, then Captain Adamson as Deputy Commissioner, with Mr. Fforde as his chief aid, were in charge. These officers received most valuable help from U Pe Si, who threw in his lot with the new Government, and served it loyally and well for the rest of his [Pg 124] life. U Pe Si was one of the most interesting characters of the annexation period. Of an established official family, his grandfather having been one of the signatories of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, he was a man of courage and resource, well fitted to be the colleague of British officers. His knowledge of Mandalay and the surrounding district was intimate and extensive. His mind was acute and his judgment sound. At sixty, so old and frail in appearance that he was once introduced to a high officer as "the Yenangyaung Mingyi over ninety years of age," that fragile frame was informed with dauntless will and resolution. He maintained the closest relations with a succession of Deputy Commissioners and Commissioners of Mandalay. His practice was to drop in to breakfast and consume vast quantities of jam, to the detriment of his poor digestion, as an aid to the delivery of wise discourse on men and things. Without him the task of governing Mandalay, difficult at the best, would have been still more arduous.

Our early sway was of a patriarchal type. The theory that the penalty should be made to fit the offence was adopted by an ingenious magistrate who knew his Burman. An instance recurs to me worthy of Shahpesh, the Persian. Some gamblers were brought up for judgment.

"So you like cards. Will you play a game with me?" said the magistrate genially. "Please draw three cards."

Two aces and a two were shown.

"What a lucky man! Take four stripes."

The next man drew two kings and a five. [Pg 125]

"Your luck is not so good. Receive twenty-five stripes."

And so on, to the delight of the public, and, we may hope, of the players. Another accused in the same case, hung about with cards and dice and other instruments of gaming, was paraded through the streets with his face to the tail of the pony on which he sat.

Colonel Sladen had the royal temperament, and was prepared to set right all the wrongs done by his predecessor. In pursuance of this policy he restored to the Yenangyaung Mingyi and the Pintha Mintha respectively all their property which had been confiscated by the King. As soon as these orders came to his notice, Mr. Bernard imperatively forbade any further similar restitutions, rightly holding it impossible to investigate the acts of the Burmese Government in exercise of its sovereign powers. The Yenangyaung Mingyi, then verging on ninety, was a valued Minister of King Mindôn, and had been wounded in the Myingun Prince's rebellion. On that occasion, as I heard from the lips of an eyewitness, King Mindôn was attacked by his disloyal son

in a summer palace near Mandalay Hill, and escaped borne on the back of a faithful attendant. The Mingyi had fallen into disgrace with King Thebaw, doubtless because he was father of the Kyimyin Mipaya,[97] one of Mindôn Min's lesser wives, who had borne the King a son, the Pyinmana Mintha.[98] In the massacre of 1879 this child's life was spared, probably on account of his extreme youth; but he and his mother and her family all remained objects of suspicion, and were kept in confinement by the Burmese Government. Soon after our arrival the boy was discovered, and sent to India and educated at an English school. After 1905 he returned to Burma and settled in Rangoon, where he still lives on excellent terms with our officers. Restored to favour and fortune, the Mingyi often came to see me, walking sturdily in spite of his years, and usually accompanied by two small sons of about eight or nine. The Pintha Mintha was the brother of Yanaung Maung Tôk,[99] already mentioned as the roystering companion of King Thebaw. These two titular Princes were sons of another Yenangyaung Mingyi, of romantic history. Sprung from humble stock, as a small boy he attracted the notice of a Princess. She adopted and educated him, and made him one of the royal pages. Conspicuous for grace and courtesy of manner, and, probably also for ability, he went on from rank to rank till he became successively Atwin Wun, and, on his death-bed, Mingyi. Though not of royal blood, his sons were given the title of Mintha, as it might be Prince Bismarck or Prince von Bülow. Yanaung Maung Tôk had the repute of being a blustering, truculent ruffian. If that was so, Pintha Maung Byaung alone inherited his father's gracious qualities. I knew him well. A pleasanter, more courteous, more polished gentleman could not be found. His wife, who, I regret to say, died last year, was of a good official family, and a lady of exceptional charm. Their sons are doing well in Government service. Their daughters, delightful young girls in their early teens, glittering with diamonds and rubies, created a sensation at the celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887. All three married well, but only one survives, the happy wife of a very distinguished Burmese officer.

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It was natural that for some time after the occupation there should be much confusion. But at the very outset means might have been taken for the preservation of the State Records; instead of which, in the time-honoured phrase, soldiers were allowed to play havoc with these documents; many of them were burnt, many more were torn and spoilt. The loss was irreparable. Immediately after the Chief Commissioner's arrival further destruction was stopped, and the surviving records were collected and deposited in the Council Chamber. Much of interest was thus preserved, but many State papers of priceless value, historically and administratively, were irretrievably lost.

The Burmese of Mandalay did not in the least recognize that they had been conquered. They were as free and easy and unconcerned and bumptious as if the King was still seated on the throne. The first task set me in Mandalay, the day after our arrival, was to find a Mohammedan doctor who was believed to have arrived lately from Bhamo. This was literally all the direction or clue given to aid me in a search among nearly 200,000 strange people. Not even the man's name was known. Colonel Sladen kindly placed at my disposal a small Burmese official, and as we rode out of the South Gate my companion was hailed by a friend and asked where he was going with the young barbarian (kala). My Burmese was fluent and vigorous. However, though I liked not the manners of his friend, my man was an intelligent, willing fellow, and before the winter sun had set we found and brought back the object of our mission. Later on, when much distress had been caused by fires, incendiary and accidental, the Burmans of Mandalay grew rather sulky. But nothing cured them of their *insouciance*. When fires were destroying their dwellings, they looked on quite calmly without offering to lend a hand, while British officers took extreme risks to save life and property in burning houses.

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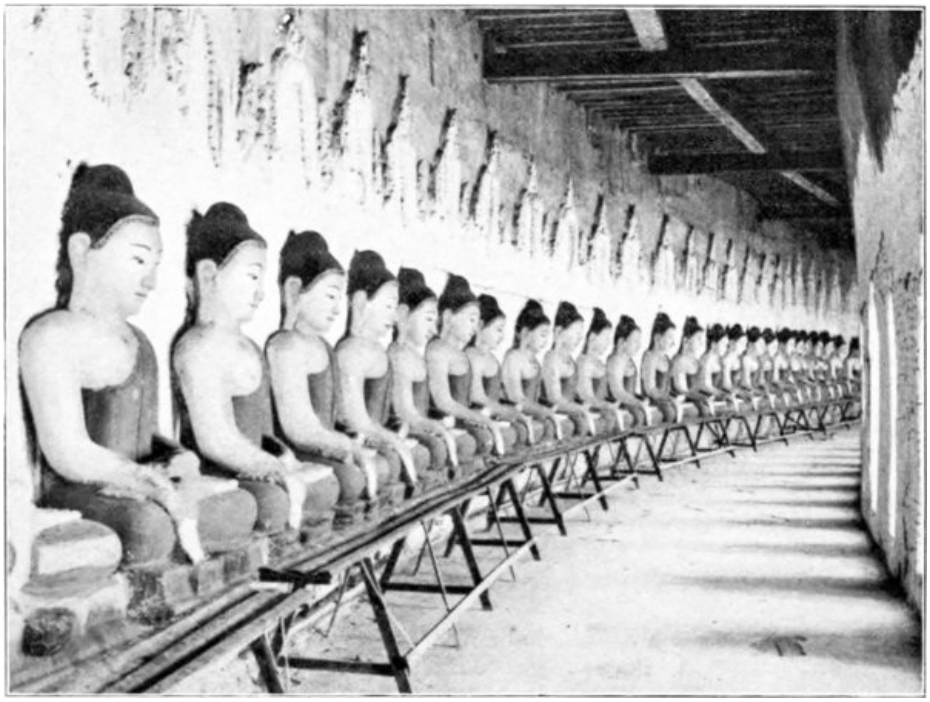
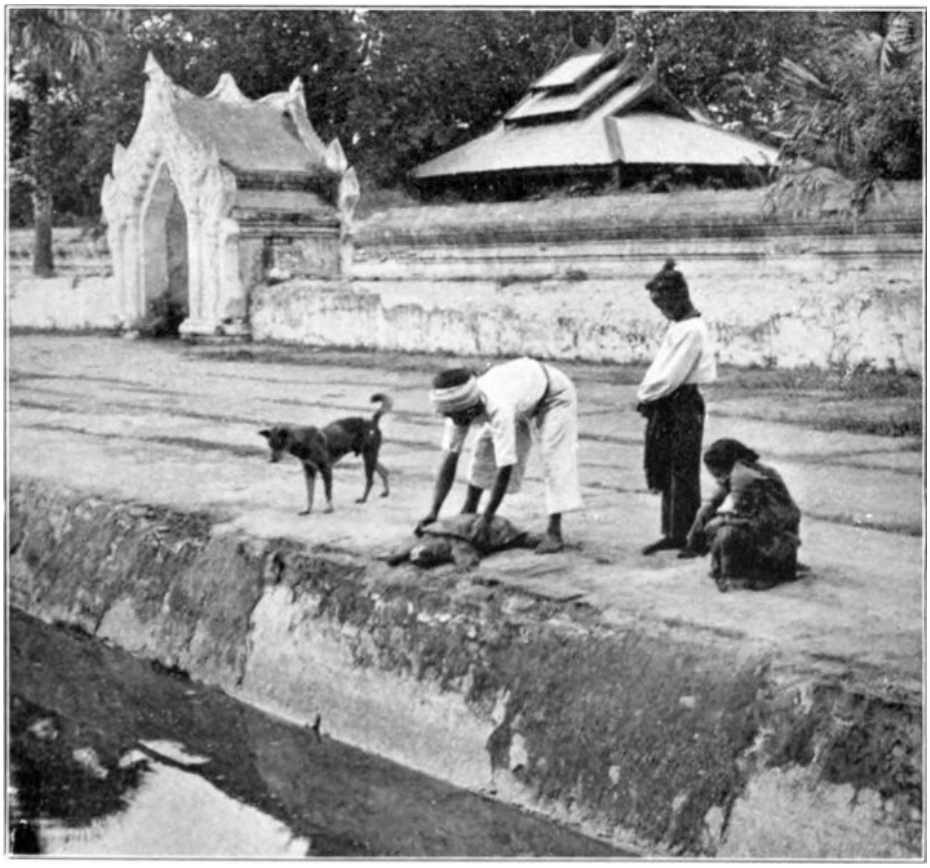
"There is a very valuable box in that house" (in a blaze). "Would you mind bringing it out for me?" I heard a Burman say to a British officer, who complied with the cool request.

At this time we were almost completely cut off from Lower Burma and Rangoon. The telegraph line was interrupted, while letters came slowly by steamer once a week. Postal arrangements were necessarily of a primitive kind. The post-office was a flat, or barge, high and dry on the river-bank. When a steamer came from Rangoon, the mail-bags were opened and their contents cast on the deck of the flat. We who had hastened down on hearing of the steamer's approach were allowed, even invited, to search the pile and take what belonged to us. In spite of this apparently hazardous procedure, I heard of no letters going astray. I quarrelled quite seriously with a high officer of the post-office because I said in his hearing, incautiously and, I confess, unjustly, that I was sending letters to Rangoon by messenger rather than trust them to the post. For some months, if not years, we were unfriends; but I am glad to say that, in the course of time, we were reconciled.

[Pg 129]



Row of Buddhas.



Releasing a turtle; a work of merit.

I was soon taken from Secretariat work and sent as civil officer with a column. A detachment of Madras Cavalry without support had been sent to repair the telegraph line between Ava and Myingyan. They had met with resistance and been forced to return. The task was then entrusted to an adequate force. Two guns, British infantry, Madras Cavalry, and Madras Pioneers were placed under the command of Major Fenwick, I.S.C. Captain R. A. P. Clements[100] was staff officer; Mr. H. d'U. Keary[101] and Mr. Rainey[102] were of our party. At Ava, where we halted before starting on our march, Maung Hlwa, the local Wun, came in and made his submission, among the first-fruits of Burmese loyalty in that part of the country. Maung Hlwa, I am glad to say, still survives and draws his pension. He was an official of the good old Upper Burman type. Not over-educated, without very delicate scruples, of proved courage, with boundless personal influence (awza), wherever he was sent he was a loyal and useful servant of Government. No better man than he to bring a troublesome township into order. He was one of the Burmese officers who went to the Coronation Durbar at Delhi in 1903, where he was deeply impressed by the pomp and splendour of the occasion. On this march he was of the utmost service, though I am not quite sure that he did not take advantage of the opportunity to pay off some old scores. So quiet seemed the country and so little did we expect attack that I used to ride for miles along the

river-bank and through the jungle at Ava with no other companion but Maung Hlwa. Yet within a month, at Sagaing on the opposite bank, four officers were attacked within sight of the Government steamer *Irrawaddy*, and three of their number slain by dacoits who issued from ambush, cut down their victims, and disappeared before the rest of the party, walking not a couple of hundred yards behind, were aware of what had happened. The fall of Mandalay had been so sudden that it had not yet been realized in rural places, and the forces of opposition had not yet been organized. Very soon the turmoil began. It was then long before officers were able to travel without escort in Upper Burma.

This was one of the first daurs, or small expeditions, undertaken. Keeping close to the telegraph line which it was our primary duty to restore to working order, we marched through the midst of the Ava subdivision. In fine open country we rode daily over sessamum fields or through tall growths of millet, making our first acquaintance with the land where so much of our lives was to be spent. The climate was cool and pleasant, so that we were able to march far into the morning. [Pg 131] At the village where the cavalry had been routed we were so hospitably received that, to the best of my recollection, no punishment for past misdeeds was inflicted. We were particularly touched to find here two Madrasi sayces,[103] cavalry followers who had been missing since the engagement, and who had, in fact, been wounded and disabled. They had been plastered and nursed by the villagers, and were restored to us none the worse for their adventure. Not much farther on we found a crucified man falling to pieces after long exposure to sun and wind. I believe it was customary to kill the victim before affixing his body to a St. Andrew's cross. In early days, after a successful skirmish with dacoits, a Burman assistant approached the civil officer, saying as a matter of course: "I suppose it is time now to crucify the prisoners!" Incidents like these illustrate the charming inconsistency of the Burmese character already noted.

Later on in our march we were resisted at two villages and had two little fights without, I think, any casualties on our side. After all the people had been cleared out, the first village was burnt for reasons of military necessity. Rightly enough, the burning of villages has always been discouraged, indeed, strictly forbidden, save as an extreme measure or for military reasons. But, when occasion arises, it is very interesting to put a match to a thatched roof and see it blaze to the sky. The second village had to be shelled. Clements and I, who had ridden round to examine [Pg 132] one of the farther approaches, found ourselves in the unpleasant position of being shelled by our own side. There I saw an instance of the stoical resolution with which Burmans meet death. A man torn to pieces by a shell asked only for an umbrella to shield him from the sun and a cheroot to smoke while he awaited the end. Both were supplied while our surgeon afforded such relief as might be. Here is another inconsistency. By a shout and the explosion of a cracker, a band of dacoits[104] will put to flight all the men of a village, who stampede, leaving the women and children at the mercy of the assailants. Dacoits themselves go to work with trembling knees and hearts of water, ready to fly at the first sign of resistance. Yet men of the same race and class face a firing party with a smile or walk to the gallows with unfaltering step. Once, at a military execution, some half a dozen dacoits were put up, one by one, against the city wall to be shot. The first man had the top of his head blown off by the volley. His companions awaiting their turn burst into a laugh at his grotesque appearance.

A day or two after Christmas we halted at Mÿotha in the middle of the Ava subdivision and there held the first gymkhana in the jungle of Upper Burma. Pony races and other sporting events for [Pg 133] officers and men and for local Burmans made up the programme. It was a characteristic episode. The people of Mÿotha were very friendly and joined with enthusiasm in the proceedings. Here I confirmed in his office the Mÿothugyi.[105] I am told that he still holds the appointment. After leaving Mÿotha, we had our third and last encounter with dacoits. Captain Clements and Mr. Rainey took a few sowárs[106] to escort a telegraph working-party a few miles from our camp. So unexciting seemed the prospect that the rest of us stayed behind. Some of us walked unattended to a neighbouring village and sat for a long time talking with the headman and his people. The working-party and the escort were met by a hostile line of Burmans armed with muskets. Followed by the sowárs, the officers charged and routed the enemy, but Clements fell with two holes in his chest. No wonder the surgeon looked grave. A bullet in each lung, God shield us, is a most dreadful thing. However, a fortnight afterwards I found Clements quite active at mess at Tha-yet-mÿo. I infer that his pony swerved at the volley and that the two holes were made by the same bullet. In Burma Clements got another wound and two brevets. He served with great distinction in South Africa, and after passing through many campaigns was cut off by appendicitis at Quetta in the midst of a brilliant career. A fine officer, a perfect horseman, with a frame of [Pg 134] iron, even in youth he gave promise of future eminence.

Another unfortunate incident was an outbreak of cholera in our camp, which brought us to a halt for some days and cost valuable lives. A stalwart young sergeant of gunners was specially regretted. A halt on account of cholera is one of the most gloomy and depressing experiences, particularly for the men. It was with somewhat chastened feelings that we marched into Myingyan. Our one consolation was that we had accomplished our purpose and reopened telegraphic communication with Rangoon.

Meanwhile the Kinwun Mingyi, who had gone with the ex-King, had returned to Mandalay, and the Taingda Mingyi, the evil genius of the dynasty, had been sent to Hazaribagh. Mr. Bernard was convinced of the Taingda Mingyi's active disloyalty. It was notorious that, in the King's time, he fomented disorder and shared the spoils of dacoity. There were reasonable grounds for believing that he continued these practices and that his power was exerted against the Government. To retain this man in a leading position on Colonel Sladen's Council, or even to

allow him to stay in Burma, deprived of office, in a private station, was fraught with grave risk. In Mandalay his influence was supreme. His speedy removal without previous warning seemed clearly desirable. This was dramatically effected. As the Mingyi sat in the midst of the Hlutdaw, Mr. Pilcher entered and summoned him to the Chief Commissioner's presence. Arriving there, he was told that he was to be sent to India. His request for permission to go to his house before [Pg 135] leaving was refused. Seated with Mr. Pilcher in a bullock-carriage, he was driven to the shore. As he passed out of the West, the Traitors', Gate, there was a block, and the carriage halted. "Is this where you are going to kill me?" asked the old man. Under the provisions of the beneficent Regulation III. of 1818, the Mingyi was detained for several years. Long after the country had been at peace, he was allowed to return and end his days in Burma in receipt of an allowance from Government. He was a man of much force of character, comparatively uneducated, and, unless his face and common fame belied him, of harsh and cruel nature. That protruding under-lip and that glance, stern even in old age, were signs of a fiery and turbulent soul. After his return he did no harm, and, having lost his wealth in foolish speculations, he died a poor man. I helped to get a small pension for his widow, an innocent old lady, who was, I believe, sincerely grateful. The pension was granted as an act of grace, not out of respect for the Mingyi's memory.

About this time I went on one more little daur, perhaps hardly worth mentioning. Dacoits were entrenched in the Kaung-hmu-daw Pagoda, not very far from Sagaing. A column, with Colonel Lowndes as civil officer, was sent against them. Another column, which I accompanied, started at the same time and went up the river. We were to hold a defile in the hills and cut off the retreat of the dacoits dislodged from Kaung-hmu-daw. The arrival of the main body at Sagaing was marked by the lamentable incident already narrated.[107] Next morning, as arranged, the pagoda [Pg 136] was attacked and the defenders driven out. The rest of the plan miscarried. Our intelligence was grievously at fault. The only pass in the hills, we found, ran from east to west. Through it we marched at the mercy of any hostile force which might be crowning the heights. Emerging scathless from this gorge, as no one took advantage of so fair a chance, we reached a wide champaign over which an army corps might have scattered without coming near us. That Sunday morning we had a pleasant picnic on a breezy down, and towards nightfall we marched back, having seen no one worse than ourselves.

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CHAPTER IX
LORD DUFFERIN'S VISIT: MANDALAY ONCE MORE

Early in 1886 Mr. Bernard returned to Rangoon. As I was not in Lower Burma for any length of time from December, 1885, to March, 1887, it does not fall within the scope of this book to attempt a description of events in that part of the Province in the months following the occupation of Mandalay. It was a time of stress and anxiety. Insurrections, excited no doubt by emissaries from the Burmese Court and headed in more than one case by monks, broke out all over the country. For a time Lower Burma was a seething mass of disorder. With inadequate military and police forces, Commissioners and district officers bravely faced the situation, and by strenuous efforts suppressed rebellion and gradually restored peace. In the early months, in the Chief Commissioner's absence from Rangoon, the general direction of operations was in the hands of Mr. Symes, then an officer of ten years' service. With what nerve, resolution, and judgment he discharged this great responsibility only those who served in Lower Burma at that time can properly appreciate. No one could have done better and more valuable work in a very [Pg 138] serious crisis. Those early months showed Mr. Symes to be an administrator of the highest class, and won for him the reputation which he enjoyed to the day of his lamented death.

At the beginning of 1886 Lord Dufferin came to study on the spot the problem of Upper Burma and practically to decide its destiny. At the same time came Sir Frederick Roberts, then Commander-in-Chief in India. With the Viceroy were Mr. Durand,[108] Foreign Secretary; Mr. Mackenzie,[109] Home Secretary; Mr. Mackenzie Wallace,[110] Private Secretary; and Lord William Beresford, Military Secretary, a galaxy of talent. Lord Clandeboye, afterwards Earl of Ava, in the flower of his youth and beauty, was among the aides-de-camp. Sir Frederick Roberts's staff was hardly less brilliant. It included Major W. G. Nicholson,[111] Major Ian Hamilton,[112] Captain Neville Chamberlain,[113] and Colonel Pole-Carew.[114] Besides being the best-known man of his time in India, Beresford was probably the best Military Secretary in history. He was [Pg 139] thoroughly conversant with every detail of his office. Equally at home in the direction of a Durbar or the management of a social gathering, with singular charm of manner, he had the delightful gift of being all things to all men. At a garden party he might be seen in close converse with a pillar of the Church, or hanging on the lips of an American Missionary, as if this idyllic communion was the one thing for which he lived. After this visit, the Bishop of Rangoon confided his opinion to a friend: "I am glad to see that the tone of the Viceregal Court is so good. Do you know? I think this high standard is in a great measure due to the influence of Beresford." In Rangoon the usual festivities were held. At a ball I was deputed to interpret between His Excellency and Burmese ladies and gentlemen. Lord Dufferin's embroidered compliments, addressed to some fair ladies, severely taxed my homespun vernacular.

After a short stay in Rangoon Lord Dufferin and Sir Frederick Roberts went up to Mandalay in the steamer *Mindoon*, fitted out and placed at the Viceroy's disposal by the Irrawaddy Flotilla

Company. Stopping at various places on the way, the Viceroy made the acquaintance of the local military and civil officers. The visit to Mandalay was an unqualified success. Their Excellencies, for Lady Dufferin lent her gracious presence to the occasion, were welcomed by the military and civil officers and all the Burmese notables. They were installed in the finest rooms in the Palace, visited all scenes of interest in the town and city, and received the members of the royal house [Pg 140] and the most eminent Burmese officers and their families. On the eastern terrace of the Palace the Viceroy held a levée, the first and only instance of that ceremony being held in the Nandaw.[115] Just before his departure, in a mandat[116] erected on the shore, he addressed a meeting of Burmese Ministers and high officials. His speech was interpreted by an Extra Assistant Commissioner, Maung Pyi. Failing to catch one sentence, the interpreter vainly tried to induce his Excellency to repeat it. Nothing daunted, Maung Pyi, with perfect assurance, evolved and uttered an elaborate sentence of his own. The incident passed unnoticed. Lord Dufferin's name will always be associated with Upper Burma. From Ava he took one of his titles, and he acceded to the request that the cantonment of Mandalay, embracing the city as well as an area without the walls, should bear his name.

On the voyage and after his arrival in Mandalay the Viceroy and his advisers conferred with Mr. Bernard concerning the future of the newly acquired dominion. With the sanction of the Secretary of State, his Excellency, at a dinner given on the eve of his departure, announced the decision that the country was to be administered as part of British India. It was on this occasion, and by Mr. Bernard, that the familiar term "annexation" was first publicly used. Then, having accomplished the purpose of his visit, the Viceroy re-embarked for Prome. Just opposite Pagan, [Pg 141] whereat the state of the district did not invite a landing, the *Mindoon* stuck fast on a sandbank for nearly twelve hours, a really characteristic incident on the Irrawaddy. Lord Dufferin was not in the least disconcerted or annoyed; he professed to be pleased to have one day's entire rest. Towards evening the whole party were on the point of being transferred to some small craft in attendance, but luckily the steamer floated off in time, and this inconvenience was avoided. The return to Rangoon was saddened by the tidings of the death of Mr. H. L. St. Barbe, one of the most rising men in the Province, whose very remarkable personality gave every promise of distinction.[117] He was killed in the Bassein District, one of the first victims of the dacoit bands which harassed Lower Burma for three or four years.

By their charm and courtesy Lord and Lady Dufferin won all hearts, and left the happiest impression on the people of the Province. Still a junior officer, naturally I was not brought into close or frequent contact with them; but on the voyage to and from Mandalay I was near enough to come under the spell. Lord Dufferin was no doubt an admirable Viceroy. His dignity and presence, as well as his brilliant gifts, were specially fitted to adorn that illustrious office. He did not condescend to detail or profess to be industrious in small things. Industry, it has been said, is the tribute which mediocrity pays to genius. Often, I have heard, it was difficult to induce him to [Pg 142] attend to matters of routine. But a really important case inspired him with enthusiasm, and on it he shed the rays of an illuminating mind; to its polished completion he devoted infinite pains. His visit in the early years of his Viceroyalty was greatly to the benefit of the Province. During the rest of his life in India his warm and friendly interest in Burma never failed.

The annexation of Upper Burma has been criticized not only by those who regard with disapproval every extension of the Empire. A very distinguished officer, whose best years had been passed in Burma, and who was familiar with both parts of the Province, suggested to me as one grave objection that the annexation extinguished a nationality, a thing which had not before been done in India. I have no doubt that, especially from the point of view of the good of the Burmese race, the annexation was an unmixed advantage. So far from extinguishing a nationality, we reintegrated it. Up to 1885 Burma was in a state of disunion. Part flourished under British rule; part languished under native tyranny. Some Burmans were British subjects; some served their own King. The conquest of Upper Burma reunited the severed fragments. Once more Burma became a solid country, the Burmese a nation under one undivided control; and as such it began a career of almost unexampled prosperity. Although there are differences and distinctions between the two sections, due to the varied course of their past history, Burma now forms one Province, and every part shares in the fortunes of the whole. The annexation did far [Pg 143] more than this. It restored peace and order to a distracted people, and secured to every man the free enjoyment of the fruits of his labours. To all men were given the protection of equal laws and the assurance of even-handed justice. The grasping avarice of officials was restrained, and corrupt practices were discountenanced. Burmans are not excluded from a due share in the administration. To aspiring youths, promising careers have been thrown open. The second Burman as yet enlisted in the higher branch of the Accounts Department is an Upper Burman, the first to take the degree of Bachelor of Arts. On those Burmans who loyally accepted the new Government, office and honours were freely bestowed. The Kinwun Mingyi became a Companion of the Star of India, U Pe Si of the Indian Empire. The real patriots were those who recognized that the new order meant peace and prosperity, with no suppression of native religion or customs, and who risked obloquy, and often life and property, in loyal service to the State. These were truer friends of their people than men who, by ineffectual revolt and resistance, plunged their country for years into bloodshed and misery.

In March, 1886, Sir Charles Bernard returned to Mandalay. On April 1 the provisional administration of the Hlutdaw came to an end. Sir Edward Sladen retired, and the Chief Commissioner assumed direct control of Upper Burma. At the same time the Burma Field Force was broken up, Sir Harry Prendergast returned to India, and Sir George White took command of the troops. While retaining general control of the whole Province, Sir Charles Bernard left Lower [Pg 144]

Burma under the immediate direction of Mr. G. J. S. Hodgkinson[118] as Special Commissioner, devoting his own energies mainly to the settlement of the new Province and the modelling of its administration. An entirely separate Secretariat was formed, of which, as Secretary for Upper Burma, I was in sole charge. My office was in the Hlutdaw building, within the Palace enclosure. We had our own little printing-press, modestly but efficiently equipped by Mr. Regan, and we published our own *Gazette*. My only qualified assistant was Mr. Taw Sein Ko,[119] then in his early youth, to whom I am indebted for invaluable assistance during those busy months as well as in later years. Of the clerical staff, the less said the better. It was, perhaps, a unique Secretariat, with no records of previous years and no precedents. Whatever the Secretary might forget, the Chief Commissioner remembered. Besides myself, the only member of Sir Charles Bernard's immediate staff was the Personal Assistant. This office was filled first by Andrew Thomson, C.S., a man of brilliant ability and exceptional gifts. Later came Sir Charles Bernard's elder son, J. H. Bernard, C.S., endowed with many of the qualities of his family. Andrew Thomson died in the [Pg 145] flower of his youth, *multis bonis flebilis*. James Bernard died in Bengal, in tragic circumstances, midway in a career of promise. Never were two pleasanter or more helpful comrades.

Though the Hlutdaw was dissolved, seven or eight of the principal Ministers were retained on moderate salaries as a consultative body. They had their own office in the Hlutdaw building, with a few clerks, and were in charge of the old State records. The handwriting of these clerks was most elaborate and beautiful. Such writing is now, I fear, a lost art. In the King's time Court writers were kept up to the mark by fear of heavy penalties. For wrongly dividing a word at the end of a line (like thi-
s) the punishment was amputation of the right hand. It seems almost excessive. The Sayedawgyi were of a higher class than ordinary clerks in Government offices. Some of them were related to Ministers, or even to members of the royal family. And often enough they blossomed into Wuns or Ministers. Among them were men of ability and character. I instance my friend Maung Tin, A.T.M., Extra Assistant Commissioner, long resident at Pagan as township officer, now subdivisional officer, a recognized authority on the antiquities of that historic city. Another, also Maung Tin, A.T.M., Extra Assistant Commissioner and subdivisional officer, has written a learned history of Burma. Both are men of good family and have attained responsible positions under our Government. The Ministers had no powers, but were often consulted on matters of which they had special knowledge or means of information. Punctually at noon every day, a chaprási[120] [Pg 146] came into my office and announced the Minister's approach.[121] At the ensuing conference public affairs were discussed and the opinions of Ministers invited. If the stock of references was low, the conversation turned to Burmese history and family affairs, of which their knowledge was extensive and accurate. One day we were all bidden to the wedding of the late Shwepyi Mingyi's daughter. A peculiar custom prevailed among the wealthier classes of having marriages celebrated by Pônnas, Hindu descendants of captives from Assam or Manipúr. It has already been explained that Buddhism, as understood in Burma, provides no ceremony of marriage. The custom of inviting Pônnas to celebrate marriages of Buddhists with some sort of Hindu rite, the binding with a thread and the eating out of the same dish, is a curious anomaly for which I can find no parallel. This was a wedding of the Pônna type. All Mandalay attended, including many European officers. To complete the quaint mixture of foreign ceremonies, the health of bride and bridegroom was drunk in champagne by those of the company who allowed themselves that indulgence. Late in the morning, as I was about to leave, one of the Ministers said with a sigh: "Well, I suppose we must be getting away to office too." The suggestion that such a festal day might be spent as a holiday was accepted with effusion. There was something pathetic in the thought of these men, all of mature and some of advanced years, who had exercised almost [Pg 147] absolute sway over a kingdom, regarding themselves as under the orders of an officer so much their junior in age. I did my best to make the position as little irksome as might be. As I retained the friendship of every one of them as long as he lived, I hope my efforts had some measure of success.

