

BURMAH AND THE BURMESE.

Go forth and multiply, was a command which man's nature caught at and obeyed instinctively; Go forth and explore, is a destiny which he has adopted for himself.

With the men of all times—with the men of all races, it has been accepted and acted upon. The impulse which directs men towards the unknown, urges them onwards to the discovery of unexplored regions and strange peoples. A *terra incognita*, an untrodden waste, an untracked sea, an unknown or distant nation, a marvellous city, has ever been temptation enough to rouse explorers and adventurers, who have been ready to go forth, daring every danger, facing every difficulty, periling and expending their lives in the great mission of discovery.

Diverse have been the motives which have sent men forth. Some have gone as preachers and evangelists to propagate and spread truth, some to extend commerce, some to establish political relations, some to pursue science, some in the mere spirit of adventure; every man, every class, every age, every race, has had its different mission; yet whatever the mission, whatever the motive, these men have been the pioneers of progression and of commune betwixt people and people. From the savage, who shot forth his canoe from island to island, to Columbus in his caraval, and Parry and M'Clure in their war-ships; from pilgrims and merchants, the Benjamins and Marco Polos, to the organised bands who explore and investigate with all the appliances of art and science; from the Bernards and Elliots, down to the Moffats and Livingstones, the work has been carried on, advancing and progressing, and will still advance and progress, until the world has been mapped out and measured, seas and rivers tracked, strata traced, tribes and nations classified—until

the earth, his dwelling-place, and his brethren of every colour and family, become open books to the mind and heart of civilised man.

The destiny has developed now, beyond the mere effort of enterprise and adventure, to a science and a duty; and in the tracks of the old pioneers, march trained bodies of professors, philosophers, artists, geologists, ready and eager to investigate, analyse, delineate, and theorise everything which may aid our speculations and increase our knowledge in nature and humankind. There are odds and ends of the earth, sandy tracts, forests, wildernesses, savage races, still existing, which, however, afford a field and a mission to the old pioneer explorers; and there are still loiterers and saunterers, free and easy cosmopolites, who wander up and down the earth without any particular purpose or mission, noting the curious, the humorous, the picturesque, and the beautiful in the highways and byways; and the narratives which these send forth, rich in adventure and incident, graphic with strange scenes and descriptions, racy with anecdote, must ever be the popular type of travel. It is to them we turn for excitement, novelty, liveliness, and interest; but it is to their painstaking brethren, the men of investigation and minute inquiry, the men of research and detail, that we refer when any question arises as to the topography, the resources, the capabilities, the political or geographical importance—the communications, the warlike character or commercial advantages, of a country or its people. *Eothen* claimed its thousands of readers—Ida Pfeiffer holds gentle sway in drawing-rooms and boudoirs—Livingstone issues in countless copies; but when the statesman would solve some political difficulty, or prepare some political scheme or treaty—the merchant enter on some new field of com-

merce—the philosopher seek some facts and knowledge on which to establish his theories—it is a Burnes, a Humboldt, a Wilson or a Raffles, a Wilkinson or a Layard, whom he takes into consultation in the closet or bureau.

All honour to the explorers of all classes. Their names will stand for ever as landmarks, as finger-posts, at the great stages of advance—as starting-points for the missionaries of progress, civilisation, and truth; their memories will live associated with the great work of uniting men in the fellowship and commune, broken and interrupted by the original dispersion, and of linking them in the bondhoo of mutual knowledge and mutual interest.

Honour to all; and honour they have, and will have, as long as the spirit of inquiry and enterprise moves the elements of man's nature. But it sometimes happens that he who labours most gets least honour; that he who scatters flowers and wreathes garlands, is more thought of, more known, than he who comes bearing the ore for which he has dug and delved; that the thought, born of pleasure and poesy and beauty, will strike and dazzle more than that which has been wrought by toil of brain and the sweat of the brow; and it is therefore fair and just ever to aid in equalising the distribution, by bringing forward the claims of the hard workers and the delvers for their due meed of honour.

The work before us, *A Mission to the Court of Ava*, is perhaps one which may not have for general readers a great attraction, and from its size and costliness of preparation can never be much known to the run-and-read public; but it possesses, notwithstanding, a sterling merit, and exhibits a labour of research and fulness of information which entitle it to a very high appreciation. Written and compiled by one member of the mission, though comprehending the observations and researches of all—elaborate in detail, minute in scientific inquiry, splendid in illustration, it presents a complete picture of a country, with its scenic effects, costumes, ceremonies, and architectural remains, and a descrip-

tion almost encyclopædic of its features, its characteristics, and capabilities. It might be wished, perhaps, that there had been attached to the mission some cosmopolite philosopher, who was neither a "stone-breaker," nor a photographer, nor a surveyor, but who had been used to study man in his daily life, and who would have had leisure and inclination to have gathered and sketched in their homes and their haunts those little traits which sometimes give us more knowledge of the present, more insight into the future of a people, than whole chapters of ethnography and of speculations, derived from languages, religion, and art, on the origin and classification of races. However, there was not time for all things; and the main object of the mission was doubtless to amass information which might be practically useful to the government of India in all its future dealings and negotiations with the kingdom of Burmah, leaving it to passing travellers to fill in the broad outlines of facts and statistics with the lights and shades of national life. There are times and occasions when such books are priceless; when, taken into counsel, they might avert a political disaster or prevent a military blunder. Such a book might have warded off the catastrophe of Cabul, had there been rulers who would have heeded warning, or learned from the experiences of those who knew the land and its inhabitants. This book may thus be turned to good account, enlarging and correcting, as it does, our knowledge of a people with whom we have trafficked, fought, and treated in turns, for two centuries or more; who border on our frontiers, and a part of whose native territory we have annexed and rule over. This proximity, this connection, involves, and will further involve, a responsibility which binds us to study, seriously and deeply, all circumstances which may affect or direct our intercourse and relations with a kingdom partly surrounded by our power, and placed in a position of half dependence upon us; a responsibility which late events invest with a deep and solemn sacredness. An empire which has passed

through such a dread ordeal as ours has lately done, will ponder long and well ere it charge itself directly or indirectly with the destinies of a nation.

In these days of general information and diffusion of knowledge, it may seem presumptuous to describe Burmah as a locality, or to preface our review of the *Mission* by a sketch of its geographical and political position; but the knowledge is frequently so general that it does not condescend to local details, unless directed to them by some striking occurrence, as was evident from the confusion of places, races, and districts which existed in the public mind at the breaking out of the Indian mutiny; and, besides, it is always well—well for writer and reader—to have the scene of action or narrative placed and laid ere the actors be introduced upon it.

