

BALLADS . . .
. OF BURMA
"OOLAY"

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BALLADS OF BURMA.

BALLADS OF BURMA

(Anecdotal and Analytical)

BY

“OOLAY.”

ILLUSTRATED

BY

T. MARTIN JONES.

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Dedication.

To O. S. PARSONS, I.C.S.

(The following lines should be sung with spirit, to the vigorous accompaniment of an Indian tom-tom.)

Dear Octavius Sidney P.,
When I try to "sing like thee,"
I am like a croaking mina—and you know it.
So I'm sure you will admit,
When you've read this humble *chit*,
That I really *am* a full-fledged "mina-poet" !

PREFACE.

MOST of these ditties have already been published in the *Rangoon Gazette*, and others have appeared in the columns of the *Rangoon Times* and the *Burma Critic*. They have been revised, and are now republished in book form at the suggestion of some of my friends, the illustrations being the work of Mr. T. Martin Jones, who has spent many years among the varied types of mankind in Burma.

In introducing my book to the British public, I feel that some apology is due for an occasional intrusion of provincial politics, but the unjust treatment of Burma at the hands of the Indian Government has been of so glaring a nature, that I have been unable to avoid alluding to it in a book dealing with current topics in Burma.

Burma is rich, and she naturally feels aggrieved that a grossly disproportionate amount of her surplus revenue should be diverted into the coffers of the Indian Government, instead of being spent upon her own improvement. Moreover, India has not hesitated to make use of her satellite as a convenient dumping ground for her own refuse population. Ceylon, which is merely an island separated from the mainland of India by the Palk Strait, enjoys the dignity of independence. Burma, with an area greater than France, is a dependency of India, although the vast expanse of the Bay

Preface.

of Bengal divides them, and there is no affinity either of race or of religion between the peoples of the two countries. Of a truth, like Leoncavallo's "Pagliacci," is the ballad which I have called "A bolt from the blue" the history of a tragedy disguised as a comedy!

To my European readers I must apologise for the inclusion of Anglo-Indian and Anglo-Burmese expressions, but I assure them that I have only employed those in ordinary everyday use, and have been as sparing as possible: where I have considered it necessary, an explanatory footnote has been appended.

M. C. CONWAY POOLE.

June, 1912.

NOTE.

THE following abbreviations, etc., are in general use throughout Burma :—

I.A.—The Indian Army.

I.C.S.—The Indian Covenanted Civil Service, the members of which (owing to the special privileges which they enjoy) are also known as “Heaven-borns.”

U.C.S.—The Uncovenanted Civil Service, the members of which hold the same appointments as the I.C.S., but retire on a much smaller pension.

L.G.—The Lieutenant-Governor, or Head of the Province of Burma.

D.C.—The Deputy Commissioner, or Head of a District.

D.S.P.—The District Superintendent of Police, or Head of the Police of a District.

D.T.S.—District Traffic Superintendent of Railways.

T.A.—Travelling Allowance (an emolument granted to officers when they are on tour).

B.I.—The British India Line of Ocean Steamships.

GYM.—The Rangoon Gymkhana Club.

PIE.—A Pariah, or Native Dog.

PICE.—Money. (A small copper coin of the value of a farthing.)

A LAKH.—One hundred thousand rupees.

A DIB.—One rupee.

A MYOOK (pronounced “Myoke”).—A Subordinate Magistrate in executive charge of a township.

PADDY.—Unhusked rice.

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BALLADS OF BURMA.



I.

The Land of the Gold Semaphore.

Air: "Brighton."

COME, let us hie to the "silken East"—
(On things exotic our senses to feast)
The cradle of hope and the grave of regrets;
The heaven of spinsters and gossamer nets.
Out to the East, let us speedily fly
To an earthly Paradise—you and I—
Where maidens are modest, but never too shy.
Well, need I say anything more?

Chorus.

Come to Burma, dear old Burma,
Where votes do not vex
The feminine sex.
Come to Burma, dear old Burma—
The land of the gold semaphore!

Out in that region of tropical heat,
A fellow at fifty is pretty nigh "beat."
But damsels perhaps a bit long in the tooth
Seem to discover the secret of youth.

Ballads of Burma.

“ Spins ” of ambiguous natal date
Playfully frolic and captivate—
With an ease approaching the consummate—
The hearts of the swains they adore.

Chorus.

Come to Burma, dear old Burma,
Where wasps hide their stings
Under butterflies' wings.
Come to Burma, dear old Burma—
The land of the gold semaphore !

Come where the *mingaley** reigns supreme,
Beyond the hope of the Feminist's dream ;
Where the pranks of the hooligan Suffragette
Are quite as unknown as the wilds of Thibet.
The sceptre she wields is a winsome smile,
Mightier far than “ political bile ” :
As sparkling champagne surpasses the Nile,
Or the skin of an apple the core !

Chorus.

Come to Burma, dear old Burma,
Where the wand of power
Is a delicate flower.
Come to Burma, dear old Burma—
The land of the gold semaphore !

Come and see the mosaic we've got
Spread in that country so polyglot.
Oh ! what a medley of colour is there :
All save the orthodox black of their hair !

* *Mingaley*: A Burmese maiden.

Ballads of Burma.

See! Babus, Madrassis and pale Chinese,
Pariahs, Brahmins, and Goanese,
(With just a sprinkling of merry Burmese!)
And Oorya coolies galore.

Chorus.

Come to Burma, dear old Burma,
Where the scum of the East
Go to plunder and feast.
Come to Burma, dear old Burma—
The land of the gold semaphore!

Come, let us speed on the spicy wind,
Curious peoples and customs to find,
Where they dress in cotton and wear no boots,
And tiny children smoke "whacking cheroots";
Where Death is a pretext for mirth and joy;
And your grey-haired servant is still a "boy";
And woman is more than a painted toy—
A fact which no man should deplore.

Chorus.

Come to Burma, dear old Burma,
Where the funeral knell
Is a joyful bell.
Come to Burma, dear old Burma—
The land of the gold semaphore!

Come, let us hie to the country where
For months and months the glass is at "fair,"
The land of pagodas, and *mingaleys'* smiles,
Where the breadth of rivers is measured in miles.

Ballads of Burma.

The home of Buddhas and guardian nats,*
Of ivory carvings and bamboo mats ;
Of Glasgow-born rajahs and plutocrats ;
Of rubies and gold-bearing ore !

Chorus.

Come to Burma, dear old Burma,
Where fellows who toil
Are bound to " strike oil."
Come to Burma, dear old Burma—
The land of the gold semaphore !

* *Nat* : A fairy.

Ballads of Burma.

II.

“ For Valour.”

During the monsoon season much damage is done to the railway line by floods.

BOTH Messrs. Lane and Browning were
Each one the image of the other ;
Indeed you'd be prepared to swear
That Lane was surely Browning's brother.

Both dwelt beneath the forest tree
Within the humble grade of ranger.
And they recoiled from bribery ;
Which fact perhaps was even stranger.

Full thirty years they'd served the State
In this subordinate position,
(Their honesty had, up to date,
Obtained but scanty recognition).

One day the forest boss came round,
Said he : “ Your splendid work I've noted :
Such probity is rarely found,
And one of you shall be promoted.

“ That both promoted cannot be,
By Government is much regretted.
Alas ! there's but one vacancy
Within the ranks yclept ‘ gazetted.’

Ballads of Burma.

- “ I must admit I'm at a loss
How best to make this grave selection ;
Perhaps you two would like to toss ?
If so, I've not the least objection.
- “ You won't ? Well then I think it best
(Avoiding preference or favour)
To put your courage to the test—
Promoting him who is the braver.
- “ I sanction both of you a fort-
Night's leave, with just one word of warning .
Some doughty deed you must report
To me when you return. Good-morning.”

The rangers paused their boss to thank,
Then lightly on their ways departed.
“ 'Tis clear,” mused they, “ gazetted rank
Is not for him who's chicken-hearted.”

That evening Browning left by train :
He'd heard a rumour of disorder
Within the district of Maulmain—
A fracas on our eastern border.

He thought he'd do some brilliant deed
Of valour (with discretion blended).
But no ! 'twas otherwise decreed ;
When he arrived, the “ show ” was ended

He'd hoped, with caution, to become
A scarless and dramatic hero.
But now he'd got to hasten home,
With all his chances down at zero

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

Meanwhile old Lane, who'd calmly stayed
In damp Rangoon, had been more lucky.
He met by chance a dainty maid,
And showed himself extremely plucky.

It happened thus. One afternoon,
When strolling on the Barr Street jetty,
He saw a damsel of Rangoon,
A *mingalay* both young and pretty.

Upon the brink he watched her stand,
(Such recklessness induced a shiver)
When lo! she lost her balance, and
Fell hurtling t'wards the seething river.

Scarce had the stream engulfed the girl,
Than Lane (who grasped the situation)
Dived boldly through the eddying swirl,
And thanked his stars he'd learnt natation.

And so she did not find a grave
Beneath the pea-soup tinted water.
(I merely mention this to save
Your time, and make this ballad shorter.)

* * * * *

Upon the preconcerted date
With eagerness our rangers quivered,
Their prowess to their chief to state,
And here's the judgment he delivered :

“ A railway journey to Maulmain
Has been performed by Mr. Browning ;
Whereas it seems that Mr. Lane
Has saved a Burmese wench from drowning.

Ballads of Burma.

- “ If Lane were honest he'd eschew
Intrigues both underhand and petty.
I fear he had a rendez-vous
With that young person on the jetty.
- “ I'm told that he, with shocking taste,
(One hears so many things in Burma !)
Allowed his arm to clasp her waist,
In bringing her to *terra firma* !
- “ An upright man should hold aloof
From acts which have an aspect vicious,
And I repeat (oh, had I proof !),
Lane's conduct has been most suspicious.
- “ His colleague Browning has displayed
For danger absolute derision,
By morbid fears he's not dismayed—
By dread of landslip or collision.
- “ The man who in the autumn rains,
By way of holiday distraction,
Takes trips in Burma railway trains
Performs a most intrepid action !”

ENVOI.

Thus Browning holds gazetted rank,
Drinks “fizz” and gets his “smokes” from Cuba,
While Lane is ranger on the dank
And dismal island of Cheduba !

Ballads of Burma.

III.

“A Cry from the Courts.”

European Barristers are, as a rule, absolutely ignorant of Burmese, the official language of the Courts in which they practise !

I'M a barrister bold,
And I've come to seek gold
In the squalid and niggardly East,
For I'm called to the Bar,
And shall rise like a star—
Or a loaf that is loaded with yeast !

Give me obsolete Law,
('Tis a thing I adore)
Be it Roman or Saxon or French ;
And if cornered for facts,
Give me “ unrepealed Acts,”
As they're “ Greek ” to the judge on the Bench.

How I bitterly hate
Indian Law, up to date,
With its carefully classified code ;
Whereby fools, who can read,
Get too knowing to need
An attorney to show them the road !

You should hear me revile
Some poor worm without guile
(Ah ! in vituperation I revel).

Ballads of Burma.

Watch him squirm in the box,
Like a tramp in the stocks,
While I bluster and curse like the D—1.

But a witness defiant,
Who tells lies *for my client*,
I anoint with libations of honey.
Yes, I know he's a thief.
But consider my brief,
And the fact that I'm taking his money !

Like Proteus of old,
I can blow hot or cold,
I can charge, I can plunge, I can tack.
Aye ! I'm ready to " bluff "
(If you pay me enough)
That Albinos are ebony black.

I can wrangle all day
Like a fishwife at bay :
I can argue as long as you please,
But—a word in your ear—
I regretfully fear
That *I can't speak a word of Burmese !*

Ballads of Burma.

IV.

Ma Nyun.

(*An Apotheosis.*)

Air: "John Peel."



Do you ken the sweet Ma Nyun
With her pretty winning ways,
And her dainty supple figure,
Unoppressed by cruel stays?
She's a "stunning little ripper";
And I'm going to sing her praise.

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys!

Maybe she's but a tyro
In your red-tape etiquette,
But she doesn't guzzle whiskey
Like your so-called Smarter Set;
And she'd scorn to shriek or riot
Like your vulgar Suffragette.

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys!

You will never catch her "ragging"
In a two-step or a jig;
And to stalk for dancing partners
She'd consider *infra dig*.
('Tis the custom of her country,*
Not because she is a prig.)

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys!