With the Kinwun Mingyi I contracted a close and intimate friendship, which ended only with his death at an advanced age. In early days Andrew Thomson and I were often at his house, playing with his charming grandchildren, small boys and girls of four or five years of age; sometimes on Sunday mornings we went to his garden beyond the walls for an early picnic. The Mingyi was a man of amiable disposition and courtly manners, of great learning, a delightful companion. To have had the privilege of discussing with him the doctrine of Neikban (Nirvana) is a pleasant memory. Although he could have no real love for our Government, he loyally accepted it, and did his best to support and strengthen the new order. I believe him to have been a man of high character, incapable of any base or treacherous act. His personal record was unimpeachable; he lived and died in honourable disregard of wealth. He had no children except two sons by adoption.

Another house where I was always welcome was that of the widow of the Pagan Min. She was his principal Queen, and occupied the house where the deposed King and herself had lived since the accession of Mindôn Min.[122] It was interesting to meet in such conditions one who had sat on [Pg 148] the throne and was sprung from the race of Burma's Kings. She was a charming lady, advanced in years, with the fine manners of her rank and people. In the house of the Pintha Mintha[123] I was also received on cordial terms. My friendship with his family subsists to this day.

The description already given[124] of the position of women in Burma may help to render intelligible the sketch of our life in Mandalay in early days. For some months European ladies were not encouraged to come to Mandalay. Most of us were extremely busy, and lived an austere

life in the Palace. For companionship we were dependent on one another and on our Burmese friends. The people of whom I saw most in rare intervals of relaxation were officials and their families and members of the royal house. Queens and Princesses were many. For a melancholy reason Princes were few. Except the Myingun Prince in Pondicherry, and the Nyaung-yan and Nyaung-ôk Princes in Calcutta, only two of Mindôn Min's sons survived—the Kawlin and Pyinmana[125] Princes.[126] Educated in India, these two have now for some years lived in charming domesticity in Rangoon; each happily married to a lady of his House. Both are honorary magistrates, and duly take their turn as members of a Bench for the trial of petty cases. There [Pg 149] were a few other Minthas, sons of the Einshemin[127] and other Princes, besides more distant relations of the King. Several of the Minthas have taken service under Government, and occupy responsible positions as Assistant Commissioners, Mÿo-ôks, and in other departments. Almost all the ladies of the Royal House, widows and daughters of Mindôn Min, or otherwise nearly related to the King, were in great distress and poverty. For the most part they had subsisted on meagre allowances, many of them being kept in confinement or under restraint. All these ladies received pensions from the British Government, but on so minute a scale that Sir Charles Bernard's proposals for their maintenance excited by their moderation the surprise even of the Government of India. Yet when income-tax was, as some think illegally, levied in Upper Burma on incomes derived from Government, I am ashamed to say that these paltry stipends were subjected to deduction. From time to time the scale of pensions was raised, but it was not till many years later that I had the good fortune to enlist Lord Minto's active sympathy with these ladies, and to secure for them allowances not utterly inadequate. Most prominent of the royal ladies in Mandalay were two full sisters of King Thebaw, the Pakangyi and Meiktila Supaya.[128] Meiktila Supaya married a commoner, and died some years ago, leaving two charming daughters, of [Pg 150] whom one is the wife of a Government officer. The Amá-daw-gyi[129] brought up her nieces, and lived quietly in Mandalay till recent days. Only one of Mindôn Min's wives of royal stock survived till our time. Wives of inferior rank were not of royal blood, but for the most part daughters of officials or chiefs. The three whom I knew best were three sisters, the Limban, Thetpan, and Thayazein Queens, daughters of a Talaing Mÿo-thugyi in Lower Burma. They were ladies of dignity and refinement, with whom my family and I were long on terms of intimacy. Only the Thayazein Queen survives, living happily with her daughters and grandchildren in Rangoon. The pension list included over one hundred persons. At first the Princesses shrank from marrying commoners, but clearly most of them must condescend or remain unwed. Many of them, therefore, in the course of time took husbands of inferior rank. In the quarter of a century which has passed since the annexation, not one of the ladies of the Burmese royal family has given the slightest trouble to Government from a political point of view; none of them has intrigued or shared in any conspiracy or seditious movement. When the prominent part taken by Burmese women in public and private affairs is remembered, it will be admitted that, if for this reason alone, these ladies merit gentle treatment at our hands. I think they might at least be excused from paying income-tax on their pensions.

[Pg 151] It may be appropriate here to notice the theory and practice of class distinctions in Burma. The King and the royal family were placed on a lone and lofty pedestal, and regarded with exaggerated reverence. In respect of royalty there was almost, not quite, a distinction of caste. An instance of respect for the sacredness of the blood royal came under my own notice. A granddaughter of Mindôn Min, daughter of his son by a minor Queen, a charming and attractive girl, eloped with the Queen's nephew, a very presentable youth. The boy was one of the Queen's household, son of the Queen's own brother, a commoner. The Mipaya's[130] distress and indignation were extreme. To console her, I suggested that, after all, the lover was of her own family. "I would as soon she had married a coolie out of the street," was the uncompromising reply. The old lady had no rest till she had worried these young people to divorce, and married the girl to a Princeling. Anomalies were necessarily recognized. Though the King took as his chief Queen one of his half-sisters, Kings and Princes might marry commoners; royal ladies might not do so. Of late, as we have seen, this rule has become less strict. But genuine respect for the royal family still abounds. To this day, whether in Upper or Lower Burma, any upstart who pretends to royal origin secures a following.[131] The very sensible plan of employing them as Mÿo-ôks and Extra Assistant Commissioners has done much to keep real sons of Princes out of mischief.

[Pg 152] Apart from the royal family and monks, the only distinct class among Burmans is that of officials. There is no landed gentry; there are no county families. In most cases, especially in the higher grades, official rank was not hereditary. The Mingyi's son did not become a Mingyi, or the Wun's son a Wun, by succession. Occasionally one came across officers, like my friend U Pe Si,[132] sprung from official families. This was the result of nepotism, not heredity. As a rule an official obtained his position by luck or by favour or by family influence, by repute for learning, or by distinction as a soldier or administrator. The royal family and officials excluded, the rest of the people were on the same social plane. False pride and snobbishness were unknown. One of the Ministers, of eminent learning, who came clad in silks and glittering with golden chains, brought his brother to see me. The brother was an old peasant out of the fields, who sat on the floor, wearing the scanty dress of the working farmer. We had a pleasant talk about crops and seasons, while the Minister sat on a chair and discussed what Prince Hassan[133] used to call "country business." It is, perhaps, to this absence of false pride, to genuine kindness of heart, and to traditional respect for elders, that the fine manners of Burmans are due. Good manners and self-respect are marks of all ranks. I have received perfect civility and courtesy from Princes and Ministers, from peasants and labouring men; always a kind word and a smile and thought for a guest's comfort and convenience. Even contact with Western civilization has not yet spoilt the [Pg 153]

grace of manner which adorns the Burmese race.

The lack of class distinctions imports a certain want of cohesion, which does not facilitate the task of administration. Burmans are rank individualists, and so, I suppose, far behind the times. Each family is a separate entity, bound by no ties to any overlord. It is true that the hereditary principle is strong in the case of minor offices, such as those of Mÿo-thugyi[134] or Ywa-thugyi.[135] These comparatively small but important offices passed from father to son for generations. In Lower Burma we have practically abolished the circle, and in Upper Burma the Mÿo is likewise in process of decay. I for one agree that the village is the better unit. Yet some tribute of respect must be paid to the old Mÿo-thugyi, a courtly country gentleman of dignity and presence, possibly more ornamental than useful.

CHAPTER X
THE FIRST YEAR AFTER THE ANNEXATION

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The task of constituting the new Administration and of reducing the country to order was rendered especially difficult by the rigid economy at first contemplated by the Government of India. In the discussions during the Viceroy's visit it is understood that frugality was declared essential. With the loyalty which in him, as in Sir Arthur Phayre, rose almost to a passion, Sir Charles Bernard did his utmost to carry out the wishes of Government. Beyond doubt or dispute, a burden far greater than any man should be asked to bear was placed upon the Chief Commissioner's shoulders. Yet the Titan never showed signs of weariness. There were to be no Divisional Commissioners; district officers were to work under the Chief Commissioner's orders. The provision for police, especially military police, was quite inadequate. The Secretariat staff was plainly insufficient. No one but Sir Charles Bernard, with his immense power of work, his loyal enthusiasm, his marvellous memory and mastery of detail, could have attempted the task. And the effort was beyond even those exceptional powers. In the first year of the occupation Sir [Pg 155] Charles Bernard, for some time single-handed, organized and directed the administration of the new Province, doing the work of three ordinary men, dealing as far as possible immediately in police matters with the Inspector-General, in forest matters with the Conservator, keeping close touch and on the most friendly terms with the military authorities, keeping also in personal contact with every district officer, guiding, encouraging, seldom admonishing. Throughout this year of labour and anxiety he was hardly a week free from severe and painful illness. Almost from the beginning he was the target of malicious and venomous attack. With an inadequate though loyal and efficient staff in the districts; with scanty funds doled out by the Imperial Government, which then, as ever, treated Burma with unsympathetic parsimony; under the depressing effects of illness, the object of ignorant and unscrupulous detraction, the work done by Sir Charles Bernard in that first year, when order began to be evolved out of chaos, has never been properly appreciated in public. But no civil officer who served in Upper Burma in that year fails to recognize the heroic work done by his Chief, or to remember the support and encouragement received from him in times of trouble, doubt, and confusion. No military officer of standing forgets the loyal co-operation of the civil power as represented by the Chief Commissioner. Sir Charles Bernard could not remain in Burma to complete his work. He laid a sound basis for the restoration of order and the building up of the fabric of settled government. The report of the [Pg 156] year's work issued at the end of 1886 was a record of which no Administration need have been ashamed.

As might have been foreseen from the first, it was soon found impossible for the Chief Commissioner directly to control the affairs of every District. Upper Burma was therefore partitioned into Divisions, and Commissioners were appointed. In June, Mr. H. St. G. Tucker, C.S., became Commissioner of the Eastern Division, with headquarters at Ningyan (Pyinmana). This division was more remote from Mandalay than any part of the Province as yet sought to be administered; there was no communication with it by water, and neither road nor rail was yet in being. In August and September three other divisions were constituted. Mr. G. D. Burgess, C.S., became Commissioner of the Northern Division; Mr. F. W. R. Fryer,[136] C.S., with a great reputation from the Punjab, assumed charge of the Central Division, both for a time residing at Mandalay; Mr. J. J. Digges La Touche,[137] C.S., from the North-West Provinces, was posted to the Southern Division, with headquarters at Minbu. With some adjustment of local limits, these Divisions still subsist. Their names have been changed, not, I think, for the better, and in most cases the headquarters have been shifted. The appointment of these officers afforded the Chief Commissioner appreciable relief.

Having taken over an area twice as large as Lower Burma, Sir Charles Bernard was confronted [Pg 157] with the task of finding officers to administer it. Obviously the existing staff could not be stretched to cover the new Province and provide equipment for the old Province as well. For the Commission civilians were sent from other provinces, military civilians were recruited, and appointments were offered to men in various departments or not yet in Government service. In each of these alternatives there were advantages and disadvantages. Civilians from other provinces, though versed in the art of administration, were ignorant of the language and customs of Burma. Military civilians, excellent material, needed some training in civil work. Officers of other departments and non-officials recruited in the Province knew the language and the people,

but had no acquaintance with administrative methods. The last-mentioned defect is probably regarded by many as imaginary. While for other arts and professions a laborious education is necessary, we all know that government and administration are gifts of the gods and come by nature. We are all familiar with brilliant amateurs in administration, who know their work far better than those trained to the business from their youth. The Commission was thus a composite body, probably not so supremely excellent as that which undertook the settlement of the Punjab under John and Henry Lawrence, but full of ability and zeal. The Civil Service, the Army, and what were then called the Uncovenanted Services, furnished officers of conspicuous merit, who [Pg 158] in the years immediately succeeding the annexation and in later times did invaluable work. Without making invidious distinctions or offering presumptuous criticisms, I may mention of the early new-comers Mr. H. P. Todd-Naylor,[138] Mr. J. George Scott,[139] Mr. H. A. Browning,[140] Mr. B. S. Carey,[141] and Mr. H. M. S. Matthews.[142]

The officering of the civil police was one of even greater difficulty, the pay and prospects being far less attractive. Some officers were drafted from other Provinces. Many adventurous young gentlemen flocked to Mandalay, eager to take part in the settlement of a new Province. Of these some were appointed to be inspectors, some to be even head constables, with a prospect of obtaining gazetted rank in the course of time. Most of them did excellent work, fully justifying their selection. From time to time some were transferred to the Commission. The majority had a hard and disappointing life, waiting long for the realization of their dreams. The story of the Burma Civil Police is one of hope deferred, and of weary plodding through many dismal years. It is greatly to the credit of its officers that they did well under such depressing conditions.

In the first year, at least, the bulk of the actual work of pacification was done by the army of [Pg 159] occupation. Sir George White was in command, brave among the brave, cheeriest of companions, loyalest of friends, the warrior whom every man in arms should wish to be. Chief of his Staff was Colonel Prothero,[143] who worked all day and night without turning a hair, whose gay serenity nothing could ruffle, whose motto might have been:

> “Still to be neat, still to be dressed
> As always going to a feast.”

In the course of the summer, Sir Herbert Macpherson, V.C.,[144] came over to exercise general control. After his lamented death, the Commander-in-Chief in India himself, Sir Frederick Roberts, spent some months in Burma, occupying the summer-house in the Palace garden where the King surrendered, giving to civil and military administration the support of his authority, the strength of his wise counsel. Gradually, as the area of settled government extended, the country was covered with a network of small military posts, more than a hundred being in existence at the end of the year.

In these months came the first two military police battalions, raised by Mr. Loch and Mr. Gastrell.[145] The Mandalay battalion, which I knew best, attracted the flower of the Punjab. Under Mr. Gastrell’s excellent command it became a thoroughly efficient force, conspicuous among the large body of military police which garrisoned the country in subsequent years. These [Pg 160] military police played an important part in the pacification. Their behaviour was most praiseworthy. Several battalions later on were converted into regular regiments of the Indian Army, called at first Burma Regiments.

For civil administration the Province was parcelled out into Districts, at first twelve, afterwards seventeen in number, each in charge of a Deputy Commissioner, with such Assistants as could be provided. In some cases military commandants of outposts were invested with civil powers, and did much useful work in a civil capacity. Every effort was made to enlist local Burman officials under Government, and many became Mỹo-ôks and rendered valuable service. But it was impossible to induce higher officials to leave Mandalay, and to take part in the settlement of out-districts. The effort was made and failed. One of Sir Charles Bernard’s first acts was the preparation and promulgation of a set of instructions to civil officers, an admirable compilation embracing in a small compass all the rules necessary at the outset for the guidance of his subordinates. That was all the law we had in Upper Burma till the end of November, 1886. As an instance of the care taken to prevent hasty and harsh measures, it may be mentioned that all capital sentences had to be referred to the Chief Commissioner for confirmation. When Commissioners were appointed, the duty of confirming these sentences was delegated to them.

The chaos to which the country was reduced, and the confusion which prevailed under the Burmese Government, rendered the task of settlement extraordinarily difficult. The country was [Pg 161] overrun with dacoit bands, ranging in numbers from five to five hundred. The names of the leaders, Hla U, Bo[146] Cho, Bo Swè, Ôktama, Shwe Yan, became household words. For some of the dacoit movements there was no doubt a slight political move. A few scions of the royal stock who had escaped the massacres of 1879 set up as pretenders to sovereignty, while here and there men of humble origin assumed the style of royalty and raised the standard of revolt. But as a rule, from the deeds and aspirations of these robber bands genuine patriotism was conspicuously absent. Most of the gangs consisted of dacoits pure and simple, whose sole object was plunder and rapine, who held the countryside in terror, and committed indescribable atrocities on their own people. Where-ever there was an appearance of organized resistance, Buddhist monks were among the chiefs. No political movement of importance has been without a

monk as the leading spirit.

The story of the pacification has been told fully, vividly, and accurately by Sir Charles Crosthwaite.[147] It is not my purpose to attempt to tell the story again. In the first year the work proceeded slowly, but within limits effectually. Many dacoit leaders were killed or captured, and the elements of regular administration were introduced into several districts. Revenue, of no enormous amount, it is true, was collected; the country was covered with telegraph lines; useful [Pg 162] public works were undertaken. The early months were clouded by the loss in action of Robert Phayre, a promising civilian;[148] the autumn was saddened, for me most of all, by the death from fever, in Kyauksè, of Robert Pilcher. A master of their language, and sincerely in sympathy with them, Pilcher was exceedingly popular with the Burmese. The first time I ever saw a man literally beat his breast for grief was when I told the good old Taungtaya-ngasè Bo[149] the sad tidings of his death. Since then I have seen men and boys beat their breasts and shed real tears at the recital of the tale of Hassan and Hussein[150] at the Mohurram. Pilcher was a scholar with a touch of genius; his early death was a loss to the State.

A Burmese family.

Among the homely virtues of the Burmese must be counted respect for parents. This is inculcated in the Sacred Books, and forms a really pleasing phase of family life. Two nephews of the Taung-gwin Mingyi, one of the Council of Ministers, were giving trouble in the Ava district. It was suggested to the Mingyi that he should use his influence to induce them to surrender and make peace with Government. “Certainly,” said the Mingyi; “I will send for their parents and put them in my dungeon and afflict them till their sons come in.” It was not possible to approve this crude proposal, but the Mingyi was told that he might ask the parents to stay with him, and talk kindly [Pg 163] to them about their erring children. The young men submitted in a week, and gave no further trouble. In Sagaing a famous Bo, Min O, was captured. His life was forfeit for many crimes; but he was an old man, and two of his sons were at large, leading dacoit bands. Word was sent to them that if they did not surrender, their father would be hanged; but if they gave themselves up, his life would be spared. Both came in. It will no doubt surprise some people to learn that the promise to spare Min O’s life was kept.

In the early days of April, 1886, there seemed to be a lull in the storm. The time of the Burmese New Year approached, always a time of some anxiety, when, if ever, disturbance may be expected. Perhaps this had not yet been realized. The exact moment on which the New Year began was calculated by the Pônnas,[151] who, besides officiating at weddings, were also the royal astrologers.[152] The time was to be announced by the firing of a cannon from the Palace enclosure. On that April morning the astrologers assembled in the courtyard of the Palace. The head seer drew a line in the dust, planted a small stick, and declared that when the shadow of the stick reached the line the auspicious moment would have come. At the precise instant I made a [Pg 164] preconcerted sign, and the cannon was fired. It might have been arranged as the signal of revolt throughout the country. On that day all the principal military posts in Upper Burma were attacked, doubtless in pursuance of a definite plan. Next morning my servant woke me rather early with the intimation that “the enemy were at the gate.” At dawn there had been a serious attack on the city of Mandalay, swarming with troops, by a band of some twenty or thirty rebels acting in concert with a few confederates within the walls. Inside the city two unlucky medical subordinates were killed, and within and without incendiary fires were lighted. The fire spread even to the Palace enclosure, and we were in some anxiety for the main buildings, which, once alight, would have burned like matchwood. To the roof of the Hlutdaw mounted the faithful Thwethaukgyi[153] Tun Baw and his subordinates, with chatties[154] of water and bamboo poles, to quench and beat out flying sparks. Luckily the fire in the enclosure was mastered, and we returned, grimy and thirsty, relieved to find our quarters still standing. As the Palace was crowded with military and civil officers and their establishments, and contained all the records, its destruction would have been very inconvenient.

The fortnight which followed was the longest fortnight of my life. It was crowded with incident, [Pg 165] attacks and risings, above all, incendiary fires. Since those days I have ceased to take interest in fires. On the Queen's Tower[155] stood a sentinel, day and night, to sound the alarm. The easiest way to the tower was through my bedroom. Nightly I went to sleep in expectation of being aroused by the fire-bugle and the tramp of men, and I was hardly ever disappointed. Every night we climbed the wooden tower, and saw the blaze of conflagration in town or city. Once I asked the sentry if he had heard any sound of firing. "Well, sir, I thought I did hear one of them there brinjals,"[156] was the unexpected answer. Once, again, fire broke out within the Palace fence, but did not spread. This also was well, as close to our quarters were considerable quantities of gunpowder and dynamite. With the early rains at the end of April fires ceased, and Mandalay enjoyed comparative rest.

It was certain that some of the Burmese officials in Mandalay were fomenting seditious movements in the country. Suspicion fell upon the Shwehlan Myowun[157] and the Hlethin Atwinwun.[158] The Myowun was removed to India in virtue of a warrant issued under the invaluable Regulation III. of 1818. He was taken from his house by Mr. J. G. Scott,[159] who had joined the Commission and was on general duty in Mandalay. Their next meeting was at a pwè in [Pg 166] Mandalay, on a memorable night in 1897, long after the Myowun had been allowed to return.[160] The Hlethin Atwinwun, most plausible and bland of miscreants, believed to have been deeply involved in the massacre of Princes, from whose hands one expected to see blood still dripping, was moved to visit Calcutta of his own accord in response to a general invitation given to Burmese Ministers by Lord Dufferin. He stayed in Calcutta for some years, much against his will, but solely under pressure of peaceful persuasion. He returned much chastened, and lived on good terms with the officers of Government till his death early last year.

In accordance with precedent not always observed, King Mindôn had moved his capital from Amarapura to Mandalay in the late fifties, transferring thither many of the inhabitants and all the entourage of the Court. The site was not in all respects well chosen. Much of the town was below the level of the river in high flood, and had to be protected by an embankment. In the rains of 1886 the Irrawaddy rose to an abnormal height, causing grave anxiety for the safety of the bund.[161] One night in August the disaster came. The embankment was breached, and the low-lying parts of the town, as far as the great bazaar (zegyo), were inundated. It was a night of peril and excitement, which taxed to the utmost the energies of the officers in charge of Mandalay, Captain Adamson, Mr. Carter, and Mr. Fforde. Till the river began to fall the town remained under water, [Pg 167] and we all went about the streets in boats and launches. As the Burman is an amphibious being, and the people in the area menaced by the flood had ample warning, the loss of life was comparatively small. Searching inquiry established the conclusion that twelve persons were drowned. An even more melancholy loss of life occurred in connection with the distribution of rice to people rendered destitute by the flood. In a crowd in a narrow passage someone fell; the throng pushed forward unknowing, and many people were trampled to death before the press could be stayed.

One of the objects to which from the beginning the Chief Commissioner devoted the full force of his energy and influence was the continuation of the railway from Toungoo to Mandalay. By dint of constant and indefatigable pressure on the higher powers, and by steadfast resistance to the suggestion that a trunk road should first be made, he succeeded in obtaining sanction for this essential work. The survey was actually begun in the rains of 1886; construction was started early in November of that year; and in February, 1889, less than three years after the proclamation of annexation, the line was opened to traffic throughout its whole length. To those who have experienced the delay usually attending the grant of sanction to important and costly proposals, the most remarkable feature of this record is that leave should have been obtained in less than a year from the occupation of Mandalay. The construction of the line afforded work to great numbers of Burmans and others, and proved one of the most pacifying influences in the [Pg 168] eastern districts. There were no engineering difficulties, and the climate enabled work to be carried on continuously throughout the year. The opening of the railway was hailed with joy by the Burmans, who expressed their appreciation in characteristic fashion, greeting passing trains with shouts of delight and crowding to travel in the mi-yahta.[162] It should never be forgotten that to Sir Charles Bernard alone the Province owes the inception of this work, as indeed in earlier days to his far-seeing policy it owed the construction of the railway from Rangoon to Pegu, and thence to Toungoo. Apparently Sir Charles Bernard furnished an exception to the rule that Indian civilians are persons of narrow horizon.

Among the measures taken at an early stage to facilitate the pacification of Upper Burma was the disarmament of the people. Orders to effect this were issued by Sir Charles Bernard, and some progress was made. It was, however, under Sir Charles Crosthwaite's rule that, in the face of much opposition, the whole Province was effectually disarmed. No measure has had more excellent results in the prevention of serious disturbances. Though from time to time dacoits and robbers have become possessed of firearms, the thoroughness of the disarmament is proved by the inability of rebels in recent years to obtain guns and powder. The Arms Act has been very strictly enforced in Burma, the number of firearms in each district being strictly limited, with the most beneficial effect.

In the time of King Mindôn and King Thebaw many foreigners, mostly French and Italian, flocked [Pg 169] to Mandalay and obtained various appointments in the King's service. The downfall of the Burmese kingdom deprived these gentlemen of their employment. All had claims against the

Burmese Government for arrears of pay, for goods sold, or for work done. Our Government naturally accepted responsibility for the lawful debts of its predecessor. The claims of foreign creditors were investigated as quickly as possible, and those established were discharged. Besides these, there were literally hundreds of other demands for payment of sums alleged to be due from the late Government. These claims were laboriously investigated and reinvestigated, and finally adjudicated upon by the Government of India. Substantial payments were made in settlement of debts sufficiently proved.

In those early days for most officers, military and civil, in Mandalay life was a ceaseless round of strenuous labour. For me it was intensely exciting. All day and often far into the night my time was fully occupied. The enthralling interest of seeing from within and from the centre the making of a new Province, of taking a humble share in the work, was a privilege which falls to few men in a generation. The receipt of reports from districts, the issue of the Chief Commissioner's orders, daily contact with men of distinction in arms or civil affairs, the early morning ride with my Chief or with a comrade, sometimes even with the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts, of whose kindness I have the pleasantest recollection, opportunities for the study of Burmese life [Pg 170] and character, filled to overflowing the swiftly passing weeks. Bustle and excitement and good fellowship formed an exhilarating combination. All the holiday I had that year was a run down to Rangoon for a day to see my wife and family off to England. But who wanted holidays at such a time, when his work was far more interesting and stimulating than other people's play? With Stevenson we might say that we had "the profit of industry with the pleasures of a pastime."

It should hardly be necessary to say that in those early months the outskirts and fringes, the Shan States and the Chin and Kachin Hills, were untouched. It has been suggested that in dealing with the Shan country there was undue delay. Anyone who realizes how much there was to do in the plains, and how impossible it was to do everything at once, recognizes the futility of the suggestion. The Chins were left severely alone. The only attempt made this year to penetrate into the Kachin Hills was the luckless expedition to Pônkan,[163] which returned to Bhamo *re infecta*, to the extreme wrath of Sir Charles Bernard and Sir George White.

The Shan States occupied the whole of the east of Burma, stretching even beyond the Mèkong River. They constituted an integral part of the Burmese Empire, but were administered by their own hereditary chiefs, puny folk who grovelled before the pinchbeck Majesty of Burma, and were on a footing quite inferior to that of native rulers in India. The first of the Shan chiefs to open [Pg 171] communication with us was the Sawbwa[164] of Hsipaw, or, as the Burmese called it, Thibaw, the State from which the late King derived his title. This enlightened chief had a romantic history which will bear retelling. Some years before, having quarrelled with the King, he fled for his life to Lower Burma. With a few attendants he took up his residence in Kemmendine, a suburb of Rangoon. Presently he came to believe, very likely with good reason, that at the King's instigation two of his servants were plotting his death. Accustomed in his State to exercise the power of life and death, he tried them in his own mind, found them guilty, and executed them with his own hand, shooting them both. He was tried by the Recorder of Rangoon (Mr. C. F. Egerton Allen[165]) and a jury, convicted, and sentenced to death. The capital sentence was at once commuted to transportation for life, and the chief began to serve his term in the Rangoon jail, where he was at first set to do the usual hard labour required of prisoners. Mr. Crosthwaite, who was acting as Chief Commissioner, found him in this sad condition, and ordered material alleviation of his lot. The Sawbwa's faithful Mahadevi,[166] who had accompanied her husband, besieged the Chief Commissioner with petitions for his release. Before long Mr. Crosthwaite yielded to her importunity and set free the Sawbwa on condition that he never returned to British [Pg 172] territory. He went to the independent State of Karenni. At or about the time of the occupation of Mandalay he made his way back to Thibaw, and after a brief struggle regained possession of his State.

Quite early in 1886 the Sawbwa wrote to me, as Secretary to the Administration, saying that he had received much kindness from the British Government, and desired to be on terms of friendship with us. It has always seemed to me that this was a very magnanimous act. I agree that it also showed much wisdom. The Sawbwa was a man of great intelligence. He had seen and experienced the power of the British Government. No doubt he realized that he was dealing with a Government immeasurably stronger than that which it had displaced, and he saw his interest in being on good terms with it. I think, too, that he had a shining vision of becoming an independent Sovereign in alliance with India. After all these deductions are made, it implied true greatness of soul for a semi-civilized chief to remember the clemency which had spared his life, to forget the dock and the prison cell and work-yard. The correspondence begun by the Sawbwa was continued on cordial terms. Early in 1887, in spite of the passionate entreaties of his advisers, who were filled with gloomy forebodings, Kun Saing came down to Mandalay. This again showed courage and foresight. There was not a British officer or soldier in the length and breadth of the Shan States. Mandalay was full of troops. Though he brought a fairly large retinue, the Sawbwa [Pg 173] knew that he was placing himself entirely in our power. His confidence was more than justified. He was received with some ceremony, Mr. J. E. Bridges, C.S., and I, as representatives of Government, meeting him at Aung-bin-le with a squadron of cavalry and a military band. Under this escort the Sawbwa made a triumphant entry into Mandalay, and was allowed even to ride through the Palace grounds. In the King's time he might sooner have hoped to fly over them. Sir Frederick Roberts and Sir Charles Bernard were among the many spectators of the procession. Accompanied by the Mahadevi, the Sawbwa was suitably lodged in a Win[167] outside the city walls. The ladies in his train were somewhat scandalized at being photographed by an

enthusiastic amateur before they had time to change out of riding kit. The Sawbwa's amáts[168] continued in a state of alarm all the time they were in Mandalay. Their terror rose almost to frenzy when one day the Chief was taken for a picnic on the river in an Indian Marine vessel. Even the Chief was somewhat relieved when he landed safe and sound on the Hard.

The Sawbwa had the luck to be in Mandalay at the celebration of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee. Partly in honour of that auspicious occasion, partly in recognition of his confidence and loyalty, the tribute of Thibaw was remitted for ten years, and three small adjacent States, Maing-lôn, Thônzè, and Maing-tôn, to which very shadowy claims had been preferred, were added to the Sawbwa's territory. Sir Charles Bernard's action in making over these States has been criticized. [Pg 174] Viewing the case calmly after the lapse of years, I humbly think that his decision was wise. The suggestion of the risk of creating a powerful Shan State strong enough to be a menace to Government was plainly ridiculous. If all the Shan States were united under one Chief, he would not have as much power as the ruler of a second-class native State in India. Thibaw with its added sub-States could never be in a position to cause the Government of Burma a moment's anxiety. On the other hand, a large and comparatively wealthy State is more easily managed and likely to be administered better than a lot of small tracts.

