

THE SILKEN EAST

A RECORD OF LIFE AND
TRAVEL IN BURMA ❧ ❧

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WITH 400 ILLUSTRATIONS
INCLUDING 20 COLOURED PLATES
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civilisation, and another to live a dog's life in the jungle.

The timber-salvor himself, a half-clad son of the forest, is oppressed with the isolation of his life. Festivals and gaiety are little in his way, and at all times he is surrounded by the spirits of nature, nearly all malevolent, all to be appeased with sedulous care. For one lives in his house, another in the whirlpool before his door, a third in the tree he is cutting down,



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a thousand in the dark mountains that shut his country away from the traffic of the world. A decade ago, to the malevolence of spirits was added the lust and fury of his fellow man. The head-hunter came raid-

ing for his head; the cateran of the hills for his wife, his cattle, for himself. From Ningin, inland, there is a road of the Shan which climbs up to the crest of a hill, its ascent or descent on the far side being accomplished by ladders ranged along the sheer face of the cliffs. By this road the harassed people were used to retreat before a Chin raid, lifting their ladders after them. Here, as we steam on our way to the upper waters of the Chindwin, we are well within the limits of the

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empire, but very near for all that to the core of unrestricted savagery. And I remind myself that, if to-morrow the empire were to withdraw its legions, the curtain of savagery would be instantly let down again.

Continuing from "Nancy Lee" the river runs on under the open glades of the forest, its course broken by sandbanks and grassy islands, till near Maulaikgyi it presents again the spectacle noticed at Mingin. The banks of the river disclose between them an island green with noble trees, and silvery with the plumes of *kaing*, round which, and under the broad barrier of blue peaks and mountains, the divided stream circles. Not very far from here there is a lake, where the rhinoceros is shot. It is a fever-stricken place, a haunt of the Chin, but carefully avoided by the Burman.

Kindat, the winter limit of the company's steamers, is the last British settlement on the Chindwin. Above this point Englishmen go as travellers, to inspect a military outpost, to supervise the construction of a road, to control the work of a native magistrate. But no Englishman lives north of Kindat. The vaguely defined frontier is still several hundred miles away; but all that lies between is ruled by a native officer, or a feudatory prince, or it is not ruled at all. To the British official in Burma, accustomed to life in remote settlements, Kindat is the *ultima Thule* of official employment, and, if he goes there, it is either because he is young and must begin somewhere, or because he has offended and must be punished, or because it is cheap