* Burmese women do not dance with the sterner sex.

Ballads of Burma.

Why, then, tear her into pieces ?
 (O ! perverse iconoclast.)
Wherefore brand her as a vampire ;
 As deceitful, fickle, " fast " ?
Has your judgment been distorted
 By the shadows of your past ?

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys !

Pause before you next assail her
 With your obloquy—Beware !
Well, she knows you cannot harm her
 And your diatribes unfair
She refutes, as *sans* foundation—
 Puny " castles in the air."

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys !

Have you watched her bowed in worship
 In a little wayside fane ?
Have you met her bearing luggage
 From a broiling, blistered train ?
Have you seen her planting paddy
 In the mud and slush and rain ?

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys !

Yes ! I ken the sweet Ma Nyun,
 With her pretty winning ways.
She's the mainspring of this country,
 And I'll ever sing her praise—
Till the " golden bowl is broken,"
 And the night steals o'er my days !

So here's to the health of Ma Nyun, boys !

Ballads of Burma.

V.

The Inspector's Report.

Research among the Police Archives of Burma will possibly reveal a number of reports similar to that of Mr. Hector.

EX-“ SOLDIER-MAN ” was Mr. Hector,
At Tantabin Police Inspector,
And pipeclay was his forte.
When ordered by the D. S. P.
To sift a case of burglary,
He made this naif report.

“ At twelve o'clock (by railway time)
I started for the scene of crime,
Arriving there at four.
I found unwatchful Sheik Latiff
(The victim of this midnight thief),
Just him and nothing more.

“ The thief had made a goodly bag ;
Indeed the value of his swag
Amounted to a lakh.
Latiff—his feelings scarce suppressed—
Entreated me to do my best
To get his treasures back.

Ballads of Burma.

“ I pointed out that thieves destroy
All trinkets, golden or alloy,
 Their pilf’ring may allot ;
Could *I*, then, fish his bangles, rings,
His necklaces, and pinchbeck things,
 Out of the melting pot ?

“ He showed me in his private room
(Protected from the sweeper’s broom)
 The prints of naked feet.
I pointed out I could not pay
Attention to these marks of clay—
 ’Twould be most indiscreet.

“ Said I, ‘ Look here, misguided Sheik,
You make a very grave mistake
 If you think those a clue.
Investigation *might* disclose
The burglar had ten dusty toes ;
 But so, perhaps, have you.’

“ A jacket that had once been white,
Shed by the burglar in his flight,
 He showed to me with pride.
I pointed out that he should know
The garment was not *à propos* :
 No name was marked inside.

“ Latiff, who loafs at home *ad lib.*,
Should ‘ spot ’ the cove that ‘ cracked his crib.’
 He ignorance affected.
Then how can *I*, who’ on that day
Was five-and-thirty miles away,
 Say who should be suspected ? ”

Ballads of Burma.

The D. S. P. just gave a snort,
When he had heard this quaint report ;
 Then smote his desk and cried :
“ You dolt, you’ve ruined every clue.
What next do you propose to do ? ”
 And Mr. H. replied :

“ All natives, like the Cretan race,
Are liars, hypocrites, and base :
 Latiff’s a native lout,
So, lest you censure dire should earn,
Please class his case in your Return
 As ‘ false,’ and ‘ strike it out ’ ! ”

Ballads of Burma.

VI.

The Yellow Peril.

A GRASPING man is Gunga Din,
The station-master at Mobin,
Beloved by drivers and by guards,
Because he oft the train retards,
And this he does—*entente* sublime—
That they may make some “overtime.”
(His boss, of course, has no suspicion
That in return he gets commission.)
When bumpkins ask a third-class fare,
He drawls he has no time to spare.
To make him drop this casual manner,
The bumpkin has to pay an anna.
All day he prowls around the wicket,
In quest of folks without a ticket ;
Exacts from these the full “excess”
(Which rarely reaches D.T.S.).
In short, unbridled lust of pice
Is Gunga Din’s prevailing vice.

Ah Shuk, a broker of Mobin,
To hire a truck was very keen.
He wished his rice to reach Rangoon
Before the advent of monsoon.

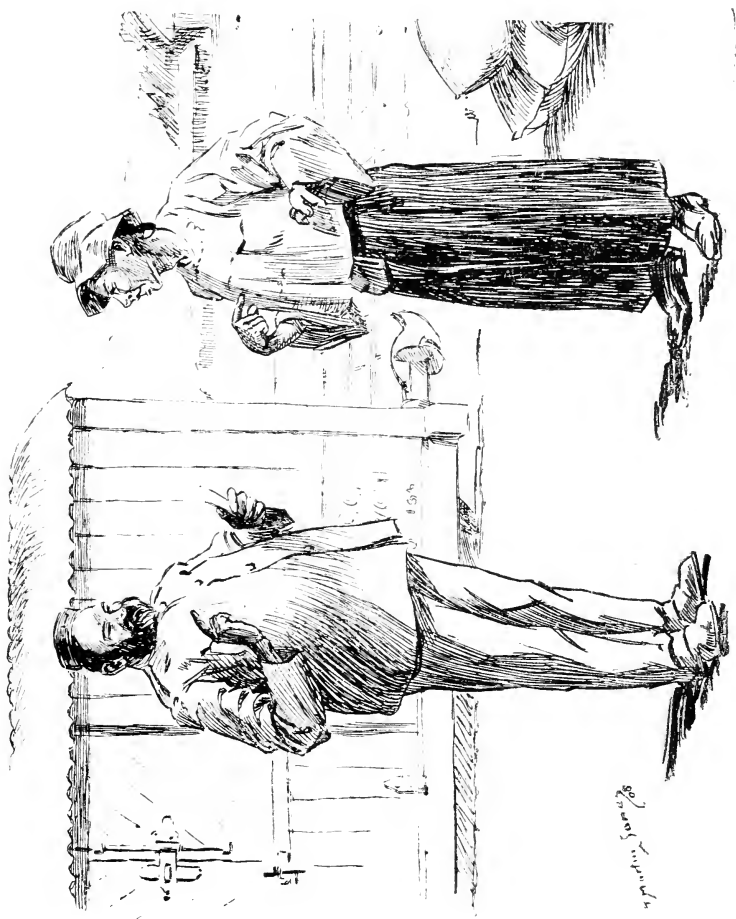
Ballads of Burma.

Said Gunga Din : " Well, Chinaman,
I cannot spare you truck or van. ;
I therefore fear your stock of grain
Will rot, should we have any rain ;
For I have noticed that your bin
Still lacks a covering of *tin*."

Such subtle hint could hardly fail
O'er mind celestial to prevail.
A bargain very soon was struck
'Twixt Gunga Din and bland Ah Shuk.
Said Gunga Din : " I have a mind,
For ten rupees a truck to find.
But then I should be very rash
To give the truck without the cash."
To this retorted bland Ah Shuk :
" And I the cash without the truck."
Then noticing the man's dismay,
He, then and there, went on to say :
" Now here's a note for ten rupees—
Observe my actions, if you please—
I part it thus in portions two ;
One-half for me, one-half for you.
My half, of course, I cannot use
Should you the other half refuse.
And when my rice is in the train,
The half I hold you shall obtain."

The arguments, thus glibly pressed,
Pleased Gunga Din, who acquiesced.

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

A truck (a bogey L.C.G.)*
Was found with prompt celerity,
And scores of Oorya coolies nude
(By thoughts of pice, with zeal imbued),
With nasal chant at once began
To load the vast and gaping van.
Thus Shuk's consignment went to town
By "Mixed train No. 20 Down."

* * * *

Now, when Ah Shuk sent his half-note,
This is the letter that he wrote :
" To Gunga Din.
At last 'tis meet
To say that note was counterfeit.
I kept one half, lest you should see
It was a worthless forgery ;
Lest you its nature should divine,
Before my goods went down the line.
Now, should you compensation claim,
You'll have to say from whence it came,
And that is why, I beg to state,
I paid *by cheque* the bill of freight.
So that it never could be said
My bill, with spurious note, was paid.
Thus—if in Court you seek redress—
To taking bribes you must confess ! "

* * * * *

* L.C.G. : Railway abbreviation for Long Covered Goods Van.

Ballads of Burma.

Within the circle of our globe
There's many an ardent "Chinophobe."
But none more loathes the Chinese nation
Than Gunga Din of Mobin station !



Ballads of Burma.

VII.

A Bunch of Triolets.

'Tis a slow sort of place
Is the town of Rangoon,
For the Johnnies who race
'Tis a slow sort of place ;
'Cause you can't steeplechase
In the south-west monsoon.
'Tis a slow sort of place
Is the town of Rangoon.

Our emotion is great
When the tempest has lulled,
The maidan is *en fête* ;
Our emotion is great
If the running's not "straight,"
And the ponies are "pulled."
Our emotion is great
When the tempest has lulled.

Husband hunters have come :
'Tis a cold-weather sport,
Seeking pice and a home,
Husband hunters have come ;

Ballads of Burma.

'They are pretty (are some),
So take care you're not caught.
Husband hunters have come :
'Tis a cold-weather sport.

He pursueth T. A.
Doth the Police Commandant.
Both by night and by day
He pursueth T. A.,
Till his boss has to say,
" No, you jolly well shan't ! "
He pursueth T. A.
Doth the Police Commandant.

He has learned ancient Greek,
Has the proud I.C.S.
Ye gods ! What a freak,
He has learned ancient Greek !
Though he fail as a " beak,"
We must humbly confess
He has learned ancient Greek
Has the proud I.C.S.

He has nice taking ways,
Has the gay Militaire.
He says civil life pays.
(He has nice taking ways.)
Perhaps one of these days
His debts he will square.
He has nice taking ways,
Has the gay Militaire.

Ballads of Burma.

How our traders love pice,
As a beetle loves blacking !
First they charge a stiff price.
How our traders love pice !
And what's far from being nice,
'They charge extra for " packing.'
How our traders love pice,
As a beetle loves blacking !

Let us hold far aloof
From the gods on Olympus,*
Since they covet our " oof,"
Let us hold far aloof
From their bureaucrat roof ;
Or like mack'rel they'll crimp us '
Let us hold far aloof
From the gods on Olympus.

'Twould be surely a crime
To continue this ballad !
As I can't find a rhyme,
'Twould be surely a crime
To encroach on your time
With a nondescript salad !
'Twould be surely a crime
To continue this ballad !

* The Government of India at Simla.

Ballads of Burma

VIII.

Echoes of the Irrawaddy.

OH! I love the creeks with their glistening mud ;
Oh! I love my riverine home.
Sweet music to me is the paddle-wheel's thud,
And the swish of the khaki foam.



My cabin is small (but my "peglets" are large),
And I doze on deck in a chair ;
For the Burmese pilot is really in charge,
And everyone's paid up their fare.

Ballads of Burma.

No, I haven't a place for the King's R.N.,
They're all buttons and "side" and talk.
They munch at tobacco—do nine out of ten—
They feed upon "junk" and on pork.

Lascars may be slow at a reef or a splice,
But they're docile and don't swallow rum ;
Their food is a savoury curry and rice
They never chew "baccy" or gum.

He's a "terror" for "booze," is the British Jack Tar,
His language is shockingly low ;
He don't say "Abez," nay, nor "Dinah shikar,"
But "Shiver my timbers, ya-ho !"

Enough! oh enough! of these "salt-horsey" folk,
Let's put them aside on a shelf,
And turn to a really nice "seafaring bloke,"
(Of course, I allude to myself!)

I'm greatly *épris* with a wee Burmese lass.
(She is pretty and taking, though dark.)
From Ava to Prome, I just give her a "pass,"
And say she's the wife of my clerk.

From messing, I manage to make a good sum,
('Tis I, not the butler, who cater) ;
My jams are the cheapest, viz., apple and plum ;
My "cutlets" are mainly "potater."

My cook "holds the ribbon" for Lemco-reared soup ;
At a "glis," he's undoubtedly skilled.
I've a jolly fat sheep tied up in the poop,
But he never—oh! never—is killed.

Ballads of Burma.

When steaming along in the depth of the night,
Oh, lor! how the villagers "scoot,"
As they spring from their beds in a panic-struck plight,
When my siren commences to hoot.

Although at the sight of a great hulking raft,
I'm careful to alter my course,
I charge at full speed into cockle-shell craft,
Without the least twinge of remorse.