The Sawbwa of Thibaw.

Although Kun Saing was not an ideal ruler; although from time to time complaints were made against him; although, I believe unjustly, even his loyalty was doubted, he was an enlightened and intelligent chief of some subtlety. Twice in later years he visited England, where he had the honour of being received by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The story, from first to last, has a ring of the Old Testament. The place most of all admired by the Sawbwa was the Crystal Palace (hman-nan-daw). Towards the end of his life, when the first signs of unrest in the East became dimly apparent, he is said to have contracted a secret marriage with the Pakangyi Supaya,[169] King Thebaw's sister. Not that he meditated treason; but if anything should happen, he meant to be on the right side.

Two of Kun Saing's sons were partly educated in England. The elder, Saw Hkè, succeeded his [Pg 175] father, and is now the polished, courtly Chief of Thibaw. The story of Saw Lu, the younger son, is pathetic and instructive. When still a boy he was sent to England, and was for a time at Rugby. He was a studious and ambitious youth, whose desire was to be, not a King, but a doctor. Most unwisely, merely to see how he was getting on, his father recalled him, and he was turned loose in Thibaw at the age of about sixteen. The temptations besetting the Chief's young son in his father's capital were too strong for him, and he fell from grace. The cup of his iniquity brimmed over when he eloped with a young girl who had been selected as the Sawbwa's Abishag. The fugitives were brought back, and the boy was cast into prison. "Is this your British justice?" he indignantly asked the political officer who came to condole with him. Presently he was released, and came to see me in Rangoon. "I don't know what to do," he said; "I have apologized to the governor, but he won't forgive me." He was an exceedingly good-looking, nice-mannered youth, like a pleasant English public-school boy. He was not allowed to return to England. Over his

subsequent history it is kinder to draw a veil. The moral of this story is that if a Burman or Shan, especially a Chief's son, is to come to England, he should be sent while still young, and should be kept at a good public school and at the University until his character has been formed. He should on no account be brought back midway in the course of his education.

Even more deeply learned in Shan than in Burmese, Pilcher would have been the first civil officer [Pg 176] in the Shan States. After his death, I was designated by Sir Charles Bernard for that post. When the time came, another officer was selected. Speaking seriously and without reserve, I have no doubt that this was for the advantage of the Shan country. No one could have been more conspicuously successful than Mr. Hildebrand[170] and Mr. Scott;[171] no one is likely to have done nearly so well. In view of the original intention, in the cold weather of 1886 I was given a holiday from office-work, and sent as civil officer with a column under Colonel E. Stedman[172] to Thônzè. Through this State ran the trade route to the Northern Shan States, Thibaw, Theinni, and Taungbaing. Along this road came caravans of bullocks laden with letpet.[173] Owing to dissensions in Thônzè, the trade was stopped. The object of our expedition, the first sent into the Shan country, was to obtain information and to open the road for traders. Early in November, when the season should have been settled, on a fine Sunday afternoon, I rode out to join the rearguard at Tônbo. Next morning we were to catch up the main column at Zibingale. From Tônbo to Zibingale we climbed the hill in a torrent of rain, letting our ponies loose to scramble up [Pg 177] the steep and rocky ascent, while the Gurkhas chaffed one another and laughed at the weather. At Zibingale we stayed under canvas in the rain for three days and three nights, quite comfortable in our tents, but rather aggrieved at having to wade knee-deep in mud to mess.

The Madrasi garrison of the post was prostrate with fever almost to a man; of our own small force about a quarter fell sick. By judicious doses of quinine, I saved my servants and myself, so that we all came through unscathed. After three days the rain ceased and we began our march in cool November sunshine. On that delightful plateau, some three thousand feet above the sea, the winter climate is perfect. We rode through forest paths and fairy glades, wild roses clustering in the hedges. At Pyintha and Singaing, we first saw the bazaar, held every five days, a custom peculiar to the Shan States and Further East. Buyers and sellers came from all the countryside, often from distant places. It is much like market-day in a country town in England. The market at Singaing and at Pyinulwin was of some interest, and attracted strange folk from the hills. It was not to be compared with the great bazaars held at Kēngtūng, Namkham, or even Mogôk, thronged with many varieties of races in rich diversities of attire. To us, the people most novel and attractive were the Shans, men swaggering in baggy trousers and large flapping straw hats brigand-like, but formidable only in appearance; girls with russet-rosy cheeks, shy and gentle. Pyin-u-lwin, a charmingly situated village of some five-and-twenty houses, with a market-place [Pg 178] and a gambling ring, won our hearts. Though we did not actually discover Pyin-u-lwin, we were among its earliest visitors. We were received with all kindness and hospitality. Several of us were housed in the village monastery, where we were heartily welcomed by the monk. He was still there when I left Burma twenty-four years later. With Captain E. W. Dun, our Intelligence Officer, I inspected a curious magnetic rock in the neighbouring jungle. Some years afterwards it was described as a new discovery by a geologist of note. It has been lost again, but will doubtless be found some day. Soon after our return, on Colonel Stedman's recommendation, a military post was established at Pyin-u-lwin, and called May-mŏyo, after Colonel May, of the Bengal army, a Mutiny veteran, the first Commandant. May-mŏyo is now the summer residence of the Burma Government and the headquarters of the Burma division, a flourishing hill-station with a population of about 12,000. Without pretension to the picturesque, it is a place of great charm and quiet beauty, with no palm-trees and few pagodas, conspicuously un-Oriental, more like a corner of Surrey than of Burma.[174]

From Pyin-u-lwin we marched to Thônzè, through a desolate country, overgrown with elephant-grass, but with many signs of past prosperity. At the ruined town of Thônzè, now no more than a straggling village, we halted and tried to open communication with Hein Sè,[175] a bandit who [Pg 179] claimed to be Chief of the State. I promised him a safe-conduct and liberty to depart if we could not come to terms, and to encourage him, I offered to let him keep my messenger as a hostage for his safety. This offer was made with the knowledge and consent of the messenger, a little Shan chiefling known as the Tabet Myosa. Him we had found, practically destitute, in Mandalay, where he had been detained by the King. As a matter of grace, he was given an allowance of Rs. 10[176] a month. He accompanied me on this tour, and pluckily undertook to carry my letter to Hein Sè. As he was leaving, he turned at the tent-door, and said: "But you will let him come back, won't you?" Accepting my assurance, he went off. I know that he discharged his mission, as I received a reply. But his courage was not put to the extreme test. Hein Sè behaved like a gentleman, treated the envoy kindly, and sent him back in safety. He himself declined my invitation. The future history of Tabet may be told here. A few months later, when Mr. Hildebrand and Mr. Scott went to the Shan States, I sent the Myosa with them. He made himself useful, and showed nerve and ability. When, owing to the persistent recalcitrance of its ruler, who fled across the Salween and stayed there, the large State of Yatsauk was in need of a chief, Tabet was chosen. He ruled Yatsauk with loyalty and intelligence, and handed down the succession to his [Pg 180] son. His fortune, probably his merit, was better than that of another Shan chiefling of similar status, the Maingkaing Myosa, who also received from Government 13s. 4d. a month, and received no more.

The rest of this tour was without incident. We explained to the people of Thônzè the beneficent intentions of Government, and gave a practical example of the good manners of a British military

force. The Gurkhas of the column, then as ever, were specially popular with the people to whom doubtless they are akin.

In February, 1887, Mandalay was not behind the rest of India in celebrating the Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The ceremonies were designedly arranged so as to give the people an opportunity of demonstrating their loyalty and devotion to the Crown by revels which they themselves appreciated. For a week pwès[177] and other Burmese festivities went on day and night. On the first day came all the members of the royal family, all the high officials, and a crowd of others, in their gayest and richest attire. In the principal ballet appeared, probably for the last time, the famous singer and dancer, Yindaw Ma Le, the favourite of Princes, undisputed *prima donna* of the Burmese operatic stage, who ten years before had been sent to Rangoon by Mindôn Min to dance at the Proclamation rejoicings. Twenty years later her successor, Ma Twe Le, also a lady of supreme grace and serpentine charm,[178] had the honour of dancing before [Pg 181] Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales.

One of the relaxations of those early days was to see the working of the Elephant Kheddah at Amarapura. The Kheddah establishment, inherited from the King and maintained for some time, consisted of a number of tame elephants, thoroughly well trained, with Burmese riders and hunters. The tame elephants, some with riders, some guided only by their own sagacity, plunged into a jungle teeming with herds of their wild brethren. By artful strategy a wild elephant would be detached from his fellows, lured into the midst of the tame herd, and gradually drawn to the Kheddah enclosure. This was a quadrangle, entered only by a funnel-shaped passage, surrounded by a strong outer wall of brick and by an inner stockade of stout teak posts set at intervals, with a space between the stockade and the wall. By his clever, perfidious friends, the captive was cunningly edged and hustled towards the passage till finally he was thrust into its mouth. Then the gate was securely fastened and the quarry was alone at the mercy of his captors. The hunters teased him with blunt spears and sticks, not doing him any real harm, but annoying him exceedingly, escaping his charge by darting between the posts of the palisade, set wide enough apart to admit a man but not an elephant. This was a sport of some danger, requiring nerve and [Pg 182] agility. When the poor beast was thoroughly tired, he was noosed and tied up in the Kheddah, and the process of training began. Spectators sat in crowds on the wall to watch this pastime. I do not think it occurred to any of us that it was somewhat cruel.

In March, 1887, Sir Charles Bernard left Burma. He was entertained by the Headquarters Mess at a farewell dinner, where Sir George White[179] proposed his health in moving and eloquent terms, quoting most appropriately the famous lines:

> “Him who cares not to be great,
> But as he saves or serves the State.
> Not once or twice in our rough island story,
> The path of duty was the way to glory:
> He that walks it, only thirsting
> For the right, and learns to deaden
> Love of self, before his journey closes,
> He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
> Into glossy purples, which outredden
> All voluptuous garden-roses.”

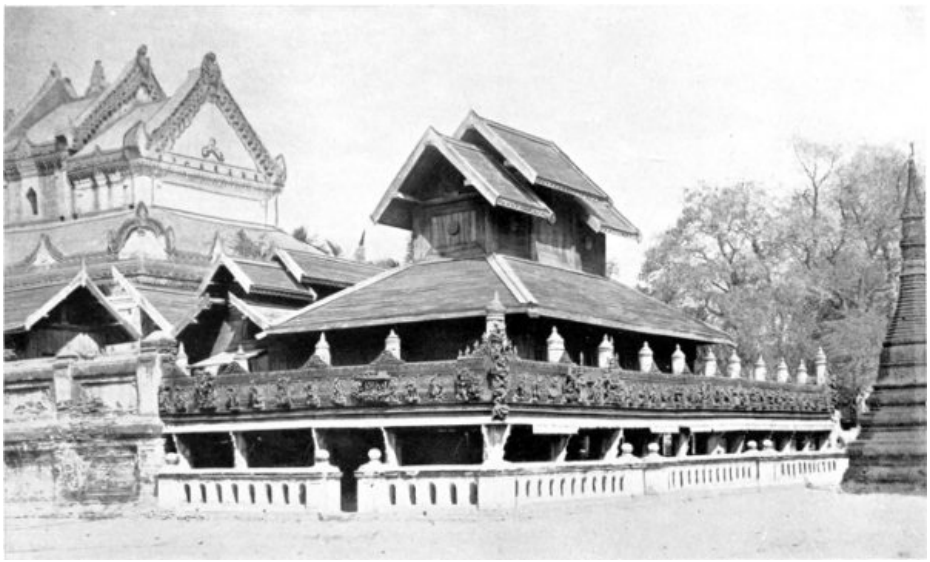
We escorted our guest to the steamer, and there bade farewell to our Chief and our friend.

CHAPTER XI
A FEW WORDS ON BUDDHISM

[Pg 183]

Buddhist monks are the most influential and most respected class of the community. In passing it may be mentioned that there is no such person as a Buddhist priest. No one exercises any sacerdotal function or celebrates any Sacrament. The religious are not priests, but monks, a numerous and well-organized body, wielding indefinite but real authority. In every village at least one monk is found. In Mandalay, the typical Burmese city, they were numbered by thousands. Professed monks are bound by vows of chastity and poverty, and are subject to strict discipline. Wearing the yellow robe, the distinctive mark of their order, as morning comes round monks and novices from every monastery walk slowly through the streets, each bearing a bowl for the receipt of the offerings of the faithful. We must not call this vessel a “begging-bowl.” One of the many acts from which a monk is bound to abstain is asking for anything. Voluntary gifts are freely offered, and are received as a matter of course. The lives of monks are devoted to meditation, the practice of austerities, the study and exposition of the law, the instruction of youth. Every Burmese boy enters a monastery, stays for a longer or shorter period, and receives [Pg 184] there the elements of secular learning. Also, much to his profit, he is instructed in religious and moral duties. Thus it happens that in Burma elementary education is widely spread. The proportion of literate persons is greater than in any country where education is not compulsory. It is rare to find a man who cannot at least read and write. Sometimes men profess to have forgotten these arts, but as a rule this is mere laziness. The influence of monks having remained

undisturbed by foreign contact, five-and-twenty years ago sound education in the vernacular was more common in Upper Burma than in the rest of the Province. In my own Court in Mandalay, in comparatively early days, a Lower Burman clerk was stumbling over the reading of a document. A bystander, apparently a plain man, offered his services. Borrowing a pair of spectacles from his neighbour, he read the crabbed text with fluency and accuracy. The incident does not prove, but it illustrates, my argument.



Monastery with carving.

Apart from the instruction of youth and the exposition of the law, monks are not supposed to take an interest in mundane affairs. Their aloofness has been exaggerated. In a country village, for example, the monk was obviously the most learned and disinterested, very likely the most intelligent, person. Inevitably he was sought as the arbitrator of disputes. That monks often acted in that capacity, I have found abundant evidence in old documents produced before me in court. Some of these went back a hundred years, when the country was quite free from foreign [Pg 185] influence, and cannot be regarded as indicating degeneracy of the monastic order. Again, it has been said that the authority of monks depended solely on their personal qualities and religious character, that it had no secular sanction. As regards Upper Burma in the King's time, nothing can be farther from the truth. Buddhist ecclesiastics relied on the arm of flesh. The King and his officers promptly and effectually enforced the commands of the hierarchy. Laymen were severely punished for ecclesiastical offences, and recalcitrant monks were imprisoned within the precincts of a pagoda, or compelled to do acts of penance. In early days in Mandalay one Deputy Commissioner essayed to maintain the ancient rule, and to give effect to monastic sentences. Unfortunately this good practice could not last. Now the hierarchy complain that, as Government will not enforce discipline, authority is waning, with disastrous results. The most that the Courts have found possible is to give effect to decisions of duly constituted religious tribunals in disputes of a civil nature between members of the order. Another instance of the interference of monks in worldly affairs, their almost invariable complicity in political intrigues, has been already mentioned. The Kinwun Mingyi himself emerged from a monastery to take part in the rebellion which placed Mindôn Min on the throne.

On the whole, in Upper Burma as we found it, the monks constituted a respectable body, including many learned and devout persons. I do not pretend that all were immaculate. Doubtless [Pg 186] there were idle and dissolute monks. One hears from Burmans themselves of some who were monks by day and who at night threw off the yellow robe and ranged the town. Some of them dabbled in magic and alchemy. A really pious monk could hardly become a dacoit chief. But the great majority honestly lived up to their profession. The fact that the vows were not irrevocable tended to prevent the occurrence of scandals sometimes incident to monastic life. Complete liberty of renunciation lessened temptation to break the vows. It was always open to a monk to return to the world and, as it was phrased, again to become a man. Even if a shadow of discredit attached to a monk who had come out (twet), it was faint and transitory. In a land where life is simple and much concealment impossible, no body of men who lived unworthily could retain the respect of all classes. Every layman, from the King downwards, treated monks as superior beings. I have seen the Kinwun Mingyi lean out of his carriage and pay the graceful Burmese reverence[180] to a humble passing monk.

In Upper Burma the fine flower of Buddhism flourished. The monastic system was elaborately [Pg 187] organized. At the head was the Thathanabaing; under him were Gaing-ôks, Gaingdauks, and Taik-ôks,[181] in due succession and subordination. The Thathanabaing was not, as some suppose, elected; he was appointed by the King. In former days his authority prevailed throughout Burma. As by degrees fragments of the country became British territory, the Thathanabaing's jurisdiction naturally shrank, being restricted to the King's dominions. Even if for no other reason, it was impossible for British officers to recognize in Lower Burma the authority of a monk who lived in Ava or Mandalay, and owed his power and appointment to a foreign monarch. Consequently the bonds of discipline were relaxed. Monks and laity in Lower Burma were as sheep without a shepherd. Heresies and schisms rent the Buddhist Church. The influence of monks waned [Pg 188]

perceptibly. Buddhism was and is still a living creed in Lower Burma. But it cannot be pretended that it is so vital and beneficent a force as even now in the Upper districts. Similarly, as already indicated, monastic education declined. The absence of ecclesiastical control has caused some deterioration of character in Lower Burma.

The policy of the Government of India has always been to observe strict neutrality in religious matters, to interest itself in no form of creed. All education directed by Government has been rigidly secular. It is now felt by many that this policy, however well-intentioned, was mistaken, that in allowing, or even encouraging education to be exclusively secular, Government has done much to sap the foundations of morality and loyalty, to undermine the basis of character. Probably the right course would have been not to stand aloof from the divers creeds of the Empire, but to take an active interest in all, and to see that each had fair play and encouragement. For a Christian Government to do this would have been difficult; most likely the attempt would not have been tolerated by public opinion at home. So far as India is concerned, the tiresome thing about public opinion in England is that, where interest might be beneficial, it cannot be roused; while in some vital matter in which only the man on the spot has materials for judging, the British public, or its spokesmen, insist on interfering. (How pleasant would it be, for instance, to see on newspaper posters such legends as—

ANOTHER WRONG TO BURMA. [Pg 189]

BURMA'S SAD FINANCIAL STATE.

How unlikely we are to see them!) Perhaps of the two mistakes lack of interest is the less mischievous. Recently we have made a step in advance. Religious teaching in State schools has been permitted; all pupils may receive instruction in the creeds which they profess.

Sir Charles Bernard recognized the value of monastic influence, and did his best to enlist it on the side of law and order. It was particularly desirable that monks should be discouraged from taking part in political agitation. It was also hoped that the monastic system of education might be maintained and strengthened in sympathy with our own Education Department. At the time of the annexation the Thathanabaing was a weak but well-meaning person who had been King Thebaw's tutor. The Chief Commissioner interviewed him in person and essayed to excite his enthusiasm for the new Government. In recognition of the part taken by monks in secular education, monthly gifts of rice were sent to the Thathanabaing and his trusted counsellors, the Pă-kán and Hladwe Sadaws. The Thathanabaing was induced to visit Rangoon with a view to the extension of his authority over Lower Burma. Government provided for his journey, which was made in some state with a long train of monks. He was received with rapture at Prome and in Rangoon; and a rest-house (zayat) for him and his successors was built on the slope of the Shwe [Pg 190] Dagôn Pagoda. The effort was ineffectual. Neither that Thathanabaing nor his successors have exercised any power in Lower Burma, which still remains in a state of reprobation. Another attempt was made to conciliate Buddhist sympathy. Many monasteries and other religious buildings had been used by troops and others for Government purposes, and some damage had been done. All over the country monks had hospitably received and entertained our officers, and had raised no objection to the necessary temporary use of sacred buildings. As a compensation for disturbance and damage, a substantial sum of money was disbursed to a large number of monks. As monks may not touch gold or silver, the actual coins were placed in the hands of lay followers. These well-meant efforts had, I fear, no appreciable effect. The Thathanabaing had not the authority, even if he had the will, to control and direct his monks by moral force alone. Monks were civil to British officers, often glad to have the protection of a military post; but they did not go out of their way to preach submission to an heretical Government. It is hardly to be expected that they would do so.

The Thatha-na-baing.

After this Thathanabaing had condescended to return, as runs the Burmese euphemism for the death of a monk, it was some years before Government made up its mind as to the appointment of a successor. No one could lawfully be Thathanabaing unless appointed by the ruling power. But it was contrary to established principle for Government to appoint a Buddhist ecclesiastic. [Pg 191] For some years the monastic world was given up to anarchy. At last it was decided that, though Government could not appoint, it might recognize; and though it could not give material aid, it might lend moral support. To ascertain the monk who would be generally acceptable, an election was held. This device has now been adopted on two or three occasions, so that people have begun to believe that it was always customary. The last two holders of the office have been formally recognized by the Government of Burma; the present Thathanabaing received a sanad[182] from the Lieutenant-Governor. He is a monk of learning, and particular suavity of manner and disposition. While maintaining due reserve and dignity, he has always been on excellent terms with Government and its officers. He has loyally exercised his influence on the side of law and order, and has tried to smooth the path of the Education Department, anxious to link the monastic with the Government system. Without posing as liberal or progressive, he has been wise and conciliatory. In later years my personal relations with the Thathanabaing were extremely cordial. Once he honoured me by his presence at a garden-party in Mandalay. This was, I think, an unprecedented occasion. On the lovely lawn fringing the moat he sat, surrounded by yellow-robed counsellors, the centre of a picturesque circle, watched with reverence by Burmese, with respectful interest by European and Indian, guests. Among my most treasured [Pg 192] possessions is a rosary which he sent me, with a charming farewell letter, when I left the Province.

The order of Buddhist nuns must not be forgotten. They are comparatively few in number, and, though regarded with respect, do not seem to exercise special influence. Living sometimes in seclusion, sometimes in communities, they occupy no prominent place. Their lives are spent in meditation and devotion, free from secular cares. Often when stricken by a great sorrow a woman becomes a nun, and adheres to her profession for the rest of her life. Innocent, harmless ladies, if they are not active in good works their passive piety is a gracious example. A nun whom you meet in the road has a pleasing habit of invoking a blessing as you pass.

Buddhism as professed by the Burmese is of a high and pure type. In Burma, and in Burma alone throughout India,[183] Buddhism is a vital force. The suggestion that religion is in danger, or that monks have been ill-used, is the surest way to rouse popular feeling. The ethics of Buddhism are as lofty and inspiring as those of any faith in the world. Obviously Burmans do not invariably shape their lives in strict accordance with the precepts of the law. But in spite of failings and shortcomings, the spiritual and moral force of their religion sheds a penetrating influence on [Pg 193] national life and character. Though its every rule may be daily violated, Buddhism does tend to make Burmans humane, tolerant, kind-hearted, charitable. All Burmans are well-grounded in the mysteries of their faith. When they sin, they sin against light and conscience. In all but the most abandoned, traces of the good influence of their religion are evident. One very pleasing effect is

extension of benevolence in theory always, in practice often, to every sentient being. Consider, for instance, the kindly attitude of Burmans to lower animals. From the plump bullocks which draw the primitive, creaking[184] carts of the country to the pariah dogs which swarm in every village, or the pigs which used to scavenge the streets of Mandalay (whose chase, not by the Burmese, was the only form of pig-sticking known in Burma), all are objects of compassion and care. The Burman's robust bullocks, nourished on their mothers' milk, contrast pleasingly with the lean kine of the Indian. You will even see a pious Burman save a deadly snake from destruction, and set it loose in a place of security. This, perhaps, is an extreme instance of logical regard for principle.

[Pg 194] Signs of the extent to which religion forms part of everyday life strike the most casual observer. The country is full of pagodas, monasteries, theins,[185] images of the Buddha, zayats. Pagodas vary in size from the stately Shwe Dagôn to the humble fane on the outskirts of a village. It may be worth while to explain that a pagoda is not a temple in which worshippers pay their devotions. It is a solid structure, often built over sacred relics, of varying type, the most prevalent being that of the great pagoda at Rangoon. Some pagodas are richly gilded, others merely whitewashed. Each is crowned with a ti, if possible studded with jewels. The very topmost pinnacle is often an inverted soda-water bottle, a primitive shield against lightning. Monks must have monasteries. These also differ in glory, from the great buildings, richly ornamented with carving covered with gold, founded by the King or Queen or some high official, which adorn the royal city, to the mat and thatched hut which shelters the poor village monk. A Burman who amasses wealth, the farmer who has an abundant harvest and good prices, the merchant whose venture has been successful, the rich broker or money-lender, does not hoard his gains. He spends them on jewels for his wife and daughters, on silks for these ladies and himself, on building a monastery, or a pagoda, a zayat, incidentally on a pwè[186] or an ahlu.[187] [Pg 195] The builder of a pagoda is a Paya-taga, of a monastery a Kyaung-taga, honorific titles in familiar use, as common as the title of Colonel is said to be in the United States. Laymen are associated in religious observances. A monastery has a lay attendant, a Kappiya-taga, who makes it his business to see that the building is maintained and duly swept and garnished. Every eighth day is set apart by the pious for religious observances, for meditation, for visiting a pagoda, for attendance at a monastery to hear the Law expounded. Each year there is a long Lenten period (Wa), when abstinence and religious practices are enjoined on the faithful, when good Buddhists refrain from marrying, when monks remain secluded in their monasteries, undertaking no journeys. A monk reckons his monastic life by the number of Lents he has observed. All this sounds rather gloomy, and in theory Buddhism ought to have a depressing effect. It teaches the transitoriness and mutability of this world and of all human things. No personal God smiles on his worshippers or listens to their prayers. This life is an evil in itself, a period to be spent in the acquisition of merit, in preparation for the ascent to a higher plane. The goal of every man's striving is the blessed rest of Nirvana (Neikban), a state, not of annihilation, but of rest for many ages from passion and all transitory disturbance. For even the rest of Nirvana is not eternal. After many æons, it may be, the unceasing round begins again. The practical effect of this austere creed is quite different. Nowhere is there a more gay and light-hearted people. [Pg 196] To balance the days and months of abstinence, religious festivals are of frequent occurrence. Then the roads are crowded with cart-loads of merry holiday-makers. Pagoda platforms are filled with bright-clad, laughing throngs. Pwès and all national sports are celebrated. On every side are gaiety and good-humour, the basis of religion underlying all. It is not for me to attempt to explain these apparent inconsistencies.

The people in general soon made up their minds that there was no intention of interfering with their religion. And, in spite of isolated instances, the monks accepted the new order with resignation, if not with enthusiasm. The tolerant spirit of Buddhism pervades all classes. Strangers wander unmolested and without meeting scowling looks in the precincts of pagodas and holy places; they are welcome to explore the recesses of monasteries, observing only common politeness and decorum. You are not expected to take off your shoes on reaching the sacred limits of a pagoda or monastery. Ordinary courtesy doubtless impels you to remove your hat in a sacred building. It is not really correct to walk across the sleeping mat of a Sadaw,[188] as I saw done by a lady who should have known better. The Sadaw only laughed, recognizing that no offence was meant.

[Pg 197] Pagodas and sacred images are left to the care of the people themselves, tempered by the benevolent patronage of the Archæological Survey. In too many cases these buildings and objects are left to the process of natural decay. It seems to be somewhat more meritorious to build a new shrine than to keep in repair an existing fabric. Probably the builder of a new pagoda, for instance, earns all the merit for himself, while a restorer shares it with the original founder. In the case of edifices of special sanctity or conspicuous antiquarian or architectural interest, arrangements have been made, at the instigation of Government, to vest the property and management in legally appointed trustees. The care and maintenance of sacred buildings and the due appropriation of pious offerings are thus assured. Not only for the Shwe Dagôn Pagoda and the Arakan Pagoda at Rangoon and Mandalay respectively, but for many shrines of less fame, trustees have been appointed. This is the best way of securing the preservation of religious buildings of inestimable interest.

One of the most striking personalities in modern Burmese Buddhism is the Ledi Sadaw. This remarkable man devoted some years of his life to travelling through the country preaching and exhorting. His passionate eloquence drew immense congregations. Wherever he went he was greeted by enraptured throngs. Men and women vied in adoration of this saintly personage,

women loosing their hair and spreading it as a carpet for his holy feet. His fervour and fiery zeal effected real revivals, whether lasting or transitory I dare not say. Besides addressing public assemblies, he obtained leave to enter jails and preach reformation to the prisoners, apparently [Pg 198] with good results.[189] In spite of the extraordinary enthusiasm which he inspired and the honours thrust upon him in his triumphal progress, he preserved unstained and flawless, simplicity and humility of character. We are not wont to regard with favour errant monks preaching here and there. Too often their exhortations have tended to sedition, their liberty has been a cloak for licence. Never for a moment did the Ledi Sadaw fall under a shadow of suspicion as to the purity of his motives and conduct, or the good intention of his pilgrimage. The ethical part of his sermons consisted of fervent denunciations of intemperance, drinking, gambling, opium-smoking, the pleasant vices most devastating among Burmans. In no way inspired by any Government officer, he did not hold aloof from the authorities, but desired to be on good terms with them. Speaking to Colonel Maxwell,[190] who more than most of us won the intimate confidence of Burmans, in all simplicity he said:

“I am not sure that Government will approve my preaching. There will be much loss of revenue; for when I have finished, all liquor and opium shops will be closed for want of custom.”

With a clear conscience the Commissioner bade him go on and prosper, assuring him that Government would be well pleased if so desirable a result could be attained. The promised [Pg 199] millennium has not yet arrived. While heartily approving the Sadaw, we did not think it expedient to make our approval conspicuous, lest plausibly, though falsely, the suggestion might be made that he was an agent of the Asoya.[191] A travelling set of the Buddhist scriptures was the only mark of Government’s appreciation. I had the privilege of one interview with this extraordinary man. What chiefly impressed me was his weary expression, as though the working of the fiery spirit had worn out the frail tenement of the body. I am glad to hear that the Sadaw still lives, and that his preaching days are not over.

One of the last incidents of my residence in Burma may fitly conclude this discursive chapter. Early in 1910 we were privileged to receive what are believed to be genuine relics of the Buddha. They were discovered by the Archæological Survey near Peshawar. Their authenticity has, I believe, been doubted. I hope I am not, to use the happy phrase of an Irish friend, more prone than most men to swallow mares’-nests. But to me the evidence of the genuine character of the relics seems reasonably convincing. It was my fortunate lot to be instrumental in securing the despatch of these precious remains to Burma, where alone, as I have said, the pure spirit of Buddhism still reigns; and to be present when, with due solemnity, at Government House in Calcutta, the Viceroy graciously entrusted the casket and its priceless contents to a deputation sent from Burma to receive them. The relics were welcomed in Rangoon with demonstrations of [Pg 200] pious enthusiasm, and brought by a long procession to the Shwe Dagôn Pagoda, where, for some days, they were exhibited for the edification of the faithful. Thence they were taken to Mandalay and placed in the care of the elders of the Arakan Pagoda till a separate suitable shrine can be erected in custody of a duly constituted trust.