Nature ever declines in finials. After exhausting itself in some vast effort of continent, plains, and mountains, it descends into points, gradually fining off in size and feature. Thus, from the creation of the great northern steppes and mountain ranges, from the gigantic formations of Hindostan and China, it runs down into a large peninsula, terminating in three capes or ends. Bounded by the seas, by Bengal and China, and by the great northern barrier of mountains in Thibet and Yunan, this peninsula forms a territory compact and distinct in its geographical limits, and still more marked as being the abiding-place of the division of mankind designated as the Indo-Chinese race. Though descending in grandeur and vastness of features from its great neighbours, it still exhibits the strength and lavishness of nature's hand in lofty ridges, rolling rivers, and large alluvial plains. Divided into the various districts and kingdoms of Cochin China, Siam, Burmah, with all the states dependent on or connected with it, and Malacca, it is peopled (with the exception of the Malays) "by nations which, though separable into groups, distinguished as well by their physical characters as by the affiliation of languages, and manifesting in both these respects much that is common, and at the same time much

that is peculiar to each tribe," are, according to all evidence, to be referred to the same type and stock. The great characteristics all denote the same origin, and the differences are such as may be attributed to the influences of climate, position, and association. They are classed as Indo-Chinese, according to Pritchard, "from the fact that they partake of the ethnographical characters of the two nations between whom they dwell. Their physical characters and monosyllabic languages associate them with the Chinese; but their religion, their earliest mental culture, their literature, are entirely of Indian origin, though modified by the domination of the Chinese in later ages." "The physiological character of a people lasts longer than its language," and is ever the surest test of affinity betwixt races. Both in structure of language and physical organisation they resemble the Chinese, and in the latter respect certainly belong to the Mongolian branch. The broad flat face, the large prominent cheek-bones, the forms "robust and well-proportioned, but destitute of grace and flexibility," the muscular textures lax and flabby, all indicate the relationship. Their moral qualities, however, their institutions, and religion, all indicate the infusion of foreign elements; and yet all the various tribes agree sufficiently in these respects to confirm and justify the theory of a distinct and common origin.

Their religion is Buddhism in its simplest form, though amid some of the wild tribes it is mixed up with heathen rites and superstitions; and others deny all worship and religious belief, declaring "that they know little on the subject; that God once wrote His commands upon a buffalo's hide, and called all nations together to take an abstract of it, but that they had no time for the work, being occupied with tilling their land."

This great peninsula, diverging in its three sections and terminating in its three headlands, is also intersected by "longitudinal and nearly parallel chains of mountains, which run, occasionally diverging, from north to south, and contain between them wide valleys, and rivers equally long,

and flowing in nearly straight courses and in the same direction. These chains separate the entire territory of the peninsula into parallel bands of low and habitable country." Each of these marks the barrier line of the various nations and tribes which compose the Indo-Chinese race. It is of one of these we have to treat.

Betwixt two of the great chains which strike southwards from that "amphitheatre of snowy peaks," that great transverse mountainous barrier which crosses the back of the whole peninsula—"the one stretching, with a variety of breaks and ramifications, between the valley of the Salwen and that of the Irawadi," till one of its great spurs almost reaches the sea at Martaban—the other starting still farther westward from a "multiple mass of mountains," and spreading over Tipura, the coast of Chittagong and northern Arracan, a broad succession of unexplored and forest-covered spurs, and passing in a defined range still southward, till it sinks into the sea hard by Negrais, its last bluff crowned by the golden pagoda of Modain gleaming far to seaward—a Burmese Sunium—lie the divisions of the Burman Empire." "This tract is not to be conceived of as a plain, like the vast levels that stretch from the base of the Himalayas. It is rather a varied surface of rolling upland, interspersed with alluvial basins and sudden ridges of hill."

Through the midst of this country runs the majestic stream of the Irawadi, now squeezing through rocky defiles, now expanding into sandy shoals and encircling peopled islands, now deflecting with a grand sweep under the walls of the capital, now flowing by the ruined cities of ancient dynasties, now swelled by tributaries and sweeping on through wooded and cultivated plains, until it divides into many branches in the delta of Pegu, and there enters the sea. Here lived for centuries, little known and little heeded, and playing no conspicuous part in the great changes and revolutions of the world, many millions of men, broken up into nations and states, sometimes owning the supremacy of one, sometimes independent, scarcely shifting from their abiding-

place, subject to few vicissitudes, except the conflict of power and the changes of dynasties among themselves; attaining at times a high degree of prosperity, and leaving behind them traces of a very advanced state of civilisation. One great invasion from China had convulsed them, but they soon fell back into the old systems under the old dynasties, undisturbed from without, and unnoted by the great representatives of civilisation, save from the accounts which chance travellers brought of the wealth and state of their kings. The two principal kingdoms were the empire of Ava, possessed by the Marama or Burmah branch of the stock, and occupying the centre of the great tract along either side of the Irawadi; and Pegu, which comprehended the lower extremity of the western promontory of the peninsula, the Doab, and all the mouths of the Irawadi, and was held by the Mons or Taleins as the dominant race, intermixed, however, with the Karens, a people of simple and rustic habits, living in small villages, and following agricultural pursuits. Betwixt these two states the supreme power was changed and battled about, sometimes one obtaining the dominance, sometimes the other, according to the rise or fall of the different dynasties; sometimes the balance of independence being equally poised. Along the western side of the second promontory, separated by a mountain-spur from Siam, was the Tenasserim district; and beyond the outermost longitudinal chain betwixt Burmah and the sea, a long strip of land ran along the shore: this was the state of Arracan, inhabited by the Rukhings, a people of pure and ancient race, claiming to be the stock from which the Burmese sprang, and to have done for them what we have for the Americans—given them a lineage, traditions, a language, and civilisation. Amid the mountainous tracts to the westward and north-east of the Irawadi, were scattered wild and independent tribes, Shans and Kyens, the latter half savages in their lives and superstitions, tatooing their faces and living in miserable dwellings, outliers and borderers on the great civilised nations beyond.

In the work before us is a curious and interesting series of small maps, representing the historical geography of the Burmese countries at several epochs. Epoch the first, A.D. 1500, shows a nest of small provinces, distinct and separate, none apparently superior enough in size or position to overshadow the rest, each marking probably the settlement of a tribe. Turning across, we find this primitive arrangement very much disturbed in epoch second, 1580. The small blue patch which distinguished the kingdom of Pegu has here overspread all the space between the ranges, absorbing even a part of Siam, and leaving only Arracan, Assam, and the wild tribes' districts, as independent colours. This was the time of the conquests of the great Toungoo dynasty, and represents, perhaps, the most flourishing and advanced stage of the country. In the next compartment we have passed on to 1822, and all is changed again. A revolution had taken place, an usurper had given to Burmah the strength and energy of a new regime, and extended its dominion over all the territory lying between China, Siam, and the Anglo-Indian Empire, now looming ominously on the frontier.

“With such a frontier—with neighbours who only wished to be let alone—with such a trunk-line from end to end of his dominions as the Irawadi—with his teak forests and his mineral riches, and his fisheries, his wheat, cotton, and rice lands, a world of eager traders to the eastward, and the sea open in front, the King of Ava's dominion was a choice one, had not incurable folly and arrogance deprived him of his best advantages, cast down the barriers of his kingdom, and brought British cantonments and customhouses within his borders.” Truly the last division of the history shows a reverse of the picture. Folly and arrogance had provoked attack, aggression, annexation, and Ava lies shorn of its proportions, hemmed in on all sides, cut off from its harbours, and shut out from the shore by the mysterious power which had taken root like the Peepul tree, and spread itself along its borders, and into the very heart of its strength. There had long been

quarrels with traders—attempts at treaties of commerce. Establishments had been formed at Negrais and Bascin—had existed with varying success, though tolerated only on sufferance by the monarchs of Ava. At last, in the days of the great contest betwixt the powers of Pegu and Ava for mastery, the Europeans, having taken, or being supposed to have taken, part with his enemies, were barbarously massacred by Alompra the usurper. Henceforth a series of provocations and aggressions, outrages on our flag and our honour, invasions of our territory, extortionate exactions on trade, insolent answers to our complaints, kept the Anglo-Indian Empire in an unceasing state of remonstrance and angry relations with the Burmese. Mission followed mission; some were treated with indifference or neglect, some with direct insult; none had any effect. All these wrongs were met by us with long-suffering and forbearance, according to our account; and in this instance it was so. There is aggression enough on the national conscience, whether incited by temptation or necessity, but towards Burmah we doubtless forbore long and patiently, either from an over-estimate of its strength, or from an honest wish to obtain redress, and establish fair and amicable relations rather by negotiation than force. However, “complicated and repeated encroachments,” and an apprehension for the safety of our frontier, drove us from our peaceful intents, and in 1824 war was declared. It ended in a peace disastrous to the Burmese, and led to the treaty of Yandabo, an event and name ever since hateful to them. The Peepul tree had begun to stretch its roots; Arracan and Tenasserim had passed to the stranger; they were no longer jewels in the crown of Ava. The two nations, also, had arrived at a more correct appreciation of their mutual strength. Thus again there was an interval of partial confidence and partial intercourse; but the madness and insolence of two successive tyrants, Tharawadi and the “Paganmen,” raised the old grievances—led to the old collisions. Again there was war, and in 1852 Pegu was annexed. The Peepul tree was taking

its course, and Burmah was reft of the province which gave it command of the sea.