If for this I'm run in, sir, I don't care a hang,
And I don't mind telling you why :
Kulassi, Secunni, and faithful Serang*
Will all back me up in a lie !

Oh! I love the creeks and the soft Delta slime.
So much my profession I'm wrapped in,
That when I retire, at the end of my time,
I'll stick to the title of "Captin" !

APOLOGIA.

You ask me are these echoes true ?
Please take away that bible ;
I fear—like B. I. Irish stew—
They savour of a libel.
I hope no "British India" man
Will slay me in his ire ;
If so, I've tumbled from the pan
Into the blooming fire !

* *Kulassi*: A sailor ; *secunni*: a helmsman ; *serang*: a boatswain.

Ballads of Burma.

IX.

Time the Healer.

Air: "The Village Blacksmith."

In the early days of the annexation the execution of "Rebel Leaders" was carried out in public in their native village.

UNDER a spreading mango tree
A Burmese Chieftain stands,
His hour has come : a captive he
Within the conqueror's hands ;
And they fasten around his sturdy neck
A noose of hempen strands.

Under a spreading mango tree
A lifeless body swings.
Though bound its limbs, a soul is free
And speeds on joyful wings
To solve the perplexing myst'ries of
Ten thousand hidden things.

Under a spreading mango tree
A Buddhist chapel stands,
Where children pray on bended knee,
Amidst the shimmering sands,
That the seeds of Western culture may
Take root in Eastern lands !

Ballads of Burma.

X.

Social Distinctions.

I'm neither Radical nor Tory ;
For politics I deem perverse,
And party government a curse ;
But that's perhaps " another story."

Why judge a person by his skin,
Or by the texture of his jacket ?
Why place a value on the packet
Before you know what is within ?

The ballet girl in silken hose,
Who round the stage so blithely trips—
A smile upon her painted lips—
Has often corns upon her toes.

The comely bird of Paradise,
When stripped of gaudy plume and feather,
Is tougher than the cheapest leather—
Worse than the *moorgh*i* you despise.

Conversely, yonder clod of earth,
On which you tread with rank disdain,
May, in its inmost depths, contain
A precious stone of priceless worth.

* *Moorgh*i, chicken, the only "meat" obtainable, except in the large towns.
The *moorgh*i is renowned for its toughness.

Ballads of Burma.

For be you black or brown or white,
A soldier, lawyer, or shopkeeper,
A bishop, or a crossing sweeper,
What matter—if your “ heart is right ” !

Yet snobs allege 'tis most degrading
To cultivate commercial brains ;
That he's a “ howling cad ” who gains
A livelihood by petty trading.

If selling is a caddish “ biz ”
(The “ if ” you'll please italicise)
Then, logically, I surmise
The more one sells the worse one is.

But no. Although a yard of chintz
Will damn you in the social scale,
Proceed to sell it by the bale,
And you'll be called a “ merchant prince ” !

Conventions seem to go too far,
And social laws breathe persecution.
Is not the obvious solution—
To judge our neighbours *as they are* ?

This world of ours is fairly wide
There's ample space “ within the pale.”
Ah ! where will be your social scale
When you have crossed the Great Divide ?

Ballads of Burma.

XI.

A Lay of British Justice.

A WELL-TO-DO, a wealthy man
Is fat Maung Gyi, who at Pauktan
 A thousand acres leases ;
Possessing likewise flocks and herds—
(But why should I be wasting words ?)
 In short, a Burmese Cræsus.

But though he be a wealthy man,
Maung Gyi is shunned by all Pauktan.
 According to their prattle,
It would appear his blatant wealth
Has been acquired by fraud and stealth—
 In stealing people's cattle.

One day his neighbour Mutu lost
A pair of bullocks, that had cost
 A tidy little sum.
He tracked them up for miles and miles,
And found at length the missing *byles*
 Within a Chuliah slum.*

* *Byles*, bullocks. Butchers in Burma are generally Chuliah.

Ballads of Burma.

The beasts were bought from fat Maung Gyi,
Who likewise paid the market fee.

The evidence was clear.

Maung Gyi was taken off to Court,
Arrested on a charge of tort.

'Twas thought he'd get a year.

But Mr. Dove, the great D.C.,
Was much impressed by fat Maung Gyi,
Who made his own defence.

And here's the judgment that he passed
With broken voice—his tears fell fast—

His feelings were intense.

“ To prove a man on theft is bent,

'Tis necess'ry to prove intent

Of base dishonesty.

A man who bullocks sleek would steal
Would try his actions to conceal.

But otherwise Maung Gyi.

“ 'Tis true, these bullocks sleek and brown
Were sold in Eastern Rangoon town

By prisoner Maung Gyi.

But then—I really must be brief—

No self-respecting cattle thief

Would sell them publicly.

“ A pauper, *sine* herd or flock,

To gain one pice would pick a lock.

Maung Gyi, we know, has plenty.

Why then should he, I must maintain,

Steal neighbour Mutu's bullocks twain

When he has five times twenty ?

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

“ Maung Gyi has herds and flocks galore.
This pair he sold, I'm pretty sure,
 In error for his own.
So Mutu, he will pay Maung Gyi
The sum of rupees fifty-three,
 His harshness to atone ! ”

Ballads of Burma.

XII.

Appearances are Deceptive.

DID someone whisper that the ditties which,
In leisure moments, I am apt to sing
Are wanting in variety of pitch—
Just jingles twanged upon a single string?
If so, I'd beg that person recollect
The adage, " Things are never what they seem " ;
That bleak Sahara sands may eke reflect
The vision of a sparkling mountain stream !

'The scarecrow Hindu beggar, who infests
The shrines of Buddhists with his begging bag,
Considers that he is completely dressed
By twisting round his loins a greasy rag.
Bed has he none ; a plantain leaf his plate ;
His daily fare a snack of rice and dhall—
Who'd guess this microbe owned a vast estate
Across the Bay, in miserly Bengal ?

Night after night, upon the Burmese stage,
You've seen the *Mintha-gyi** the *Déwi*† seize
And drag her, with a fiendish yell of rage,
While shrieks for mercy rend the midnight breeze.

* *Mintha-gyi*: The "big prince"—the conventional villain of Burmese drama.

† *Déwi*: The princess or heroine of the piece.

Ballads of Burma.

See ! savagely he flings her on her face ;
Her slender form lies quivering in the dust,
As with one swift, unerring *coup de grâce*
He slays the victim of his Sadist lust.

The curtain drops ; the tragedy is o'er.
Our "gentle *Déwi*" sprawls athwart a chair ;
Our "swanking *Mintha*" crouches on the floor,
And meekly combs the tangles from her hair.
"You're hurting me," she snarls ; "you're far too rough ;
I've drawn a stumer in the marriage 'sweep.'
Clear out ! you clumsy, leather-fingered 'muff,'
And mind the baby, while I try to sleep !"

Before I close, one final paradox—
Perhaps the strangest of a motley batch.
(Pray note I'm striking on my private box,
In imitation of the Swedish match !)
O captious critic, you must fain confess
(Unless a bee has occupied your bonnet)
This "ballad," in the era of Queen Bess,
Is what "Our William" might have termed a "sonnet" !!

Ballads of Burma.

XIII.

The Capture of Boh Nee.

The leaders of the dacoit gangs which infested Burma during the waging of what is known as "The Policeman's War" were called Bohs.



IN eighteen eighty-six—that epoch of exploits
By "boys from Public Schools" (condemned
to fight dacoits
On four rupees a day), there roamed a
potent Boh
Within the zone of land ruled o'er by Mr.
Rowe.
Now, Rowe was I.C.S., and very, very
proud.
The U.C.S. he dubbed a "snuff and butter
crowd."
And he was wont to say, "This globe contains
two classes—
Some heaven-born prodigies, the rest terres-
trial asses."
Indeed, it was his boast that he, and only
he,
Could catch that bandit chief, the truculent
Boh Nee.

Ballads of Burma.

One frizzling April day, the first (oh, *absit omen*),
He held a full parade of his domestic yeomen ;
His cook and syce were there, likewise his kitmagar,
His bhisti, dressing boy, and sweeper-jemadar.
These " household troops " select, he armed with Snider rifles—
Their haversacks being crammed with gastronomic trifles ;
But so intent were they on victual and nutrition
That they forgot to pack the Snider ammunition.
Disaster sure was theirs : dire would have been their fate
Had Boh Nee only known. But I anticipate.

* * * * *

At eventide they reached far-distant Yinmabin,
Where Boh Nee used to court a damsel called Ma Kin.
Deserted was the place ; a mangy, half-starved " pie " *
Yelped feebly in dissent as they went marching by.
Rowe grimly set his teeth ; such conduct was, he thought,
Uncalled for—in a word, a gross contempt of court.
With dogged self-control, he sauntered to the hut
Where dwelt the fair Ma Kin. Ye gods ! the door was shut.
But ammunition boots (the product of Cawnpore),
With sure, relentless aim, soon battered in that door.

Oh ! piteous, gruesome sight : a man lay on the ground.
A gag was in his mouth, his limbs were tightly bound.
Seven pairs of willing hands released him from this state ;
Seven times he bowed to earth—his gratitude was great.
" My lord, my king," cried he, " you've come from heaven
I know "
(" He's twug I'm I.C.S.," mused Covenanted Rowe).

* *Pie*: A pariah dog.

Ballads of Burma.

“ You’ve saved me, strangers dear, true angels in disguise ”
(He pointed gratefully to sweeper and to syce).

“ This morn—can I forget ?—just on the stroke of ten,
Our village had to yield to Boh Nee and his men.



SWEEPER-JEMADAR.

Cried they, ‘ Be one of us, come fight the dog-*kalahs* ; *
The man who stands aloof shall taste our thirsty dahs.’
These threats had due effect, and every one, save me
(The cowardly sycophants), swore that they’d join Boh Nee.

* *Kalah* : A native of India, a foreigner.

Ballads of Burma.

But I stood up and said, ' I love the white man's rule ;
I love the hairy Sikh, likewise his transport mule.
I really must decline with cads like you to stand,
To drive such charming folk to quit this sultry land.
Whatever you may do, as sure as I'm MOUNG YOH,
I will not take a part in your bloodthirsty show.'
No sooner had I said these very pregnant words
Than I was felled to earth and tightly bound with cords.
BOH NEE hissed in my ear : ' I'll fetch my pruning knife ;
At six I shall return, and *slowly* take your life !'
But you, my lord, my king, appeared upon the scene ;
And had you later come, I mincemeat should have been !'

Rowe heaved a heavy sigh ; he brushed away a tear ;
Compassion held his soul ; he did not seem to hear
A smothered chuckling laugh within the paddy bin
(Where crouched, unknown to him, the willowy Ma Kin)
Said he, " Look here, good man, you know that I'm D.C.
I'll make you an Inspector (upon the list called B).
A loyal chap like you deserves our recognition ;
Will you accept that post, or similar position ? "
" My lord, I've just escaped the horrid jaws of Death.
Bound hand and foot, alone, I felt a murderer's breath.
I'll covet never more the riches of this globe ;
Henceforth I mean to don a Pongyi's* yellow robe :
Henceforth I mean to live in strict ascetic state ;
To spend my time in prayer—to be a celibate."
Within the bin once more there rose a chuckle faint.
" That tucktoo's† croak," said Rowe, " is surely rather quaint."

* *Pongyi* : A Buddhist monk.

† *Tucktoo* : A large house lizard, which makes a chuckling sound when calling to its mate.

Ballads of Burma.

Moung Yoh rapped on the bin, as if to drive away
The noisy saurian. He then went on to say :
“ My lord, I’ve heard you make strange pictures with the sun.
Delighted should I be if you would make me one.
I thus should treasure up a lasting souvenir
Of him who saved my life, of him whom I revere.”
And Rowe replied : “ Good man, within my haversack
I have my camera, a portable Kodak.
To-morrow, then, at dawn, your portrait I shall take,
Which I’ll present to you, to treasure for my sake.”

Before a week had passed, the whole of Yinmabin,
Their conduct to explain, by Rowe were summoned in.
In vain they humbly plead they merely ran away
Because Boh Nee had come to Yinmabin that day.
Sneered Rowe : “ I rather think that you are telling fibs ;
On Moung Yoh’s evidence you’re fined a thousand dibs.”