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CHAPTER XII
UNDER SIR CHARLES CROSTHWAITE, 1887-1890

Mr. C. H. T. Crosthwaite, soon afterwards Sir Charles Crosthwaite, K.C.S.I., succeeded Sir Charles Bernard. He came enjoying the confidence of the Viceroy, and in just expectation of the support of the Government of India. Taking in hand at once the settlement of the country, in the next four years he devoted his remarkable administrative genius to the completion of the task. I cannot becomingly express in full my humble appreciation and admiration of Sir Charles Crosthwaite and the great work which he accomplished in Burma. I hope it is not presumptuous of me to say that as an administrator he ranks in the very highest class of Indian Statesmen, and is at this moment by far the most distinguished member of our Service. Never sparing himself, in those eventful years he initiated, guided, directed, controlled. In his officers he inspired enthusiasm; we would have fallen in harness to serve him or win his approval. We were always sure of strong and efficient support, and had no fear, if things went wrong, of being thrown to the dogs. Sir Charles Crosthwaite came to a land still torn by internal strife; he left it a peaceful and [Pg 202] prosperous Province. I speak of what I know, for from first to last it was my privilege to work immediately under him, to see the pulse of the machine. Let those who wish to understand turn to the book[192] wherein the story of the pacification is modestly told by the chief actor in the drama.

Early in March, 1887, the Chief Commissioner came to Mandalay, retaining for a short time the separate Secretariat for Upper Burma. Wisely distrusting the sanitary conditions of the palace, he took up his quarters in a small house built on the city wall, intended as the residence of a military police officer. It consisted of two or three rooms under one of the pyathats.[193] On the first evening after the Chief Commissioner's arrival we waited some time for dinner, as the roof of the cook-room was blown off by a sudden gale. Since those days the building has expanded, and has become a respectable Government House. Thanks to the good taste of the Chief Engineer, Mr. H. J. Richard, Burmese style has been preserved. The pyathat is the centre of a range of buildings which might be a monastery or a section of the Palace. Thus the house is a picturesque feature in the landscape, not an outrage. With the moat and a stretch of green lawn on one side, and pretty gardens on the other, commanding a fine view of Mandalay Hill and the rugged western hillocks, it has every æsthetic quality. It may be whispered that it is more [Pg 203] beautiful to see than comfortable to inhabit.

Sir Charles Crosthwaite's first tour was undertaken for the purpose of visiting the Ruby Mines district, then recently occupied. A military station had been established on a lofty, somewhat bleak plateau, and honoured with the name of Bernardmyo. The civil headquarters were at Mogôk, the centre of the ruby mines. Reaching Kyan-hnyat by steamer, we rode to Sagadaung, at the foot of the hills, breakfasting midway with Mr. R. C. Stevenson,[194] the subdivisional officer. The Chief Commissioner's party consisted of the Personal Assistant[195] and myself. At Sagadaung it was found that all the servants, panic-stricken at the thought of plunging into savage wilds, had refused to leave the steamer. The kit and stores had come on, but the only servants with us were my Madrasi boy and a few chapràsis.[196] The Personal Assistant was equal to the occasion. He invited all the officers of the Station to dine with the Chief Commissioner, from whom the state of affairs was concealed. "And," said he, "as our men are rather tired, will you let your cooks help to get dinner ready?" These assistants he supplied with stores and necessaries, and dinner was successfully achieved. Next morning we rode up the hill to Bernardmyo, where we were kindly made honorary members of the mess and lodged as handsomely as Service conditions allowed. I slept in a commissariat godown,[197] with the wind, [Pg 204] cold even in April, whistling through the openings in the boarded floor. After a day or two we rode on to Mogôk, through lovely evergreen forest which still shades the bridle-path. There we were guests of the Deputy Commissioner, the late Mr. G. M. S. Carter, who cherished us till we reached the river and our steamer once more. Never, I ween, not even in the Spartan days of Sir Arthur Phayre, did a Chief Commissioner make an official tour in his Province with only a third of a boy and a stray chapràsi or two as bearer,[198] khitmagar,[199] and cook.

The Ruby Mines Company was still in embryo, but the syndicate out of which it was evolved had established a footing, and Mr. F. Atlay, who still manages its affairs, was already installed. The quest for rubies was prosecuted by the hereditary miners, who worked by primitive native methods. In the King's time rubies were, naturally, a royal monopoly, and any stone of exceptional value was a royal perquisite. The most illustrious stone on record was called, after its finder, Chin Nga Mauk. The lucky man himself took it to the Palace, and was privileged to lay it at the King's feet. As a reward he was allowed to take away a cart-load of whatever he liked from the Palace. The legend of the discovery of the mines may be told. Passing through a desolate, unpeopled land, a wayfarer saw a vulture swoop from a solitary rock and pick up a piece of, as it seemed to wayfarer and apparently to vulture, raw red flesh. Surprised at such a phenomenon in [Pg 205] a waste place, the traveller investigated, and found the earth strewn with lovely glittering red stones, thenceforth known as the rubies of commerce. The truth of the story is proved by the existence to this day of the rock on which the vulture perched. Times have changed, and rubies

are no longer picked up on the surface. Nor are they found embedded in the stone walls of Aladdin's caves. They are extracted by washing from ruby-bearing earth (bỳôn), which is borne in trucks to the Company's washing sheds. Each truck contains, I suppose, about twelve cubic feet of earth; the average value is about one shilling. But any load may produce a stone worth a King's ransom. Besides the scientific operations of the company, mining by native methods is still practised. The rights of hereditary miners are preserved. They pursue the quest after the manner of their fathers, on payment of a moderate licence-fee. The very poor, mostly women, may glean in the beds of streams without any restriction. Ruby-mining was a profitable business, with a pleasing element of chance. Some lucky miners amassed large fortunes. Even the common people were affluent. The smallest coin current in the bazaar was a silver two-anna (2d.) piece. Coppers were unknown. In later days the Chief Commissioner or Lieutenant-Governor's receptions at Mogôk were ceremonies of much splendour. Followed by scores of mounted men who came to meet him, he rode through the town under triumphal arches gleaming with silken banners, past [Pg 206] lines of cheering spectators, groups of dancers, and cymbal-clashing musickers, while pretty, shy Shan girls peeped from the casements. An incident of one of these visits, though it has nothing to do with rubies or ceremonious receptions, may be recorded by way of comic relief. The scene was the parade-ground; the occasion, an inspection of the Military Police Battalion; the time, the end of summer. The ground was wet and slippery from an early unexpected shower. After the accustomed evolutions, the Commandant, an exceptionally smart, well-turned-out officer, came galloping up to the Lieutenant-Governor, and as he essayed to pull up within a yard of that august personage his pony slipped and deposited him in the mud at his feet. Nowise abashed, he rose, gravely saluted: "Would you like to see anything else, sir?" "No, thank you," was the equally grave reply. And the incident closed, to their credit, be it told, not one of the staff moving a muscle. As the story goes, they waited to laugh till they got home.

On our return from the first visit, our baggage borne on mules, we rode to Thabeik-kyin along a mule-track following approximately the line of the present road. The narrow path wound through and about the hills, often with a yawning precipice on one hand, a wall of rock on the other. But that the road is broad and smooth, in many respects it resembles the old path. Ponies have still a horrid habit of hugging the cliff's edge, and one rides with a leg suspended over the abyss. To meet a train of pack-bullocks charging down the pass is a trying experience. So, too, is the ascent [Pg 207] in a motor-car with a driver learning his work. Green forest covers the hillsides and luxuriates in the valleys, brilliant with many-coloured blooms. The cicala fills the open spaces with sound, so great a noise by so small a body. It was then all new and full of interest. The beauty of the landscape charmed every step of the march. Our guide was a handsome ruffian, Bo Aw, as picturesque as the scene, who rode ahead in Shan dress, his flapping straw hat decked with gay streamers. Afterwards he returned to the life of a dacoit, and, I fear, came to a bad end.

Soon after this, the Mandalay Secretariat ceased to exist as a separate branch, one Secretariat, with a Chief Secretary, Secretary, Junior Secretary, and Assistant Secretary, being constituted in Rangoon for the whole Province. Mr. Symes became Chief Secretary, but, worn out by many labours, went on leave, Mr. Donald Smeaton[200] coming from India to act for him. I became Secretary, and Mr. C. G. Bayne, Junior Secretary. The anomalous post of Special Commissioner was abolished, Mr. Hodgkinson going to Moulmein as Commissioner. Mr. Smeaton was not new to the Province. Some years before he had come to Burma to fill the newly created office of Revenue Secretary and Director of Agriculture. In that capacity he had devised and organized the Supplementary Survey system, afterwards called the Land Records Department. This was, I [Pg 208] believe, an entirely original scheme, of which the design was to keep land records and maps up to date, year by year, so as to obviate the labour of re-survey whenever a Settlement had to be revised. In theory the plan was admirable; its practical success has not been perfect, partly, I think, because the establishment was inadequate. Mr. Smeaton also organized and set to work the first regular Settlement Parties in Burma. From 1887 onwards he served as Chief Secretary, Commissioner, and Financial Commissioner, failing, however, in the end to attain the high office for which his rare abilities seemed to designate him. The Chief Secretary took over the political department, and for a time my association with the most interesting part of the administration was severed. I had plenty to do in my own branches.

The Secretary was in charge of State prisoners, a few of whom, members of the late reigning family of Delhi, still survived. The ex-King, Bahadur Shah, who had been tried and sentenced to death for his share in the massacre of English men and women, had been spared the extreme penalty and sent to Rangoon, where he died in exile. His widow, the Begam Zinath Mahal, was in Rangoon in my charge. She and her daughter-in-law were of such exalted rank that they were not parda-nashín[201] to English officers. More than once I saw the old Begam who, thirty years before, had played so lurid a part in the Mutiny. Though now of advanced age, she retained traces of great beauty and was specially proud of her finely shaped, delicate hands. Her beauty [Pg 209] was of the Pit, aquiline, dark, menacing. Her son, Prince Jăwán Băkht (P. J. Băkht, as he used quaintly to style himself on his visiting cards), the direct representative of the Moguls, lived in Rangoon with his wife, Shah Zamani Begam, of the race of Nadir Shah, the Persian Conqueror. Jăwán Băkht was not of specially marked character, amiable and harmless. His wife was a lady of charm and dignity, worthy of her lofty lineage. In her youth beautiful exceedingly, time had but little marred that lovely face. Poor lady, she was totally blind, but the disease which had darkened her sight left no disfigurement and hardly dimmed the lustre of her radiant eyes. She spoke the purest Urdu, in liquid tones sweeter than any I have ever heard in that graceful tongue. Beyond words pathetic it was to see and converse with this lady of a great family, keeping to the last the pride of her race and station, with every mark of a gentle and gracious

disposition, reduced to comparative poverty, and sharing without a murmur the hard lot of the last scion of a fallen dynasty. Jăwán Băkht and Shah Zamani Begam have long been gathered to their fathers. Their son and daughter, Mirza Jamshíd Băkht and Ronak Begam, last of the line of Babar and Akbar and Aurangzíb, still live in Rangoon in receipt of miserable stipends. It is true that the decadent Moguls did not deserve well at our hands. Bahadur Shah and Zinath Mahal were treated even more leniently than they merited. But their surviving descendants are innocent of complicity in their crimes. Politically, they have never given the slightest trouble; [Pg 210] Mohammedans seem hardly aware of their existence. Somewhat more generous treatment might be accorded them. Their pensions might be made sufficient to enable them to live in reasonable comfort.

Another interesting State pensioner, not a prisoner, was Prince Hassan, adopted son of Sultan Suleiman, leader of the Panthay[202] rebellion in Yunnan. When, finally overthrown, Suleiman died by his own hand to avoid capture, Hassan luckily was in Rangoon. There he stayed for the rest of his life, in receipt of an allowance from the Indian Government. Precisely on what grounds the grant to Hassan of a pension from Indian revenues was justified, I have never clearly understood. But all who knew him must be glad that any technical difficulties were overcome. Most charming and courteous of men, Hassan was in some respects the most attractive of the native notables of my acquaintance. He spent his time quietly in study, occasionally paying the Secretary a friendly visit. Ronak Begam became his wife. Some years later, after many wanderings and much tribulation, the Panthay wife of his youth, whom he had believed to be dead, appeared and resumed her natural position in his house. Ronak Begam, who could hardly be expected to take the second place, returned to her family. Hassan died some years ago. There are a good many Panthays in Upper Burma, principally in Mandalay, Bhamo, Mogôk, and the [Pg 211] Shan States, sturdy men of stalwart stature and agreeable manners, assiduous traders, and good citizens. With several I was on friendly terms. My best friend among them one day brought his very aged and wrinkled mother to see me and bade her shake hands. The old dame obeyed, but pudically covered her hand with a kerchief before clasping mine.

For a few months in 1888 I acted as Commissioner of the Northern Division, the second officer to hold that appointment. Including the royal city, the Katha district on the borders of Wuntho, the Ruby Mines, the Kachin Hills, the China frontier, the division has always seemed the most interesting in the Province. To me who had been associated with Mandalay from the beginning, the position was specially attractive. The place was full of my Burmese friends by whom I was cordially welcomed. The appointment was temporary, though at first this was not the Chief Commissioner's intention. As a somewhat maladroit acquaintance, meeting me at the club on my arrival, frankly said: "Of course, you will be here only till a senior man can be sent." It was true, but he need not have rubbed it in.

Unlike most other officers, Commissioners draw a fixed monthly travelling allowance. It is therefore a point of honour with them to spend a good deal of time away from headquarters. In the Northern Division the cost of travelling was high, and the monthly allowance was never a source of profit. An early tour brought me to Bhamo, after being nearly swamped by a sudden squall. Signs of violence were still common. The Captain of the steamer assured me that quite [Pg 212] lately he had seen corpses floating down the river "dreadfully emancipated." At Bhamo I was shocked to find that the day before my arrival Bo Ti, one of the rebel leaders of Mogaung, had escaped from the primitive wooden jail. He was never recaptured. With him went a young Indian who was under trial for attempting to murder the Colonel of a native regiment. The Colonel I found convalescent. He was a hard man, and sepoys had often threatened to shoot him. As he was shaving one morning he felt a shock, and knew that he was wounded. Thinking that the threat had been carried out, the stout old man said to himself, "They shan't know they have hit me," and went on shaving. It was really his own servant, who from behind had slashed him with a sword. Owing to the Colonel's grim determination not to let the sepoy know that he had scored, his assailant got in another blow. This is the story as I heard it. The Colonel, a bulky, muscular man, recovered from wounds which would probably have killed one of slighter build. It was doubtless by the agency of this young Indian that the guard of the jail was corrupted and the prisoner's escape facilitated. He, too, made his way to the Kachin country, and was never caught. Vague rumours of his presence in the frontier fights of the next few years were current. I hope he did not have a very good time in the hills.

A story of Bhamo of later years may be told here. A military police sepoy ran "amuck," as they say. Armed with a rifle and well supplied with ammunition, he took possession of a masonry [Pg 213] house, and from a casement amused himself by shooting at anyone who came in sight. The house was duly surrounded by police, and the Deputy Commissioner and District Superintendent came down. It did not occur to them to summon infantry and guns from the neighbouring fort, or to fire volleys at the brick walls. The Superintendent, Mr. H. F. Hertz,[203] obtained a rough description of the interior of the house, and entered it from next door. Groping in the semi-darkness characteristic of native houses, he made his way to the room next to that held by the sepoy. Hearing a sound, the sepoy half-opened the door and thrust out his rifle. Pushing the rifle aside with one hand, Mr. Hertz shot the man dead with his revolver, receiving a slight wound in the encounter. This is the way these things are managed in Burma.

Bhamo was then the headquarters of the district which included the country bordering on China and Tibet, all the present Myitkyina district, Mogaung, and the Jade Mines. The column under Major C. H. E. Adamson, which visited Mogaung and the Jade Mines, had just returned, having secured the submission of Kansi La and Kansi Naung, the Kachin chiefs of the Jade Mines tract.

[204] Soon afterwards occurred the assault on Mogaung, gallantly repulsed by Gurkha military police under Captain Hugh O'Donnell[205] and Mr. Lawrence Eliott. Close to China, from which it [Pg 214] is separated by a range of hills, Bhamo is filled by a strange variety of races. Chinese, stalwart traders of Yunnan; Panthays, survivors of the great rebellion; Shans, Shan-Chinese, Shan-Burmans, Kachins of many divers tribes, give life and colour and speak a Babel of tongues in the bazaar. Driving along one of the roads leading out of the town, the traveller is impressed by a sign-post bearing the legend—

To China.

Not many miles away the peaks of the Kachin Hills rise in the eastern sky. Across these hills come caravans[206] from T'Êngyüeh (Momien) and Manwaing, in those days paying toll to the Kachins for leave to pass. Through these hills marched the ill-fated Margary before he attempted his fatal return journey. Through them in later days, with happier omens, walked Dr. Morrison at the end of his adventurous pilgrimage. A few miles below the town of Bhamo the Irrawaddy runs through a narrow, rock-bound gorge known as the Second Defile. Conspicuous on the right bank looms the tall Elephant Rock, crowned by a small golden pagoda. I have had the rare experience of passing through the defile by the light of the full moon. The silver light on the towering crags, the silence and the solitude, created an effect full of mystery and charm. Emerging from the [Pg 215] defile, we reach the town of Shwegu, whence, gazing on the sunset painting with gorgeous colours the western hills, one realizes "the incomparable pomp of eve." Above Bhamo the river pierces a still more gloomy, precipitous, whirlpool-haunted gorge, the First Defile. In the dry months, from November to April, this defile is navigable by launches, and with reasonable care the passage can be made without risk. In the rains it is closed to all traffic except that of country boats and timber rafts. Once, long ago, two gallant officers came through in a launch as late as May. They had no wish to repeat the experiment. When in full flood, to traverse the defile even in a boat is an adventure requiring nerve and skill. On the upward course the boat is towed laboriously for many weary days. If the rope slips, the work of days may be lost in a few minutes. Down-stream the journey is far more rapid and even more hazardous. I do not think any British officer has been drowned in the defile, but several of my friends have lost their baggage. At least one launch lies in its fathomless depths. At any time the passage through the defile is full of interest and excitement. Nothing can surpass the wild beauty of its winding, rock-bound course. Here, in mid-stream, a sharp boulder has to be shunned; there careful steering is needed lest the vessel be spun round in a whirlpool; now we seem to be driving straight against a wall of stone. To leave Burma without traversing the First Defile is to miss one of the sights of the world.

Another tour led me across the Shwebo district, then in the Northern Division, where my old [Pg 216] friend Mr. B. K. S. MacDermott was in charge. The township officer was Maung Tun, K.S.M., afterwards Extra Assistant Commissioner, a local officer of remarkable ability and of proved courage and loyalty. His father, Bo Pyin, had been Wun of Shwebo, and had retired at an advanced age. He is the man already mentioned who shocked his pious serious-minded son by retaining his passion for the chase.

Here is the city of Alaungpaya; here Mindôn Min raised the standard of revolt against his brother. Shwebo was always a turbulent district, the seed-bed of sedition; it retained that character long after the annexation. At this time it was fairly quiet; we rode through it with a moderate escort. As we left the town we saw approaching a long line of Burmans, in carts and on foot, men, women, and children. "All these people," said the Deputy Commissioner with pride, "are coming in to my new bazaar." On inquiry, we ascertained that they were really all coming in to be vaccinated. This is an example of the good sense and lack of prejudice so often found among Burmans. Years before, the people of Pantanaw had begged for a vaccinator. If proper facilities were provided, the whole population of Burma could be vaccinated without recourse to compulsion. Only the inefficiency and corruption of an underpaid staff and the untrustworthy quality of the lymph have retarded this desirable consummation. I am glad to say that these [Pg 217] defects have now been, or are in process of being, remedied.

From Shwebo we crossed the Katha district and came to Kawlin on the verge of the Shan State of Wuntho.[207] This State, inconveniently situated in the midst of regularly administered districts, was left under its native chief till the year 1891. Shortly before the annexation the Sawbwa, a capable truculent man, had been transferred as Wun to Mogaung for the purpose of suppressing a Kachin rising. He accomplished the task with devastating completeness. In Wuntho he was succeeded by his son, a timid creature quite unlike the savage swashbuckler who begot him. Vain efforts had been made to induce the young chief to meet our officers, Mr. Burgess himself and the Kinwun Mingyi having visited Wuntho for the purpose without success. Once the Sawbwa did meet Mr. E. P. Cloney, Extra Assistant Commissioner. The issue was unfortunate. At the conference, owing to a misunderstanding, a tumult arose and the Shan retainers drew their swords. Mr. Cloney's life would have been sacrificed but for the presence of mind of the Sawbwa, who clasped him in his arms and shielded him from attack. This is the solitary occasion on which the Sawbwa showed any sign of courage or resolution. Only once again he met a British officer, Mr. H. F. P. Hall,[208] afterwards Assistant Commissioner. Though I went to Wuntho with only [Pg 218] half a dozen sowars, the Sawbwa declined the meeting and bolted to his remote fortress at Pinlebu. When, owing to the survey of the projected railway-line, the long-existing tension became acute, the Sawbwa, after wantonly attacking the adjacent districts, fled with his father to China. The old man is dead. The son survives in exile in Yunnan, having long ceased to be an object of apprehension or of interest to the Burma Government. The State of Wuntho is merged

in the Katha district.

From August, 1888, till the end of 1890, I acted as Chief Secretary, Mr. C. G. Bayne being Secretary, and in succession Mr. A. S. Fleming, Mr. F. C. Gates,[209] and Mr. D. H. R. Twomey,[210] Junior (or Under) Secretary. These were years of abnormal stress in the office, which was still undermanned. The appointment of Mr. Fryer to be Financial Commissioner afforded us some relief. But though a good deal of his work was done in direct communication with the Chief Commissioner, part of the revenue business necessarily was transacted by the Secretariat. These were my really strenuous years. The practice of dictation to shorthand writers was not yet in vogue; I have never acquired the habit. Day after day, Sundays included, I did my spell of work in office and then wrote on far into the night at home, kept awake by coffee and protected from [Pg 219] mosquitoes by Burman cheroots. Six hours of sleep sufficed. Though I wrote rapidly, I was not a quick worker. I dare say other men would have done as much with less effort. Life in the Secretariat presented few incidents which seem worthy of record. The real work was being done in the districts, in the Shan States, in the Chin Hills.

These years witnessed the completion of the pacification and settlement of Upper Burma, and what may be called the resettlement of Lower Burma. The details of the work in Upper Burma have been described in Sir Charles Crosthwaite's book.[211] The organization of the military and civil police was perfected by the administrative ability of General Stedman, the Inspector-General, who was a tower of strength to the Government. Dacoit bands were dispersed, their leaders captured or killed, the rank and file in many cases allowed to surrender and return to their homes on suitable terms. Admirable, unobtrusive work was done by military, civil, and police officers, who by degrees bore down opposition and broke the forces of disorder. The most potent instrument in the final establishment of settled administration was the village law planned by Sir Charles Crosthwaite himself. This invaluable enactment created the village as the unit of administration, and placed the village headman in a position of authority and responsibility. He became the local judge and magistrate, with limited but sufficient power to enforce his orders. As far as possible the office was made hereditary, but the people were consulted in the appointment. [Pg 220] Henceforth the post, though not one of great emolument, instead of being avoided, was eagerly sought.[212] The village law did much more than elevate the headman. It enforced the joint responsibility of villagers for offences committed within their borders, for stolen property traced to the village tract. The Deputy Commissioner was legally empowered to require villages to be duly fenced. All able-bodied men were bound under penalties to turn out to resist any unlawful attack. Above all, subject to carefully devised safeguards, power was given to the local authorities to order the temporary removal of persons found to be in sympathy with outlaws. No measure was more efficacious than this to secure the destruction of dacoit gangs by depriving them of support and sustenance. These are among the most important provisions of the village law which has done more than gun and sword to assure permanent peace. The revenue system was formalized as far as our limited knowledge allowed on the lines of Burmese law and custom. Meanwhile, the border lands were not neglected. Of the Shan States some mention will be made presently. The Chins might have lived unmolested in their hills, but they could not give up their rooted habit of raiding villages in the plains. The plundering of peaceful hamlets, the carrying off of living captives and the heads of the slain, provoked inevitable reprisals. Happily the policy of [Pg 221] slaying, burning, and scuttling was not adopted. After laborious operations, the Chins were thoroughly subjugated and disarmed. Military police posts were established in their midst. They are now peaceful and amenable to law. The names honourably associated with the arduous task of settling these rugged hills are those of Major F. D. Raikes, C.I.E., General Sir W. Penn Symons, Mr. B. S. Carey, C.I.E., Mr. D. Ross, Mr. D. J. C. Macnabb,[213] Captain F. M. Rundall,[214] Mr. E. O. Fowler, and Mr. H. N. Tuck. Here, too, Captain Le Quesne[215] won the Victoria Cross by gallantly tending a wounded officer under fire from a stockade. The Kachin Hills and the State of Wuntho alone remained for settlement in later years.

No detailed story of the restoration of order in Lower Burma has yet been given to the world; nor does it lie within the scheme of these personal reminiscences to supply the omission. The outbreak of disturbance at the end of 1885 has already been mentioned. For years crime continued to be rampant. A few figures may be given. In 1886 the number of dacoities was 2,183; in 1887, 1,387; in 1888, 695; in 1889, 332; in 1890, 181. Serious risings there were: one in Tavoy in 1888, quelled by Colonel Adamson and Mr. Twomey; one in Sandaway, sternly repressed by Mr. Bernard Houghton, who at the outset nearly fell a victim to the insurgents. But in the period [Pg 222] now under reference it was not so much a question of dealing, as in Upper Burma, with organized resistance on a large scale as of suppressing countless small, isolated gangs. The strict enforcement of the Village Act, framed on the lines indicated above, and vigorous disarmament carried out in the face of ignorant and factious criticism, were among the most efficient means of restoring peace. The plan of placing a defined area in charge of a specially selected officer invested with large powers for the suppression of crime was tried with excellent effect. Pyuntazá, in Shwegyin, was reduced to order by Mr. Todd-Naylor, to whom the Chief Commissioner gave a free hand with abundant support. Boldest, most strenuous, most untiring of men, traversing vast distances with incredible speed on the scantiest fare, facing every danger and enduring every hardship, there, and soon afterwards in Tharrawaddy, Mr. Todd-Naylor earned great and well-merited renown. For the first, and so far the only, time in its history, Tharrawaddy was at rest. In every district solid work was done, and by degrees normal conditions were established.

An event which I recall with interest was the visit to Rangoon of the celebrated traveller, Mr. Colborne Baber, of the China Consular Service, deputed to Burma in connection with the

proposed demarcation of the Chinese boundary. Baber was one of the elect of travellers. Not only did he make hazardous and scientifically important journeys, but he also had the gift of letters, so [Pg 223] that his records have a place in literature. A man of genius, a born explorer, of various and versatile accomplishments, he was, I believe, a sinologist of distinction, and certainly a scholar of no mean attainment. Before proceeding to Bhamo to study the boundary question on the spot, he was our guest for some days in Rangoon. These are days of happy memory, made bright by his luminous and inspiring talk, his distinguished and attractive personality. He seemed to live principally on cigarettes, and cared too little for a body not physically strong. Early in 1890 he died at Bhamo, mainly from weakness caused by his own neglect of material comfort. His premature death was a loss to the State, and a lasting grief to his friends.

More than once in these two years I visited Mandalay in attendance on the Chief Commissioner, sometimes occupying my old quarters in the Palace, sometimes enjoying the hospitality of Government House. One trivial incident illustrates the state of the country even close to the capital of Upper Burma. Rather late one night a friend[216] called me out of my quarters to go to see a fire. Having seen as many fires as would satisfy the most morbid craving, I cannot think why this fire attracted me. However, we went. As usual, the scene was much farther off than we thought. Passing out of the city gate, we walked for some miles across the fields till we came at last to a village where houses were still blazing. It had been plundered and burnt by Bo To, the [Pg 224] most prominent leader then afoot in the district. The police were there before us, and the dacoits had disappeared. As we were alone, armed only with walking-sticks, perhaps it was lucky that we did not arrive an hour or two sooner.

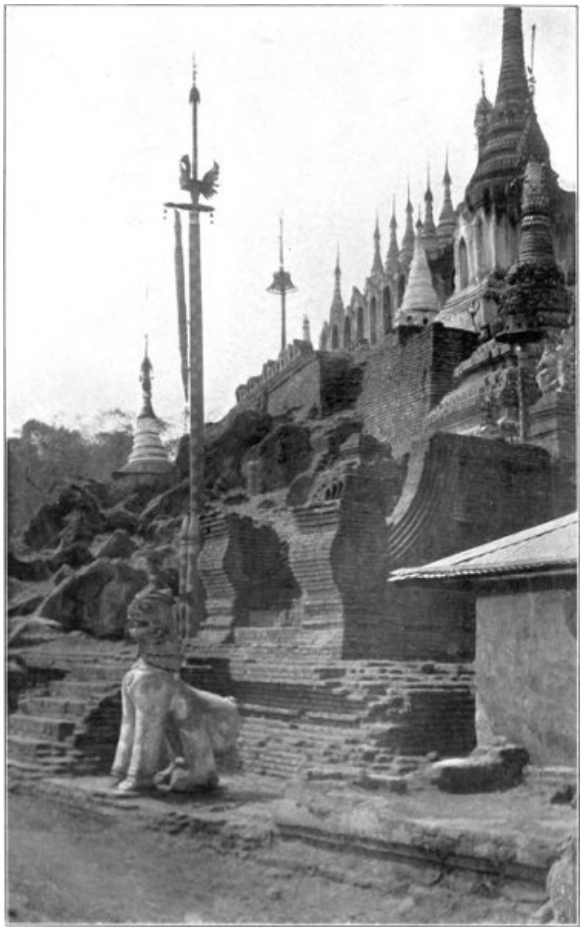
The last day of February, 1889, saw the formal opening of the railway from Toungoo to Mandalay. The occasion was celebrated with some pomp, Sir Charles Eliott,[217] K.C.S.I., Public Works Member, representing the Government of India. Later in the year, during the absence of Sir Charles Crosthwaite on privilege leave for three months, Mr. A. P. MacDonnell,[218] Home Secretary to the Government of India, acted as Chief Commissioner. Mr. MacDonnell was, of course, innocent of any knowledge of the country or the people. I doubt whether this brief interlude of administering a strange Province could have been a satisfactory experience to him. I am under the impression that the Chief Secretary's work was materially increased.

At the end of 1889 Burma was honoured by the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Albert Victor of Wales (the late Duke of Clarence), who spent some days in Rangoon and Mandalay. The Royal visit was highly appreciated by the Burmese, as well as by the European community, and was celebrated with much demonstration of genuine spontaneous loyalty. Chief of His Royal Highness's staff was the late Sir Edward Bradford, whose high qualities it were superfluous to praise.