Our author thus sums up the consequences and results of the contact with the great Anglo-Indian power:—

“As with the Nepaulese and some other Indian powers, the empire of the Burmese princes had just expanded to the widest limits known in their history when it came into contact with British bayonets, and rapid collapse ensued. Thirty years have sufficed to strip them of dominions which had been the gradual acquisition of more than two centuries. Eighteen hundred and twenty-four saw the weak grandson of old Menlaragyi ruling over a territory that extended over Gowhati and the frontiers of the old British district of Rungpoor to the great river of Cambodia eastward, and to the island of Junk-Cylon southward, embracing altogether an extreme width of 800 miles, an extreme length of 1200 miles, and a seaboard of equal extent. Eighteen hundred and fifty-four saw the Burmese confines reduced nearly as low as they had been in the centuries of decay that succeeded the fall of the Pagan dynasties, and without access to the sea except through many leagues of British territory.”

It was the old story of the earthen and the brazen vase, so often illustrated in the world's history.

Thus stood matters when the mission in 1854 was undertaken. A king of milder character, and of more liberal intelligence, was on the throne; the officials around him had gained stern experience of British might; a mission of compliment had been sent to the Governor-General; and the time seemed fitting and good for confirming the intercourse and relations by a treaty. This was the ostensible purpose of the embassy, but the real object was evidently exploration and inquiry—a desire to become more accurately acquainted with a country and a people so intimately connected with our government and our territory. Consequently the mission was composed of men capable of observation and research in all departments. There was our author, the secretary—the *homme de plume*; there was the geologist—the stone-breaker—an accomplished photographer, and an artist; the envoy himself being one who had studied diligently, and was

well learned in the problems presented by the Eastern nations.

From such a combination it was to be expected that hereafter Burmah and its people would be better known and better understood.

The start is made from the frontier, and the mission is fairly launched on the Irawadi. To us there is nothing so beautiful and so interesting, even in description, as the panoramic effects of a voyage on a river: the changes are not too rapid to mar the completeness of each picture; and the succession of scenic elements falls harmoniously and softly on eye and mind, allowing them quietly to imbibe the beauty, the poesy, the blending of lights and shades, the mingling of man and his homes with Nature and her scenes. And then the gentle motion, the rippling of the waters, the gliding of the landscape—so tranquillising and so picturesque: all these we seem to feel as we follow in the track of the voyagers.

On and on sped the mission up and along the banks of the Irawadi; now passing by “a country low and undulating, now again a narrow campaign tract intervening between the river and the high land, having all that richness of aspect which an intermixture of palms with the larger forest trees bestows; and now villages, pleasant and cheerful places, generally with one or two dark monasteries raising their triple roofs above the mingled huts and foliage, and with dry-looking turfy hills behind, crowned with pagodas, and ascended by winding paths.” The party was soon increased by a deputation of officials from the court, most grave and reverend seignors; and the procession, too, was swelled by an escort of war-boats, “immense canoes, with long sharp bows and high curving sterns, double banked, with twenty to thirty rowers on a side, the whole exterior of the hull and the oars being gilt; festoons of muslin and tinsel net hung from the high sterns, and a great white banner, bordered with silver, and blazoned rudely in the centre with the royal peacock, drooped gracefully over the curving bamboo ensign-staff, the point of which was generally decorated with a globe of col-

oured glass or an inverted English decanter." These were outdone in picturesqueness by the native vessels, the craft of the Irawadi. Picturesque they look in illustration, and doubly so they must have been as they sailed onwards "before the wind, with their vast spreading wings and almost invisible hulls, and with the sunlight falling on their bellying sails, like a flight of colossal butterflies skimming the water." The construction of this craft was most peculiar. "The keel-piece, a single tree hollowed out;" the bow low, with beautiful hollow lines; "the stern rising high above the water; a paddle shipped for a rudder; a mast of two spars, bolted and lashed so that it could be let down or unshipped together, with ratlines running from one to the other, and forming a ladder." The rig was stranger still. "The yard is a bamboo, or a line of spliced bamboos, of enormous length, and, being perfectly flexible, is suspended from the mast-head by numerous guys or hal-yards, so as to curve upwards in an inverted bow. A rope runs along this, from which the huge mainsail is suspended, running on rings like a curtain outwards both ways from the mast." We have seen the boats of the Tagus, and wondered; but this must have been a greater marvel. On went the mission by day, staying by night at some town or village, where they were invariably recreated by a puppet-show and a regular dramatic performance, aided ever by a full Burmese orchestra. Without these no entertainment would be complete. They are the popular amusements of the people—the national ideas of recreation and representation. Dull and monotonous enough they appear to have been; but who shall say what is dull, what gay, what brilliant, what tasteful, what enjoyable, to other eyes? The mind, the age, the people, has each its own gauge of enjoyment; who shall dictate or prescribe for it? What has been received and recognised as the amusement of a nation must claim respect—must have in it inherent points of attraction, though we perceive them not. We should vote the operas and cotillons and the witticisms of our forbears rather slow; and yet

how they revelled in them, and considered themselves rather fast fellows. So their "pues" were to the Burmans the very essence and spirit of fun and interest, however monotonous they might seem to strangers. "What fools those English are," said the Sultan Mahmoud when witnessing a ball at the Embassy, "to be twisting and turning about and perspiring in that manner. If we wish to enjoy dancing, we make our slaves do it"—and look on. So much for the national estimate of pleasure. A "pues" might to a Burman be a richer treat than an opera which concentrated all the power of the Marios, and the Grisis, and the Piccolominis, and all the genius of the great Maestri; and to us, as the recreation of a people, it is an illustration of the feelings and phases of human nature, which we cannot but regard with interest, which we could not overlook in our estimate of the character of a race. The thing which stirs his heart to pleasure or enjoyment is ever a key to the solution of the great problem, man. Arts and sciences, institutions and governments, give him his rank in the classes of civilisation, but in the sources and objects of his joy and recreation we shall perhaps find a truer index to his inner nature.