* * * * *

The torrid years burned on, and Bertie Rowe, D.C.,
Became Sir Albert Rowe, and likewise, too, L.G.
Boh Nee was still at large ; his crimes had grown apace ;
He preyed upon the land—defied the “ ruling race.”
At last a “ Bobby ” bold (uncovenanted chap)
Was able, by a ruse, the outlaw to entrap.

* * * * *

The Court was fairly crammed when Boh Nee’s case was tried.
The evidence was clear ; it cavilling defied.
The Sessions Judge summed up ; the people held their breath.
Said he, “ I’m bound, Nga Nee, to sentence you to death,
But ere I judgment pass (as ordered by our laws),
Why you should not be hanged I’ll ask you to show cause.”

Ballads of Burma.

Moung Nee, with care, unrolled a dirty silken scarf,
Within the folds of which reposed a photograph.
“ Your Honour will observe that this your servant’s photo
Has writing on the back ; please read the screed *in toto.*”
The Judge the portrait scanned, then wisely shook his head
He turned the photo o’er, and this is what he read :



“ This holy man, who spurns the lucre of this globe,
Is qualified to wear a Pongyi’s yellow robe.
A friend of British rule : like Cranmer at the stake,
He’s suffered tortures dire for good old England’s sake.
I hope indeed that he, at no far distant date,
Will condescend to serve as officer of State.
And should he ever be in trouble or distress,
I promise him my help. Signed, Bertie Rowe, C.S.”

Ballads of Burma.

“ The cove who signed that bond,” cooed prisoner Boh Nee
“ Is now Sir Albert Rowe—His Honour the L.G. ! ”

* * * * *

To cut this history short, Boh Nee was made a Myook,
His district Ruby Mines (Headquarters at Mogók).
Of course his *Myook-Kadaw** is willowy Ma Kin.
She dotes upon the place, and rakes the rubies in.
Sir Albert has retired ; he occupies a chair
Within the drawing-room of 16, Jimmy’s Square.

* *Myook-Kadaw* : The wife of a Myook or subordinate magistrate.

Ballads of Burma.

XIV.

A Lamb in Wolf's Clothing.

Civil surgeons who are members of the Indian Medical Service bear combatant rank.

YOU may call a shovel a spade ;
You may call a codfish a sturgeon ;
 But people inquire
 Why Major O'Fire
Should be called a civil surgeon.

'Tis strange that this versatile man
(As medicos go, an old-stager).
 No "civilian" is he ;
 How on earth can he be—
Consid'ring his title is Major ?

He's the servant of bellicose Mars,
To whom ("lock and barrel") he's sold.
 He "cures or he kills,"
 And fashions his pills
As *bullets* are made—in a mould.

Toffee *bull's-eyes* he frequently sucks ;
But "Bugle Brand" beer is his "shoke."
 Of course his Bohea
 Is *gunpowder* tea ;
"Guards' Mixture" his favourite smoke.

Ballads of Burma.

With shamming "scrimshankers" he's brusque.
Says he: "I don't think you're in pain.
 In case you malingering,
 Let's cut off a finger,
Or scoop out a piece of your brain!"

When Brown got an abscess, he said:
"I'll doctor myself, and just chance it;
 For I tremblingly fear
 Lest the Major appear
With a sabre instead of a lancet!"

But O'Fire, when he visited Brown,
Was gentle, urbane, and polite;
 And the man's "bedside manners"
 (Like newly-made "tanners")
Were charmingly polished and bright.

A shovel is hardly a spade;
A codfish is hardly a sturgeon;
 But wherefore inquire
 Why Major O'Fire
Should be called a *civil* surgeon!

Ballads of Burma.

XV.

An Ideal Myook.

FRIENDS! Burmans! countrymen! I've come
 (From where I cannot say)
To sing the praises of a "chum,"
 Who's—still with us to-day.

Perhaps you'd like to know his name :
 (Ah, no! I may not tell).
Let's say "Maung Tat" : 'tis all the same,
 And suits him just as well.

He serves the Crown—such is his boast ;
 But stay! I may not speak,
Except to mention that his post
 Is that of Township "Beak."

Good Heavens! My tongue has been too glib :
 I'm sorry that I spoke.
You've guessed by now (I'll bet a dib),
 My hero is a Myook!

I'm wandering : indeed, I fear
 I'm talking "through my hat."
But ain't it time that you should hear
 About the great Maung Tat?

Ballads of Burma.

Maung Tat, he runs his ship of State
Upon an even keel.
His judgments never are reversed,
Nor "squashed" upon appeal.

He never gets from his D.C.
Official "knocks" or gibes :
Him all his bosses hold to be
Incapable of bribes.

And yet, my friends, there's not a case
That's tried within his court
In which "palm oil" has not a place,
And "equity" is bought.

Still all his rulings are most just,
And his decisions fair,
Without one single speck of dust
To taint the legal air.

A litigant has ne'er been known
At his decrees to "kick" ;
No man has dared contentious bone
With shrewd Maung Tat to pick.

How is it done? You well may ask.
To make you understand, I
Will just explain (a simple task)
His *modus operandi*.

Say A and B are in dispute ;
He takes from *both* a gift ;
Then settles down, with queries cute,
The evidence to sift.

Ballads of Burma.

His shrewdness, kindly note, is great—
As great as that of Martial :
Excuse me if once more I state
He always is impartial.

Should he decide that B is right,
To guilty A is sent,
By trusted hand, at dead of night,
The “ present that he *lent*.”

A holds his tongue. He's well aware
His case is sadly weak :
Nor is he likely to declare
He tried to bribe a “ beak ” !

And lucky B will ne'er complain
Of having had to pay
For Tat's decision and the gain
Of half a lakh from A !

XVI.

The Secrets of the Ballot.

THROUGHOUT the breadth of Arakan
One scarce could find a meaner man
Than Mr. Shylock Grubb.
A trouser-wearing *chetty** he ;
His practice, simple usury ;
His prey, the British " sub."

'Tis said that subalterns are prone
To be the wily sharper's hone ;
But Mr. Percy Mack,
Though in the service of the Crown,
For tyrant *chetties* (white or brown)
Declined to be a hack.

To him had Grubb benignly lent
At rupees twenty-five per cent.
(O self-denying Crœsus !)
On I O U and note of hand,
With surety bond and " on demand,"
Ten thousand silver pieces.

* *Chetty* : An Indian money-lender.



Ballads of Burma.

Bright beamed the sun until our "sub."
Was visited one night by Grubb
 (Quite *à la* Nicodemus).
Said he : " Dear Mack, you'll please to pay
Your debt in full by Saturday,
 Or there'll be war between us.

" You said you'd pay me ' on demand '—
A written promise, understand :
 Shell out, or reap disgrace.
You've not a cent ? Well, that's a bore,
For in a *public* Court of Law
 The music you must face !

" You think my heart is made of flint.
But no ! I'm of a lighter tint
 Than you would paint me, man.
This debt you say you'll liquidate
If I until next quarter wait.
 Well—possibly I can.

" With all my wealth, I somehow fail
To clamber up the social scale ;
 Ah ! there's the blooming rub.
To mix with *Toffs*, man, I aspire.
Pray help me gain my heart's desire ;
 In short—to join the Club.

" My plan of action I'll disclose.
I merely ask that you propose
 That I be made a member.

Ballads of Burma.

Should you do this, then I'll forego
The sum of money which you owe
Until—let's say—November.

“ *En passant*, I would gently note
Eight men at least must cast their vote
And each must drop a ‘ white.’
And should some boulder drop a ‘ black,’
You'll please remember, Mr. Mack,
That I shall have to bite.”

* * * * *

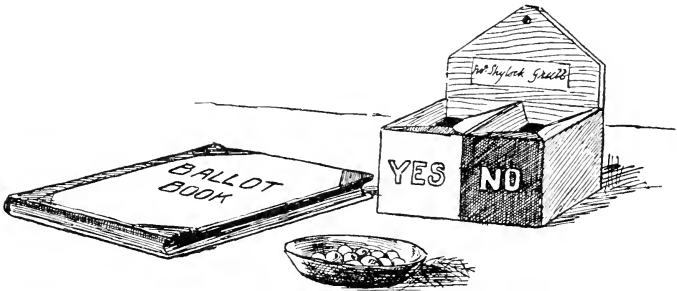
A week rolled by, and Shylock Grubb
Was nominated for the Club :
A thing he scarce expected.
The ballot box contained no “ black ” ;
Of “ whites ” there clearly was no lack :
Still he was not elected.

No hostile element was there :
Eight members voted fair and square,
Their names being strictly noted.
But though each balloted in turn,
Nine “ whites ” were found within the urn,
While only eight had voted.

Three times before November came
Were ballots held ; results the same ;
The “ whites ” were in excess.
Three ballots rendered null and void,
No wonder Grubb became annoyed,
And joined the Sergeants' Mess !

Ballads of Burma.

'Tis said that subalterns are prone
To be the wily sharper's hone ;
 Not Percy Mack, I.A.
And Shylock Grubb will never learn
The mystery of that voting urn
 E'en to his dying day !



Ballads of Burma.

XVII.

An Apostle of Aviation.

AN altruist he, of high ideals
 (In theory, if not in deed);
His mind is narrow, and sadly small:
 He judges a man by his creed.

His bungalow's built of bricks and teak,
 While yours is of mat and thatch;
He keeps a spanking carriage and pair,
 With coachman and syce to match.

He takes good care of the "inner man,"
 Does this sanctimonious glutton.
He ne'er allows an elderly goat
 To pass itself off as "mutton"!

He keeps his eye on the paddy mart,
 To bargains he's quite alive;
He knows the value of delta land,
 And how many beans make five.

Although he is far from erudite,
 He doesn't scruple to "teach";
And this he does with a nasal twang—
 The American eagle's screech.

Ballads of Burma.

He deprecates "original sin" ;
Deems Sunday tennis a vice.
On "saving sinners" he's mighty keen—
And ditto on *saving pice*.

This hybrid medley of Earth and Sky,
This teacher without degree,
Is known to the dear old folks out West
As the "martyr *mishunree*" !

Sky pilots, if ye are keen to do
Some truly "mission'ry work,"
Go, tackle the heathen gangs who haunt
The Bowery of New York !

Ballads of Burma.

XVIII.

To the East of the East.

Air: "So English you know."

To the East of the East,
Land of yellow-robed priest,
Is Burma you know, is Burma you know.
People go there to seek
Gold in paddy and teak,
To Burma, to Burma you know.

Decked in silk and in linen
Are the quaint men and women
In Burma you know, in Burma you know.
They're not partial to shoes
And they never wear trews
In Burma, in Burma you know.

Now the women up North
Wear a—well, it's a cloth,
In Burma you know, Upper Burma you know;
It's worn open one side,
And it's not very wide,
So Burman, quite Burman you know!

Ballads of Burma.

Though they do not sport curls,
They've some very *chic* girls
In Burma you know, in Burma you know.
Raven tresses are coiled,
Likewise cocoa-nut oiled,
In Burma, in Burma you know.

People say that the sun
Toasts you brown as a bun
In Burma you know, in Burma you know.
But I know a good few
Of a "biscuity" hue
In Burma, in Burma you know.

I have also met boobies
Who think nothing but rubies
Come from Burma you know, from Burma you know
How about *ye-nan-see*,*
Paddy, teak and *ngapee* †
In Burma, in Burma you know.

For the globe-trotter green
There's one land to be seen.
'Tis Burma you know, 'tis Burma you know.
But he'll find it less gay
If he stops there till May
In Burma, in Burma you know.

Should he be of the sort
That hankers for sport
In Burma you know, in Burma you know,

* *Ye-nan-see*: Mineral oil.

† *Ngapee*: Salt fish.

Ballads of Burma.

Take him out in the *kwin* *
When the snipe have come in
To Burma, to Burma you know.

If he wants to shoot cheetahs,
Hire him dozens of beaters—
All Burmans you know, Jack Burmans you know
If he finds them too dear,
He had better keep clear
Of Burma, of Burma you know.

We are not "dogs in mangers,"
But we've too many strangers
In Burma you know, in Burma you know.
Aye! a fine dumping ground
For the pariah hound
Is Burma, is Burma you know.

They are welcome to stay
If their footing they pay
In Burma you know, in Burma you know.
But we won't be exploited,
Bamboozled, dacoited
By India, black India you know.

Here's a cheer for old Burma :
May we find *terra firma*
In Burma you know, in Burma you know !
If we give her her due
She'll be loyal and true,
Will Burma, *our* Burma you know !

* *Kwin* : Open paddy land.