CHAPTER XIII
A VISIT TO THE SHAN STATES

[Pg 225]

The Shan States occupy the whole of the eastern side of Upper Burma, and border on French Indo-China, China, and Siam. It is sometimes erroneously supposed that they are independent or semi-independent States, on the same footing as native States in India. From Theinni in the north to Mobye in the south, from the Myelat in the west to Kyaingtôn in the far east, these States were an integral part of the Burmese kingdom, over which the Burmese assertion of sovereignty was never abandoned or successfully resisted. Burmese Residents and garrisons were maintained. Though there were rebellions, revolts, and massacres, though in King Thebaw's time the bonds of authority were loosened, independence was never established. Each State was administered by its own chief, Sawbwa, Myosa, or Ngwekunhmu, appointed or recognized by the Burmese Government, and very practically subject to the King and his Council. Consequently, when we succeeded to the sovereignty of Burma, the Shan States became as much an integral part of British India as any district of Upper Burma. To speak of the annexation of a Shan State is [Pg 226] incorrect. Those States, such as Wuntho and Kale, which have ceased to be governed by their own chiefs, have been, not annexed, but taken under direct administration. The distinction between the Shan States and the rest of Burma is one not of political status, but of administrative method. The Legislative Councils of India and Burma make laws for the Shan States as for other parts of the Province. This power was exercised as long ago as 1886 in the first Statute relating to Upper Burma. The principle has been consistently maintained. The States which are really semi-independent, subject to suzerainty, are those of Karenni. The historical explanation is that before we took Upper Burma we strenuously maintained that Karenni was not part of the King's dominions. When we succeeded to the King's rights, we could not decently assert the contrary. But though there is a theoretical distinction, in practice Karenni is as much under control as the Shan States.



Pagoda at Monè.

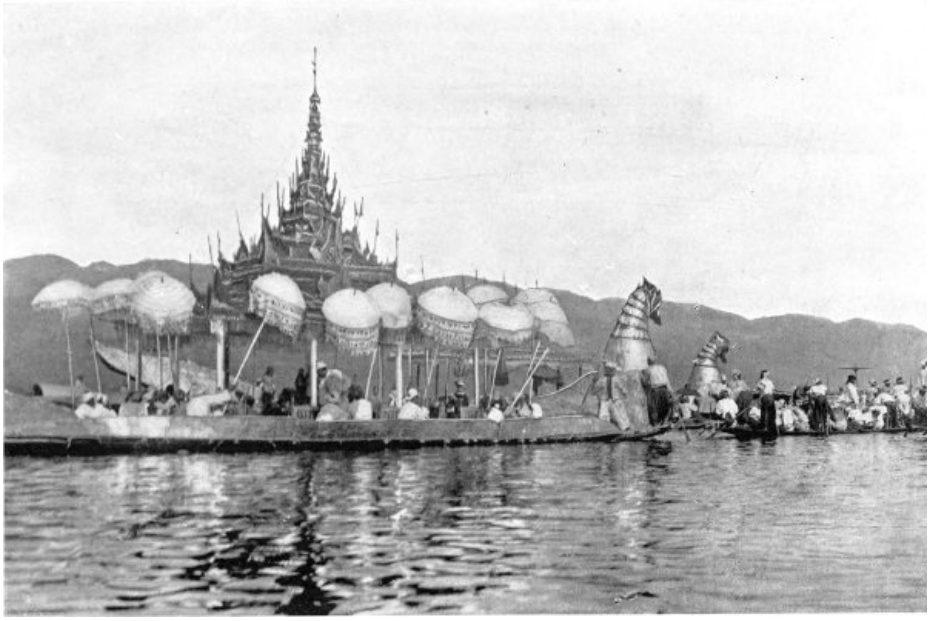
In less than a year from the proclamation which incorporated Upper Burma in the Empire, surely as speedily as could be expected, an expedition was despatched to assert our authority in the Shan country. Colonel Stedman[219] was in command, with Mr. A. H. Hildebrand[220] and Mr. J. G. Scott[221] as civil officers. A full account of the operations of the expedition has been given by Sir Charles Crosthwaite.[222] I need not attempt to tell again the tale of Mr. Hildebrand's [Pg 227] conspicuous success: how he traversed the States, receiving the submission of the Chiefs and confirming them in their offices; how by tact and firmness, almost without striking a blow, he imposed peace on this distracted country; how he became the friend and monitor, as well as the strict supervisor, of every Chief. Nor must I yield to the temptation to recount once more the story of Mr. Scott's gallant feat of arms in the capture of Twet Nga Lu, or of his later even more splendid display of the courage which dares the impossible when, with a handful of Gurkhas, he brought to his knees in his own capital the chief of Kyaingtôn, the largest and most secluded of the States. Are not these things written in the book so often quoted in these pages? It is a far cry to the Shan country and across the Salween, or these tales would be as familiar to Britons as any tale of chivalry.

Mr. Hildebrand became the first Superintendent of the Shan States. A little later they were divided into two groups, Northern and Southern, under two mutually independent Superintendents working in direct communication with Government. The Shan States extend over an area estimated at about 60,000 square miles. Here, as elsewhere in Burma, our aim has been to administer as far as possible in accordance with pre-existing custom. Each State is ruled by its own Chief, who has the power of life and death, appoints his own officials, and manages his own finances and domestic affairs. The Chiefs administer their own customary law, subject to the [Pg 228] provisions of a very simple code, probably the shortest since the Decalogue, which lays down a few general principles and prohibitions. Issued in 1890, it still remains unaltered. The Chief is appointed by Government, and receives a sanad, or order of appointment, defining his functions and limitations. He is under the control of the Superintendent, and, to a less degree, of the Assistant Superintendents in charge of subdivisions, into which the States are distributed. These officers have by law extensive powers of intervention and revision, but as far as possible they abstain from active interference in the economy of the State. So, too, Government ordinarily avoids exertion of direct authority, but, if occasion requires, does not hesitate to deprive a chief of part of his powers, to change the order of succession, to amalgamate adjacent territories, to alter boundaries, even, as an extreme measure, to take a State under direct administration. All receipts from forests and minerals belong to the general revenues of the Province, rights over forests and mines being reserved by Government. Subject to this reservation, Government levies no taxes on the people. Each State pays a fixed sum annually as tribute, the assessment being revised every ten years. The demand is moderate, and at the decennial revision pleas for reduction are indulgently considered. It need hardly be said that the chiefs are required to keep the peace among themselves. They are responsible for the good order of their territories, and maintain their own local police in picturesque uniforms. There is also a small body of regular [Pg 229]

police under the civil officers. The garrison consisted at first of troops, then of military police, then partly of troops and military police, now again of military police alone. Each group, the Southern and the Northern, has its own battalion. Such, briefly and in outline, is the way in which the Shan States were governed five-and-twenty years ago; such is the way in which they are governed now. Probably no dependency of so great an extent is administered so inexpensively or with so little display of force. As a study in administration the experiment is full of interest, and has been remarkably successful. In five-and-twenty years there have naturally been changes and improvements. At first the Chiefs lived for themselves, caring only for their own ease and comfort, while, as was graphically said, "the bloodsuckers around them were making hay." Now they are becoming more enlightened, and beginning to realize their responsibilities. They are learned in the mysteries of budgets and taxation rolls. Some take a zealous interest in road-making, in digging canals, in promoting the growth of new staples, in sanitation and medical relief. Many of the Chiefs are courteous and intelligent gentlemen, who live on terms of easy friendship with British officers. Several have visited India, more are familiar with Rangoon and Mandalay. One Chief, formerly very shy and reserved, now gallops on our polo-grounds. His ambition was to visit Rangoon periodically for the purpose of gazing on the ball-room at Government House, which reminded him of Heaven. When all is said, it must be remembered that [Pg 230] the chiefs are merely officers of Government of no very high position, like other officers, holding their appointments during good behaviour.

The Shans,[223] remnants of the race which once dominated a vast empire in Eastern Asia, including the whole of Northern Burma to the confines of Tibet, are now somewhat backward in civilization. A clannish folk, with the cohesion lacking among Burmans. If you get hold of the chief you secure his people also. This no doubt facilitated the task of settlement. Of fierce appearance, to us they seem unwarlike. Once at least a conflict was stopped by a British officer adopting the simple expedient of pitching his camp midway between two hostile armies. But before our coming internecine feuds raged savage and devastating. Like medieval barons, Chief warred against Chief, laying waste the country. Populous cities reduced to ruinous heaps gave place to miserable hamlets. Wide stretches of fertile land, thrown out of cultivation, became deserts of jungle and tall grass where the tiger made his lair and the elephant ranged at will. Under the firm and just rule which we have substituted for the intermittent ferocity of Burmese dominion, the Shan plateau is reviving, and once more promises to be an orchard and a harvest-field. Scantiness of population and distance from markets alone retard the cultivation of wheat, vegetables, and fruit. Now a railway to the Southern States is being made. If it is not stopped in [Pg 231] mid-air, and if no parsimonious schemes hinder through communication, an era of prosperity for the Shan country is at hand.

Early in 1890, I accompanied Sir Charles Crosthwaite on the first visit paid by a Chief Commissioner to the Southern Shan States. We rode from the railway at Meiktila road (Thazi), past Hlaingdet, up and along the customary mule-track to Kalaw, on the border of the Myelat[224] plain. The cart-road was yet unmade. There was not a cart of any kind in the Shan country. Kalaw lies in the midst of pine-forests, a perfectly lovely spot, believed by many to be the future hill-capital of Burma. It will be an important station on the new railway. Personally, I doubt whether it will displace Maymyo, though it may well be to Maymyo what Mussoorie is to Simla. From Kalaw we rode through the Myelat, fine open country, but intersected by many ravines, to Nyaungywe, on the edge of the Inle Lake. The chiefs of the Myelat States flocked to meet the head of the Province, and with bands of wild retainers, with much clashing of cymbals and beating of gongs, escorted him on his march. Crossing the lake we came to Fort Stedman, then the civil and military headquarters. Here the Chief Commissioner halted for some days, interviewing local officers and many Shan notables, and holding a Durbar, at which he addressed the assembled Chiefs. These State visits to Fort Stedman and Taung-gyi, which afterwards [Pg 232] became the Superintendent's headquarters, were full of interest, certainly to the visitors, probably also to the local inhabitants. I have assisted at three such visits. From distant hills, from far across the Salween, come multitudes of strange people eager to do honour to the representative of their Sovereign. Weird dances by outlandish folk, grotesque caperings some, others slow melancholy measures, expressed the popular rejoicing. The lake was alive with boats competing in exciting races. Men and women took part in these contests. Here you might see the Sawbwa distribute prizes to victors and vanquished, these races being of the nature of a caucus-race, and smearing with lime the foreheads of the losers. You shall also see the lake-dwellers standing and rowing with legs instead of arms, a difficult and, as one may think, somewhat useless feat. Many young and ambitious officers have sought to accomplish it, but in vain. The lake-men row in this way with perfect ease and skill, but not, I think, faster than a boat paddled in the ordinary style.



The Paungdaw—u Festival.

Fort Stedman is well situated in the State of Nyaungywe, one of the largest and most prosperous of the Southern States. At the time of the annexation, the Sawbwa was Saw Maung, a man of culture and education, trained at the Court of Mandalay in all the learning of the Burmans. Soon after, his cousin Chit Su rebelled against him. In the first fight Saw Maung was severely wounded, being shot through both thighs. Very confidingly, he placed his troops and arms at the [Pg 233] disposal of his brother, Saw Ôn, who offered to suppress the revolt. Having done this effectually, occupied the capital, and tasted the sweets of power, Saw Ôn declined to make way for the rightful Chief. Forced to retire, Saw Maung with a small following established himself on the borders of the Myelat. Thence, anxious to prevent more fighting, Government summoned him to Mandalay and directed him to stay there in receipt of an allowance. In the Shan States, as elsewhere, our policy was to accept existing facts. If the Chief in actual possession was willing to submit, he was confirmed in his office. When Mr. Hildebrand came to Nyaungywe, he was warmly welcomed by Saw Ôn, whom he rescued from a position of much peril. Saw Ôn, therefore, was recognized as Sawbwa and held charge till his death some years later. He was the chief whom Sir Charles Crosthwaite found in Nyaungywe, a boisterous uncivilized person, with some sense of humour, whose loud laugh concealed a mind by no means vacant of ability and cunning. At his death, Saw Maung[225] was restored to his State. He proved an excellent ruler, probably the most enlightened and progressive of the Shan chiefs, full of projects for the good of his people, and exceedingly popular with all classes. Though in the early days after his return the lake-men were ready to rebel against him, not many years later, when Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Mandalay, Saw Maung sat in the boat of the leg-paddlers [Pg 234] competing in a race on the moat.

From Fort Stedman we returned by the way we came, the Chief Commissioner for my sake considerately riding the last three marches in one day. According to the original programme, if we had missed the train I should have missed also the steamer which was to take me home on my first leave. I caught the steamer and enjoyed the leave, which lasted a few days over three months. I cannot say that I enjoyed the return journey from Calcutta in the middle of the monsoon, seeing no sun nor star, in a boat on which cockroaches of gigantic stature vied with myriads of red ants in making life hideous.

I remained in Rangoon as Chief Secretary till the end of the year, when the Secretariat was reorganized and strengthened. Mr. Symes came back as Chief Secretary. I was appointed to be a Divisional Commissioner, but was seconded for duty as a Secretary till I went on furlough early in 1891. Mr. Mackenzie[226] became Chief Commissioner, Sir Charles Crosthwaite going to Council. The work of pacification and organization was completed. Conscious of a great trust worthily discharged, the most eminent of Burma’s rulers moved on to fresh fields of action, less thrilling but not less honourable.

CHAPTER XIV
RANGOON—MANDALAY

[Pg 235]

When I returned early in 1893, Mr. Fryer was acting as Chief Commissioner during Sir Alexander Mackenzie’s absence on leave; Mr. Symes was still Chief Secretary. For a few weeks I was on special duty examining and abstracting the documentary evidence concerning the boundary between Burma and China, then in the acute stage of discussion between the two Governments. After this was done, for a short time I held charge of the Pegu division. It was a most unsatisfactory appointment. The Commissioner was still Sessions Judge, and, though assisted by

a coadjutor, took a full share of the original and appellate work. Piled on top of the revenue and administrative duties, this formed a mountain which no one could scale. However strenuously the Commissioner laboured, however much he accomplished, he felt that as much or more remained undone. This was worse than the Secretariat, where, with diligence, one could keep abreast of the files.

The one exciting incident of my brief tenure of this office was the riot in Rangoon between Mohammedans and Hindus in June, 1893. In Burma we were accustomed to a mild and tolerant [Pg 236] religion, and had little acquaintance with the fierce fanaticism of warring sects. We resented bitterly the stirring up of strife by Mohammedans and Hindus in a land where they were strangers and pilgrims, hospitably received and treated with courtesy and consideration. Just as if guests should hurl decanters at one another across their host's dinner-table. It is not quite accurate to say that Burmans dislike and despise Indians. They welcome them with large-hearted tolerance, and live amicably side by side with them. But the Burman regards himself as a superior being, much superior to anyone, except, perhaps, even this is doubtful, a European. And he does resent Indians being placed in authority over him.

The occasion of this unusual and unnecessary tumult was the Mohammedan festival of Bakr-i-id. Though in Burma we have, I think, a slight leaning to the side of Mohammedans, whose religion is less puzzling to the lay mind than the abstruse mythology of the Hindus, I am bound to say that this time the Mohammedans were entirely in the wrong. In Twenty-ninth Street, a narrow thoroughfare of no good name, stood a Hindu temple of some repute. Having the rest of Rangoon practically at their disposal, the Mohammedans declared it essential to sacrifice their cow close to this temple. Forbidden by the magistrate to do this, it was expected that they would set at naught the prohibition. Such precautions as seemed necessary were taken by the Deputy [Pg 237] Commissioner, Mr. A. S. Fleming, who was in close communication with me and with the Chief Secretary, Mr. Fryer being absent on tour. We determined to do the best with the police before calling out troops. Military and civil police patrols were organized; and early on Sunday morning, the great day of the feast, a fairly strong picket of military police, partly Mohammedans and partly Hindus, was posted at the top of Twenty-ninth Street. All local and civil officers, as well as others not immediately concerned, were in the town. The streets were thronged with people, Mohammedans in holiday attire, Hindus ready to make mischief, both sides spoiling for a fight. From the top of Twenty-ninth Street could be seen the great mosque in Mogul Street, crowded with excited worshippers. For a time, though the tension was extreme, nothing happened. One high official, who was present as a sightseer, asked wherefore the rioting did not begin. Before long he was satisfied. The crowd became a seething mass. A rush was made to force the picket holding Twenty-ninth Street. Then stones began to fly, and all was confusion. Sowars[227] cleared the street, but as soon as the charge was past the roadway was again filled with rioters. Mr. Fleming had his head cut open by a stone. My thick topi[228] saved me from a similar mishap, and I was struck by missiles more than once. The spot near the objective of strife, where several of us were standing, became a very warm corner. It seemed advisable to summon troops. My friend Mr. E. W. B. Summers volunteered to ride up to barracks, running the gauntlet of showers of [Pg 238] stones from street and houses. That shots were fired from windows was said, but this is not within my knowledge. At last it became clear that the small party of police and officials at the top of Twenty-ninth Street was in imminent danger of being wiped out. I therefore told the senior military police officer to take the necessary measures to stop the riot. A file of men was ordered out, and a volley was fired, causing some loss of life. As if by magic, the uproar ceased in a moment. At first, by my order, blank cartridge was fired, but without effect. It has since been definitely ordered that on these occasions blank cartridge is never to be used. I dare say I am wrong. Certainly the weight of authority is against me. But if I used my own judgment, in a similar emergency, as a measure of humanity, I should again try first the effect of blank firing. The statement made at the time that blank fire only infuriated the mob is quite baseless. It had no effect whatever. By the time the troops arrived all was quiet. The soldiers marched through the streets and were picketed in the town, and there was no further disorder.

This is the story of the riot of 1893 as pictured in my memory. Yet such is the fallibility of human testimony that accounts written immediately afterwards by myself and two other officers, all close together at the time, differed on material points. This was a useful lesson to me in dealing with the evidence of eye-witnesses, especially in times of excitement. Defects of observation and lapses of memory cause discrepancies in the stories of witnesses whose sole desire is to tell the [Pg 239] truth. The stern suppression of this wicked and wanton riot kept the peace in Rangoon for twenty years. At first, as Bakr-i-id came round, troops were posted in the town. But there has been no disturbance, and display of military force has been discontinued. I do not think Indians bore me any ill-will for the part taken by me in this affair. To the end of my service many of them remained my good friends. Within a couple of months of the riot my wife and I were welcomed at the Mohurram in Mandalay, listened to the sad story of Hassan and Hussein, and watched the fiery rites of that impressive celebration.

In the middle of 1893 I became Commissioner of the Northern Division. The country was perfectly quiet and in order. Settled times had succeeded the bustle and confusion of the pacification. There was now leisure to prepare and execute projects for the benefit of the people. First among these was the Mu Valley Railway, which runs from Sagaing to Myit-kyina, opening up the fertile, land-locked plains of Wuntho, where a year or two earlier unhusked rice sold for ten rupees a hundred baskets, and rich lands farther north. A branch runs to Katha, on the Irrawaddy, below Bhamo, with which there is connection by ferry. Between Mandalay and Sagaing there is still a gap in the system. As soon as funds are available the Irrawaddy must be

bridged, and through communication established from Rangoon to Myit-kyina. Even more important than the railway were two great irrigation schemes for watering the dry districts of [Pg 240] Mandalay and Shwebo. These were being examined and matured. When I rode through Shwebo in the autumn of this year with the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. G. W. Shaw,[229] the fields were as hard as the stony-hearted pavement of Oxford Street. Anxiously the people watched the sky, longing for the appearance of the smallest cloud. Rice was scarce, and edible roots formed the staple fare of the peasantry. We were perilously near the Famine Code. In those days, if Shwebo had one good year in three, it reckoned itself fortunate. Luckily, at harvest-time there was always work in Lower Burma; and if the season failed, crowds streamed down to the teeming rice-fields of the Delta, whence they honourably remitted sustenance for the women, the aged, and the infirm left in their homes. Though emigration is easy and common enough, most Burmans are strongly attached to their birthplace, and cling with passionate affection to their ancestral lands. Mortgages are kept alive for a century or more, the hope of regaining possession being abandoned with extreme reluctance. Thus, though many farmers from the sterile north took up land in the Delta and made new homes, the majority hastened back to their native districts at the faintest prospect of a good season. Now in Shwebo, thanks to the Irrigation Canal, the face of the country is changed. Thousands of acres formerly dependent on precarious rainfall receive ample and regular supplies of water, and are under continuous cultivation. The pretty song of the [Pg 241] women as they plant out the seedlings from the pyogin[230] is doubtless heard as of yore, now not intermittently, but each year as the season recurs. A District which was too often a barren waste is now a rich harvest-field, giving grain not only for local use, but for export. Similar good results have been obtained in the Mandalay district by similar means. These irrigation systems, which not only enrich the people, but also yield a handsome revenue, were planned and executed with all the skill and science of irrigation engineers experienced in such work in the Punjab. They were based on the old Burmese works, which had fallen into disrepair, and which at no time were sufficiently well planned and managed to secure regular crops.

On the borders, the Kachins had been reduced to order and had become for the most part a law-abiding people. No longer were they permitted to levy toll on passing caravans, or to raid and oppress the plain villages at the foot of their hills. Their subjugation had not been effected without difficulty. In 1891 and 1892 there was severe fighting at Sima and Sadôn; and as recently as Christmas, 1892, Myitkyina had been attacked and burnt by a raiding party from the north. But when they had been well beaten, and when posts had been established at various points, the hillmen rapidly settled down. The discontinuance of their lawless practices was more than compensated by the wealth acquired as payment for services rendered to our officers and [Pg 242] military police garrisons. The Kachins, in which name may be included, conveniently if unscientifically, many kindred tribes speaking different dialects and following diverse customs, are sturdy fellows, peopling the hills of the Bhamo district, on the borders of China and Tibet. As a race, they have the vigour and vitality characteristic of mountaineers. They are distinctly one of the most progressive races of Burma, and, but for our advent, would have penetrated gradually far into the plains of Burma and the Shan States. Washed and brushed up, many Kachins show signs of a high order of intelligence.

At this time the Bhamo district still included all the Kachin country, Myitkyina not being yet constituted a separate charge. Mainly by the genius of Mr. E. C. S. George,[231] the system of managing the tribesmen was evolved. The hills were divided into administered and unadministered tracts. In the latter there were no posts, and no interference was attempted. So long as their inhabitants abstained from raids and outrages in the settled country; so long, as was somewhat crudely said, as they confined their zeal for slaughter to their own borders, they were at liberty to do as they pleased. No officers visited them, summoned them to appear, or exacted any tax or tribute. Travellers crossed the administrative line at their own risk, Government accepting no responsibility for their safety, and refusing to exact reparation if they suffered [Pg 243] wrong. Our sovereignty over these tracts was not abandoned; it was merely left in abeyance. From time to time the administrative line has been varied. On this side of the line Government undertook to preserve order and to punish misconduct. The administered country was dominated by police posts and placed in charge of the Deputy Commissioner and his assistants. Control light but effective was enforced. A simple code was promulgated, care being taken to avoid the creation of artificial offences and undue interference with local customs. Each village-tract had its own headman, with fairly extensive powers, appointed by the Deputy Commissioner. In early days the headman was rather absurdly called Sawbwa; with fuller knowledge the title of Duwa was adopted. Periodically in the open season, the Deputy Commission and his Assistants, with suitable escorts, made set tours through the hills, trying cases, settling disputes, and collecting the moderate tribute or household tax, the only revenue raised from the Kachins. This patriarchal system, which was gradually perfected, has succeeded admirably. Since the beginning of 1893, only one serious disturbance[232] has broken the peace of the Kachin country. The orderly condition of our hill-tracts afforded a pleasing contrast to the state of those close at hand under Chinese control, where complete indifference alternated with savage measures of repression.

Affairs on the Chinese border gave some trouble. The boundary had been declared, but not yet [Pg 244] demarcated. Its actual location being still undetermined, it was difficult to prevent encroachments, some of which were designed to strengthen the Chinese case when the border-line came to be settled. We had to correspond directly with Chinese officers at Yunnan-fu and T'Êngyüeh, consular officers at these places not having yet been appointed. On the whole, the Chinese were not bad neighbours. We certainly were not afraid of them, but were able to take a correct measure of their power as of their diplomacy.

At the end of the year 1893, just at the close of his turn of office, the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, came to Burma. With Lady Lansdowne, he visited Mandalay, went up the river as far as Bhamo, and by launch through the First Defile to Sinbo. In His Excellency's party were Sir Henry Brackenbury,[233] Military Member of Council; Sir John Ardagh, Private Secretary; Mr. W. J. Cuningham,[234] Foreign Secretary; and once more Lord William Beresford as Military Secretary. The administration of the Kachin Hills and the Chinese boundary was discussed on the spot by the Viceroy with the Chief Commissioner and his local officers. At Bhamo the Viceroy held a Durbar on the house-boat in which the Chief Commissioner was wont to travel in comfort, if not in luxury. Kachin Duwas came in crowds and laid spears and elephant tusks and embroidered [Pg 245] cloths at His Excellency's feet, receiving more valuable gifts in return. On shore weird Kachin dances were performed mid unseasonable rain, which damped the revels. It was a pity, for at the best a Kachin dance is a depressing ceremony, something like "Here we go round the mulberry bush," played by tired children. At Mandalay, in the golden-pillared Western Hall of Audience, a fitting setting for so brilliant a scene, another Durbar was held, glittering with uniforms of British officers and gay with the bright Court dresses of Burman and Shan notables.

This cold season I toured in the hills for some weeks and in the pleasantest company. Captain Bower,[235] having covered himself with glory by hunting down the murderer of Dalgleish and earned fresh laurels by his adventurous march across Tibet, came over to gather honey for the Intelligence hive. Mr. George, who made all the bandobast[236] for the tour, was more at home among Kachins than any man of his time. Starting from Waing-maw, we marched inland to Sima, the scene of a fierce struggle not many months before, where Morton met a soldier's death and Captain Lloyd[237] won the Victoria Cross. So close to the border that in the first Boundary Convention, concluded when our diplomatists were in great awe of China's puissance, it was assigned to our neighbours, Sima was a little outpost in the hills. Surrounded by a stockade, a [Pg 246] ditch, and barbed-wire entanglements, it was strong enough to resist any probable attack. Officers and men were housed in huts of mud or mat, stores and ammunition in sheds of corrugated iron. Long since these primitive posts have been replaced by substantial forts built on scientific plans. A line of them holds the frontier and dominates the hills. From Sima we struck northward to Sadôn, then our farthest outpost. We strolled at leisure; along forest paths up and down hill; across clear mountain-streams, sometimes at a ford, sometimes by a swaying bridge hastily made of bamboos with a carpet of long grass, sometimes on a raft or rude dugout; through thriving Kachin villages perched on crests of hills, where the barbarous people showed us no little kindness, offering fruits from their Taungyas[238] and encouraging us to explore their long, low thatched houses. A stretch of the march led easily over the saddle of a range of hills. In the morning the valleys were covered with a veil of mist; as this dispersed, at our feet were spread fertile plains, and in the distance gleamed the Irrawaddy like a silver thread. Our escort was a score of mounted military police, our transport mules from China. Early, but not too early, we rose and took a substantial chota haziri[239] beside the camp-fire while the mules were loading up. Chinese muleteers have many good points, but they need handling, and submit with reluctance to interference with their little ways. You may hearken, but their voice is not in [Pg 247] heaven before the lark. Even when they have been roused from slumber, it is any odds that two or three mules have wandered off in the night and have to be sought with vituperation best left obscure. The actual loading is comparatively simple. The baggage is tied to a wooden saddle which is lifted on to the mule's back and left there unfastened. At that season, at the height of some three or four thousand feet, the climate was perfect, cool, and bright. We could march all day without inconvenience. Once started, we walked and rode, staying now and then to interview headmen and villagers with special reference to an inquiry into the opium habit which I was making for my own satisfaction, till we reached our halting-place, on the bank of a crystal stream. One inviolable rule was enforced. The sumpter mule always headed the cavalcade. After a dip in the river, while tents were being pitched we breakfasted under a shady tree at any hour from one to five, as the length of the march determined. The best servant in the camp was Captain Bower's Pathan, a hook-nosed ruffian from the North-West Frontier, who had been in every scrap on the border for a generation. When he raised his finger, the other servants fled gibbering. After dinner, the day's work over, he relaxed. In a leafy bower, like a figure from the Arabian Nights, smoking a hookah he sat holding enthralled a breathless audience with, one fondly hoped, stories of adventure. Perhaps he was only discussing prices in the bazaar. Next to him, *longo intervallo*, was the Kachin Zinaw who acted as interpreter and handyman. He began the march speaking [Pg 248] Chinese, Shan, Burmese, and several Kachin dialects; he ended with a working knowledge of English and Hindustani. Zinaw was a man of great intelligence, but not of lofty principle. For negotiating the passage of a rushing stream, or for hastily rigging up a camp, he was invaluable. Some years he flourished, till misdirected ingenuity brought him to grief. His last service to Government was rendered, I believe, in the Bhamo Jail.

Up to Sadôn we climbed with labour and heavy sorrow, each height surmounted revealing our goal apparently as distant as ever, till we were fain to sit down in the dust and weep. Drever, the post commandant, an athlete of renown, explained the special advantage of life at Sadôn. Whenever you went for a walk you had to descend 2,000 feet and climb up again. So you kept in condition. In posts like this one or two civil and military police officers spent the months guarding the marches. Occasional tours were welcome interludes. The work was not very arduous, and there was a blessed lack of files and records. But it was a hard life, with few amenities, often drearily monotonous. Our frontier officers cheerfully endured this isolated existence, and kept bright their country's honour among the hill tribes.

Still passing northward, we reached the bank of the ’Nmaikha, the main branch of the Irrawaddy, which, starting from a source still unascertained, joins the Mali-kha some thirty miles above Myitkyina. We camped at ’Nsentaru Ferry, forbidden to cross, as the *enclave* between the two [Pg 249] rivers is unadministered territory. A scene of savage beauty, with hills on every side, the distant peaks on the Chinese border white with snow. We rambled upstream and along the bank of the ’Nmaikha, farther than any of our officers had yet penetrated.[240] Returning to camp at midday, we bathed in the ice-cold water of the river, fresh from the snowy hills.

From ’Nsentaru we marched through Kwitu and across the Irrawaddy to Myitkyina, then the headquarters of a subdivision. It was but a small village, with very humble public buildings, well placed on a high bank of the river, whose waters flowed clear as crystal. Now it is the terminus of the railway, a flourishing town, with many Indian settlers, the resort of fishermen who catch mahseer of ever-increasing weight. We rode to the confluence where the ’Nmaikha and Mali-kha join to form the Irrawaddy, more than a thousand miles from the sea; a very picturesque spot, with the mountain-streams rushing and tumbling over rocks and boulders. We returned on rafts, and were privileged to shoot the rapids which impede the navigation of the river above Myitkyina. They are not much to boast of as rapids, but the raftsmen made a fat fuss, shouting and hustling as we toiled through the eddies.