Thus our author describes the popular entertainment, which during their journey was repeated night after night for the amusement of the members of the mission:—

"The stage of the Burmese theatre is the ground, and generally spread with mats. On one, two, or three sides are raised bamboo platforms for the more distinguished spectators; the plebs crowd in, and squat upon the ground in all vacant places. In the middle of the stage arena, stuck in the ground, or lashed to one of the poles supporting the roof, is always a small tree, or rather a large branch of a tree, which, like the altar on a Greek stage, forms a sort of centre to the action. I never could learn the real meaning of this tree. The answer usually was, that it was there in case a scene in a garden or forest should occur. But there is no other attempt at the representation of scenic locality; and I have a very strong impression that this tree has had some other meaning and origin, now probably forgotten. The foot-lights

generally consisted of several earthen pots full of petroleum, or of cotton seeds soaked in petroleum, which stood on the ground, blazing and flaring round the symbolic tree, and were occasionally replenished with a ladle-ful of oil by one of the performers. On one side or both was the orchestra, and near it generally stood a sort of bamboo horse or stand, on which were suspended a variety of grotesque masks. The property-chest of the company occupied another side of the stage, and constantly did duty as a throne for the royal personages who figure so abundantly in their plays.

"Indeed, kings, princes, princesses, and their ministers and courtiers, are the usual dramatic characters. As to the plot, we usually found it very difficult to obtain the slightest idea of it. A young prince was almost always there as hero, and he as constantly had a clownish servant, a sort of Shakespearian Lance, half fool, half wit, who did the comic business with immense success among the native audience, as their rattling and unanimous peals of laughter proved. It was in this character only that anything to be called acting was to be seen, and *that* was often highly humorous and appreciable even without understanding the dialogue. Then there was always a princess whom the prince was in love with. The interminable prolixity of dialogue was beyond all conception and endurance. What came of it all we could not tell. I doubt if any one could, for with the usual rate at which the action advances, it must have taken several weeks to arrive at a denouement.

"Much of the dialogue was always in singing; and in those parts the attitudes, actions, and sustained wailings, had a savour of the Italian opera, which was intensely comical at first. Dancing by both male and female characters was often interspersed or combined with the action. The female characters in the towns more remote from the capital were often personated by boys, but so naturally that we were indisposed at first to credit it.

"The puppet-play seemed to be even more popular among the Burmese than the live drama. For these little performers an elevated stage of bamboos and mats is provided, generally some thirty feet long. This affords room for a transfer of the scene of action; and very commonly one end of the stage is furnished with a throne to represent the court, whilst the other had two or three little branches to represent the forest. The style of the play acted by these

marionettes seemed to us very similar to that of the large actors, and was equally prolix in its dialogue and operative episodes. But I fancied that more often in the former there was a tendency to the supernatural, to the introduction of enchanted princesses, dragons, bats, and flying chariots, probably from the greater facility of producing the necessary effects on a small scale. Some of the puppet-plays, too, were 'mysteries' founded on the history of Guatama, which possibly it would not have been admissible for living actors to perform.

"The puppets were from ten to fifteen inches high, and were rather skilfully manipulated. Not seldom, however, they got entangled, and then a large brown arm of the *Deus ex machina* was seen descending from the dramatic welkin to dissolve the nodus; or a pair of huge legs, striding across the stage with a view to the adjustment of the foot-lights, perfectly realised Gulliver and Lilliput."

Each performance was attended by a full Burmese orchestra. The principal instruments were peculiar. One, called the pattsiaing, consisted of a circular tub-like frame, formed of separate wooden staves, fitting by tenons into a hoop, and having some eighteen or twenty drums or tom-toms suspended vertically round the interior. The performer sits squatted in the middle, and plays with the natural plectra of his fingers and palms. This is aided by various other instruments—clarionets with broad brass mouths, cymbals, clappers of split bamboo, and sometimes a large tom-tom. There were also concert instruments, stringed harps and harmonicons, curious and strange enough in shape, though not very original in design, and all displaying a very fair skill and advance in the knowledge of instrumental harmony.

The drama here could not be accepted as a representation or reflex of the social life of the people; and as all the action and the characters were sought in higher or imaginary spheres, it seems evident that their own lives and histories did not furnish incidents or tableaux sufficiently striking or interesting. This, however, indicates a very advanced stage, when men and women will sit to listen, to see, to weep, or to laugh, over the events of common life. It shows that a people

have attained a life of their own, and one which has more vivid action and interest for them than the fictions of state or fancy—one which they can accept as a drama furnishing scenes and incidents which they can delight to see exhibited in pathos or caricature. The Burman, rising from his reed hut and monotonous existence, sought his excitement, his romance, in the stories of kings and princes, and in the ideal world of gods and Náts. In thus placing his scenes in unknown spheres, and in selecting his heroes from a class of beings supernaturally or socially above or beyond him, he is not dissimilar to nations more elevated in the scale of civilisation. Neither is the prolixity of dialogue, which our author complains so much of, peculiar to him. What audience nowadays would not yawn over the recitation of a Greek chorus, or sleep or groan over the classic speeches in *Cato*? The national drama is ever held especially to be an index to the moral status of a people. One authority pronounces the Burmese to be full of abominable conceptions; and again another, and a very high one too, Major Phayre, the envoy, strongly protests against such a view, and declares that he never, in the Burmese plays, saw anything approaching to indecency, except when there was a sprinkling of Europeans, and believes that the indecent actions were then introduced in supposed conformity to the tastes of their visitors. What a rebuke to civilisation! Does not this national recreation, however—this picture of crowds sitting hour after hour, day after day, to listen to prolix dialogue, and wait for feeble denouements, prepare us to hear afterwards of a people inert and apathetic, indifferent to the present, hopeless of the future, careless and despairing of their own lot, and delighting rather in the pleasures of the imagination and the sense, than in the actual and active enjoyments of life? When the recreations of a race lack the robustness and vigour of personal action, we can scarcely ever hope to find in their history or their career the energy, the independence, or the character which leads to the development of a great or national destiny.

On speeds the mission along the river, stopping at the different towns and villages to see plays, receive deputations, and make excursions to oil-wells, until it reaches a chief and interesting point in the journey, the ancient city of Pagan, whose ruins are the vestiges of the past of Burmah. The past of a people who bear no promise of a future is a sacred record, and they who preserve or publish it, do a faithful and honest part toward the elucidation of the great problem, the history of man. This the mission did for us. The past of Burmah, as it exists, and is written in the works and remains of art, has been vividly presented and illustrated; so that, though temple and pagoda may crumble and decay, the lessons they convey, the state of civilisation they represent, and the knowledge which can be culled from the impress man leaves on his works, will be ever open to the inquiry of philosophy or the comparisons of art.

Here, at Pagan, twenty-one kings reigned in succession; here Buddhism was established as the religion of the country; and here was enacted the greatest and most prosperous period of Burmese history. Magnificent ruins, extending over a space of eight miles, exhibiting all kinds and forms of temple architecture, and enclosed by a ditch and mound, and large masses of ruined brickwork—all attest a high stage of civilisation, art, wealth, and grandeur, though they have no record, no tradition of the glory or the greatness of the kings who reigned here for so many centuries. They are records of man rather than of dynasties. It was a vast quarry of architectural research and analogy; it was a chapter in the history of man, and such chapters, however short or obscure, are ever important pages in the great book.

Here were found all the varied expressions of the religion of Buddhism, embodied in the beautiful and elaborate forms of Eastern art. "The bell-shaped pyramid of dead brickwork, in all its varieties; the same raised over a square or octagonal cell, containing an image of the Buddha; the bluff knob-like dome of the Ceylon Dagobas; the fantastic Bo-phyas, or pumpkin pagoda, which seemed

rather like a fragment of what we might conceive the architecture of the moon than anything terrestrial." "But the predominant and characteristic form is that of the cruciform vaulted temple." This is the substantial type of the temples at Pagan.

