

AMONGST THE SHANS

BY

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With upwards of Fifty whole-page Illustrations
AND AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE SHANS

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PRECEDED BY AN INTRODUCTION ON

THE CRADLE OF THE SHAN RACE

BY

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LONDON:

FIELD & TUER; SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & Co.;
HAMILTON, ADAMS & Co.

NEW YORK: SCRIBNER & WELFORD.

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1885.

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industrious, better educated, and more law-abiding than the Burman and heathen Karen villagers in their neighbourhood—an opinion which will be generally endorsed by all who have studied Burmah. The Karen race, and the British Government, owe a great debt to the American missionaries, who have wrought this beneficial change among the Karens of British Burmah.

The town of Hmine Long-gyee had increased from twenty houses, in 1836, to two hundred at the time of our visit. It is beautifully situated in the midst of gardens of pomegranate, cocoa-nut, papya, and guava trees. The surrounding fields are irrigated by Persian water-wheels, and laid out in terraces, two crops of rice being grown in the year. The hills to the east of the valley abound in tiger, elephant, elk, deer, wild cattle, and wild pig. The rhinoceros is found in the lower and grassy parts of the jungle, while monkeys and pheasants, as well as jungle fowl, are plentiful. The hills are covered with eng, saul, and small teak timber that has not been considered by the Burmese foresters worthy of extraction. The higher portions of the range and its spurs are covered with splendid pine-forests.

The river rises at Hmine Long-gyee thirty to forty feet during the rains, and many portions of the lower land in the neighbourhood of the town are at times inundated. Several villages dot the plain, and the whole country, excepting the rice-fields and garden land, is an enormous breeding-ground for cattle. As many as eight thousand a year used to be

driven by the beaters. Often in Burmah a hunt is carried on by torchlight, the inquisitive deer coming so close to the torches as to be easily cut down with their dhas by the hunters. At other times they are hunted down by dogs, which are seemingly a cross between a stag-hound and a pariah dog. These dogs are of great value, as much as £10 being sometimes given for them, and they are now very scarce. Elephants and rhinoceroses are numerous in the wilder parts of the country, and the natives are very bold in their attacks upon them. Mouhot, when passing along the hills that separate the Mékong from the Ménam, was invited to be present at a rhinoceros hunt, and thus describes it: "Our party consisted of eight, including myself. I and my servants were armed with guns, and at the end of mine was a sharp bayonet. The Laotians (Laos Shans) had bamboos with iron blades something between a bayonet and a poignard. The weapon of the chief was the horn of a sword-fish, long, sharp, strong, and supple, and not likely to break.

"Thus armed, we set off into the thickest part of the forest, with all the windings of which our leader was well acquainted, and could tell with tolerable certainty where we should find our expected prey. After penetrating nearly two miles into the forest, we suddenly heard the crackling of branches and rustling of the dry leaves. The chief went on in advance, signing to us to keep a little way behind, but to have our arms in readiness. Soon our leader uttered a shrill cry, as a token that the animal was near; he

then commenced striking against each other two bamboo canes, and the men set up wild yells to provoke the animal to quit his retreat.

“A few minutes only elapsed before he rushed towards us, furious at having been disturbed. He was a rhinoceros of the largest size, and opened a most enormous mouth. Without any sign of fear, but, on the contrary, of great exultation, as though sure of his prey, the intrepid hunter advanced, lance in hand, and then stood still, waiting for the creature’s assault. I must say I trembled for him, and loaded my gun with two balls ; but when the rhinoceros came within reach, and opened his immense jaws to seize his enemy, the hunter thrust the lance into him to a depth of some feet, and calmly retired to where we were posted.

“The animal uttered fearful cries, and rolled over on his back in dreadful convulsions, while all the men shouted with delight. In a few minutes more we drew nearer to him ; he was vomiting pools of blood. I shook the chief’s hand in testimony of my satisfaction at his courage and skill. He told me that to myself was reserved the honour of finishing the animal, which I did by piercing his throat with my bayonet, and he almost immediately yielded up his last sigh.”

It may seem strange to those who have not been in Burmah or the Shan country that buffaloes are more hostile to Europeans than any other animal ; such is, nevertheless, the case. They are fine, large animals, of an exceedingly suspicious disposition, gentle and obedient to those they know, but violent and danger-

Ages. The Shan doctor spread out all his medicines under a tree, and began prescribing for all the following. He had in his store of medicine the thigh-bone of a dog, the jaw of a monkey, the vertebræ of a fish, part of the grinder of an elephant, the fore-tooth of a rhinoceros, some bone of a turtle, and two or three pieces of broken china. The rest of his collection consisted of little bits of sticks, and roots of all colours, to the number of two hundred and eighty-one, the names and virtues of all which he professed to know, with the minute accuracy of the charlatan. Not the least curious part of the collection was his mortar, or substitute for one. It was a turned wooden bowl ten inches in diameter, with a handle to it, and inside, opposite the handle, a piece of coarse flinty sandstone, fixed with lac, about four inches square and sloping towards the bottom of the bowl; on this the various articles were ground down, in sometimes a quart of water, if the patient was very ill.

According to what was told us, the people seem to be free from hereditary diseases; small-pox sometimes rages amongst them, and they have no system of vaccination or even of inoculation. About one-third of the children are said to die before their fifth year; the greatest number of deaths amongst all classes and ages arises from bowel complaints and low-fever. The houses, though seemingly clean, are never scoured out; and as the floors generally consist of split bamboos, with sometimes matting spread about, the dirt gets into the interstices and remains there, often breeding disease amongst the people, until some day,