From Myitkyina we rode inland to Mogaung, a singularly unpleasant town, important as a trading [Pg 250] centre. In the regions north-west of Mogaung comes almost all the jade yet discovered; the rest is found in Turkestan. Though lovely and ornamental, jade is not classed as a precious stone, and has little vogue in Europe except for hilts of daggers in ladies’ novels. Chinese merchants have a practical monopoly, and most of the stone goes to China, where it is properly appreciated by a nation of artistic taste. The right of levying *ad valorem* duty on all jade brought to Mogaung is farmed out by Government. As the value of a piece of jade in the rough cannot be determined accurately, the business of dealing and of farming is distinctly speculative. The value is revealed by cutting; the duty is paid on uncut stones. The farmer assesses the duty on any piece of stone brought in. The owner has the option of either paying the duty or selling it to the farmer at the farmer’s valuation. This plan insures fair dealing on both sides. But there is always the attractive element of chance. Except for the jade business and some historic associations, Mogaung was a dull and uninteresting place. Our objective was the lovely lake of Indawgyi, which I was not to see till nearly twenty years after.[241]

Sudden news came of a Kachin rising on the eastern frontier. The escort of a civil officer had been attacked, and had suffered some loss. The border might be ablaze. The Deputy Commissioner must hasten to the spot; nor could the Commissioner remain unconcerned. We [Pg 251] rode to Sinbo next day, covering nearly fifty miles on one pony apiece, carrying no kit and taking no attendants, our rations in our saddle-bags. At Sinbo we found a launch and all necessary comforts provided by Mr. George’s forethought. Next day, as soon as the morning mist had lifted, the launch started, and in two minutes was fast on a sandbank. Not all the labours of the villagers, who turned out *en masse*, availed to move it a foot. Resolved to reach Bhamo that day, we took a small boat and began the passage of the Defile. It was plain paddling with the stream, but parlous slow, and hot and cramped. When we were about half-way through, our luck changed. We met a Government launch, which we boarded and turned about. So at sundown we landed at Bhamo. Half an hour later the launch abandoned at Sinbo also arrived.

Next morning we set out for the frontier. Riding most of the day and night, stumbling after dark on narrow ridges[242] between rice-fields, at about midnight we came into camp, not without some slight risk of being shot by a zealous sentry. All escorts within range having been bidden by telegraph and signal to combine, quite a considerable force of military police and a dozen British officers were assembled. It was as if the Deputy Commissioner, fulfilling Pompey’s thrasonical boast, had stamped upon the ground and raised legions. This sudden show of strength, coupled with Mr. George’s tact and management, speedily restored peace. Leaving him to distribute [Pg 252] rewards and penalties, I rode back with a tin of bully beef for sustenance, and a couple of sowars as escort. On the way I slept at the Kachin village of Pônkan, where I was hospitably entertained by the Duwa, who not many years before had literally held Bhamo in terror. He was a tall and handsome savage, but somewhat given to drink. At Bhamo I spent the next hundred hours in making up six weeks’ arrears of office-work. Then I took a day’s rest.

This was my best tour. But all the travelling in the Northern Division was full of interest. Mogôk and the Ruby Mines provided an agreeable interlude. Katha, a pestilential district in the rains, was perfect marching ground in the dry season. Wuntho, but lately brought into line, was revisited, and Piulebu, on the bank of the Mu River, once the Sawbwa’s strong place of refuge, inspected. With me rode my old friend Maung Aung Zan,[243] now subdivisional officer. Though of the girth regarded as suitable for a high official, and weighing, as he told me, 45 viss,[244] Aung Zan found a pony to carry him. His local knowledge was invaluable. We came to Mansi, at the end of the Banmauk road, which breaks off so abruptly that one feels as if another step would take one over the world’s edge into the abyss. Here was some excitement, the police post being threatened by a jungle fire rapidly nearing the wooden stockade. In these remote parts the [Pg 253] people, of Shan race, were primitive folk of simple and engaging manners. Extremely poor, they earned a scanty livelihood in the forests, or by fishing, or by laborious cultivation of miscellaneous crops. Here, as elsewhere, courtesy and hospitality abounded. At the entrance of every village the headman and villagers came out to welcome us, the girls dressed in their simple best, bearing offerings of water and flowers. Inspecting a Court on this tour, I was refreshed by

finding a case in which trial by ordeal for witchcraft was the main incident. The suspected witch was tied up in the fearless old fashion, and thrown into a stream. As she sank, and was with difficulty rescued, her innocence was made clear. The cause of action in the judicial case was her claim for damages for defamation. She was awarded £4 and costs.

The Commissionership of the Northern Division was probably the most interesting office in Burma. Mandalay itself always seemed to me a goodly place wherein to live. 'Tis true that for a couple of months or so the heat is great; but though the thermometer rises to 110° or more, the climate is dry, and yet we do not seem to have the excessive, suffocating heat, day and night, of the plains of Northern India. Again, every æsthetic and artistic taste is gratified. Never to be forgotten are the battlements of the walls, the purple shadows on the eastern hills, the glowing sunsets on the moat, the splendour of moonlight in the Palace corridors. The frontier work was [Pg 254] absorbing, and occasionally exciting; the ordinary executive work enough to occupy one's time without being unduly exacting. Of the touring I have already tried to create an impression. Just across the road, too, so to speak, was the new hill-station of May-mÿo, then coming into notice. The railway to Lashio, in the Northern Shan States, was being made, and had not yet reached May-mÿo; but it was easy to get up for a week-end. A drive of fourteen miles along the Aungbinle-bund to Tônbo, then a ride of thirty miles, with a change of ponies at Pyintha; with an early start, May-mÿo was reached in time for breakfast. We rode up by the railway road to the Zibingyi plateau, a craggy path sometimes rendered hazardous by showers of boulders rained down after blasting operations on the line above. Thence part of the route was over the plateau, through pleasant jungle-tracks, part along the embankment, where the rails were not yet laid. Returning by the same way, we got back to Mandalay by office-hours on Monday. May-mÿo was still in bud, perhaps even more delightful than in its fuller bloom. Sweet were the rides through bracken and underwood, with the chance of losing one's way and a possible thrill of meeting a bear. And cheerful the gatherings at the Club, the trivial social pleasures in which all took part. Mandalay itself was a large military station, where good-fellowship has always reigned.

It was therefore with regret that, early in 1894, I received Sir Alexander Mackenzie's summons to Rangoon to act as Chief Secretary for Mr. Symes, on furlough. At the time I was acting as [Pg 255] Judicial Commissioner in a temporary vacancy caused by Mr. Burgess's absence on privilege leave. As was our custom in those days, I obeyed the order without remonstrance.

CHAPTER XV
LOWER BURMA ONCE MORE

[Pg 256]

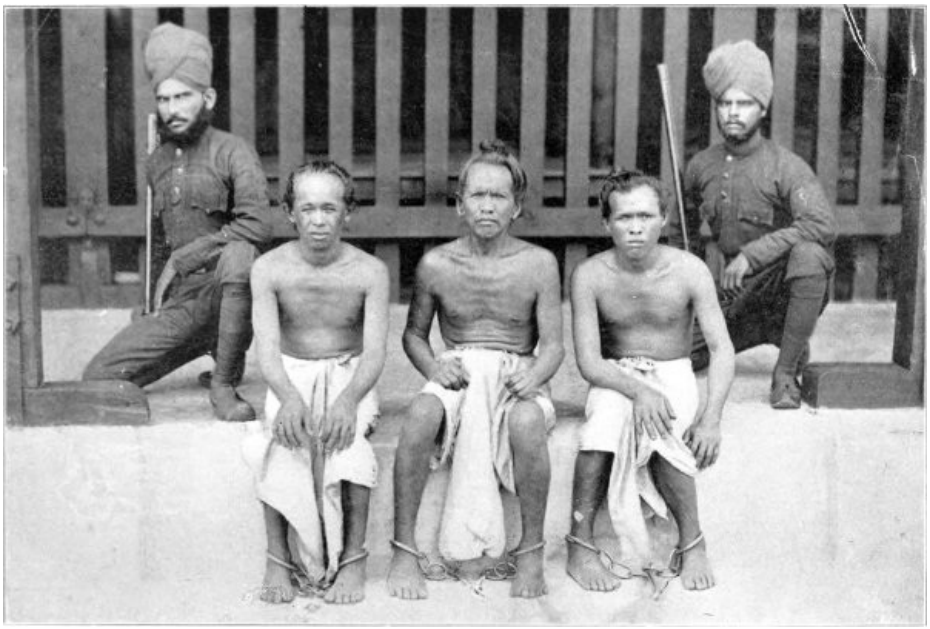
The next three years, with a brief interlude of privilege leave, were spent in Lower Burma. I was Chief Secretary for a year under Sir Alexander Mackenzie, for nine months under Sir Frederic Fryer, for three months under Mr. Donald Smeaton, who acted in a privilege-leave vacancy. Work was sufficient, not excessive. The Province was in order, and the Secretariat was administered on more regular lines than in the earlier strenuous years. It was no longer necessary to burn the midnight oil or to abjure exercise and recreation. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was a man of extraordinary capacity, and of abnormal, in my experience unexampled, speed of work. Throughout the day four Secretaries toiled and filled office-boxes with files; by nine o'clock next morning all came back with the Chief Commissioner's orders noted on them. It hardly seemed as if he could have had time to untie the bundles. Yet we had frequent evidence that cases were not dealt with perfunctorily. The speed with which Sir Alexander Mackenzie got to the root of a case, however elaborate or involved, seemed almost supernatural. He left the Secretaries to do their [Pg 257] own work, and wrote less than any other Chief I have known. A line of his writing would be the basis of a long draft. The least obstinate of men, he invited criticism and free expression of opinion, and was not afraid of changing his mind. But he was the strong man, the mainspring and motive-power of the Administration. No Secretary cherished the delusion that he was running the Province. We felt that he was the player whose organ-keys were thunders, and we, beneath his foot, the pedal pressed. Parenthetically, it may be observed that in Burma, and probably in other Provinces which do not enjoy the blessing of Executive Councils, the theory that Secretaries are supreme has no foundation in fact. The power and subtle intrigues ascribed to provincial Secretariats are the vain imaginings of people who have had no experience of their working from within. The nonsense asserted or hinted by such persons is incredible, and would be ludicrous but for its effect on others equally ill-informed. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was a genial and appreciative Chief, under whom it was a pleasure to work. As an administrator he was not in the same class as his immediate predecessor, nor did he inspire the personal enthusiasm and affection which many of us felt for Sir Charles Bernard and Sir Charles Crosthwaite. But we respected his marvellous ability, and were grateful for his uniform kindness. According to popular belief, having finished his work before breakfast, he spent the rest of the day on a sofa reading light literature till it was time for tennis.

A distinguished visitor to Burma at this time was Lord Randolph Churchill. As Secretary of State [Pg 258] when Upper Burma was annexed, he had a close association with the Province. The recollection of this was often in his mind, and gave a personal interest to his visit to Mandalay. His coming to Burma was tinged with melancholy, as his health was broken, and it was not long before his premature death. It is a privilege to have met him, even though not in his brilliant day, and it is a pleasant thought that he was able to see the country which he was instrumental in adding to the

Empire.

Again I must confess that life in the Secretariat, interesting enough to the workers, presented few incidents likely to enthrall the most sympathetic reader. The more smoothly the machinery worked, the fewer sparks were thrown off. Even in the Province, the happier the people, the less material for the bookmaker. True, there were exciting events even in that peaceful time. Two which startled us out of our equanimity may be recalled. Mr. Tucker, a member of a well-known family, many of whom have served the Crown in India, at the time District Superintendent of Police in Pegu, was an excellent shot and a notable sportsman. One night, when on tour in a country boat, he was aroused by the report of a dacoity close by. Leaping on shore at once, and calling to his boy[245] to bring his gun and cartridges, he hastened towards the scene. As he ran along the bank, he was shot dead by dacoits, without a chance of defending himself. It was one of [Pg 259] the ironies of fate that he, better than most men qualified for resistance, should have fallen thus obscurely. One by one all concerned in the crime were brought to justice, though some years passed before the tale was complete. The other lurid incident was the plunder of the mail-train between Yamèthin and Pyinmana, when Nelson, the guard, was murdered. The miscreants who perpetrated this daring outrage are believed to have been natives of India, formerly employed on the railway and conversant with its working. Boarding the train at Yamèthin, they tampered with the couplings of the brake-van, of which one compartment was obligingly labelled "Treasure and valuables." At a lonely place they completed the severance of the van from the rest of the train, which went on, unconscious of the act. The unarmed guard was cut down and the treasure carried off. It was believed at the time that the real criminals were brought to trial. After protracted proceedings, they were finally acquitted on appeal.

The year 1896 saw the very last of the dacoit Bos. Ten years before, Bo Cho had harried Myingyan and Pagan, the leader of a formidable gang; once, when he met Captain Eyre, he is said to have led seven hundred men. Unlike other Bos, he was neither killed nor captured, nor did he surrender. When his band melted away, and dacoity became too hazardous a sport, he simply disappeared. Either he was dead, or he had plunged into effectual obscurity in the comparatively dense population of the Delta. Actually, he was living as a peaceful cultivator in a [Pg 260] village in the middle of the Myingyan district. There he might have spent the rest of his days, perhaps becoming in time a Kyaung-taga, or even a Headman. No one would have dreamt of betraying him even for the price set upon his capture. Did not the munificent offer of Rs. 20,000 fail to tempt any follower of Gaung Gyi?[246] But after a time, apparently weary of a life of inaction, Bo Cho became restless. With two sons, he took to the jungle and began again the old trade of dacoity. Experience of the early years of the pacification was utilized. Mr. W. R. Stone, [247] a newly joined Assistant Commissioner, with a small force of military and civil police, and with selected Burman officers to help him, was told off to catch Bo Cho. He was given full authority under the Village Regulation, and a free hand. The invaluable power of removing to a distance friends and relatives of dacoits was unsparingly exercised. In a few weeks Mr. Stone dispersed the gang and captured Bo Cho and his sons, who were duly hanged in the Myingyan Jail.



Bo Cho and his sons.

Rejoining after short leave at the end of 1896, I became Commissioner of the Irrawaddy division, and after many years again saw Bassein and even Pantanaw. Seen in the light of larger experience, and from the melancholy mound of advancing years, Bassein seemed quite different [Pg 261] from the gay station of our giddy youth. Really, it was much the same, and in some ways it had improved. I found many old friends among Burmans, officials, advocates, and traders. Every greybeard wagged his head and welcomed me as contemporary. Seriously, I was very glad to see these old gentlemen, and not to find myself forgotten. But I could not disguise from myself, perhaps not from others, that my heart was in Upper Burma; that I found the Delta folk, at least

in the larger towns and villages, sophisticated and with too large a mingling of Kalas, and that I pined for Mandalay. The work was substantial but not overwhelming; there was still time for the judicial part of it. We were in Irrawaddy only for the dry months, and were able to make some pleasant tours. Conditions of travelling by water were vastly better than in early days. There was already one house-boat, which, towed by a launch, was an agreeable substitute for the rice-boat of our youth. The Commissioner had not yet a house-boat of his own, such as that enjoyed by the present pampered official; but on occasion we borrowed one from the friendly Deputy Commissioner of Maubin, Major Macnabb. In the northern part of the division travelling by land was easy in the dry weather. One exceedingly enjoyable tour in that part lives in my memory. We rode from Henzada to Ngathaing-gyaung traversing subdivisions held by two native officers, Maung Tin Gyaw and Maung Ba Bwa.

Much has been said and written about the corruption of Burmese officials. To hear some people, [Pg 262] you would think there was no such rare bird, if indeed he be not fabulous, as an honest Burman in Government service. I am happy to say that my experience enables me to place on record a far more favourable judgment. It would be absurd to pretend that corruption did not exist, even that it was very unusual. It has been my fortune many times to recognize, expose, and punish corrupt officers. Both in Upper and in Lower Burma we inherited the traditions of a feeble Oriental Government, and it was impossible that evil practices should not abound. Township officers and their subordinates, all natives of the Province, exercised great power, often free from constant and close supervision. To the mass of the people, in their daily life, the township officer and Thugyi, even more than the Deputy Commissioner, represented the Government. Furthermore, in early days the native services were ill-paid and had poor prospects of advancement. Till an honourable tradition was established, it could not be expected that all would resist the many temptations in their path. Recognizing and admitting all these grounds of reserve, I am satisfied that very many Burmese officers have been perfectly honest and have faithfully justified the trust reposed in them. Men there are in whom I have such confidence that, were it shown to be misplaced, my faith in human nature would be shattered. In recent years the pay and prospects of Burmese officers have been improved (*quorum pars exigua fui*). They now have fair wages and [Pg 263] many roads to dignity and honour. Partly for this reason, partly from higher motives, a sound tradition is gradually becoming crystallized, and year by year the standard of morality is being raised.

Of those[248] who, in comparatively early times, set a shining example of probity and efficiency, Maung Tin Gyaw was a fine specimen. Of good Talaing stock, he was one of the ablest native officers I have known. His father and uncle, whom a flippant but kindly, experienced, and appreciative Deputy Commissioner used to call Romulus and Remus, were Circle Thugyis, when I knew them venerable white-haired men of distinguished appearance. One of them bore honourable scars of wounds received in action in the troubles of 1885. Maung Tin Gyaw himself, then in the prime of life, was a man of courage, resolution, and independence. Well educated as a boy, but only in the vernacular, in adult life he had succeeded in teaching himself enough English to enable him to read the *Gazette* with moderate ease. With lighter English literature I fear he was unfamiliar. In his subdivision, which he managed admirably, he had boundless personal influence (awza), that intangible quality which makes the administrator. Throughout his career he preserved a reputation for spotless integrity and honesty. Riding with us through his charge, Maung Tin Gyaw was a very agreeable companion, prompt in all courteous attentions, always at hand when required, but never obtruding his society unsought. [Pg 264]

At one of our halts he found a wandering monk who had caused some commotion elsewhere, and was regarded with suspicion as a potential cause of political trouble. As I have said before, the wandering monk, who gathers crowds, practises magic, and heals the sick by charms and incantations, is always distrusted by the district officer. When he begins to tattoo his followers, it is time to put him on security or send him to jail. This monk proposed to walk through the subdivision and proceed to Ngathaing-gyaung. Maung Tin Gyaw regarded this proposition with disfavour. He forbade the monk to go by land. “In fact,” said he, “that’s a very tedious and uncomfortable way. Go back to Henzada, where you will find a steamer which will take you far more quickly and easily.” “Please tell me,” replied the monk, who was of the order of sea-lawyers, “by what law you will prevent me from going by land.” “The law,” said Tin Gyaw, “I will show you in Henzada. But back you shall go.” And back he went under the friendly escort of a couple of constables, and so far as I know he gave no further trouble. No doubt a high-handed and illegal proceeding, but conducive to the peace of the district, and therefore explicitly approved by the Commissioner. Some years ago I had to mourn Tin Gyaw’s loss. Till his death he was one of my most trusted and valued friends. Maung Ba Bwa, our other companion on this tour, I am glad to say still serves the State. I am therefore precluded from saying more of him than that he, too, [Pg 265] was an officer of distinction, who for some years managed an important subdivision never before, I think, placed in charge of a Burmese officer. That these subdivisions should be entrusted to native Extra Assistant Commissioners is an indication of the advance made in twenty years.

CHAPTER XVI
MANDALAY—THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION

[Pg 266]

Early in 1897 I was once more in Mandalay, well pleased to be again among my friends in Upper

Burma. In the short period of my charge of the Mandalay Division occurred the inevitable rising for which the time was ripe. In Burma a small rebellion breaks out with almost seasonable regularity. One evening, as I was on the point of going to the Club, then sumptuously housed in the western halls of the Palace, Mr. (now Sir George) Scott came in. Instead of going to the Club, we drove round Mandalay Hill. It was October, and the festival which marks the end of Buddhist Lent was being celebrated. At the Kuthodaw[249] Pagoda we alighted and mingled with the crowd. Pwès were being played, and the scene was vivid with a gay and giddy throng of men, women, and children, decked with jewels and clad in rainbow-coloured silks. We met several friends, among them the Shwehlan Myowun, with whom Mr. Scott renewed an old acquaintance. [250] This was not the time of year when disturbance is expected. The October festival is one of peace and good-will, when the shadows of Lent have departed, when merry lights go sailing down [Pg 267] the river, when the prospect of harvest is in sight. It is, moreover, a sure sign that no trouble is apprehended when women and children are seen in swarms at pwès and public assemblies. So with cheerful hearts we resumed our drive, while with unconscious irony I explained to Mr. Scott the profoundness of our security, our firm hold on Mandalay, my confidence that nothing untoward could happen without timely warning. We sat down to dinner, and got as far as coffee and cheroots. Sir George Scott still regrets that he never tasted that coffee. For at this moment in ran Mr. Snadden, the Superintendent of Police, saying: "There is an insurrection. You had better come and see about it." When we arrived on the scene, the insurrection had been suppressed. A very agèd monk had announced himself as the coming King, the reincarnation of a Prince dead some centuries ago. He possessed the power of making his followers invisible and invulnerable, always an advantage, especially to a small force contending against superior numbers. Perhaps his forces would not be so small, for presently he would throw leaves into the air and they would come down as armed men. His occult power he proved by walking thrice round his monastery and disappearing from sight. "Of course," said the Kinwun Mingyi, as he related the story afterwards, not wishing to impose upon my simplicity, "he hid himself somewhere." With such old wives' tales, and with promises of place and power, he beguiled a score of wretched dupes, mostly as old as himself. They sat and plotted beneath the humble mat- [Pg 268] and-thatch monastery where the monk lived. My confidence that we should be warned in time was not misplaced. The local police inspector was told by a woman that a conspiracy was being hatched. The cry of "Wolf!" had been so often raised that he was mildly incredulous. When she led him to see the conspirators, and he found a lot of old men telling their beads, his unbelief was confirmed, and he declined to listen to the story. His want of faith cost him his appointment.

When the eventful evening came, armed only with swords and short spears hidden in the sleeves of their jackets, without a firearm of any kind, the little band marched to the taking of the walled city of Mandalay, garrisoned by two or three regiments. Their goal was the Palace where, said the monk, "when I take my seat on the throne, Burma will be my kingdom and the heretic kalas will flee." Almost at the outset, they were diverted from their purpose. Crossing the moat by the South Bridge, they came upon a British soldier walking with an Englishwoman. "Behold the enemy; slay them," cried the mad monk. Hotly pursued, the luckless pair ran through the South Gate.[251] I regret to say that the police guard at the gate fled. Close by, in a large compound, stood the house of Major W. H. Dobbie[252] of the Indian Army. The woman ran along the garden [Pg 269] fence, while the man darted in and gave the alarm. Then this nameless hero, alone and unarmed, went back to help his companion and met death unafraid. The woman, grievously wounded, survived. With his revolver, and supplied with cartridges by his gallant wife, Major Dobbie ran out and met the rebels at his gate. Single-handed, he held them at bay, doing much execution, till some other officers, attracted by the firing, came to his aid and completed the rout. In the city gateway a running fight ensued. The white walls were splashed with blood which long remained a memorial of that stirring night. One officer received a cut on the head. Of the rebels, five, including the leader, were killed and most were wounded. If the band had pursued its original intention and made straight for the Palace, it would have come upon a few peaceful gentlemen sitting at dinner in the club with no weapons of defence handier than chairs and table-knives. The attempt was an isolated affair, of no political significance, confined to the few fanatics actually engaged. Patrols were sent out and rewards proclaimed. Within a week we picked up all the surviving rebels. After trial, ten were hanged in the presence of many spectators; the rest were sent to transportation. In the jail I spoke to one of the leaders, a man of fair position, somewhat past middle age, the Kappiya-taga[253] of the dead monk's monastery. He explained that he had [Pg 270] no enmity or cause of enmity against Government. Ambition was the motive which impelled him. He was to be the new King's Chief Minister. The fortune of war being against him, he submitted to the penalty without complaint.

The story is pitiful enough. These petty risings are of periodical occurrence, and seem to be peculiar to Burma. Three or four have broken out in the last few years. They are never of sufficient importance to cause any anxiety to Government. The sorrow and misery fall on ignorant, misguided peasants who are led astray by some *soi-disant* Prince. Always a pretender to royal blood, a Minlaung or embryo Prince, with power to work marvels, to bring fire forth from his arm, to kindle mystic lights, or cause gilding to be laid by unseen hands on a pagoda; always fairy-tales of charms against death and wounds. It seems impossible to cure this insane disease of flocking to a pretender's standard. For the sake of the people themselves, these outbreaks must be suppressed with severity. We used to regard crimes against the State as crimes of the worst character, not as venial offences to be treated tenderly. This is the only kind of sedition which has hitherto troubled Burma. The mass of the people, no less than the educated classes, are too proud to follow demagogues from Bombay or Bengal. They seem to be too intelligent to hanker

after representative institutions unsuited to the genius of the race. Recognizing that they already take a great part in the administration, they feel assured that as they show themselves fit, higher offices will be thrown open to their ambition. Enlightened Burmans see that the good of the people is the sole desire of Government, and that this is promoted by due submission to constituted authority, not by liberty of fluent rhetoric. While, therefore, other parts of India were seething with sedition, Burma alone remained unmoved, pursuing its steady march of progress. The speed of the march would be accelerated if Burma had more of its own money to spend, and if it were not often hampered by being made to conform to Indian precedents. All that we knew of sedition was the deportation of certain ring-leaders to Burma, where they were not likely to be regarded with any interest or sympathy.

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Towards the close of this year I relinquished charge of the Division on appointment to be Her Majesty's Commissioner for demarcating the boundary between Burma and China. The settlement of this boundary had long been under discussion between the two Governments. In 1893 had been concluded a Convention fixing a boundary-line very unfavourable to Burma. As already mentioned, Sima went to China and farther south the frontier was drawn perilously near Bhamo. Fortunately, an opportunity of revising this Convention occurred. The new Agreement laid down a line more practical and more in accordance with historical evidence. In the winter of 1897 a Joint Commission was appointed to ascertain and demarcate on the ground the frontier defined in the revised Convention. Mr. E. C. S. George was Assistant Commissioner. My Chinese colleague was General Liu, with several Chinese assistants and a telegraph clerk as interpreter. The Commission assembled at Bhamo as arranged. A few days were spent in settling preliminaries and exchanging courtesies. General Liu and his officers dined with us and we in turn were entertained at a Chinese feast. With some confidence, we set out for the frontier. Mr. George, with one of the Chinese Commissioners, was deputed to demarcate north of the Taiping as far as the high conical peak in latitude 25° 35′, the extreme point mentioned in the Convention. With his customary vigour and decision, overcoming many difficulties, he accomplished his task. General Liu and I proposed to demarcate south of the Taiping. Of the party were Mr. W. Warry[254] of the China Consular Service, Major F. B. Longe[255] of the Survey of India, Captain E. W. M. Norie[256] of the Middlesex Regiment, Intelligence Officer, and Mr. D. W. Rae of the Provincial Service, an officer of tried experience in the Kachin Hills. Captain J. W. L. ffrench-Mullen[257] commanded the modest escort of a hundred rifles of military police.

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We marched due east, through the pleasant hill-station of Sinlumgaba, past terraced rice-fields watered by ingenious irrigation works, over shallow streams. With more than the wonted vigour of Chinese officials, General Liu exchanged his sedan-chair for a rough pony, and rode at the head of his ragged escort. The result did not justify the promise of the beginning. Almost at the outset, in circumstances with which I need not weary my readers, we came to a deadlock. Though the case was obviously one for compromise, General Liu, most courteous and most obstinate of men, declined to come to terms. There was no alternative but to refer the matter to our respective Governments, and await their orders. So after a very few days we settled down on the banks of a stream which up to that time had marked the provisional boundary.

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Four weary months we spent beside that miserable stream, our escort on the Burmese side, the Chinese escort on the farther bank, occupying our time in sending urgent appeals to Government, and in holding endless conferences with our Chinese colleagues. Our men, disciplined and well equipped, were under canvas, properly rationed and cared for by our medical officer. Among them were a few Kachins recently enlisted, very smart and proud of their new uniforms. Boots were to them at once a source of glory and of pain. Most of them marched bare-footed, carrying the precious but weary burden slung on their shoulders. In a village they put them on and swaggered about for the admiration of the girls. Hardy and brave, these mountaineers are likely to prove excellent material for military police, perhaps even for the regular army. This season they were blooded in a small affair which Mr. H. F. Hertz had with an intrusive body of Chinese. They were among the first to scale the enemy's stockade. There are now several companies of Kachins in the battalions at Bhamo and Myitkyina. General Liu had his hundred Chinese braves, clad in picturesque rags, undisciplined, armed with the latest thing in rifles, which they had no idea how to use. They carried no tents, and had to house themselves in huts of leaf and bamboo. The comfortable arrangements made for our military police filled them with envy, and they gratefully accepted the attention of our surgeon. We could have enlisted as many as we pleased if we had wished to raise a Chinese battalion. They impressed us as being good raw material and quite well behaved, but in their existing conditions entirely useless as a fighting force. The futility of Chinese troops against a disciplined army has been abundantly exemplified on this frontier. Notwithstanding warnings and alarms in the Press of the presence of formidable arrays trained by German or Japanese instructors, and armed with rifles of the very newest pattern, we have never encountered from Yunnan a Chinese levy capable of standing up to our military police, far less to a British force of all arms.

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General Liu was a sturdy old man, who had seen service in the field. Although he succeeded in wasting the whole season, and broke solemn compacts with a serene smile, our relations on the whole were friendly. He wrote me innumerable despatches, adorned with the noblest moral sentiments, but in substance quite inconsequent. This was in accordance with established tradition. Very often he crossed over to our camp and talked for hours, probably for the benefit of his assistants and the egregious telegraph clerk. After drinking a liqueur, he would return to his own side of the stream, conscious of a morning well spent, and sit under a tree, cooling his head after the heat of argument. Among interesting visitors to his camp were Sawbwas of the Chinese

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Shan States, which lie along the border. These chiefs occupy very much the same position as those of our own Shan States. At times they enjoy greater freedom, at times are more severely repressed, than their brothers in Burma. One of them cherished a beard which Shagpat might have envied; except on occasions of display, he kept it encased in a bag. Incidentally we were surprised by the arrival in our camp of two English travellers, who announced that they had travelled through China, and had just come from Lasa. Their report was received with derision by a correspondent, who thought that Lasa was the storied capital of Tibet, then untrodden ground. Their Lasa is one of the Chinese Shan States. In the course of the season we had a very effective eclipse, and were privileged to witness the Chinese beating gongs and making an incredible noise to frighten away the dragon devouring the sun, a custom of which we had heard, but hitherto had only in part believed to exist.

[Pg 276] Such were the trivial incidents which helped to pass the weary days, as we sat in our tents pitched in the midst of bare rice-fields, on a plateau some four thousand feet above the sea. Till the middle of March the climate was cold and bracing, with a sharp frost that covered buckets of water with ice an inch or two thick, at first an object of surprise and admiration to my Burman boy from the plains. We diverted ourselves as best we might, and from first to last were all good friends. By the camp-fire at night many a story was told. But that it was a monotonous time cannot be gainsaid. Even the resource of shooting was almost entirely absent. The hills swarmed with guns, old-fashioned muskets for the most part, and the Kachins very successfully kept down the game. We rode about the country for relaxation, visiting Kachin villages, and making the acquaintance of many Duwas. The most interesting was the blind Chief of Matang (Matin), a man of real influence, who had been of service to Colonel Sladen on his mission to Yunnan in 1868. Once or twice we visited Sinlumgaba, already mentioned as a budding hill-station, and were cordially welcomed by the gunners out for practice at the neighbouring hill of Imlumshan. Somehow or other the months passed, in daily expectation of orders from Government enabling us to make a start. I do not know what was the cause of the delay. At last, at the end of the season, the long-awaited orders came. But it was too late. We parted from General Liu with [Pg 277] mutual protestations of respect and affection. In spite of his obstinacy, duplicity, and pious dissertations, I could not help liking the old man.

