

A BURMESE ARCADY

AN ACCOUNT OF A LONG & INTIMATE SOJOURN
AMONGST THE MOUNTAIN DWELLERS OF
THE BURMESE HINTERLAND & OF THEIR
ENGAGING CHARACTERISTICS
AND CUSTOMS &c., &c.

BY
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*"Arcadia was inhabited by a hill race of shepherds and hunters,
who worshipped Pan, Hermes, and other primitive Gods of Nature."*
ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA.

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

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Kodaung—A Jewel & Nine Hills

taungya fields, but they happen to cultivate at a lower level, where the forests regenerate themselves naturally. Indeed, young trees may be seen springing up amongst the crops. Seeds, like that of teak, can lie on the ground apparently for three or four years before germinating, and fire does not necessarily destroy them. The Gauris even plant out trees—especially a quick-growing mountain birch called *Maibau* (*Alnus-Nepalensis*)—with which to reforest their disused clearings. But the Yawyins live at a much higher elevation. Here rank grass and bracken spring up and prevent young trees from growing. All along the hill-tops of Kodaung, as at Bernardmyo, they have destroyed the forests, and the open, grassy slopes they leave behind prove that the destruction is permanent, or will at any rate take years to make good. Efforts have been made to coax the Yawyins to come lower down, but they will not brook interference, and in Kodaung have migrated wholesale into the Shan States rather than change their methods.

All this country is full of game. Traces of wild elephant are seen everywhere along the paths. One of our recruiters was again attacked by a wild tusker who ran him through the thigh. By some miracle the lad was not killed. Ivory is extraordinarily cheap in Kodaung, where tusks are sold for Rs.15 a *viss*.⁹ A tusk as long as your arm can be bought for Rs.60. Tusks are considered appropriate gifts at the marriages of Kachin chiefs or *Duwas*, and Sau Nan, who is the

Kodaung—A Jewel & Nine Hills

eldest son of the *Duwa* of Lahtaw Hpakum, and will one day be the *Duwa* himself, was very anxious to buy a pair with which to propitiate the outraged parents of his runaway wife. The Kachins believe that elephants carry their dead and drop them into some lake where fishermen sometimes find the tusks. At one village we heard that two elephants had lately had a fight in which one was killed. The villagers and wild animals feasted on it, and the very bears came and ate its flesh.

Skins of leopards, cats and bears are constantly brought in for reward. Wild pigs are numerous, and do much damage to the crops. Bison are plentiful in the jungles of the Lower Shweli, and even rhino are found there, though they are scarce. Both bison and rhino are preserved. While I was in Kodaung a Kachin was fined Rs.120 for killing a female bison in calf. It is to be feared, however, that he had already realized quite that much money by rafting the flesh down for sale in Molo.

The Kachins display considerable pluck in tackling big game with most unsuitable weapons. I heard of a case in which a Kachin killed a wild elephant with his *dah*, by cutting off the tip of its trunk. The poor beast naturally bled or starved to death. Their adventures with tiger are so numerous as to be scarcely worth mentioning. They frequently shoot tigers with flint-lock guns, and often kill them with only *dahs*. In one place some villagers actually dispatched a tiger

Myitkyina—Where the World is Young

the rapids above and below. The opposite bank is clothed in impenetrable jungle from which troops of monkeys came down and played on the sand, while now and then the shadowy forms of great fish could be seen in the water.

We left the Putao road for good near the sixty-first mile, and struck up west into the mountains by the usual heart-breaking paths. This tour of one hundred and seventy-seven miles makes on the map a U, with Myitkyina and Mogaung at the two points. There were, of course, no more comfortable rest-houses, but this had its advantages as well as its drawbacks. It is troublesome to be stared at and spat round, and there is an awful monotony in expounding the same truths, making the same jokes, and meeting the same defeats for twenty consecutive days; but, on the other hand, there is a far closer intimacy with the villagers round the camp-fire, which has its pleasures and compensations. The rest-house, whatever its comforts, has been a serious factor in isolating us from the people. A special insight belonged to the days when officers travelled slowly, slept in huts and *zayats*, or sought the hospitality of village monasteries.

At Shadan Bum we were rewarded with a lovely view over a sea of low hills and endless, endless forests, spreading to the foot of a high range to the west called Hku-mung Bum. These mountains rise to over 8000 feet, and divide this Sana country from Kamaing and the mysterious Hukong. There are said to be rhino

Myitkyina—Where the World is Young
in the foot-hills. Hku-mung Bum is half veiled in clouds all day, but in the evening stands out sharply against the sunset, a barrier of fine peaks spread across the landscape.

All this is Kachin country. Shadan Bum and the villages for many marches are inhabited exclusively by Lahtaws. The people are not exactly pictures of health, but all the dreadful disease, deformity and goitre seen elsewhere are entirely absent. The children, however, almost without exception, suffer from appalling spleens. It is possible that these Kachins in-breed less than others, and that their improved physique is due to this. Their wives come from the north, and from a variety of clans, such as Marip, Maran and N'Hkum. Like most extremely poor people, their marriage customs are extravagant. Many cattle, robes and gongs are demanded for a bride; but gongs, being scarce, are borrowed and passed on, and so circulate, leaving a wake of debt in their passage. Hkahku women are very striking, and of a type so marked and unusual that one would hardly take them for Kachins. Their dress also is peculiar, and consists of a cotton skirt, and over the breasts a shawl which leaves the shoulders bare except when a jacket is worn. Cigar-shaped ornaments of amber are carried in the ears.

The dress of the men too is distinctive—an open jacket, and a short, home-spun *loongyi* reaching only to the knee, except in front, where it falls rather low. Trousers, or *baumbis*, are never seen in these villages.