Ballads of Burma.

XIX.

A Lay of the Derby Sweep.

“ BENGALI chap ” was Chandra Dass,
Loquacious, lying, and an ass ;
The telegraphic Babu he
At calorific Twinklelegyi.
Though versed in all Vedantic lore,
He loved Finance a great deal more.
Like Gunga Din, the lust of pice
Was Chandra D.’s prevailing vice.*

One day he thought he’d try a “ flutter,”
So sent an order to Calcutta,
And bought (he deemed it far from cheap)
A ticket in the Derby Sweep.
Oh, wond’rous are the ways of Fate !
His ticket—number 978,
With *nom de plume* “ A Slave of Morse ”—
Drew Marmaduke, the favourite horse.

The race was fixed for June the third.
An earlier date he’d have preferred,
So many things might well take place
Before the running of the race.

* See No. 6, “ The Yellow Peril.”

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

He heard (it seemed a shame—a sin)
That “ favourites ” do not always win ;
That (worse !) they sometimes strain the heart,
Or sprain a limb and fail to “ start.”

Upon the first of steaming June,
A telegram came from Rangoon
For Mr. Bland, the D.S.P.
(The message passed through Chandra D.):
“ Fear Marmaduke, when jumping wall,
Has injured knee—a nasty fall ;
Impossible to start on third.”
Thus ran the wire (a “ State deferred ! ”).

When Chandra Dass this message read,
He beat his breast, and bowed his head ;
In bitter disappointment, he
Shed saline tears, and sweated ghee.
Then falling on his knees, he prayed :—
“ Oh ! Vishnu, I implore thy aid.
I cannot win ; assist me then
To save my stake of rupees ten.”

This abject plea moved Brahma's sire
The doleful suppliant to inspire,
Who straightway called his peon Ko Poo,
A cooly lout—a mere Yahoo.
Said Chandra : “ Man, I owe you pay—
Your stipend for the month of May.
To square my debts I never fail :
I'll pay you now upon the nail.

Ballads of Burma.

“ Well, here’s the coin. I must remark
Of pity you have not a spark.
Does not your wife, at Sandoway,
Deserve a portion of your pay ?



The sum—let’s say—of ten rupees
Your faithful wife would surely please.
You nod your head. Ah ! you agree
To do this act of charity.

Ballads of Burma.

“ Now, if by hand, this sum you send,
You may be swindled by your friend ;
On money orders sent by post,
Commission is an extra cost.
So swap with me this Turf Club ticket
For ten rupees. You simply stick it
Within a cover, which you'll post.
The postage costs two pice at most.

“ You nod your head. I clearly see
That you, once more, agree with me.
But, lest you some distrust might feel,
In front of witnesses we'll deal.
So that *by neither* can be said
This covenant was never made.”
To terminate this patchwork screed,
Suffice it that Ko Poo agreed.

* * * * *

Upon the third the race was run,
And Marmaduke, the “ favourite,” won !
The Babu could not understand
Until he saw wee *Marmie Bland*,
Who, when he came to Twinklegyi,
Still slightly limped upon one knee !
'Twas then he twigged (in racing “ gup ”)
How he had sold himself a pup.

ENVOI.

Ko Poo scooped in a lakh or two ;
He owns an oil-field at Singu.
While Chandra Dass (he might do worse)
Is still a toiling “ Slave of Morse ” !

Ballads of Burma.

XX.

The Key to Popularity.

YOUNG Meakin's joined the I.C.S.
To earn his daily bread ;
The way the ladies butter him
Bids fair to turn his head.

He cannot dance ; he cannot talk ;
Yet never Duke nor Pasha
Was more sought after by the girls
At every smart *tamasha*.

His eyes are bleared ; his cheeks are wan.
('Tis said he'll soon " snuff out. ")
Yet these sweet lambkins ogle him
And follow him about.

Why veil the secret of his power ?
To you and me 'tis clear :
The darlings know his widow gets
Three hundred pounds a year !

Ballads of Burma.

XXI.

Is Burma Like it Used to Be?

Air: "Is London like it used to be?"

A PENSIONER in London Town,
Across the ocean spray,
Met a pal on furlough from the East,
Who'd landed there that day.
He anxiously seized him by the hand,
And asked in accents low :
"Please talk to me of Burma, lad,
The land I used to know."

Chorus.

Is Burma like it used to be ?
Do laughing *mingaleys** sweet
Come tripping down the pagoda steps
With bare and spritely feet ?
Do your maidens still do all the work ?
Have the *chetties*† all gone "phutt" ?
Do your *loopyos*‡ lounge in idleness,
A-chewing betel nut ?

They talked of hunting rebel gangs,
When times were very hard,
When the hunters drew the glorious pay
Of a "Burma Railways" guard.

* *Mingaley*: A Burmese girl.

† *Chetties*: Indian money-lenders, who lend to Burmans at a very high rate of interest.

‡ *Loopyo*: An unmarried Burman.

Ballads of Burma.

What mattered it now ! Those times were past,
With memory left behind.
A single thought obsessed their hearts :
Their pals were good and kind.

Chorus.

Is Burma like it used to be ?
Do youngsters, brave and true,
Toil and strive for the Motherland
On a microscopic " screw " ?
Are " good chaps " just as plentiful ?
Are my dear old pals all right ?
I'd give a lot to be with them
In the festive Gym to-night !

They talked of the strenuous strife for wealth ;
Of men, whose ev'ry aim is
To satisfy the craving pangs
Of *sacra auri fames*.
They talked of men who dabble in stocks ;
Of men who purchase land ;
Of men who juggle with mining shares,
Or scrape for gold in sand !

Chorus.

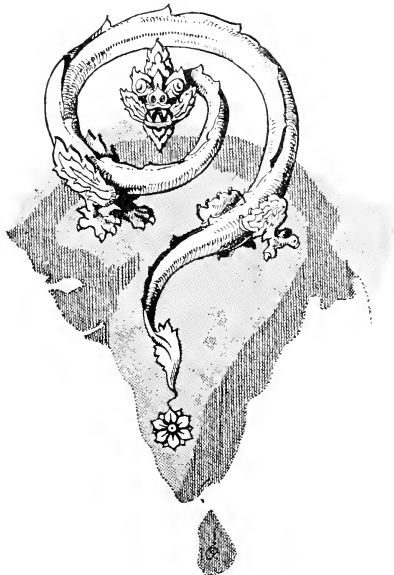
Is Burma like it used to be ?
What price those " Dredger shares " ?
Does your Liliputian Stock Exchange
Still play at " bulls " and " bears " ?
Do company promoters do
Exactly as they please,
By playing thimble-rigging tricks
With other folks' rupees ?

Ballads of Burma.

They talked of India's pleasantries ;
Of rates and dues and taxes ;
Of bullion sent across the Bay
To sharpen Aryan axes ;
Of plague-stricken wastrel " sharks " who come
Across the sombre deep,
To settle down—like locust swarms—
On India's " dumping heap."

Chorus.

Is Burma like it used to be
Beneath *another's* rule,
When India pillaged, unrestrained,
" A people still at school " ?
Is Burma still a mild milch cow,
A sweated Cinderella ?
Or has she sought protection 'neath
Colonial umbrella ?



Ballads of Burma.

XXII.

Love's Labour Lost.

You've heard the trite old adage—that blunt and toothless
“saw”—

That all is fair in Love ; that all is fair in War.
Perhaps I may be victim of sentiments perverse,
To me they both abound with treachery or worse.

An out-of-work contractor—his name was Maung Tun Min—
Came with his wife, Ma Nu, to stay at Tantabin.
Oh ! ne'er before was seen such ill-assorted couple.
The man was stiff and lean ; his wife was plump and supple.
Her age was twenty years, while his was fifty-eight ;
Archaic were his ways, but she was “ up to date.”
Now nothing much occurred for fifty days or more,
Till there came upon the scene the juvenile Ko Paw.
A contrast to her spouse, this youth, so lithe and bright,
Quite captivated her ; she fell in love at sight.
Her husband welcomed him. (By nature he was kind ;
Besides, old men are apt to be a trifle blind.)

One day Ko Paw dropped in. Sighed he, “ Good-bye, Ma Nu,
I'm going away to visit the city of Pegu.
I mean, on my return, to give you a surprise.”
And Ma Nu thought she noticed “ the love-light in his eyes.”
Her heart went pit-a-pat, her cheeks grew burning hot.
'Twas then that she devised a most cold-blooded plot.

Ballads of Burma.

That night she called her spouse. Cried she, " You lazy duffer,
You're always out of work ; 'tis I who have to suffer.
I've got no jewellery—oh ! pray don't curse and swear—
I've not enough to eat ; my clothes aren't fit to wear.
Your faithful wife, in short, is treated like a pauper,
Because you choose to loaf in selfish state of torpor.



Some work you *must* obtain—a most important factor
For one who claims to be a Public Works contractor.
And so I would suggest—though pr'aps 'tis not my sphere—
You lubricate the palm of Gill, the Engineer.
Thus you may get a job to patch the Court House road,
Or else to smear with tar the great D.C.'s abode.
Tun Min replied, " My dear, you don't know Mr. Gill—
The pink-cheeked progeny of lofty Coopers' Hill.

Ballads of Burma.

About a week ago I made him very wroth
By laying at his feet four annas' worth of cloth.
He stamped upon my gift—I grieve to say, abused—
And drove me from his house. These were the words he used :
' How dare you, with this rag, my probity assail ?
If you appear again, I'll have you sent to jail.' "

Ma Nu gulped down a smile. Her path was very clear ;
She played her master-card. So, conjuring up a sneer,
Said she, " You brainless fool, you'd even make a Chin* sick.
Of course the man was riled ; your gift lacked worth intrinsic.
Officials, one and all, have got their special price ;
But no one will accept a cowrie or a pice.
If you would only pause, between the lines to read,
You'd note that Gill decried the gift and not the deed.
I think you loved me once. Well, if you love me still,
You'll take a fit *douceur* to white-skinned Mr. Gill."
She nagged him till he wept ; she pelted him with jeers ;
She snubbed him with her jibes ; she watered him with tears.
At last, the poor old man—as you've no doubt surmised—
Gave in and said he'd do whatever she advised.
Next morn at eight o'clock he crawled on hands and knees,
And tendered Mr. Gill a roll of bright rupees.
But o'er that interview, we'll gently draw a veil.
That very day he went, for eighteen months, to jail.

* * * * *

Ko Paw, on his return, called in to see Ma Nu.
Cried she, " I think 'tis *I* who have surprise for *you*.
My husband, Maung Tun Min, has offered Gill a bribe,
In spite of my advice ; in spite of diatribe.
My warnings were in vain, and, shocking to relate,
They've packed him off to jail, his crime to expiate.

* *Chins* : Semi-civilised hill tribes upon the north-west frontier of Burma.

Ballads of Burma.

How can I rightly have a jail-bird for a spouse ?
Of course, I must abjure my matrimonial vows.
So I'll have you, dear boy ; indeed, too long we've tarried.
The Headman let us call, and be this instant married."
Just then a dainty maid tripped smiling to the door ;
That " love-light " in his eyes Ma Nu had seen before.
" Who's that ? " she sternly cried, " that minx who grins outside ? "
" A *lady* from Pegu—my newly-wedded bride ! "

ENVOI :

Too late Ma Nu discovered that she must pay the cost
Of all her machinations : Love's labour had been lost.
In penury she's left, her lover to bewail,
While he, who truly loved, is languishing in jail !



Ballads of Burma.

XXIII.

The Song of a Subaltern.



WHEN I was in my regiment,
I "blew" my income every cent,
And when I'd got no more to lose,
I sought assistance from the Jews.
But now I'm free from every want :
I've joined the Police as Commandant.

I stay for weeks and weeks away
(You've doubtless heard about T. A. !)
Inspecting some old frontier fort,
In furtive search of big-game sport.
To shoot the *hsine* and elephant,
I've joined the Police as Commandant.

A whipper-snapper I.C.S.,
Who'd be tabooed in any Mess,
Controls my work—nay more, declares
He's going to "boss" my Police affairs.
He won't : and this is why he can't—
I've joined the Police as Commandant.

An aunt of mine who's growing old—
The dear old thing—has wealth untold.
And as she's rather fond of me
I guess I'll be her legatee.
So, till I lose my senile aunt,
I've joined the Police as Commandant !

XXIV.

The March of Education.