"The body of the buildings was cubical in form, enclosing a Gothic vaulted chamber. The entrance was by a projecting porch to the east, and this porch had also a subsidiary door on its north and south sides. There were also slightly-projecting door-places on the three other sides of the main building, sometimes blank, and sometimes real entrances. The plan of the building, it will be seen, was cruciform. Several terraces rose successively above the body of the temple, and from the highest terrace rose a spire, bearing a strong general resemblance to that of the common temples of Eastern India, being, like the latter, a tall pyramid, with bulging sides. The angles of this spire were marked as quoins, with deep joints, and a little apex at the projecting angle of each, which gave a peculiar serrated appearance to the outline when seen against the sky. The buildings were entirely of brick; the ornamental mouldings still partially remained in plaster. The interior of each temple contained an image of Guatama, or its remains. The walls and vaults were plastered, and had been highly decorated with minute fresco-paintings."

The finest and most perfect of the type is the Ananda, and which is still the most frequented as a place of worship. It illustrates an architecture so beautiful and so singular, "so sublime even in its effects," that we cannot forbear transferring the author's description of it, though full justice could not be done to it without the exquisite drawing and plans, which place it before the eye in all its completeness and all its details.

"This temple is said to have been built in the reign of Kyan-yeet-tha, about the time of the Norman conquest of England. Tradition has it that five Rahandas, or saints of the order second only to a Buddha, arrived at Pagan from the Hema-woonda, or Himalayan region. They stated that they lived in caves on the Nanda-moola hill, and the king requested them to give him a model of their abode, from which he might construct a temple. The Rahandas did

as they were requested. The temple, being built, was called Nanda-tsee-goon, or caves of Nanda.

"The Ananda is in plan a square of nearly 200 feet to the side, and broken on each side by the projection of large gabled vestibules, which convert the plan into a perfect Greek cross. These vestibules are somewhat lower than the square mass of the building, which elevates itself to a height of thirty-five feet in two tiers of windows. Above this rise six successively diminishing terraces, connected by carved converging roofs, the last terrace just affording breadth for the spire, which crowns and completes the edifice. The lower half of this spire is the bulging, mitre-like pyramid, adapted from the temples of India; the upper half is the same moulded taper pinnacle that terminates the common bell-shaped pagoda of Pegu. The gilded *htee* caps the whole, at a height of 168 feet above the ground. The building, internally, consists of two concentric and lofty corridors, communicating by passages for light opposite the windows, and by larger openings to the four porches. Opposite each of these latter, and receding from the inner corridor towards the centre of the building, is a cell or chamber for an idol. In each this idol is a colossal standing figure, upwards of thirty feet in height. They vary slightly in size and gesture, but all are in attitudes of prayer, preaching, or benediction. Each stands facing the porch and entrance, on a great carved lotus pedestal, within rails, like the chancel-rails of an English church. There are gates to each of these chambers—noble frames of timber—rising to a height of four-and-twenty feet. The frame-bars are nearly a foot in thickness, and richly carved on the surface in undercut foliage; the panels are of lattice-work, each intersection of the lattice marked with a gilt rosette.

"The lighting of these image-chambers is, perhaps, the most singular feature of the whole. The lofty vault, nearly fifty feet high, in which stands the idol, canopied by a balance of gilt metal curiously wrought, reaches up into the second terrace of the upper structure, and a window pierced in this sends a light from far above the spectator's head, and from an unseen source, upon the head and shoulders of the great gilded image. This unexpected and partial illumination in the dim recesses of these vaulted corridors, produces a very powerful and strange effect, especially on the north side, where the front light through the great doorway is entirely

subdued by the roofs of the covered approach from the monastic establishments. The four great statues represent the Buddhas who have appeared in the present world-period."

Another great feature in the art and religion also of Burmah, is the number of monasteries or *kyoungs* which are seen everywhere in connection with the temples. These exhibit even a greater richness of ornamentation and detail, and the most perfect of them, afterwards seen at Amarapoora, seemed actually to overwhelm and dazzle the sight with the multiplicity and elaboration of the ornaments. One is spoken of as "carved like an ivory toy, and being a blaze of gold and other ornament."

"In the precincts of the Ananda was a large group of these *kyoungs* or monastic buildings, forming a street of some length. These, in beauty of detail and combination, were admirable; the wood-carving was rich and effective beyond description; great fancy was displayed in the fantastic figures of warriors, dancers, *náts*, and *bilus* (ogres), in high relief, that filled the angles and niches of the sculptured surfaces. The fretted pinnacles of the ridge-ornaments were topped with birds cut in profile, in every attitude of sleeping, picking, stalking, or taking wing."

The Burmese architecture is itself a study: the material is the "*kucha pukka*" work, "that is, brick cemented with mud only;" and the style is one peculiar and striking, combining as it does solidity of structure with the beauty and grotesqueness of detail, and being withal religious and solemn, as well as gorgeous. The principle of the construction is "a representation of the cave, a favourite style of building among the Burmese for depositing images, and not a wonderful one among votaries of a religion which regards an ascetic life in the wilderness as the highest state for mortals in this world." But this is so covered with the forms and ornaments belonging to other religions or other styles, that the original idea, if not lost, is at any rate confused by the beauty and brilliancy of the exterior, and the variety of designs superadded on the gloom and coldness of the cave idea. It would seem at first to have most affinity with the Indian;

but this, on a careful comparison, applies only to the details, and not the construction; "for the arches and vaults which are such marked features in the Pagan temples, are quite unknown to ancient Hindoo architecture." In the religious expression, too, they differ. "The Burman, rejecting indeed, in the pride of his philosophy, the idea of an Eternal Divinity, but recognising the eternal sanctities of nature and conscience, has reared nobler fancies, and far more worthy to become the temples of the true God, than the Hindoo, with those his deities so numerous and impure." And then again: "The arches and semi-arches resting on regular pilasters, with base, capital, and cornice, the singular resemblance of which, both in general character and in many of the details of mouldings, to the pilasters of Roman architecture, is startling, perplexing, and unaccountable,"—induced with some the theory that these temples must have owed their origin to the skill of a Western Christian or missionary, who may have adopted largely the ornamentation of the Burmese, and engrafted much of their detail and arrangement on his own ideas of a temple, and that the cross-like plan was thus symbolical. Our author, too, again and again remarks how singularly these buildings, especially "the Ananda, suggest strange memories of the temples of southern Catholic Europe." Assuredly in the descriptions we recognise touches of the Gothic character; and ever and anon, as we looked on the pictures, so gorgeous in ornamentation, and so quaint in many of the details, there would float across our vision shadows and recollections of those strange and long-hidden temples in Central America.

It is, however, unjust, and apparently irrational, to be always attempting to reduce the art or style of a people to some known and recognised standard; most of the symbols and designs which are adopted by man in the expression of his worship, are such as are generally recognisable in some shape amid the generality of tribes and nations, and their presence would argue nothing more than the common heart and

feelings which are in man. It would seem hard to rob the Burman of the glory which the conception of these structures must attach to his age of civilisation, by regarding them as the copies and imitations of other types and other ideas than his own. There would seem no doubt that he borrowed much of his detail from the Hindoo, to whom he was doubtless indebted for much also of his culture; but the great principle of the construction, especially as it harmonises well with the phase of Buddhism which he had accepted as his religion, was doubtless his own, modified probably by contact, and by the traditions of the two races from whom he sprang.