After writing my report and forming plans for the ensuing season, I acted for a time as Judicial Commissioner of Upper Burma. Towards the end of 1898 the permanent appointment became vacant, owing to the lamented death of Mr. Burgess. I was given the option of succeeding him or of retaining the office of Boundary Commissioner. I accepted the post of Judicial Commissioner. The demarcation of the boundary was successfully carried out in the next two seasons by Sir George Scott and Mr. George.

Judicial work in Upper Burma, which occupied me for the next two years, was interesting but not exciting. The volume of work was sufficient, not beyond the pursuit of zeal and industry. The forensic part was varied and often entertaining, involving many studies of Buddhist law and indigenous customs. Though not a very litigious people, Burmans hate being treated, as they think, unjustly. I have known a case where only a few pence were at stake carried through all the Courts up to Mandalay. Besides hearing appeals and revisions as a High Court, the Judicial Commissioner had to supervise, and, where necessary, instruct the subordinate judiciary. The judicial system was less elaborate than in other Provinces, and many magistrates and Judges retained characteristics acquired under Burmese rule. They did their best, and administered what was perhaps at times a wild kind of justice. They had the Civil Procedure Code thrust on [Pg 278] them, *me judice*, at too early a date, but they bore the infliction with resignation. The Judicial Commissioner's duties involved a fair amount of administration and a good deal of inspection. With the members of the small but efficient Bar his relations were friendly and cordial.

The Judicial Commissioner held sway within the limits of his powers over all Upper Burma save, mercifully for them, the Shan States and the Chin and Kachin Hills. Inspections included many parts of the Province by me before unvisited. Of these brief visits, full of interest at the time, it were tedious to write at length. A sample may be given. Early one morning I landed at a wayside village to inspect the township court. A graceful little pandal[258] had been erected wherein I was invited to witness a pwè before beginning work. Innocently consenting, I took my seat and the performance began. Dancers came, not single spies, but in battalions. Every village in the neighbourhood had sent its troupe, each eager in succession to display its skill and grace. Except one, all the companies consisted of quite young girls, not professionals, but daughters of the village. The last turn was given by a band of small boys delightfully dressed in green jackets and knickerbockers. This was much more amusing than turning over dusty files and registers. But all good things come to an end, and after some pleasant hours I had reluctantly to obey the call of [Pg 279] duty. In the end, I breakfasted at 5 o'clock tea. There is a sequel to the story. On my return to Mandalay I received a petition signed by the girls of one of the troupes. It was more clement than the petition of Salome. The memorialists had danced, and I had been pleased to look and express approval. Such poor skill as they had was due to the training of their saya.[259] This worthy man had fallen on evil days. By the craft and subtlety of his enemies, he had been wrongfully prosecuted for embezzlement, unjustly convicted, and barbarously sentenced to imprisonment. If he stayed in durance, his lessons would be forgotten, and his pupils would be able to dance no more. Would I kindly, as a personal favour to them, order his instant release? The impulse of the natural man was to grant on the spot this ingenuous gracefully worded request. Hardening my heart, I yet examined the record of the trial with every desire to find a reason for intervention. Alas! I could not convince myself that the saya was an injured innocent. All that the girls got by their memorial was a civil answer, in which I tried to explain why their request could not be

granted. I hope they gave me credit for the wish to help them.

It should be a truism, but is too seldom recognized, that the less the higher Courts interfere, especially on technical grounds, the better. Now and then, however, it was pleasing to be able of one's own motion to throw open the prison gates. Very gratifying it was to set at liberty a man [Pg 280] sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for exceeding the right of private defence against an armed robber. To me he seemed deserving of reward rather than punishment. I doubt if any act of my official life gave me greater pleasure than restoring a young woman to freedom. Inspecting a gaol, I found a young Burmese girl, the solitary occupant of the woman's side. In an agony of grief at her husband's sudden death she had tried to commit suicide. For this heinous crime she had been sentenced to imprisonment for three months. On her ready promise not to do it again, I was able to release her at once.

For a few weeks in 1899, by arrangement with Mr. F. S. Copleston, C.S., who, solely for my convenience, changed places with me, I held the office of Judicial Commissioner of Lower Burma, a thankless post, of which the work exceeded my capacity.

In 1900 the Chief Court of Lower Burma was established, Mr. Copleston becoming the first Chief Judge. The selection was vehemently criticized, the local Bar and Press clamouring for the appointment of a barrister and for Mr. Copleston's head on a charger. I should like to explain the reasons which may be urged in support of the appointment of a civilian. The judicious skipper will perhaps be warned, and avoid the next page or two. It is open to argument that there should not be any civilian Judges; that, as in England, all Judges should be barristers trained in forensic practice. This argument is not seriously advanced by anyone conversant with the conditions, and need not be traversed at length. But the situation may be briefly stated. From the beginning of [Pg 281] their service, civilians are constantly doing judicial work, always criminal, generally civil. In the five-and-twenty years or so that pass before they are likely to enter a High or Chief Court, those who have any aptitude or inclination for legal studies have had abundant experience and have acquired a good stock of learning. Where there is a division between the executive and judicial branches, certain officers specialize almost exclusively. Civilians of my own standing had even an earlier training. During their term of probation law formed a prominent part of their reading. Periodical examinations tested their proficiency, and they had also to attend Courts and prepare notes of cases. They saw in practice the daily working of Courts under the presidency of the best Judges and magistrates in England. A selected candidate who failed at the Final Examination to qualify in law was ruthlessly rejected, excluded for ever from the paradise of the Civil Service. It is thought by some not unintelligent persons that in the trial of civil and criminal causes it is an advantage for the Judge to have knowledge of the language, customs, and character of the people concerned. Apart from this, every High and Chief Court in India has civilian Judges, by common consent as well qualified as their barrister colleagues. So much for the appointment of any civilians as Judges. Now for the question of the Chief Judge. In the Chief Court of Lower Burma, with which we are immediately concerned, in forensic business the Chief Judge has no more [Pg 282] weight or authority than any of his puisne brothers. Only when all the Judges are sitting as a Bench, and when they are equally divided, has the Chief Judge a casting-vote. As yet that instance has not happened. Ordinarily, in court the Chief Judge is on terms of exact equality with his colleagues. As a member of a Bench he can be outvoted by his juniors. His decision as a single judge can be considered, modified, or overruled by a Bench, of which he may or may not be a member. So far as judicial work is concerned, every objection to the appointment of a civilian as Chief Judge can be urged with equal force to the appointment of any civilians as Judges. But the work is not exclusively judicial. It includes also administrative functions. The Chief Court initiates or advises upon many matters connected with the judicial administration. All subordinate Judges and magistrates, most of them Burmans, are under its supervision. In this branch of the duties of the Court the leading part is necessarily taken by the Chief Judge. It is therefore desirable that he should have administrative experience, and, if possible, good knowledge of the people. For these reasons public interest is better served by the selection of a civilian as Chief Judge. I do not care to discuss the vulgar suggestion, not seriously made by any decent person, that civilian Judges are more likely to be subservient to Government than barristers. No one believes this; nor would it apply particularly to the Chief Judge, who, as I have said, has no more power judicially than his colleagues. The only sound rule is for Government to appoint as Chief Judge the man [Pg 283] believed to be best qualified for the office, whether civilian or barrister, bearing in mind that administrative as well as purely legal qualifications are requisite.

Some time ago there was an agitation for the establishment of a High Court for Burma in place of the Chief Court and Judicial Commissioner. No doubt Judges of the Chief Court should receive the same pay as Judges of a High Court. They do exactly the same work, and are of the same standing. Apart from this, in my humble judgment, the establishment of a High Court would be an unmixed evil. Upper Burma is not ripe for even the mild sway of the Chief Court. For both litigants and Judges it is better to remain under the sympathetic control of the Judicial Commissioner, whose learning is tempered by sympathy with the people. It would also be disastrous for suitors from Upper Burma to have to come to Rangoon, practically a foreign city, instead of Mandalay, where they are at home. Besides these objections, the establishment of a High Court would involve the appointment on every occasion of a barrister Chief Justice, which I hope I have shown to be inexpedient. As puisne Judges, barristers would be sent from England. One need not believe spiteful stories of political jobs, and one may respect many Judges of High Courts; but it cannot be contended that an Indian career now attracts the pick of the English Bar, men in first-class practice or with good prospects. Recent experience has, I trust, quenched whatever desire there may have been for the establishment of a High Court in Rangoon. But [Pg 284]

enough of controversy.

At the end of 1898 Lord Elgin visited Burma, on the very eve of his departure from India.

In the last few months of my last residence in Mandalay, no suitable house being available, I occupied my old quarters in the Palace, with the White Pavilion[260] opposite. Except for the Club on the western side and a few offices, the Palace was untenanted. Burmans ranged it at will, much interested in pacing its corridors and examining its stately rooms. They certainly did not regard the Palace with awe or reverence, but were well pleased to satisfy their curiosity. On feast days crowds came to picnic in the gardens and loitered in my courtyard. All climbed up the Queen's Tower, and all counted the steps as they descended. At night, save for a few watchmen, most of the Palace was left in solitude. Very striking was the effect as one's footsteps sounded hollow on the boarded floors, while the tropic moon flooded the columned arcades with unearthly light. Revolving many memories and picturing many scenes of bygone days, I traversed the deserted halls.

At the end of 1900, the day after the completion of my obligatory service in India, I went on furlough, free to retire at the end of two years. Mr. Harvey Adamson[261] succeeded to the appointment.

CHAPTER XVII
THE CHIEF COURT—LAST YEARS IN BURMA

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After spending rather more than a year in Europe, I was tempted back to Burma by the offer of the post of Chief Judge in succession to Mr. Copleston, who retired from the Service. I held the office for three years, from 1902 to 1905. These are years of pleasant memory, mainly on account of the very cordial relations with my colleagues, and especially the kindness and friendship of the barrister Judges. Of the Bar also I have a grateful remembrance. Its members were pleased to speak appreciatively of me on my departure. I risk the double edge.

The most interesting event of these years was the Durbar at Delhi held by Lord Curzon on New Year's Day, 1903, to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII. I do not propose to tell a twice-told tale by describing the Durbar and its attendant ceremonies. But a brief reference may be permitted. A splendid pageant was the State Entry, with its long line of richly caparisoned elephants, its dazzling array of Chiefs in gorgeous vestments, seen by thousands from the terraces of the Jamma Musjid. Glorious and soul-stirring was the Durbar itself with all the pomp of heraldry and blazonry of colour. Perhaps the most moving incident was the [Pg 286] appearance of a body of Mutiny veterans, conspicuous among them white-haired men of many Indian races who had been faithful to their salt. The Shan chiefs, humble folk among the stately Indian Rajas, were yet in their grotesque attire a picturesque feature of the State Entry, and attracted notice as they paid homage at the Durbar. Not soon to be forgotten was the review of native retainers, where the followers of many Chiefs displayed curious customs and equipment handed down from remote antiquity. Perhaps the most charming ceremony was the State Ball in the Diwan-i-Am (with supper in the Diwan-i-Khas), where Europeans and Indians, gleaming with gold and jewels and radiant colour, flashed and glittered in the historic halls of the Moguls. The conception of the Durbar and of the incidents grouped round that memorable scene was worthy of the great event which they celebrated. The Burma camp was, as usual, admirably arranged and managed; the griffins, which characteristically guarded the gateway, a piece of Burma set down in the Punjab plain. The guests hospitably entertained there owe a debt of gratitude to Sir Frederic and Lady Fryer and His Honour's able and courteous staff for many pleasant days. That fortnight remains in my mind as a charming episode.

In 1905, Lord Curzon appointed me to be Lieutenant-Governor in succession to Sir Hugh Barnes, who went to the Council of India. Sir Harvey Adamson became Chief Judge.

Early in 1906 the Province was honoured by the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Their [Pg 287] Royal Highnesses were received with unbounded enthusiasm by all classes and races in Burma. Their gracious kindness and consideration had the happiest effect in exciting the loyalty of the Burmese people. To Rangoon and Mandalay, Shan chiefs and many strange folk from remote hills and valleys, Chins, Kachins, Karens, Was, Padaungs, Brès, flocked to do homage. Proceeding down the river to Prome in a steamer fitted up by the Flotilla Company, Their Royal Highnesses saw a great deal of the country in a short time. The memory of their visit will not fade from the minds of those privileged to see them, and will be handed down as a glowing tradition to posterity.

Next year the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and Princess Patricia came to Burma, and were welcomed with acclamation. Their Royal Highnesses visited Rangoon, Mandalay, and Pagan, thus seeing the most interesting places in the Province.

In 1907 the Viceroy, Lord Minto, with Lady Minto, paid us a visit, and spent nearly a month in Burma. Their Excellencies saw Rangoon, Mandalay, Lashio, Myitkyina, Bhamo, Pagan, and Prome. Coming, like Lord Curzon, early in his term of office, Lord Minto obtained an insight into the conditions of Burma, and became interested in the Province. The most memorable incident of his visit was the Durbar held by His Excellency in the Eastern Hall of Audience in the Palace at

Mandalay, the first public ceremony held there since Lord Dufferin's Levée in 1886. [Pg 288]

Although to Lord Curzon I owed my appointment as Lieutenant-Governor, I was not in Burma at the time of his visit, nor was it my privilege to serve directly under him for many months. Most illustrious of the eminent statesmen who have held the high office of Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon left, regretted by all who had at heart the interests of the Empire and the good of the people. It is presumptuous of me to attempt any appreciation of his work or to raise my feeble voice in eulogy. Yet, having served under him, I cannot be altogether silent. Lord Curzon set the example of the loftiest ideal. Inspiring the heartiest enthusiasm in those brought into personal relations with him, he spared no pains to raise the standard of efficiency, to reform abuses, to promote the well-being of the people of India. When the dust of controversy shall have been laid, the historian will see clearly, in true perspective, how noble a task he accomplished in the years, all too few, of his Viceroyalty.

So long as Burma remains a Province of India, her geographical position will place her at a disadvantage in comparison with other Provinces. Members of Council pay sparing and infrequent visits, and seldom have any knowledge of the country and the people. Nor has the Lieutenant-Governor many opportunities of visiting the headquarters of Government. Only once, towards the end of my term of office, did I go to Calcutta. While I was at Government House, except one Member who came on a private excursion, giving me no warning of his coming, and [Pg 289] whom I never saw, only two Members of Council, Sir Denzil Ibbetson,[262] and Mr. W. L. Harvey, came to Burma. It was a pleasure and a privilege to make the acquaintance of Sir Denzil Ibbetson. His coming, though unavoidably deferred till the last moment, was of advantage to the Province. The same may be said of Mr. Harvey's visit. Sir Denzil Ibbetson and Mr. Harvey were lost to India soon afterwards. Both were men of character, ability, and distinction, whom we could ill spare.

Distance and the pressure of overwhelming official cares kept away the Financial Member.[263] This was specially to be regretted. For the new Provincial Settlement, cynically styled a Contract, was discussed and determined. The debate was one-sided, and recalled the schoolboys' tag: "Si rixa est, ubi tu pulsas, ego vapulo tantum."

Burma fared badly in this unequal contest, where the decision rested solely with the Supreme Government. The situation may be described in popular terms. Apart from local funds, revenue and expenditure in India are divided into Imperial and Provincial. All the revenue is raised in the Provinces, the Government of India having no separate estate. Imperial expenditure, including the cost of the Central Government, the army, and Home charges, has to be met by contributions [Pg 290] from the Provinces. Certain heads of revenue are Imperial, others provincial; others are divided between the two. It is right and fair that Burma as well as other Provinces should contribute to Imperial needs. Only very foolish people believe that the Government of India depends upon Burma for its livelihood, so to speak. The poor old milch-cow has been trotted out too often, and has become a wearisome, time-worn beast. In fact, the contribution paid by Burma is actually less than that paid by the richer Provinces. At the same time it is true that the contribution from Burma is greater in proportion to its population than that of any other Province, and that from Burma alone the annual subvention tends to increase. It may be admitted, as is perhaps the case, that the settlement with Burma was made on the same lines as those of other Provinces, that the proportion of its revenues taken by India is much the same as the proportion taken elsewhere. What people in Burma feel is that this is unfair. When our settlement was made we were still in a backward state, ill-equipped with roads and buildings, with many needs as yet unsupplied. Other Provinces were far more advanced, and had less necessary expenditure to incur. Moreover, the cost of public works in Burma is twice as high as in other parts of India. If, therefore, we are to be treated like other Provinces, we ought to have more liberal terms. So much is taken from Burma that not enough is left for public works and other expenditure necessary to our expansion. [Pg 291] We also believe that this is a shortsighted policy, and that liberal expenditure in Burma would benefit Imperial and Provincial revenues alike. Stated in few words, this is the case for Burma, based on facts available to the public, without reference to unpublished records.

Another disadvantage under which Burma labours is the application of Indian principles and precedents. While Burma is part of India, no doubt the system of administration and the main lines of policy must be the same as in other Provinces. But in details, in matters where our conditions differ essentially from those of India, it is unreasonable that we should be bound by Indian rules. A Member of Council who has never seen Burma thinks nothing of overruling[264] the Local Government on points of purely local concern. Again, general orders framed after consideration of the circumstances of Indian Provinces are applied to Burma, where conditions are totally unlike. In this way much needless labour and waste of valuable time are caused. I remember one Commission which contained no representative from Burma, and which never came near the Province. It issued an elaborate and extremely valuable Report. For years afterwards poured forth a flood of Resolutions on the Commission's recommendations which we were required to consider and discuss, though none of them could possibly apply to our local conditions. No real harm was done, but time and labour were spent in vain. As Burma differs [Pg 292] essentially from India, and as it is impossible that Burma should be adequately represented in all departments of the Government of India, the natural conclusion is that the Local Government should be allowed a much freer hand, and should be trusted to know what is best in matters of local concern.

While on the subject of disadvantages I may mention a real grievance. It may seem mainly to

affect the Civil Service; really it is of vital importance to the Province. I refer to the very small share which Burma has in appointments under the Imperial Government. As I myself obtained in my service more than I could have expected, I shall not be thought to speak from any personal feeling. In the fifty years since Burma has been a Province she has supplied to India one Member of Council, two Deputy-Secretaries, one Agricultural Adviser (for a short term), and two or three Under-Secretaries, all within the last seven years. No civilian from Burma has ever been chosen to administer another Province. It does not seem likely that of civilians in Burma, chosen in the same way as other civilians, none has been fit for such an appointment. It is needless to conjecture reasons for this apparent neglect. I suggest that Burma should receive a fair share of high offices, so that service in Burma may cease to be unpopular, and that her needs and conditions may be properly appreciated by the Supreme Government.

During my term of office the Royal Commission on Decentralization came to us. Needless to say, [Pg 293]
Burma had no representative among its members. That could hardly be expected. Bombay had two members, Madras and Bengal one each. The Punjab and the United Provinces were omitted. Except Mr. Dutt, a Bengali civilian who served in the regular line and seems to have attained no special distinction, the Commission included no one who had any acquaintance with the system of government by Lieutenant-Governors, and only one, Sir F. P. Lely, who had served in a non-regulation Province. The constitution of the Commission was clearly reflected in the Report which regarded all India as administered under the Presidency system, and therefore in the hands of Secretaries and Members of Executive Councils. The Commission learnt little of Burma during its somewhat hasty visit. Nor was it likely that permanent benefit would result from the labours of a body which set out to investigate and reform the whole administrative system of India in the course of a cold-weather tour.

The reforms of Councils devised by Lord Morley or Lord Minto were discussed and carried into effect during these years. These reforms were not needed in Burma; there was no popular demand for them; they were entirely unsuited to the Province. But Burma must lie on the procrustean bed. I am thankful to say, that for a time at least, the Province was saved from popular elections. In a country where, after thirty years, it is rare to find Europeans or Burmans of position willing to take an interest even in municipal elections, that would be the last straw. [Pg 294]
But the Council had to be enlarged, a non-official majority secured, and the elective system introduced at least to the extent of enabling one body, the Burma Chamber of Commerce, to elect[265] its member. And all the detailed rules of procedure, of Budget discussions, of interpellations, and the like, framed for other Provinces, have been applied to Burma. It may safely be said that no one in Burma is a penny the better for these innovations, and that the great heart of the people remains unmoved. The net result is some waste of time and public money owing to the appointment of more official members, worthy gentlemen who have to spend hours in Council when they should be doing their work. We were quite as well off under the old Council and the old rules. The situation would be ludicrous if it were not pathetic.

The objects which I regarded as most important, and which, to the best of my ability, I pursued, were the encouragement of efficiency in the Services, insistence on the principle of selection to which the Government of India often drew attention, and the improvement of the position and prospects of officers of various departments, particularly but not exclusively, those manned by people of the country. I had the pleasure of making the first appointment of a Burman as a District Judge, my old friend Maung Aung Zan,[266] K.S.M., being the officer selected. Two posts of Deputy Commissioner were obtained for the Provincial Service, the first Burman to hold that [Pg 295]
office being Maung Myat Tun Aung, C.I.E., K.S.M., T.D.M. Later I appointed the first two Burman Superintendents of Police, Maung Tun Min,[267] T.D.M., and Maung Shwe Tha,[267] I.S.O., K.S.M., A.T.M. These appointments enabled us to solve a long-standing problem, the officering of Kyauk-pyu. This district was notoriously unhealthy for any but natives of the locality, so that it was difficult to keep European officers there for any length of time. With one Arakanese as Deputy Commissioner and another as Superintendent of Police, both accustomed to the climate, it was possible to have the district efficiently administered without sacrificing anyone’s health. For some time Kyauk-pyu was administered solely by native officers. The experiment seems to have been successful; both the Deputy Commissioner and the Police Superintendent having recently been decorated. I take the opportunity of reminding my Burmese friends, who justly cite me as desirous of seeing them placed in higher offices, that one essential condition is that by character and ability they should prove their fitness for advancement. I am the last man in the world to wish Burmans promoted merely because they are Burmans, without regard to their qualifications. “After these things do the Gentiles seek.”

A successful effort was made to equalize the pay and prospects of the higher ranks of the Judicial Service, so as to attract men of at least average ability and ambition to that branch. The [Pg 296]
Provincial Judicial Service was organized on a proper basis, so that officers who chose or were posted to it might receive the same pay as those on the Executive side. The important Land Records Department was reorganized and placed on a proper basis as regards pay, and a system of recruitment and training was devised. To my lot, assisted by Colonel S. C. F. Peile, C.I.E., the experienced Inspector-General, fell the task of introducing most of the changes following the Report of the Police Commission. In this matter I think we might have been allowed more liberty to consult local conditions. After all, the Report was not verbally inspired.

I had much at heart the enactment of legislation for restraining the alienation of land and for the protection of tenants. I was unsuccessful in effecting either of these objects before my retirement. I have no doubt that gradually but surely the Burman is being squeezed off the land,

and that if, as seems likely, the proposed legislation is abandoned, the land will fall into the hands of non-agriculturists and natives of India. Free trade in land as in other things may be good. From an economic point of view the position is probably sound. More rice will be grown for export; more land revenue and customs duty will be garnered. But there are other considerations. The standard of living will be lowered. The deterioration of the Burmese race which will inevitably accompany their divorce from the land will be a subject for regret when it is irremediable. Similarly, tenants in Burma are rapidly increasing in numbers. There, as elsewhere, [Pg 297] they need protection. The solace of my disappointment was the progress of the co-operative credit movement under the fostering care of Mr. A. E. English, C.I.E. This movement will afford a great deal of help to the Burman cultivator. If it spreads to a sufficient extent, it may even obviate the need of agrarian legislation.

Among the pleasantest as well as the most beneficial duties of the Lieutenant-Governor is the making of tours in all parts of the Province. These journeys bring the head of the local Government into touch with officers of all grades and departments, as well as with the people. Not the least charming incidents associated with them are the receptions at every halting-place of importance, where the townsfolk offer a hearty welcome in their own fashion, and tender loyal addresses. Some of these receptions were elaborately and magnificently staged, with presentation of flowers, with dance and music, with triumphal arches, with decorated streets. Without meaning to be invidious, I think receptions at Mandalay, Pegu, Akyab, and Bassein, where I was charmed to meet many old friends, stand out in my memory as conspicuous. The addresses presented on these occasions were often gracefully worded. Besides a profusion of loyal sentiments and good wishes, they usually stated matters of local interest for which the benevolent attention of Government was sought, the need of a new school, waterworks, sanitation, as the case might be. In one address my wife was gratified by being styled my “august [Pg 298] consort.”[268] Except the Chin Hills, the Hill districts of Northern Arakan and Salween, and, I am ashamed to say, Tharrawaddy, which was unaccountably neglected, I visited all the districts as well as the Northern and Southern Shan States. Kyaingtôn (Kēngtūng), across the Salween, was an object of unfulfilled desire, and a projected ride to Namkham was not realized.

To Mogôk I went for the purpose of investing the young Sawbwa of Möñgmit with the administration of his State. At a very early age the young Chief was taken in hand, and placed in charge of the Rev. J. N. Cushing,[269] the venerable head of the Baptist Mission in Rangoon, and one of the first of Shan scholars. Dr. Cushing received him into his own house, and treated him as a son. When of suitable years, the future Sawbwa was sent to a district for training in judicial and executive work. Not till he was of ripe age, and had given evidence of steadiness of character, was he allowed to assume charge of his State. He received his Sanad in full Durbar, and with it much good advice. With an experienced Burman officer as his principal Assistant, and under the effective supervision of the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. E. C. S. George, the young Chief has done [Pg 299] well, and has shown zeal and intelligence in the management of his State. I think the impressions of his early years have not faded. At the time of his investiture his marriage was celebrated—a pleasing ceremony which I was privileged to attend. At Mogôk the usual strenuous round of duty and pleasure, incident to the inspection of a district headquarters with a vigorous Deputy Commissioner, filled days and nights. Up at six to ride round and visit local institutions, business occupied the day; at about five in the evening amusements began, and lasted till the small hours. Carrying very pleasant memories, a tired party reached Mainglôn, on the march back to May-mŏyo. Most of the route lay along a well-graded hill-road, aligned and made by the Public Works Officer of Thibaw, a very intelligent Shan. At each halting-place comfortable encampments of mat and bamboo had been built by direction of Mr. Stirling,[270] Superintendent, and the Chief, my good friend Saw Hkè.[271]

A charming tour took us the round of the maritime districts, Tavoy, Mergui, Akyab, Kyaukpyu, and Sandoway, in the R.I.M.S. *Dalhousie*. We cruised in the lovely Mergui Archipelago, a summer sea set with countless islands, rivalling in beauty the Inland Sea of Japan. Perhaps the most noticeable sight was Elephant Island. It stands alone, its green slopes narrowing to the sky. At low water we approached the shore, our boat with difficulty and strenuous effort pushed over sands hardly covered by the shallow sea. So we came to where the water deepened, at the mouth [Pg 300] of a gloomy cavern. Entering, we found a low, winding, rock-roofed tunnel, just wide and high enough for our boat, with a glimmer of daylight at the far end. Emerging, we reached the middle of the island, a still lagoon, encircled by smooth marble walls. A magic scene from fairyland: a snow-white ring, with an opening like the crater of a volcano; in the midst the purple lake. One pictured it as the secret refuge of buccaneers, who here might hide in safety. Our time for admiring this lovely landscape was limited; too long a stay would have imprisoned us for hours, till the tide fell and left the tunnel navigable. Working by charts nearly a hundred years old, we approached Victoria Point, the farthest outpost on the south, bordering on the Siamese State of Renoung. The revival of tin-mining had begun to make the place of some importance. Later a wireless telegraph station was established. More recently rubber-planting has been tried.

After a winding course over rocks and shoals, through unexplored Shan States and savage hills where head-hunting is still fitfully pursued, the Chindwin joins the Irrawaddy above Pakôkku. Passing between banks clad with dense forest, we desecrated with steam and smoke silent reaches glamorous with romance. The march of progress is gradually dissipating the mist which yet still clings to this river of ancient story. Here and there a court-house or a military police post marks the advance of civilization. Inland the woodman’s axe resounds in the primeval forest. A [Pg 301] coal-mine, one of the many promising but faithless ventures of the prospector, makes a deep

cavern in a hillside. We explored it for a considerable way by the light of naked, guttering candles; no Davy lamps in that mine. On the Chindwin are still current stories with an old-world ring. There you will see a little monastery at the water's edge. Above that point, though snakes abound, they have no power to harm. On one side of the line thus marked, if a snake bites you, prepare to die; cross the line, the same snake may bite you with no worse effect than a fleeting sting. Walking through a village, to test the story we asked a man if there were many snakes. "Oh yes," he replied; "but, of course, they do no harm. I was bitten yesterday." And he showed on his leg the mark of recent fangs. The reason of this interesting difference is comparatively simple. Once upon a time the countryside was ravaged by a gigantic serpent. The King himself, in the fearless old fashion, gave battle to the snake, and, after a desperate struggle, slew it and cut it in half. The two pieces he flung into the river. Now, the head-piece, where are the poisonous fangs, floated down-stream; the tail-piece, where there are none, floated upwards. You see the result. If you go farther north, you will come to a village where the people have the fascinating power of turning themselves into tigers. We went no higher than Homalin, and missed the chance of verifying this attractive legend. It was poor compensation to land at Thangthut, the capital of a very small Shan Chief, to find a stack of polo-sticks in his haw,[272] and to learn that Manipuris, the originators of the game, sent teams to play polo with the Sawbwa and his staff.

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Talking of tigers reminds me of one or two stories which may find a place here. Real tigers are common to many parts of the Province. One day a tiger came upon two little girls in the jungle, seized the younger, and was trotting off with her. The elder sister, a girl of about twelve, took off her tamein[273] and flapped the tiger about the face till the astonished beast dropped the child and fled. The truth of this story is proved by the fact that Government gave the girl a silk tamein in recognition of her courage and presence of mind. Another time, quite recently, a woodman was seized by a tiger. He cut at him with his da[274] till the tiger dropped him and retreated. The man, enraged at being attacked, followed and slashed him again, his only weapon being a long wood-cutting knife. Another authentic story, of an earlier date, tells how a tiger was killed by a man armed only with da. We may hesitate to believe people who tell us that Burmans are not brave.

The American who declined to go to the Taj Mahal because he had not come to India to see tombs, when he came to Burma would not look at Pagan because he had not come to see pagodas. Described once for all by Sir Henry Yule in "The Court of Ava," in its way Pagan is one of the most remarkable places in the world. The seat of an ancient dynasty, it lies along the bank of the Irrawaddy below Myingyan. Pagodas, literally for miles and in hundreds, fill the landscape as far as eye can see. All varied styles of Buddhist architecture, with many traces of Hindu influence, are represented. Here is the renowned Ananda Pagoda, among the most famous of Buddhist shrines. Here, too, are solemn, stately figures of the four Buddhas[275] who have yet visited the earth. As the ages roll by, other Buddhas will descend for the regeneration of the world.