Analysis may possibly show that Maung Gyi's anachronisms are perhaps not so outrageously absurd as at first sight they would appear to be.

“ COME greasy, sallow young Maung Gyi,
I wish to question you to see
 What you have learnt at college.
In olden days, our stern papas
Exacted merely ‘the three R’s,’
 An error, I acknowledge.”

MAUNG GYI LOQUITUR :

“ I’m versed in Latin, Sanscrit, Greek,
These languages defunct I speak
 (When on the class room bench).
Though modern lingo I despise
(If I can’t get it otherwise),
 My ‘leave’ is always French.

“ I’d scorn to read De Molière ;
The work of ‘slipshod’ Dumas *père*,
 Termed dramatist (misnomer !).
I tolerate Euripides,
Facetious Aristophanes,
 And presbyopic Homer.

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

“ Although I’m but an urchin raw,
I’ve studied Chemistry and Law
 (In both, *retorts* abound),
I’ve waded deep in Hydrostatics ;
I’ve climbed to Higher Mathematics ;
 My Algebra is sound.

“ I’ve read of sedent’ry Canute,
Who charmed old Charon with his flute ;
 Of Shakespeare and Lucrece ;
Of Jason who doffed courtier’s dress,
To make a carpet for Queen Bess,
 And donned a Golden Fleece.

“ Of Robert Bruce, the prince of riders,
Who raced to York pursued by spiders—
 A Scotch (and soda) hero.
Of Joan of Arc and Kubelik,
Who fenced with stake and fiddle-stick,
 For philharmonic Nero.

“ Of Cromwell who, foreseeing trouble,
Cast on the floor the South Sea Bubble
 (’Twas called a *bauble* then).
Of Taffy stealing Alfred’s cake
To feed the Lady of the Lake
 In Cœur de *Lyon’s* den.

“ Of Absolom who cried, ‘ Alas ! ’
When long-haired Samson took his ass,
 And gave her coat a clipping.

Ballads of Burma.

Of Hardie (known as cranky Keir),
Who some fine day, I sadly fear,
 May reap a sound horse-whipping.

“ Of Peeping Tom, who called for lights,
When fair Godiva doffed her tights ;
 Of Venus ‘ clothed in mist ;’
Of Iron Duke ; of Stonewall Jackson ;
Of Limehouse George ; of Anglo-Saxon ;
 Of mailed Teutonic fist.

“ Of David who, with catawaul,*
Chased Mrs. Chant from Tara’s Hall
 For playing on his harp.
Of Wagner, who grew very wild
When Harold stole Lord Byron’s ‘ Childe,’
 And called it ‘ Becky Sharp.’

“ Of Nansen who shook Stanley’s hand
On board the *Fram* in Zululand,
 Beneath a fountain pen.
Of shy De Rougemont, Lemprière,
Münchhausen, Cook, and Labouchere,
 And other Truthful men.

“ Now should you ever be in doubt
Upon some point, I’ll help you out ;
 I’ll very quickly fix it.

* Could Maung Gyi have meant a catapult ?

Ballads of Burma.

Redundant quite a casuist quorum ;
In me, you'll find a *ensor morum*.
Well, there's my *ipse dixit!*"

THE EXAMINER :

" Enough, Maung Gyi, I've heard enough
Of your confounded classic stuff—
In Hindustani, ' bus ' !
Come, bend across my rigid knee,
And taste this twig from yonder tree
Of classic *Betulus!*"

Ballads of Burma.

XXV.

A Bolt from the Blue.

(*With apologies to the shade of Lord Byron.*)

The only highway in Burma—worthy to be classed as a road—is the new road between the missionary station of Toungoo, on the railway line, and the hill-station at Thandoung, which has been constructed, practically speaking, for the sole convenience of a few scores of Europeans. Further remarks concerning the exploitation of Burma by the Indian Government will be found in the preface of this book.

OLD Sir Ferdinand Boyle, like a wolf in his den,
Paced his chamber and nibbled the stump of his pen.
And the lines of his brow were like waves on the sea
When the *catamarans* toss at Trincomalee.

From Olympus had swooped a vice-regal command:—
“To the L.G. of Burma—

You'll please understand
That the people you rule give a great deal of bother
By the way that they libel our Aryan brother.

“For example, your Burmans unjustly complain
Of the tax we've imposed upon paddy and grain;
But they seem to forget that they pocket our pice
When we purchase their precious consignments of rice.

Ballads of Burma.

“ They allege that they’re hampered in commerce and trade,
As their country is bridgeless, and roads are not made ;
That their revenue’s pounced on and slyly deflected
To embellish Bengal, while ‘ poor Burma’s ’ neglected.

“ Such a statement of course is absurdly untrue :
Just consider the *lakhs* that we spent at T’oungoo
On the road to Thandoung over valley and ridge,
Which commences its climb with a beautiful bridge !

“ But your insolent people inanely retort
That Thandoung is entirely a white man’s resort ;
That to mission’ry whines and demands we have pandered,
And the bullion of Buddhists on Philistines squandered.

“ That the Delta, though taxed to a tithe of its riches,
Is a swamp intersected by creeks and by ditches,
That its populous hamlets are left to their fate—
Banished islands of mud—by a cheeseparer State.

“ Once again, dear Sir F., I reluctantly fear, I
Must accuse your Burmese of *suppressio veri*.
Through our not building bridges, their ferrymen reap
Golden harvests—we *sell* them their licence so cheap.

“ Then your people complain that without their permission
We have sent them some Babu who scribbles sedition.
To the loyal Burmese we a compliment pay
By deporting our vermin to good Mandalay.

“ When poor Oorya coolies to Burma migrate,
They endure all the torments of racial hate ;
Yet they visit your shores, lazy Burmans to aid.
Was ingratitude ever more coarsely displayed ?

Ballads of Burma.

“ Once for all, recollect that we'll no longer stand
The insulting rebuffs of your querulous land.
If the manners of Burma don't swiftly amend,
Then your reign at Maymyo will be brought to an end.”

Now the ruler of Burma was fully aware
That the Viceroy's remarks were intensely unfair ;
But what troubled him most in this bolt from the blue,
Was the threat to remove him from shady Maymyo.

Sir Ferdinand nibbled the stump of his pen,
And he turned up his eyes, as he muttered “ Amen ! ”
Then he sat down and wrote without further demur :
“ With the Viceroy's despatch I entirely concur ! ”

Ballads of Burma.

XXVI.

Ayah.



Who's skin's as black as sticking-plaster
(Antithesis of alabaster),
Although baptised "same caste like
Master"?

Why, Ayah !

Who's limbs are innocent of hose ?
Who decorates with rings her toes,
And hangs a hoop upon her nose ?

Why, Ayah !

When Missie Baba goes "day day,"
Who drags her by the hottest way ?
(Which passes where the Chokras play),

Why, Ayah !

And when our cherub goes "bye bye,"
And keeps awake with watchful eye,
Who gives her opium on the sly ?

Why, Ayah !

Who shams a toothache, just to beg
The missus for a whiskey peg ?
Who fairly pulls the Memsahib's leg ?

Why, Ayah !

Ballads of Burma.

Who sobs for leave (with eyes that leer)
To weep by some fictitious bier,
And drops an onion-nurtured tear ?

Why, Ayah !

Who in her neighbour's compound spies,
With prying scandal-seeking eyes ?
Who stuffs her missus up with lies ?

Why, Ayah !

Who, when you've sailed for far Beelat,*
Reviles you for " an English cat,"
And does not always stop at that ?

Why, Ayah !

In short, who typifies Madras,
Especially the " Christian " lass.
By telling lies and swilling Bass ?

Why, Ayah !

* *Beelat*: England.

Ballads of Burma.

XXVII.

The Fall of a Star.

(Being the Biography of a "Bounder.")

The convict settlement of Port Blair, in the Andaman Islands, is garrisoned by a detachment from one of the Indian Regiments of the Burma Command.

PART I.—AT ITS ZENITH.

THERE'S nothing gives me greater glee
Than when some gilded Pharisee
Falls from his pinnacle on high
To wallow in the common stye.
'Twas thus with young Augustus Chaw.
(No need to specify his corps :
Suffice it that Augustus C.
Was in the British Cavalry.)
His father, native of Shoreditch,
Was fairly opulent and rich.
'Twixt you and me, he made his "pile"
Exporting curios up the Nile,
Weird effigies of ancient Ram
(Designed in modern Birmingham),
To tourists sold as rare antiques
By licensed bandits known as "Greeks."
At his decease, Augustus Chaw
Inherited his wealth galore,

Ballads of Burma.

His stock of worthless counterfeit,
His arrogance and self-conceit.
Said he : " I've coin, I need not toil
To keep intact this mortal coil,
But do I idle in my Club,
Or flirt with barmaids in a pub ?
No, no ; with sword in hand I fight
For King and country, God and right !
'Twas only fair I should be sent
To some crack tip-top regiment.
And so I braved the risk of glanders,
And joined the Snorting Salamanders.
You see the pick of England's Forces
Are those that fight on prancing horses.
'Twould break a Salamander's heart
To learn your tame ' mud-punching ' art.
Your *Fantassin* who ' slogs ' on foot
Ain't fit to shine a Blucher boot.
As for the Guards, why bless you, sir,
They seldom from their barracks stir—
A pack of busbied nincompoops—
Most aptly christened ' *Household* Troops.'
Far better lose a ' thou ' at cards
Than go ' mud-punching ' with the Guards.
The Engineers are just as bad,
They're married, Methodist, or mad.
And Gunners crouch behind a wall,
And are not ' soldier men ' at all.
The Indian sepoy, did you say ?
That hybrid scarecrow popinjay,
Who decorates his toes with rings,
And bangs a tom-tom when he sings :

Ballads of Burma.

Who scores an 'outer' when he shoots,
And weeps when told to wear his boots.
Great Scott! I'd rather get the sack
Than nigger-drive a cringing black.
Augustus he is far too 'fly'
To mingle with such common fry,
And as he merited the best,
He chose the Salamanders' nest!"

* * * * *

This vulgar swaggering buffoon
Is chanting now a softer tune.
His pride (as only just and proper),
In hunting parlance, came a "cropper."

PART II.—THE FALL.

The Epsom Downs and potent "pegs"
Consumed his nest of golden eggs,
He reached his last *piastre*.
Fast actresses and slow geegees
Induced what Frenchmen call *la crise*—
In other words, disaster.

His bolt was shot: he'd not a friend;
The money-lenders would not lend
(He might have been the Sultan).
So thus it was, it came to pass,
Augustus sailed to far Madras,
And joined a *kala paltan*.*

* *Kala paltan*: A native regiment.

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

The Native Foot at Inkypore
Had heard of young Augustus Chaw,
 And of his vulgar boasting.
Said they : " You leather-bumping cur,
Who on mud-punchers cast a slur,
 You'll have an Indian tcasting."

They twitted him with showing " side,"
They asked him if he'd learnt to ride,
 They never ceased their banter,
Until Augustus rued that he
Had jeered at Native Infantry.
 Ah ! Tempora mutantur !

They egged him on to try and school
A misanthropic transport mule,
 Which very promptly kicked him.
Said they : " To keep you sound and sleek,
You'll do a route-march twice a week,"
 And this severely " dicked " him.

They threatened all his bones to break
Should he attempt to poodle fake,
 Or try to " mash " the ladies.
In short, on duty and on leave,
From early dawn to dewy eve,
 His life became a Hades.

One day from Simla came a wire
Which set all Inkypore a-fire,
 And flustered everybody :
" Your corps will shift to Mandalay
(Where flying-fishes *never* play)
 Upon the Irrawaddy.

Ballads of Burma.

" A subaltern you'll please detail
To travel by the B. I. Mail—
 Port Blair his destination.
His duties, they will be to guard
Bengali convicts doing their 'hard'
 Within that convict station."

'Tis scarcely necess'ry to say
They packed Augustus 'cross the Bay
 To carry out this order.
His pride lay humbled in the dust
On realising he was just
 A sort of convict warder !

Like Humpty-Dumpty on the wall,
Augustus had a mighty fall.
 Oh ! horrible position.
To think that he should have to tend
A Babu dog (Keir Hardie's friend),
 Convicted of sedition.

* * * * *

And now he's moving Heaven and earth
To try and get a softer berth
 In Burma's Police Imperial.
But should he get that job or not,
Don't influence *us* a little jot ;
 'Tis purely immaterial !