It is much easier to believe that "the Burmans of those days were very different from the Burmans of the present," and that the magnificence and taste of the age in which these edifices were created have died away, than that their designs were due to the skill of Christian missionaries or foreign art. No one dreams, because the Greek of to-day is not the Greek of the past, that the Parthenon was therefore an importation, or the production of a stranger race.

The men, however, who could attain such "an actual sublimity of architectural effect, which excites wonder, almost awe, and could leave behind them such an evidence of combined power and exertion," must have achieved a civilisation which made them of some importance in the world's history, and have left a past rich in records of grandeur and achievement. Some such records may yet be explored; and if none other should exist than these temples, they alone would present a store of knowledge and research to those who delight to trace in man's works the analogies of races, and the progress of nations and peoples.

From the city of the past we pass on to the city of the present, the seat of the Burmese monarchy, Amara-poor. This capital is associated with the destiny of the reigning dynasty. It was founded by a descendant of Alompra, and has since been, with a short interruption, the residence of the race. The royalty of Burmah had moved gradually, era

after era, up the Irawadi, from Prome to Pagan, from Pagan to Panya, from Panya to Ava, from Ava to Amara-poor—ever retreating from the sea, ever holding by the river. "This city stands on slightly elevated ground, which in the flood season forms a long peninsula, communicating with the mainland naturally only at the northern end. Walled embankments and wooden bridges, some of them of extraordinary length, connect the peninsula with the country to the eastward, southward, and south-westward. On the north-west side runs a wide creek from the Irawadi. The city, however, except in the high floods, is accessible from the present main stream of the river only near the extremity of the western suburb." The city proper of Amara-poor is laid out four-square at the widest part of the peninsula, and is bounded by a defensive wall of brick, about twelve or thirteen feet high, with a battlemented parapet. The four sides are each a little short of a mile in length, and are exactly alike, excepting that at the north-west, where the river channel comes close under the walls, the angle of the square has been cut off obliquely. Each side has three gates and from eleven to thirteen bastions, including those through which the gates are cut. The palace occupies the centre, its walls being laid symmetrically with those of the city, and has three successive enclosures, with a high palisade of teak posts outside. "The four-square city, with the palace in the centre, is the characteristic form of the old Burman cities, and has perhaps a mythic origin." Within the defences the streets are laid out parallel to the four walls, running from gate to gate, and cutting up the city into rectangular blocks. The houses of the princes, the ministers of state, and other dignitaries, generally occupy the areas within the blocks into which the rectangular streets divide the town. The city of the people differed from the city of the state.

"There were no brick buildings within the walls, except the temples, and the few in the palace. The streets are very wide, and in dry weather are tolerably clean. They are always free from the

closeness and offensive smells of most Indian towns. There are, however, no public arrangements or regulations for street-cleaning, and the dogs are the only scavengers. There is no attempt at drainage, and consequently in wet weather the streets are deep in mire, and some of the lower parts of the city are absolutely swamped. Large unoccupied spaces still exist within the walls, and the population is nowhere dense. The great majority of the houses are mere bamboo cottages, slightly raised from the ground on posts along all the chief streets. At the distance of a few feet from the house front, on each side, runs a line of posts and neat lattice hurdles or palings, which are left white-washed. The posts are crowned with plants in flower-pots, and between the houses and the palings there are often a few flowering-shrubs. This arrangement is called *Yaga-más*, or king's fence, and is supposed to be put up whenever the king is likely to pass, in order to prevent the crowd from encroaching on him disrespectfully. Indeed, they are expected not to stare on him, for in Burmah the right of a cat to look on a king is not well established. This lattice-fence gives a tidy appearance to the streets, but, concealing the shops and their contents (always the most interesting subjects of curiosity in a foreign city), it destroys all picturesque variety, and gives the town an aspect of monotony and depopulation. The passages of the most frequented gates are favourite stations for the stalls of the staple articles, with the addition of all sorts of small wares, such as *pán*-boxes, copper spoons, scissors, little pictures, ear-tubes of coloured glass and metal, steatite pencils, strike-lights, &c. Berths for similar goods are ranged against the corners of the palace palisade, and at the very gate of the palace is the principal mart for the stationers who deal in the *para beiks* (or black books) and steatite pencils, which form the only ordinary writing of the Burmese in their common transactions."

A larger and denser population occupies the western suburb, and here are the foreigners, the Mussulmans of India, the Chinese, stray Europeans, and Armenians, who come for trade and traffic; and in this foreign quarter brick houses are more common, especially among the Chinese, with whom it is a particular vanity. Amarapoora represents the present, as the ruins of Pagan may record the past of Burmah. The pic-

ture is not inviting—the contrast betwixt the state quarters and the residences of the people, betwixt the richly decorated monasteries and the bamboo huts, the absence of intermediate dwellings, the fencing-out of the commonalty, the want of bustle and picturesqueness in the marts, all mark a stagnation of life, a deficiency of the elements of progress and the movement of society which would promise a fair and hopeful future for the kingdom and the people. The State absorbs the whole of note or mark, and the commonalty sinks into the shade.

As we have said before, we cannot but regret that there was not attached to the mission some street philosopher,—one who had an eye for man, who had nought to do with the science or the etiquette of the mission, and who was free to move up and down in the towns and cities, gathering traits of life and character. From such an one we might have had other and perhaps brighter views of the qualities and capabilities of the Burmese as a people.

The national picture would be very incomplete without the introduction of the royalty and the court, such very chief elements in the world of Burmah. They are very fully and elaborately portrayed by our author.

The main and ostensible object of the mission was an audience with the sovereign, for the purpose of obtaining a treaty guaranteeing certain privileges.

After many days of tiresome discussion, vexatious delays, and wranglings, as to the etiquette to be observed on the occasion—whether the Governor's letter was to be carried under a canopy, or not—whether the members of the mission were to take off their shoes at this place or that—trifles to us, but matters of moment in Eastern intercourse—the day for the important ceremonial was fixed. The abode of the Embassy was separated from the city by a lake.

"The passage of this was rather a brilliant scene. The jolly-boats of the steamers led the way, with the men of the 84th; the Governor-General's letter followed in the Zembra's gig, with the Company's jack flying at the bow; the officers of the mission in other gigs and

cutters ; and a gilt war-boat carrying the envoy and the *woons*, with Burman oarsmen rowing to a wild chant. The background of the picture was formed by the white spire and pinnacles of a temple, with a surrounding grove of noble cotton-trees and tall palmyras ; the Burmese soldiers of the guard and crowds of villagers lining the banks of the lake, whilst behind all rose the manifold ranges of the Shan Mountains . . . The route lay to the western central gate of the city. For the whole distance the way was lined with troops. All sorts of persons had been pressed into the service, peasants, old men, and boys ; but the essential point was the exhibition of a store of muskets. At each cross-street stood elephants carrying officers (as they seemed to be)—men in gilt mambrino hats and mountebank costumes, exactly like the histrionic princes in the theatres at Magwe and elsewhere, decked out with triple buckram caps, and shoulder-lappets, and paltry embroidery. Many of the soldiers carried green leaves or flowers in the muzzles of their pieces. Crowds of spectators, among whom more than half were women, peeped through the white lattices that line the principal streets, and thronged in denser masses at the cross-streets, all silent, or nearly so. . . Among the spectators were some comely women and many tastefully dressed, and with pleasant sensible expression, though generally disfigured by a careworn aspect, or by a prominently bad mouth."