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Not very far below Pagan, illustrative of a strange mingling of ancient and modern, is the most productive of the oil-fields of Burma, that of Yenangyaung. In 1886, reviewing the prospects of mineral discovery in Upper Burma, we prophesied before we knew. We went nap, as might be said, on coal, and took but little interest in petroleum. The development of the oil-fields is the most striking feature of the economic history of the Province for the past twenty-five years. The search for coal has been uniformly disappointing. The Yenangyaung field was worked in former times by crude native methods. Into shallow wells dug by hand men went down, clad in a sort of diver's costume, and laboriously baled out oil with a bucket. The out-turn was comparatively small. The wells were owned by a close corporation of local Burmans known as twinzas,[276] who had exclusive hereditary rights. All the oil extracted had to be sold to the King at a fixed price. Of late years the oil-fields have been exploited with all the resources of modern science by companies who, by grant or purchase, have acquired rights over wells and oil-bearing land. The Burma Oil Company were pioneers of the industry. It was under the auspices of my friend Sir Campbell Kirkman Finlay, Managing Director of the company, that I twice visited Yenangyaung. One of my visits was marked by the spouting of the most productive well yet struck in Burma. The oil-field is a busy bustling place, covered with tall derricks and giving employment to many drillers and mechanics. Side by side with modern scientific extraction may be seen the primitive native methods still practised. Over all is a Warden to enforce the elaborate rules necessary to safeguard the field against danger from fire and to prevent its premature exhaustion. From the wells runs a pipe-line conveying oil for about two hundred and seventy-five miles to the refinery at Syriam, where a populous town has sprung up. The latest report gives the total quantity of petroleum produced in Burma as 222,000,000 gallons, a very small fraction of the world's production.

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Our tours on the Irrawaddy and Chindwin were made in steamers of the Royal Indian Marine and in the house-boat already mentioned. Among Indian Marine officers I had many friends. One I may mention by name, Lieutenant H. R. Bowers, was with us on several tours. The son of Captain A. Bowers, R.N.R., long resident in Burma, who had accompanied Colonel Sladen's mission to Yunnan in 1868, he had close hereditary associations with the Province. From the first he impressed us as an officer of great promise, capable and self-reliant. I bade him farewell on the eve of his departure, full of hope and pride, for the journey whereon he died a hero's death among Antarctic snows. His memory lives in the hearts of his countrymen.

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My final tour brought me at last to the lovely lake of Indawgyi, which I had in vain tried to reach in 1894.[277] From Hopin on the Mu Valley Railway the distance is only some thirty miles, which

we rode leisurely in three or four easy stages. With us were Mr. Hertz,[278] the very able and distinguished Deputy Commissioner of Myitkyina, and Mr. W. Scott, one of his Assistant Superintendents, whose knowledge of Kachin language, folklore, and customs is extensive and peculiar. Very impressive is the panorama of the lake, lying in a semi-circle of hills, with few traces of civilized intrusion. A pagoda here and there on its green banks adds a picturesque touch to the scene. We sought but did not find the floating islands of which we had heard long ago. Indawgyi lies on the border of a fertile country once populous, but devastated after a Kachin rising not long before the Annexation. It is slowly recovering, and as population increases will once more be a rich harvest-field. Thence we paid a last visit to Myitkyina and the confluence. [279] More precious than the Commissioner, the Lieutenant-Governor was not allowed to shoot the rapids. He was induced to skirt them on a pony. Of the rise and progress of Myitkyina I have already written. Then for the last time, with many regrets, we passed through the glorious First Defile and bade farewell to it for ever. [Pg 306]

It were ungracious to close this discursive record without expressing my grateful obligations to those who worked with me in the last responsible years of my service. No Lieutenant-Governor ever had a better personal staff or more capable Secretaries. If I take leave to mention Mr. F. C. Gates,[280] Mr. W. F. Rice, C.S.I., Mr. Lionel Jacob,[281] Mr. R. E. V. Arbuthnot, Mr. G. F. Arnold, C.I.E., Mr. F. Lewisohn among Secretaries; Major F. J. Fraser, the late Mr. D. Shearme, Captain A. F. S. Hill, R.E., Mr. C. S. Pennell, Captain E. L. Caldecott, R.A., among officers of the personal Staff, it is not that I value less highly the loyalty and good service of their colleagues. If I were to mention Commissioners, district, and departmental officers to whom I am indebted, I must name practically the whole Commission and plagiarize many pages of the Civil List.

So after a chequered career we bade farewell to Burma, fairest and brightest of Eastern lands, the memory of whose happy people will always be enshrined in our hearts.

GLOSSARY [Pg 307]

[Containing only Burmese words used more than once, or not explained in text or notes.]

amat = Minister.

atu-ma-shi = incomparable. “There is none like her—none.”

bein-sa = opium-eater.

bo = chief, leader.

da = a knife of any sort.

Ein-she-min = heir-apparent.

gyi = great.

hlutdaw = Council of State.

kala = barbarian, a foreigner from the West.

kappiya-taga = a lay attendant of a monastery.

kin-bya = a somewhat familiar form of address.

ko-mi = a game of cards.

ku-tho-daw = royal merit.

kyaung = monastery.

kyaung-taga = founder of a monastery.

maung = much the same as “Mr.”

min = King, lord.

mingyi = great lord, high official; in this book, one of the four chief Ministers of State.

min-laung = an embryo *min*.

min-tha = Prince, son of a *min*.

Mi-paya = Queen.

mўo = city, town, township, circle.

mўo-ôk = officer in charge of a township, a member of the Subordinate Civil Service.

mўo-ôk-gavaw = Mўo-ôk’s wife.

mўo-sa = a title of a Shan chief (in his book).

mỳo-thu-gyi = head of a *mỳo* or circle.

mỳo-wun = town magistrate.

nan
nandaw } = palace.

nat = a spiritual being.

neik-ban—Nirvána = the state of rest.

pa-dauk = a tree yielding excellent timber and bearing lovely flowers.

pa-ya = a pagoda, a sacred image, a title of honour = lord.

pè-nin = helmsman.

pôn-gyi = a monk; literally, “great glory.”

pôn-na = Hindus of Mandalay, descendants of captives from Assam or Manipur.

pwè = an assembly, most commonly an entertainment of a dramatic nature.

pya-that = a terraced spire.

sa-daw = a monk of high position.

Saw-bwa = a title of a Shan chief.

sa-ye-daw-gyi = clerks or secretaries of the *hlutdaw*.

shwe = gold, golden.

Su-paya = a Princess of royal birth on both sides.

taik = a territorial division, called in English a “circle.”

taik-thu-gyi = headman of a circle.

tamein = a woman’s skirt.

taung-ya = hill-cultivation.

tha-tha-na-baing = head of the monastic Order.

thu-gyi = headman; literally, “great man.”

twet = a term applied to a monk who renounces his Order.

win = a house and grounds.

wun = an official title of varying denotation.

yo-ma = a range of hills; literally, “backbone.”

za-yat = a rest-house.

ze-gyo = the great bazaar or market at Mandalay.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Môk-so-bo-myo*, the hunter’s city.

[2] See p. 107.

[3] Great or headman of the circle.

[4] Principal taxpayer.

[5] Headman of the village.

[6] Members of the Provincial Civil Service.

[7] Literally, heads of townships, members of the Subordinate Civil Service.

[8] Major-General T. Lowndes, I.S.C.

[9] Mr. B. Ribbentrop, C.I.E.

[10] The late Sir Augustus Rivers Thompson, K.C.S.I., Lieut.-Governor of Bengal.

[11] This term, formerly in ordinary use, is now obsolete.

[12] Paddy is the local name for unhusked rice.

[13] *Gyi*, great.

[14] Major-General Horace Browne, I.S.C.

[15] Colonel C. H. E. Adamson, C.I.E.

[16] Mr. A. H. Hildebrand, C.I.E.

[17] Called after General Godwin, who commanded the force in the Second War.

[18] The population of Rangoon in 1881 was 134,176; in 1911 it numbered 293,316. In 1878 its trade was valued at £10,484,469, as compared with £32,040,000 in 1911 (private trade alone).

[19] A Chief Commissioner, newly arrived, whose face was not yet familiar, was told by a barber in the town, in the course of his ministration, that he should try to join the gymkhana, as that was the way to get into society.

[20] Afterwards of the Commission.

[21] *Nat*, a spiritual being in Burmese mythology. For a full account of nats the curious may refer to Sir Richard Temple's learned and sumptuous work "The Thirty-Seven Nats."

[22] This is, however, a matter of taste. A lady told me that the only thing which made it worth while to come to Rangoon was the Strand Hotel, with its general comfort and its incomparable omelette. The pagoda merely impressed her as "a messy place." Perhaps she was only playing upon the poor Indian's simplicity.

[23] *Kala* is as nearly as possible barbarian, and has a connotation of contempt. It is applied by the Burmese to all foreigners from the West, Indians or Europeans. A Chinaman is a cousin, so is a Siamese. Neither of these is a kala.

[24] The late Mr. G. D. Burgess, C.S.I.

[25] The late Sir Charles Aitchison, K.C.S.I., successively Member of Council and Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.

[26] Maung Pe, I.S.O., K.S.M.

[27] The first Viceroy was Lord Canning. Many people erroneously think that Clive or, perhaps, Warren Hastings was the first who attained that dignity.

[28] *Mingyi*, one of the four principal ministers. Literally, great lord.

[29] *Mintha*, prince.

[30] See p. 126.

[31] There is a subtlety here. *Ko* is one of the Burmese equivalents of Mr., more respectful than Maung.

[32] Council of State at Mandalay.

[33] As to grammar, Latter helped us in those early years. Students of to-day, more fortunate, have the invaluable help of Mr. Bridges' book.

[34] What it really wrote was "clearness and simplicity."

[35] Early breakfast.

[36] The late Colonel F. D. Maxwell, C.I.E.

[37] The late Sir Edward Spence Symes, K.C.I.E.

[38] Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G.

[39] The late Sir Charles Bernard, K.C.S.I., for some years Secretary in the Revenue and Statistics Department at the India Office.

[40] "Don't let them do that, they'll take me for a Burmese Minister," he called out, as officious underlings were hustling some carts out of his path as he rode through Mandalay.

[41] Among many mistaken appreciations of Burmese character is the notion that Burmans have no sense of gratitude. This story indicates the contrary. Since my retirement I have been touched by the frequent receipt of letters and other tokens of remembrance from Burmese friends obviously disinterested.

[42] *Ti*, an umbrella; also the ornamental summit of a pagoda.

[43] The Arakan Pagoda, as we call it, at Mandalay.

[44] Sergeant or Thugyi's wife.

[45] *A-pyo-gyi.*

[46] *Tha-yet-mŷo*, not the city of mangoes, as might be supposed, but the city of slaughter.

[47] Streams.

[48] In *taungya* cultivation, the farmer prepares a piece of forest-land by setting fire to the trees and undergrowth, and fertilizing the ground with the ashes. Rice and vegetables are sown broadcast. Except by careful Chins, the same piece of land is not used again till the forest growth has been renewed. It is a wasteful plan, rightly discouraged.

[49] Tiger fence.

[50] *Da*, a knife; in this case a Burmese sword.

[51] *Paso*, *lôngyi*, skirts worn by Burmese men, the former of ampler size.

[52] The Burmese man's headgear.

[53] Local civil officer.

[54] In Mandalay, in 1886, a *parvenu* official was guilty of the same breach of decorum on entering my office. I made no remark at the time, but I mentioned the incident to his friends. The Prime Minister seemed surprised that the earth had not opened and swallowed up that fearful man. The offence was not repeated.

[55] Now Sir John Jardine, K.C.I.E., M.P. for Roxburghshire.

[56] Elephant driver.

[57] Colonel William Cooke, lately Commissary-General in Madras.

[58] *Atwin Wun*, one of the classes of Ministers, so called from being nominally employed inside (atwin) the Palace, near the person of the King.

[59] As Burma was not under the Madras Government, this arrangement was anomalous and inconvenient; after the war it was abolished.

[60] The late Sir Godfrey Clerk, K.C.V.O., C.B.

[61] Now Colonel Sir Neville Chamberlain, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., Inspector-General, Royal Irish Constabulary.

[62] Major-General Sir George Pretyman, K.C.M.G., C.B., R.A., whom I met not again till he came to succeed Sir Donald Macleod at May-mỹo, where he spent the last year of his service in command of the Burma Division.

[63] *Yôma*, a range of hills; literally, backbone.

[64] The Right Honourable Sir Henry Primrose, P.C., K.C.B., C.S.I., I.S.O.

[65] The Earl of Cromer, P.C., G.C.B., O.M., G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

[66] Guardians of the Royal life.

[67] Sir Charles Crosthwaite, K.C.S.I.

[68] Mr. C. G. Bayne, C.S.I., whose early retirement deprived the Province of an invaluable officer.

[69] Sir Alfred Irwin, C.S.I., lately a Judge of the Chief Court.

[70] The Myingun Prince was a son of Mindôn Min, who in the year 1867 rebelled against his father. Defeated, he fled to Lower Burma, where he continued to plan mischief. He was deported to India; later, he escaped to French territory, and lived for many years at Saigon. He was long a source of some apprehension to Government, and a likely cause of trouble; but I think for some time he has been regarded as harmless.

[71] Messengers.

[72] Broad hat made of bamboo.

[73] Most of this paragraph is extracted verbatim from my Report on the Administration of Upper Burma in 1886.

[74] Administrative Report for 1886 *ut supra*.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] A woman's skirt.

[77] The late General Sir Harry Prendergast, V.C., G.C.B.

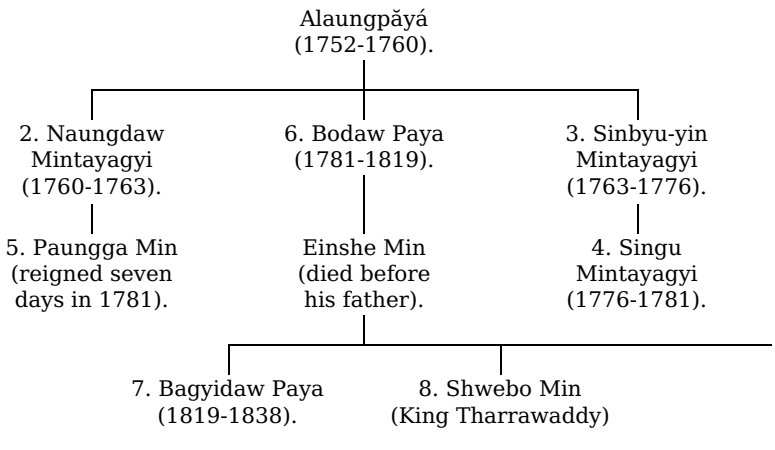
[78] The late Field-Marshal Sir George White, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., O.M., Commander-in-Chief in India, the heroic defender of Ladysmith.

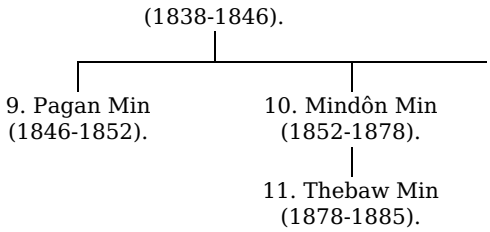
[79] The late General Sir W. Penn Symons, K.C.B., who served with the highest distinction in Burma and India, and met a soldier's death at Talana Hill.

[80] The late Sir Edward Sladen.

[81] Nephew of Sir Arthur Phayre; he died for his country in June, 1886, at Padein, near Minbu.

[82] The subjoined table shows the succession of the Kings of the House of Alaungpăyá. The dates and details were gathered from the lips of Ministers in 1886:





[83] Royal Herald.

[84] *Wun*, a local official of varying rank; probably in this case about equal to a subdivisional officer.

[85] Head revenue officer.

[86] Major-General T. Lowndes, I.S.C.

[87] Colonel C. H. E. Adamson, C.I.E.

[88] Wife (in this case widow) of the chief local authority.

[89] Incomparable.

[90] Council of Ministers.

[91] Monastery.

[92] The Hill of Peace.

[93] This stone disappeared the day after the occupation of Mandalay. It was never suggested that any of the force of occupation was guilty of the theft.

[94] Pagoda of Royal Merit.

[95] U Pe Si, C.I.E., one of the first Upper Burmans to receive a British decoration.

[96] The late Mr. T. F. Fforde, of the Burma Commission, who died as Deputy Commissioner of Sagaing.

[97] Queen.

[98] *Mintha*, prince.

[99] See p. 30.

[100] The late Major-General R. A. P. Clements, C.B., D.S.O.

[101] Major-General H. d'U. Keary, C.B., D.S.O.

[102] Colonel R. M. Rainey-Robinson, C.B.

[103] Horse-keepers.

[104] Technically, a dacoit is one of five or more persons banded together for purposes of robbery. It has been the custom to apply the term to all our opponents in Upper Burma, after the King's surrender. Even technically, the use was almost invariably justified.

[105] Circle headman, much like a Taik-Thugyi in Lower Burma.

[106] Cavalrymen.

[107] P. 130.

[108] The Right Hon. Sir Mortimer Durand, P.C., G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., successively Minister at Teheran and Ambassador at Madrid and Washington.

[109] The late Sir Alexander Mackenzie, K.C.S.I., Chief Commissioner of Burma, Member of Council, and Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

[110] Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., best known, perhaps, as the author of the standard work on Russia.

[111] Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, G.C.B., R.E.

[112] General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., D.S.O.

[113] Colonel Sir Neville Chamberlain, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., Inspector-General Royal Irish Constabulary.

[114] Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew, K.C.B., C.V.O., M.P.

[115] Palace.

[116] Temporary pavilion.

[117] Mr. St. Barbe had a marked turn for letters. Some of his papers may be found in the *Cornhill Magazine* of the seventies.

[118] The late Mr. G. J. S. Hodgkinson, C.S.I., afterwards the first Judicial Commissioner of Upper Burma.

[119] Now Mr. Taw Sein Ko, I.S.O., recipient of the Kaiser-i-Hind medal, Superintendent of the Burma Archæological Survey. I gratefully acknowledge much valuable help from him in the preparation of this book.

[120] Messenger.

[121] Raja lôg ate haiṅ

[122] See p. 27.

[123] See p. 126.

[124] See p. 67 *et seq.*

[125] Already mentioned, p. 125.

[126] There is one more who has lived in obscurity in Rangoon for many years.

[127] See p. 122.

[128] *Supaya* means a Princess of royal parentage on both sides. Except the King's sister, there was in Mandalay only one real holder of the title, the Pyinzi Supaya.

[129] Elder royal sister.

[130] Queen.

[131] See p. 270.

[132] See pp. 123-4.

[133] See p. 210 *et seq.*

[134] Headman of a town or circle, much like a Taik-Thugyi in Lower Burma.

[135] Village headman.

[136] Sir Frederic Fryer, K.C.S.I., Chief Commissioner and first Lieutenant-Governor of Burma.

[137] Sir James Digges la Touche, K.C.S.I., Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces and a Member of the Council of India.

[138] The late Mr. H. P. Todd-Naylor, C.S.I., C.I.E., Commissioner and acting Financial Commissioner.

[139] Sir J. George Scott, K.C.I.E.

[140] Colonel H. A. Browning, afterwards Chief Commissioner of the Andaman Islands.

[141] Mr. B. S. Carey, C.I.E., Commissioner.

[142] Mr. H. M. S. Matthews, C.S.I., Settlement Commissioner.

[143] The late Major-General M. Prothero, C.B., C.S.I., afterwards commanding the Burma Division.

[144] Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army.

[145] Colonel E. T. Gastrell.

[146] *Bo*, a chief or leader.

[147] "The Pacification of Burma."

[148] See p. 106.

[149] Chief of eleven hundred and fifty men. He was also called the Mobye-Sitkè-gyi.

[150] Perhaps most familiar to English readers in "A Persian Passion Play"—Matthew Arnold's "Essays in Criticism."

[151] See p. 146.

[152] This solemn farce is, I think, still played. Of course, no astrology is needed. The method of calculation is explained in Sir Alfred Irwin's learned book on the Burmese Calendar.

[153] Literally, great blood-drinker, a Burmese official designation of various connotation. Tun Baw was hereditary door-keeper and custodian of the Hlutdaw building. He still survives in receipt of a modest pension for faithful service.

[154] Earthen pots.

[155] See p. 115.

[156] *Briṅjal*, a vegetable; *jingal*, a small cannon.

[157] See p. 123.

[158] Lord High Admiral.

[159] Sir J. George Scott, K.C.I.E.

[160] See p. 266. The Myowun died this year.

[161] Embankment.

[162] Fire-carriage.

[163] Pônkan was a bogey to the people of Bhamo till it was settled, without much difficulty, by Sir George Wolseley in 1889.

[164] The highest title of a Shan chief.

[165] See p. 17.

[166] Chief wife.

[167] House and compound.

[168] Advisers, ministers.

[169] See p. 149.

[170] Mr. A. H. Hildebrand, C.I.E.

[171] Sir J. George Scott, K.C.I.E.

[172] General Sir Edward Stedman, G.C.B., K.C.I.E., successively Inspector-General of Police in Burma, Quartermaster-General in India, General Officer Commanding the Burma Division, and Military Secretary at the India Office, one of the most distinguished officers of the Bengal Army.

[173] Pickled tea.

[174] My wife spent the hot season of 1888 at May-mỹo, the first Englishwoman who ever visited it.

[175] *Hein*, a Shan official of about the standing of a Circle Thugyi in Burma.

[176] 13s. 4d.

[177] See p. 45 *et seq.*

[178] The suppleness of Burmese women is remarkable. To lean backwards and pick up with the eyelid a rupee placed on the floor is not an unknown feat.

[179] Sir George White's close connection with Upper Burma was never forgotten. When Ladysmith was relieved, the Upper Burma Club sent him a telegram of congratulation, of which we received a courteous acknowledgment, probably the only instance of an exchange of telegrams between Mandalay and Ladysmith.

[180] A great deal of nonsense has been written from time to time on the subject of the Burmese custom of *Shiko*. A Burman coming into the presence of a superior, a monk, a member of the royal house, an official, an elder of his family, adopts an attitude akin to kneeling, and places the palms of his hands together. Placing the palms of the hands together and slightly raising them is the essence of the attitude of respect. It is a charming and graceful salutation. In European schools boys are taught to adopt instead a weird caricature of a military salute or a debased imitation of the Indian salaam, which they do ungracefully and with the ugliest effect. I do not care very much for the prostration on the floor, and think it may be overdone. I used to make people of any standing sit uncomfortably on chairs. But what objection there can be to the hands slightly lifted in reverence, a natural and beautiful action, why it should be thought more dignified to pretend to cast dust on the head in salaaming, I cannot understand. The last outrage perpetrated in school is to teach boys to stand with arms folded across their chests in the presence of their elders and betters.

[181] Heads of *Gaings*, that is, collections of monasteries; assistants to *Gaing-ôks*, heads of large monastic institutions. Roughly, I think, this is a fair interpretation. In speaking of these dignitaries, I abstain from the common practice of using the nomenclature of Christian Churches. The analogies are superficial.

[182] In this instance a formal document setting forth the terms of the recognition.

[183] A Hindu gentleman, orthodox but emancipated, after a tour in Burma, did me the honour of dining at my table. In the course of the evening he said to me that, after seeing Burma, he thought it much to be regretted that Buddhism had not maintained itself as the prevailing religion of India.

[184] One patriarchal Deputy Commissioner made a law that carts entering his headquarter town, at least by the road which passed his house, should not creak. Every cart before long carried a small pot of oil, and at a respectful distance halted while the wheels were effectively greased.

[185] *Thein*, a very sacred building, containing images of the Buddha, where ordination services are held. The land on which a *thein* is built must be sacred in perpetuity and granted by the King. In modern practice grants of land for *theins* are signed by the Lieutenant-Governor himself.

[186] See p. 45 *et seq.*

[187] A feast and presentation of gifts to monks.

[188] A monk of high position.

[189] This excellent example has, I am glad to say, been followed. Several gaols are regularly visited by monks, who exhort prisoners to repentance and a new life.

[190] Then Commissioner of the Irrawaddy Division.

[191] Government.

[192] "The Pacification of Burma," by Sir Charles Crosthwaite. (Arnold, 1912.)

[193] Terraced spires over the gates.

[194] See p. 106.

[195] I need not mention this sportsman's name. It was neither Andrew Thomson nor Jem Bernard.

[196] Messengers.

[197] Store-room.

[198] Valet.

[199] Table-servant.

[200] The late Mr. D. M. Smeaton, C.S.I., for some years M.P. for Stirlingshire.

[201] Hidden by the curtain.

[202] Panthays are Chinese Mohammedans of Yunnan.

[203] Mr. H. F. Hertz, C.I.E.

[204] *Cf.* "The Pacification of Burma," p. 239 *et seq.*

[205] Brigadier-General Hugh O'Donnell, C.B., D.S.O.

[206] A curious sight often to be seen outside of Bhamo was a drove of pigs brought from China, each pig at night picketed to a small peg. Hard by baskets of walnuts deluded the stranger into the belief that the pigs, like pack-bullocks, were made to carry the baskets.

[207] The station of that name on the Myitkyina line used perversely to be called by railway engineers "One-two."

[208] Mr. Fielding-Hall, the accomplished author of "The Soul of a People."

[209] Sir Frank Campbell Gates, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Financial Commissioner of Burma.

[210] Now a Judge of the Chief Court.

[211] "The Pacification of Burma."

[212] It remained for the ingenuity of the Courts in later years to discover that in the eye of the law the headman was not a respectable inhabitant.

[213] Lieutenant-Colonel D. J. C. Macnabb, C.S.I., Commissioner of the Minbu division.

[214] Colonel F. M. Rundall, C.B., D.S.O.

[215] Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Le Quesne, V.C., R.A.M.C.

[216] Mr. E. S. Carr, now Conservator of Forests.

[217] Afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

[218] Lord MacDonnell of Swinford, P.C., G.C.S.I., K.C.V.O.

[219] Sir Edward Stedman, already often mentioned.

[220] Mr. A. H. Hildebrand, C.I.E.

[221] Sir J. George Scott, K.C.I.E.

[222] "The Pacification of Burma."

[223] A full account of the Shans is to be found in Mrs. Leslie Milne's charming book, "The Shans at Home."

[224] *Myelat* = middle country—the name given to the small Western States bordering on Burma proper.

[225] The Honourable Saw Maung (*Sao Mawng*), C.I.E., K.S.M., Member of the Local Legislative Council.

[226] See note, p. 138.

[227] Mounted military police.

[228] Sun helmet.

[229] Sir G. W. Shaw, C.S.I., acting Lieutenant-Governor of Burma.

[230] Nursery of seedlings.

[231] Mr. E. C. S. George, C.I.E., I.C.S. (retired), whom ill-health alone prevented from attaining the highest distinction.

[232] See p. 250.

[233] General the Right Honourable Sir Henry Brackenbury, P.C., G.C.B., K.C.S.I., R.A.

[234] Sir William John Cuningham, K.C.S.I.

[235] Now Major-General Sir Hamilton Bower, K.C.B., recently commanding the Abor Expedition.

[236] Arrangements.

[237] Surgeon-General O. E. P. Lloyd, V.C., R.A.M.C.

[238] See p. 76.

[239] Early breakfast.

[240] In recent years much of the country east of the 'Nmaikha has been taken under administration. Forts have been built and roads made far north of 'Nsentaru.

[241] See p. 305.

[242] *Kazins.*

[243] Maung Aung Zan, K.S.M., District Judge. See p. 25.

[244] A viss was then equal to 3.65 pounds avoirdupois. It has now been standardized at 3.60 pounds.

[245] Native servant (*bhai*).

[246] A dacoit leader in Tharrawaddy in the early days of the pacification of Pegu (1852-1860). This reward was offered by the Government of India instead of the modest two thousand suggested by Sir Arthur Phayre. Gaung Gyi went across the frontier when Tharrawaddy became too hot. I met some of his descendants in Mandalay.

[247] Major W. R. Stone, I.A.

[248] I refrain from specifying many others, still living, lest by naming some I seem to slight others equally worthy.

[249] See p. 122.

[250] See p. 166.

[251] For years afterwards, perhaps to this day, as a measure of superabundant caution, the city gates were closed early in the night, to the annoyance and inconvenience of strayed revellers returning late from dance or dinner without the walls.

[252] Brigadier-General W. H. Dobbie, C.B., commanding a brigade in India.

[253] See p. 195.

[254] For many years Chinese adviser to the Government of Burma.

[255] Colonel F. B. Longe, C.B., R.E., formerly Surveyor-General in India.

[256] Colonel E. W. M. Norie, A.D.C., Assistant Military Secretary at the War Office.

[257] Major J. W. L. ffrench-Mullen, C.I.E., Commandant of the Myitkyina Battalion of Military Police.

[258] A temporary hall built for the occasion, of mats and bamboos, gaily adorned with flowers and curtains and paper ornaments.

[259] Teacher.

[260] See p. 115.

[261] Sir Harvey Adamson, K.C.S.I., Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, formerly Member of the Council of the Governor-General.

[262] The late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, K.C.S.I., Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.

[263] The late Sir Edward Baker, K.C.S.I., afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, whose early death we have had but lately to deplore.

[264] I am aware that he has to obtain the Viceroy's concurrence; but he has the advantage of the last word.

[265] I need hardly say (as I proposed it) that I regard this as a sound measure.

[266] See note on p. 295.

[267] Some of these officers are Arakanese, one a Talaing; all are natives of Burma.

[268] I must not be thought to regard these addresses with levity. I appreciated them highly, and have preserved them all.

[269] I have elsewhere paid my humble tribute of respect to Dr. Cushing's memory. The first person to join with me in lamenting his loss was the Right Reverend Bishop Cardot, of the Roman Catholic Church. Our own Bishop was not backward in expressing his sorrow and appreciation. In Burma, at least, there is some unity among Christians.

[270] Mr. G. C. B. Stirling, C.I.E.

[271] See p. 175.

[272] House of a Shan Chief.

[273] Skirt.

[274] Knife, of any size.

[275] Kakusandha, Konagamana, Kassapa, Gaudama.

[276] Eaters (= owners) of wells.

[277] See p. 250.

[278] Mr. W. A. Hertz, C.S.I.

[279] See p. 249.

[280] Sir Frank Campbell Gates, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

[281] Sir Lionel Jacob, K.C.S.I., too soon carried off to be Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department.

INDEX

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Transcriber's notes:

The following is a list of changes made to the original. The first line is the original line, the second the corrected one.

illustrious of pure Bhuddist shrines, dominating the
illustrious of pure Buddhist shrines, dominating the

I spent in the office eleven years a period surpassed only,
I spent in the office eleven years, a period surpassed only,

Two days earlier the King of Burmah issued a proclamation
Two days earlier the King of Burma issued a proclamation

into Divisions, and Commissioners were appointed, In June,
into Divisions, and Commissioners were appointed. In June,

he was noosed and tied up in the Keddah, and the
he was noosed and tied up in the Kheddah, and the

At Sadagaung it was found that all the servants,
At Sagadaung it was found that all the servants,

Their son and daughter, Mirza Jamshíd Bakht and Ronak Begam,
Their son and daughter, Mirza Jamshíd Bǎkht and Ronak Begam,

In the morning the valleys were covered with a vale of mist;
In the morning the valleys were covered with a veil of mist;

Some of these officers are Arakenese, one a Talaing;
Some of these officers are Arakanese, one a Talaing;

the very able and distinguished Deputy Commmissioner of Myitkyina,
the very able and distinguished Deputy Commissioner of Myitkyina,

myŏ-ôk-gavaw = Myŏ-ôk's wife.
mÿo-ôk-gavaw = Mÿo-ôk's wife.

myo-thu-gyi = head of a *myo* or circle.
mÿo-thu-gyi = head of a *mÿo* or circle.

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