Ballads of Burma.

XXVIII.

Audi et Alteram Partem.

WHEN you first went out to Burma,
To the dust and glare and heat,
Where the white man's food is garbage,
And the *moorghī* * does for meat,
You abused the shrill mosquito,
You anathemised the *dhoop*, †
And you cursed the gentle *poochie* ‡
For expiring in your soup.

Refrain.

But to-day that you are pensioned
And frequent St. James' Square,
You revile the British climate
With its cold and misty air.
You complain if *chicken* curry
Ain't upon the bill of fare ;
And you yearn for juicy mangoes,
And a jail long-sleever chair.

You remember how you shivered
(In the shade, 'twas ninety-nine)
When malaria turned your muscles
Into masticated twine ;

Moorghī: Hind. for fowl. † *Dhoop*: The sun. ‡ *Poochie*: An insect.

Ballads of Burma.

When, like molten lead, the fever
 Burned its way along your veins,
And you vowed that h—ll were better
 Than the Delta in the rains.

Refrain.

But to-day that you are pensioned
 And frequent St. James' Square,
You bewail the blinding blizzard
 (Fit to freeze a polar bear);
Round about you folks are ailing
 From bronchitis and the "flue,"
And you sigh for sunny Burma
 Where no blizzard ever blew.

In the wild archaic eighties,
 When you chased Boh Nam-le-boo,
On Chicago beef and biscuits,
 And a striker miner's "screw,"
You were worked until you sweated
 Like a coolie in the Rand;
And you cursed the day you travelled
 Out to "India's coral strand."

Refrain.

But to-day that you are pensioned
 And frequent St. James' Square,
You step gently on the carpet
 And select the cosiest chair.
Once again you fight your battles—
 Draw the elongated bow,
And declare, "The good old days, sir,
 They have gone to Jericho!"

Ballads of Burma.

All alone amidst the jungles,
 You endured an exile's life ;
For the pay that Simla grudged you
 Would not let you take a wife ;
Sickly rodents squirmed around you,
 Plague came prowling round your doors,
And you prayed the gods to let you
 Quit those pestilential shores.

Refrain.

But to-day that you are pensioned
 And frequent St. James' Square,
Vain to seek for boyhood's comrades—
 They have "climbed the golden stair."
Ah ! your thoughts drift back to Burma,
 To your pals a-toiling there,
To the Shwe Dagon at sunset ;
 To—your Judson's dictionnaire !

Ballads of Burma.

XXIX.

A Talaing Courtship.

Amongst the thousands of Talaings, who are scattered over South Burma, it is the custom for a suitor to stand outside his sweetheart's house, insert his hand through a hole in the floor especially made for that purpose, and in this position woo her. This is termed "*Apouk ka hnike the.*"

THE "Post Commander" at Pauktan
Was Jemadar Sher Ali Khan ;
Such martinet
Was rarely met—
A hateful domineering man.

This scion of the Afghan race
Fell victim to a pretty face ;
A sweet Talaing,
By name Ma Myaing,
Endued with ev'ry Eastern grace.

Resolved his passion deep to tell,
He waited for her by the well.
With gift of fruit
He pressed his suit.
To him replied the saffron belle :—

Ballads of Burma.

“ Bohgyi,* I have been strictly taught
That men Talaing-wise ought to court.
So—if you like—
Apouk ka hmike;
Or else your words will count for nought.”



The love-sick Boh, his flame adoring,
That very night (when all were snoring),
With cautious twist,
Slipped in his fist,
Right through the shaky bamboo flooring.

* *Bohgyi*: A chief or captain.

Ballads of Burma.

“ Oh, beauteous maid. I'd scorn to seek
A sweetheart with an ebon cheek.

The Indian lass
Is black and crass—

Her nose is like a raven's beak.



“ Your face is fair ; your raiment natty ;
Your form's as graceful as a chatty ;*

Your velvet skin—
(*Ma soke pa hnin !*)

Is soft and fragrant as chapatty !” †

* *Chatty*: An earthenware pot.

† *Chapatty*: A dough cake.

Ballads of Burma.

The bashful damsel hung her head—
Her cheeks suffused a brick-dust red.

“ I fear that pa
Won't let *Kalah**
His docile little daughter wed.”

Said Ali Khan : “ 'Tis very clear
Your father will not interfere.

I pay his debts,
And then he lets
Me marry you, my little dear.”

“ Bohgyi, although my father may
Consent, still *I* must have my say.

I love a youth
(Talaing forsooth),
And hope to marry him some day.”

Hissed Ali Khan : “ You've brought me here
At my abasement just to jeer.

As for that yellow
Flat-nosed young fellow,
I'll cut his throat from ear to ear.”

He said no more, for with a groan,
He fell—his wrist cut to the bone.

But worse than pain
He failed to gain
Her hand. (He nearly lost his own.)

* *Kalah* : A foreigner or native of India.

Ballads of Burma.

The cut was deep, but did not main.
Next day, he begged, o'erwhelmed by shame,
 Transferred to be
 To far Kirkee ;
Or otherwise he'd " cut his name."

When C.-in-C. Lord K. of K.
Swung down the line on New Year's day,
 There's just *one* scar
 This Jemadar
Kept " up his sleeve," and hid away !

Ballads of Burma.

XXX.

A Metamorphosis.

In 1907, it was enacted that European Inspectors of the Burma Police were ineligible for further promotion. The restriction only applied to Inspectors who were Europeans. This ballad should be sung briskly, to the vigorous accompaniment of a tom-tom.

SMITH was born in London town :
From his ankles to his crown
He was British—eighteen carat every link.
And the hair upon his head
Was a flaring carrot red ;
And his skin was white (except where it was pink).

You have heard how in one night
Hair has turned a snowy white ;
But young Smith goes on a somewhat different tack,
For, on coming back from leave,
On the morn of New Year's eve,
His flamingo head had turned a raven black.

And his Anglo-Saxon cuticle,
Once superbly white and beautiful—
Yes, those dimpled cheeks so rosy and so ruddy,
Have assumed a brownish colour
Like the waters of a *nullah*
In September, when the floods have made it muddy.

Ballads of Burma.

Most amazing change of all,
He has lost his Mayfair drawl ;
With a *pizzicato* snap, his words he " clips."'
He exclaims, " Oh my ! oh man !"
Just as often as he can,
And the blatant stains of betel dye his lips.

With his cook he waxes wrath
When he serves him joints or broth,
And insists upon a red-hot " curry rice."
And he's partial to a skilly
If it " hums " with ghee and chilli ;
But his latest trick of all is " *eating pice !*"

Smith's astounding sudden change
Is not really very strange ;
For the fellow's got a rather brilliant notion,
That, if taken for Eurasian,
On a not remote occasion,
They'll select his name for long deferred promotion !

Ballads of Burma.

XXXI.

The Two Myooks.

It is the ambition of a Myook to become an E.A.C. (or Extra Assistant Commissioner) and to gain the distinction of a K.S.M., which is conferred only upon especially deserving Burmans.



MAUNG PAY.

THE British race (forgive me, please !)
Abounds with odious Pharisees ;
With prudish folk who take offence
At "Honi soit qui mal y pense !"
Who'd mould the morals of a nation
By priggish forms of legislation ;
Who pat themselves upon the back,
And say, "Thank God! *we* are not black!"
Confined by queer dogmatic trammels,
They "strain at gnats and swallow
camels."

The modern saint delights to note
Within his neighbour's eye a mote ;
But he is very, very prone
To hide the beam within his own.
Though British Pharisees abound,
'Mongst Burmans, too, they're to be found,
This statement you will not gainsay,
When you have read about Maung Pay.

Ballads of Burma.

Nice simple-minded Mr. Stokes,
Had under him a pair of Myooks.
The one was fat, the other thin—
Their names, Maung Pay and Maung Tha Din.
Maung Pay was full of Western knowledge,
Crammed into him at Rangoon College.
He ran up bills with Rowe and Co.,
Wore Dawson boots and silk *pasoh*.
Tha Din, brought up by some old Pongyi,*
Wore sandals and a cotton *loongyi*.

Maung Pay knew Jardine's Rulings pat :
Tha Din relied on Dhamathat.†
Maung Pay possessed a greasy palm ;
Tha Din declined the golden balm.
Maung Pay judicial duties shirked—
His violent crimes were mostly burked.
Tha Din recorded his. Poor duffer—
His years' returns were bound to suffer.
Maung Pay collected every tax
By methods the reverse of lax—
(Oh ! keep it dark from kind Lloyd G. !)
By " methods of barbarity."
Tha Din, too kind to twist the screw,
Was in arrears with revenue.

Once Mr. Stokes *Ayay-baing-min*,‡
Went down to visit Tantabin.

* *Pongyi* : A Buddhist monk.

† The Dhamathat of Memoo was the standard Law Book of the Burmese Kings.

‡ *Ayay-baing-min* (Bur.) : Deputy Commissioners.

Ballads of Burma.

Within the bungalow, Maung Pay
Bowed down before him with a tray
Of cakes and ginger pop. (Tha Din
Was absent marking out a *kwin*.)*



MAUNG THA DIN.

And this is what the 'cute Maung Pay
Said to the great D. C. that day.

* *Kwin* : An area of cultivated land.

Ballads of Burma.

“ Oh, may it please you, Mr. Stokes,
I am not like your other Myooks.
I strictly supervise my scribes.
I shudder at the thought of bribes.
Each week, I study my *Gazette*,
My cases never are upset.
My township is at perfect peace ;
And revenue flows in with ease.
And when the great D. C. comes here,
I welcome him with ginger beer ;
Unlike Tha Din, who sliuks away,
To hunt the oof bird—called T.A. ! ”

In next week's Government *Gazette*.
The following words were to be met :
' Maung Pay—created K.S.M.—
Is made an E. A. C. *pro tem*.
To clerkship grade reverts Tha Din,
Who transferred is to damp Maubin.”

Ballads of Burma.

XXXII.

Geographical Jingles.

THERE was an old man of Rangoon,
A *dry*-humoured sort of buffoon ;
 But he “quitted” his joking.
 After jolly well soaking,
In the drip of the wat’ry monsoon.

There was a young lady of Prome,
Who’s motto was—“Do as in Rome,”
 So, at afternoon tea.
 In the clearest *chee-chee*.
She would chatter quite vaguely of “home.”

There was an old dame of Tavoy,
Who’s trinkets were mostly alloy.
 But said she, “Pray excuse
 This precautionary ruse,
For my husband did ‘time’ as a boy.”

There was a young man of Mogók,
Who, just for a practical joke,
 Sent some potted *ngapee* *
 To a Pecksniff D.C.,
But, alas ! it was “bagged” by the Myook.

* *Ngapee*: Salt fish, renowned for its pungency.

Ballads of Burma.

There was an old girl of Bilin,
Who aspired to be slender and thin,
 So she sat on the fire,
 With a view to perspire,
Till she melted right out of her skin !

There was a young man of Minbu,
Whose vices were probably few.
 For a *lustrum* or so,
 He drank plain H₂O.,
And succumbed to a galloping sprue !

There was an old man of Shwebo,
Whose standard of humour was low ;
 He thought it great fun
 To sit out in the sun,
Till he frizzled as black as a crow.

There was a young girl of Kindat,
A "nailer" at tackling a rat ;
 But she fled from the house
 At the sight of a mouse,
And wired to Rangoon for a cat !

There was an old man of Bassein,
Whose ways were both cruel and mean.
 He fixed locks on his doors,
 And kept count of his stores,
So his servants grew shockingly lean !

There was a young girl of Chouktan,
Who coquetted behind a small fan ;
 But the villagers said,
 "Should that girl ever wed,
Well—our sympathies lie with the *man!*"

Ballads of Burma.

XXXIII.

The Fastidious Globe-Trotter.

When a Burmese Pongyi (or Buddhist Monk) dies, his body is kept embalmed with a preparation of resin, honey, and spices, until such time as sufficient funds shall have been collected to give him a fitting funeral.

YOUNG Boffin was a millionaire,
A pampered life his lot.
At Cook's he bought a first-class fare,
Around the globe to trot.

Some people social lines would draw
Betwixt black folk and white ;
With Boffin, 'twas another law—
“ The poor can have no right.”

Whate'er he had, he'd ne'er share half,
But “ swanked ” about his “ tin ;”
Bowed down before the Golden Calf—
Deemed poverty a sin.