On the procession was paraded half round the city, and then through streets deluged with water, and lined with soldiers, providentially furnished with little stools or platforms of bamboo, to keep them out of the mud (a precaution of discipline worthy of a soldier of Mahon), on through the "royal gate of the chosen ;" and after another debate as to skikhoeing, and shoes or no shoes, to the hall of audience, and there, seated upon the carpet, with their legs doubled up behind them, the mission awaited to present themselves "at the golden feet."

"The long wings of this hall formed, as it were, the transepts of a cathedral ; in front of us ran back a central wall like the choir ; and in the position of the altar stood the throne under a detached roof, which, in fact, formed the many-storied spire conspicuous from all sides of the city. The central space was bounded by tall columns, lackered and picked out in red towards their bases.

Other rows of columns ran along the transepts. The whole, except the red bases of the columns, was a blaze of gilding. One high step, and four of less size, ascended to the dais on which stood the throne. This was in character exactly like the more adorned seats of Guatama in the temples, and like that from which the High Poongyi preaches. Its form is peculiar, contracting, by a gradation of steps, from the base upwards to mid-height, and again expanding to the top. The top of the throne was matted with crimson velvet, and at one side was an elbow-chair for the king. A carved doorway, closed by gilded lattice-doors, led from behind to the top level of the throne. The material of the throne was a sort of mosaic of gold, silver, and mirror-work. A few small figures occupied niches in the central band. These were said to represent the progenitors of the human race. In front of it, on the edge of the steps, stood five fine-gilded shafts, with small gilded labels or scrolls attached to them. These are also royal emblems. On each side of the dais were railed recesses like pews, and along the walls, which run right and left in rear of the throne, were rows of expanded white umbrellas, fringed with muslin valances. The centre aisle in front was occupied by a double row of young princes in surcoats of silver and gold brocade, with gay silk putsos. Farther forward, near the steps of the dais, and between two pillars on our right, the Ein-she-men, or heir, was seated in a sort of couch or carved litter, scarcely raised above the ground."

There and thus sat the mission, with the Governor-General's letter on a gilt stool before them, partaking, in uneasy and uncomfortable attitudes, of refreshments from "little gilt stands containing trays of tobacco, pawn and *klafet*, or pickled tea, and other curious confections, neatly set out in golden cups or saucers, and accompanied by water-goblets and gold drinking-cups," which were liberally handed around.

"At last the king's approach was announced by music, sounding, as it appeared, from some inner court of the palace. A body of musketeers entered from the verandas in rear of the throne, and, passing forward, took their places between the pillars on each side of the centre aisle, kneeling down with their muskets between their knees, and their hands clasped before them in attitude of prayer. As the last man entered, the golden-lattice doors behind the throne

rolled back into the wall, and the king was seen mounting a stair leading from a chamber behind to the summit of the throne. He ascended slowly, and as if oppressed by weights, using his golden-sheathed sword as a staff to assist his steps. This is doubtless in some degree royal etiquette, but at the same time it was known that the jewelled coat worn by his majesty actually weighed nearly one hundred pounds! The queen followed close on her husband, and after assisting to hand in the golden spittoon, and other appendages of a Burmese dignitary, and fanning herself and her husband for a few minutes, whilst one of the girls from behind brought a lighted cheroot, which was immediately placed between the royal lips, finally took her seat. . . . From the distance at which the king was viewed, he seemed a portly man, having features of a much more refined character than are common among his subjects—exhibiting, indeed, the national physiognomy, but much subdued. His expression was good and intelligent, his hands delicately and finely formed. His dress was a sort of long tunic or surcoat, of a light-coloured silk apparently, but so thickly set with jewels that the fundamental material was scarcely discernible. His crown or cap was a round tiara of similar material, like an Indian morion, rising to a peak crowned with a spire-like ornament several inches high, and having flaps or wings rising over each ear. Over the forehead was a gold plate or frontlet; this crown is called Thara-poo. The queen was not seen to such advantage; this was partly owing to the character of her head-dress, which would have been a very trying one to any lady."

It would scarcely be justice to our fair readers to withhold the description of this dress also. Here it is:—

"It was a perfectly close cap, covering ears and hair entirely, and rising above into a conical crest, strangely resembling in form a rhinoceros horn, with the point curved forward into a volute; close lappets fell along the cheeks. The rest of her majesty's dress had rather an Elizabethan character. The sleeves and skirt appeared to be formed in successive overlapping scalloped lappets, and the throat was surrounded by a high collar, also scalloped or vandyked, and descending to the waist. At the waist she wore a stomacher or breast-plate of large gems. Both cap and robe were covered and stiffened with large diamonds, or what appeared to be such."

"When the king had fairly entered, all took off their hats, and the whole native assembly bowed their faces to the ground, and clasped their hands in front of them. The two rows of little princes, who lay in file before us, doubled over one another like fallen books on a shelf; and the two *atwen-woons* who sat near us grovelled forward in their frog-like attitude to a point half-way to the throne, as if to establish a 'repeating station' betwixt the king and us. Some eight or ten Brahmins, in white stoles, and white mitres encircled with gold leaves, then entered the screened recesses or pews near the throne, and commenced a choral chant in the Sanscrit language."

Then, after more chanting and other preliminary ceremonials, the Governor-General's letter was read aloud by the "Receiver of the Royal Voice," and the presents were delivered—looked at, wondered at, especially a railway model; and then, after some regular official questions, the royal departure took place, the mission was relieved from sitting on its heels, and the reception was over. This was dull work enough—but it was the state visit, and etiquette prescribed its routine and formalities. There were other interviews of a less formal character, when royalty appeared in *dishabille*, divested of the overweights of state ceremonial; and then the conversation was more animated, and his majesty displayed ever therein an intelligence and knowledge, after his own kind, and a degree of speculation and research, which would not have shamed many of his European compeers. Religion, science, government, all were in turn subjects of discussion; to this followed interviews with the *Ein-she-men* and the great officials, all shadows of the royal one. In the official ones there seemed some jollity, and an oppressive series of eating, drinking, and consumption of pickled tea. We could sympathise with their labours in undergoing the multiplicity of breakfasts and desserts, for we once ourselves remember pressing our hospitable intents on a party of foreigners, and being suddenly pulled back by an old sea-captain, who hissed with stage whisper in our ears, "For God's sake don't stuff these fellows

any more; this is the fourth time they have lunched, they have three more to get through, and then they dine at half-past six." We saw them sup, and only hope that our Embassy addressed themselves to their task as kindly, and with such good appetite, followed apparently by good digestion.

One official deserves particular note—the Lord White Elephant, a great minister of state. A wag of our acquaintance, when asked what he would most like to be, answered—"A board—for then there is always good picking, good pay, and no responsibility." According to this rule, the Lord White Elephant would be an enviable personage—great state, nothing to do, and a territory to eat. How would *Punch's* fat boy, who rather envied the destiny of the fat pig, have longed for a transmigration into the White Elephant existence! This functionary has a palace or state apartment, with an humbler everyday residence, and "sheds for the vulgar herd of the same species, and brick godowns in which the state carriages and golden litters are stowed away." "The present White Elephant has occupied his post for at least fifty years." "He is a very large one, close upon ten feet high, with as noble a head and pair of tusks as I have ever seen; but he is long-bodied and lanky, and not otherwise well made. He is a regular "estate of the realm," having a woon or minister of his own, four gold umbrellas—the white umbrellas which are peculiar to royalty—with a suite of attendants said to be thirty in number." Like many other sinecurists and "estates of the realm," he does not seem to flourish much under his dignities, but would doubtless be a happier elephant if he could exchange his palace and his umbrellas for coverts, forests, and overhanging trees. The possession of a white elephant is a sort of ensign of universal sovereignty, and the discovery of one is hailed as a good and happy omen for a reign. The slightest blemish, however—a few black hairs in the tail, or some such matter—at once mars its claims to sanctity. 'Tis well that all the other great officers of state are not chosen with the same

fastidiousness. Fancy a white-stick or a gold-stick being rejected for red hair or crooked legs!

The palace and the bamboo hut, what a contrast do they present! and there is little save woons and white elephants betwixt them. It is the old story of the one absorbing the wealth, the splendour, the resources of a country, and leaving around a waste of dreary poverty, squalidness, and apathy. The corn in one heap, the husks scattered all around—such as Burmah is, spite of all that is said, such it must ever have been, in a degree, in this respect. Amarapoora may not vie with the relics of Pagan; but when we read of its palaces, its monasteries—richer in art even than those of ancient times—and reflect that it is the capital of a new dynasty, a new city, raised and created amid the difficulties and trials of intestine struggles and foreign wars, we cannot believe that there has been any great falling-off in the royal finances or in native art; and there is nothing in the records or traditions of the race to lead us to the belief that the relations of people and sovereign, the difference betwixt state and commonalty, bamboo hut and palace, were ever other than they are now. The extent of the sovereignty was wider, the splendour of courts and cities perhaps greater and more gorgeous, but we doubt, from what is seen of the present, and what known of the past, whether the men of the land, the real strength of a nation, were ever more than dwellers in bamboo huts, and spectators of puses. The strength of a nation, diffused through classes, would have shown itself in greater national efforts, in more vigorous stands for independence. Kings and kings' coffers may create national works, but it is only a people naturalised and bound to the State who can raise a national destiny.

The mission failed in its purpose of a treaty. That seems to us but little matter. The great object was evidently the gathering and collecting information and details of the country and its people. This was done as thoroughly as the time and opportunities permitted. We have

quoted purposely from the parts which throw out the salient points of the national characteristics and conditions,—the amusements of the people—the monuments of the past—the present as it appears in the modern city—the state and forms of royalty, and the architecture as it reflects the genius of the people. Many lighter and more amusing scenes might have been selected, but these would not have shown the character and principle of the book, which were eminently useful and informing. The concluding chapters contain a summary of the geography, religion, statistics, and government of the country, and are, perhaps, the most valuable part of the work.

The government would appear to be a pure despotism, aided and carried out by a high court or council, composed of the Woongyis, or principal ministers of state.

“Four appears to be the normal number of woongyis, and they do not appear to have any distribution of departments of business among them, but deliberate together at the *Hlwot-dau*, on whatever is brought before the body. Their decisions, when confirmed by the king, become the laws of the land. The *atwen-woons* or household ministers, also four in number, are intrusted with the internal affairs of the palace and the realm, and the business of the royal monopolies. The woongyis are generally designated by the title of office, or by a sort of peerage title derived from the township or district which they eat.”

These and their confederates, the *atwen-woons*, administer the law and the State, and apparently constitute the aristocracy of the country. As far as we can gather, there is no hereditary rank, no middle class, no power, no estate standing between the crown and its functionaries and the people. The military state of Burmah is very low—contemptible indeed. The King of Ava has no magazines or munitions of war, so called; and though the life of every subject is at the disposal of the king, and every male is liable to serve as a soldier whenever he is called upon, the strength of a Burmese force must depend not on the amount of the population, but on the number the

king can feed in a collected state, and on the number of muskets.

The army is supplied by contingents provided by provinces and districts, and has besides a more permanent force on duty at the capital, and believed to amount to about ten thousand men. This force, however, as has been amply proved, is deficient in military character, organisation, and resources.

“It appears to be allowed that Buddhist worship and the monastic discipline are preserved in Burmah with greater purity than in any other country, the former less mixed with the service of intruding divinities, and the latter less stained with the habitual breach of obligations either of poverty or continence. The ethics of their Buddhism, with many puerilities, free as they are from the warp of caste, appear to be much purer than those of Brahminism, and here and there among them maxims are seen of a startling thoroughness that remind one of the penetrating precepts of Holy Writ.” The monastic state is carried here to a greater extent than in any Asiatic country perhaps, and is considered indispensable to the attainment of perfection and bliss. “The reputation of the monks in Burmah, too, maintains, I believe, a respectable level. Yet the moral system has had little effect on the character of the people. No point, at least, is more prominent in that system than tenderness of life. Yet in no country probably (unless in semi-Buddhist China) has human life been more recklessly and cruelly sacrificed, whether in punishment of crime, or in judicial and private murder.” The geographical description has already been given; its commercial capabilities would not appear to be many or considerable, but yet such as have hitherto been very incompletely developed. The resources of the country, varying, as it does, in its climate and population, are doubtless vast, and such as, under other sway and other circumstances, might be made more advantageous to human life and national prosperity. A sparse population of two millions spread over such an extent

of territory, would in itself indicate all the wants of government and defects of civilisation. All the deductions—all the conclusions, though not expressed—lead to the conviction that the country and people, as they exist now, do not possess the elements of progress within themselves—that they require for their advancement and development a stronger impulse and more energetic governing force. All point to the further progress of the Peepul tree. Yet shall we ever again devote national rights and independence to theories of government and civilisation? or shall we not rather pause until the will of a people, rather than the necessities of polity, invite our dominion? Burmah would, from its condition and position, say, Come, take us, govern and civilise us. India, with its experiences, says, “Stay thine hand until events are ripe—until empire be no injury, no polity, but a benevolence and a blessing.”

Thus must we quit the book and its subject, deeply impressed with the value of its information, and the thoroughness with which its object has been carried out, even to the sacrifice of lightness and attraction. There has been one aim systematically adopted and adhered to—that of collecting and publishing a knowledge of Burmah and its inhabitants; and this has been done by plans, maps, illustrations, and a carefully-compiled letterpress, which establish the topography, illustrate the architectural remains, and delineate the features of the country, with a correctness, vividness, and particularity of detail, which will make this, hereafter, a text-book for politicians, archæologists, philosophers, and explorers. The man who makes one blade of wheat grow where one never grew before, confers, it is said, a benefit on

the world; and surely he who sets before us in light and knowledge one particular nation, however unimportant it may be in the economies of peoples, has done something for mankind—something which shall aid us in knowing and communing with one another. This our author has done. He cannot or may not expect that his costly volume will lie on the lap of railway travellers, or that his leaves will be turned over by the fair fingers of sea-side visitants; but when the governors of his nation seek for knowledge on the subject of the country he describes, or when savants and philosophers seek for facts on the characteristics and analogies of the race of whose past and present he treats, they will recur to him as their authority and councillor. This appreciation may not be so sweet or so ready as popularity, but it is more solid, more enduring; and he who has been capable of so much labour and research will also be capable of waiting for his reward.

Whilst, however, giving all due honour to those who thus creditably fulfilled the mission intrusted to them, it were unjust not to pay a passing tribute to the energy and wisdom of the mind which planned and sent it forth. It would be well for us and our policy were all rulers to follow the system then adopted by Lord Dalhousie, and to make the missions of diplomacy and etiquette instrumental to the acquisition of the knowledge of a people, and the advancement of science. Such a system must be ever of incalculable gain to a governing power, and to the general interests of mankind; and it is to be hoped that all future missions may be conducted on a principle so worthy of a civilised nation.