Now when he reached our torrid coast,
He'd *buk* the livelong day,
With scathing taunt, or empty boast ;
And this is what he'd say :

Ballads of Burma.



Ballads of Burma.

“ You work-worn fools of backbone weak,
With faces pale as ghosts ;
You live in cabins made of teak,
In boxes perched on posts.

“ You clothe yourselves from head to foot
In togs of khaki shade ;
And should you sport an ‘ English suit,’
’Tis always derzi-made.

“ Your pabulum is sorry trash,
Viz., chicken Irish stew,
Crumb chops of chicken, chicken hash,
And ‘ chicken-beefsteaks,’ too !

“ The way you ‘ wolf ’ your curry rice
Quite gives my nerves a shock.
I make a rule to have things nice—
Live like a fighting-cock ! ”

One morn he called his boy. Said he :
“ This marmalade looks funny ;
Well, here’s the sum of one rupee,
Go purchase me some honey.”

“ Please, master, buy it, apple jam ;
Please, not yet honey season.”

“ Be blowed,” cried Boffin, “ that’s a cram,
And not sufficient reason.

“ I fear you’re getting ‘ out of hand,’
You low Madrassi scum.
I’ve ordered honey—understand ?
Go fetch me some *ek-dum* !* ”

* *Ek-dum* : At once.

Ballads of Burma.

“ You good-for-nothing Pariah, if
Without it you come back,
Then you and I will have a tiff—
In short, you'll get the sack.”

The awe-struck boy—like one inspired—
Rushed forth with pot and spoon,
To seek that which the Sahib desired,
And found it pretty soon !

He'd scarcely reached his master's side,
Than clad in yellow robe,
A Buddhist monk burst in and cried :
“ Hark ! trotter of the globe !

“ To-day there closed a life of toil,
U Wanda bishop great,
Cast off this wretched mortal coil,
And gained Nirvana's state.

“ A catafalque of costly price
We built beneath a palm,
Collecting sweetened herbs and spice,
The body to embalm.”

“ But what has this to do with *me* ? ”
Exclaimed impatient Boffin.
“ O, Sir, you produce of the bee
Was robbed—from Wanda's coffin ! ”

Ballads of Burma.

XXXIV.

Blank the Engineer.

Scraping a borrow-pit is quite a source of wealth to some unscrupulous people. The operation consists in scraping the sides and bottom of an old and forgotten borrow-pit—when making embankments, etc.—and sending in a bill for the total cubic contents of the combined ancient and modern excavations! Although this ballad may be sung to the tune of “The British Grenadiers,” I wish it to be understood that Blank is not a Britisher.

SOME talk of tube and tunnel,
Of Brooklyn and Simplon ;
Of Baker and of Brunel,
Lesseps and Stephenson.
But of all these brilliant experts,
There's none that can compare,
For oriental 'cuteness,
With Blank the Engineer.

I'll bet none of these champions
Has ever made his “ bit ”
Upon “ repairs and painting,”
Nor “ scraped ” a borrow-pit ;
Nor measured up road metal,
By methods passing queer,
In writing feet for inches—
Like Blank the Engineer.

Ballads of Burma.

When ordered by his bosses
Some "public work" to do,
Blank calls his pet contractor—
A betel-stained Babu,
Who doubles rates and measures ;
Bilks coolies, too, I fear ;
But gladly showers commission
On Blank the Engineer.

But some "Execs"* are Tartars,
Which causes Blank to "grouse,"
When he has got to earthoil
The Ex-E.'s matchbox house.
The Tartar weighs his *yénan*,†
And counts the rags to smear—
Which forces muffled curses
From Blank the Engineer.

Come let us drink a bumper
To Blank, who patches roads,
Who smears with oily raglets
Our matting wall abodes.
Hail, Blank the Oorya's idol,
Let's ever hold him dear,
We're only poor tax-payers,
But Blank's an Engineer !

* *Exec* : Executive Engineer.

† *Yénan* : Crude earth oil, with which the walls of wooden and mat buildings are smeared, as a protection against the extreme damp of the monsoon season.

Ballads of Burma.

XXXV.

To Ma May.

(*An Anglo-Burmese Ballad.*)



GREAT is my love, Ma May, for you,
The sweetest girl in Donabyu.
Talaing and Burmese blood combine
In you, to mould a form divine.

Great is my love, Ma May, for you.
Can I forget Ko Pan's *ahloo*,
When first you flashed across my life,
The emblem of a perfect wife ?

Great is my love, Ma May, for you :
Thu-mya taga hnin min ma-too.
(Excuse the " *min*," for else I can
Not make the burning couplet scan !)

Great is my love, Ma May, for you :
So great—*kyundaw ma-eik hnine boo ;*
Sah-lo ma-win, eik-lo ma-pyaw
(In royal language) *set ma-kaw.*

Ballads of Burma.

Great is my love, Ma May, for you ;
'Tis true, I swear—*paya ko soo*—
So great, that I have grown quite thin ;
My word of honour as *thakin*.

Great is my love, Ma May, for you,
A love as passionate as true ;
A love I'm powerless to control,
So strong it surges in my soul.

Great is my love, Ma May, for you.
Like this, *Kyundaw ma pyit poo boo* :
My blood's a-boil, my heart's a-fire.
Oh ! listen to my soul's desire !

Great is my love, Ma May, for you.
Please don't deride this *billet doux* ;
But listen to my abject plea,
And whisper : "*Kyunma kyike pa mee*" !

APOLOGIA.

Did somebody growl at my using Burmese ?
If so, further bother to save, I
Most humbly and meekly apologise. Please
Forgive me, kind reader. *Peccavi* !

Ballads of Burma.

XXXVI.

Forty Years Back.

Air: "Forty Years On." (Harrow School Song.)

FORTY years back every verdant young Griffin,*
Putting his foot on the soil of Rangoon,
Quickly discovered that lunch is called tiffin,
Learned to eat curry and rice with a spoon.
Once a "blue moon," he could reckon on mutton—
Far beyond hope, was the tinkle of ice—
Spartan-like fare; but he cared not a button,
Hunger inured him to curry and rice.

Chorus.

Hip, hip hooray! Hip, hip hooray!
From Yunan to the Bay, raise a cheer
For the hardy and brave pioneer.
Hip, hip hooray! Hip, hip hooray!

Forty years back, the reverse of alluring
Were prospects of pension, promotion, and pay.
Cheerfully youngsters for Government touring,
Stuck to their saddles the whole of the day.

* *Griffin*: One who has not been long in the East, corresponding in a way to what is known as a "Torpid" at Harrow.

Ballads of Burma.

Nowadays, railways in every direction
Carry about, at the cost of the State,
Youngsters who grumble in sulky dejection,
When the express is a few minutes late.

Chorus.

Hip, hip hooray ! etc., etc.

Forty years back, when a man took a journey
Into the regions of Justice and Law,
Rarely, if ever, he sought an attorney ;
Deeds in those days counted higher than " jaw."
Nowadays, Courts swarm with Vakils and Pleaders,
Lying in wait for Jack Burman's rupees ;
" Bluff " is the game of these spidery " bleeders,"
Eloquent fellows—who can't speak Burmese !

Chorus.

Hip, hip hooray ! etc., etc.

Forty years back, every headquarters station
Bowed to a Nabob, whose power was immense,
Lacking the polish of sleek education,
His was the mascot of plain common sense.
Youngsters to-day, stuffed with rules academic,
Cramped by the trainmels of section and code,
Fritter their time in hair-splitting polemic,
Spurning the course which the veterans rode.

Chorus.

Hip, hip hooray ! etc., etc.

Ballads of Burma.

Forty years back, a devoted young stripling
Screened in the jungle his chivalrous deeds
(Conduct deserving a poem by Kipling),
Giving his life for the Motherland's needs.
Come! let us follow this patriot hero,
Fight to a finish, until we have won.
Let our endeavour be "*Dum spiro spero*"
Twenty or thirty or forty years on!

Chorus.

Hip, hip hooray! Hip, hip hooray!
From Yunan to the Bay raise a cheer,
Let us follow the brave pioneer!
Hip, hip hooray! Hip, hip hooray!

Ballads of Burma.

XXXVII.

Vale !



FAREWELL, ye rocks of sandstone ;
Farewell, ye sodden *Kwins* ; *
Ye stately toddy-palm groves ;
Ye shady *thayet-bins*. †

Farewell, ye teak-tree forests,
That fringe the fertile plains ;
Farewell, ye rain-swept mountains ;
Ye dusty village lanes.

Farewell, ye rocky torrents ;
Ye trickling sandy *choungs* ;
Farewell, swift Irrawaddy,
The home of racing *loungs*. ‡

Farewell, ye gaudy parrots ;
Ye sober birds that pipe ;
Ye iridescent peacocks ;
Ye jungle-fowl and snipe.

* *Kwins* : Fields.

† *Thayet-bins* : Mango trees.

‡ *Loung* : A Burmese racing boat.

Ballads of Burma.

Farewell, sagacious *hathis*, *
That toil at Kemmendine ;
Ye gallant-hearted ponies ;
Ye patient ploughing-kine.

Farewell, ye gold pagodas ;
Ye bright melodious *tees* ; †
Farewell, ye milk-white temples
Beneath the tamarind trees.

Farewell, ye laughing maidens ;
The sunshine of your smiles
Extends across the oceans,
Five thousand watery miles !

* *Hathis* : Elephants.

† *Tee* : The part of the pagoda from which the bells are suspended.

FINIS.

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Hotel Bristol, Place Vendome,

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I received your beautiful book whilst I was in London, but was in such a state of bewilderment and botheration with my own little volume, that I hadn't heart to perform the proper duties of gratitude and society, and thank you for your present and dedication. It was very interesting to me to see what my native country is like now. I have far-off visions of great saloons and people dancing in them, enormous idols and fireworks, rides on elephants or in jigs, and fogs clearing away and pagodas appearing over the trees, yellow rivers and budgerows, etc. I'm always interested about the place, and your sketches came to me as very welcome, besides being exceedingly pretty, cheerful, and lively. I hope the book will succeed. It must have been an awful bill to pay.

As for that little hint about Printing House Square, I know the Editors and most of the writers; and, knowing, never think of asking a favour for myself or any mortal man. They are awful, and inscrutable, and a request for a notice might bring a clasher down upon you, such as I once had in the *Times* for one of my own books (“*Esmond*”) of which the sale was absolutely stopped by a *Times* article. I wish your volume every success, and thank you for putting my name on its first page.—Ever yours, W. M. THACKERAY.

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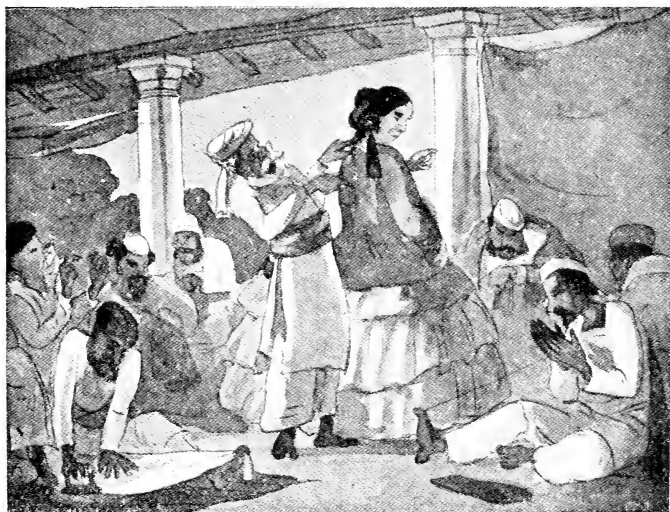
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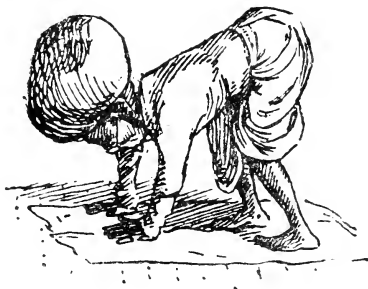
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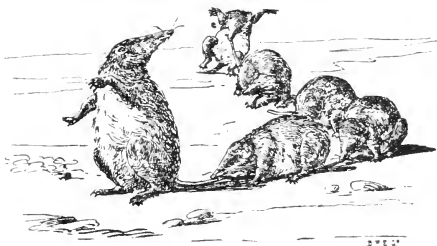
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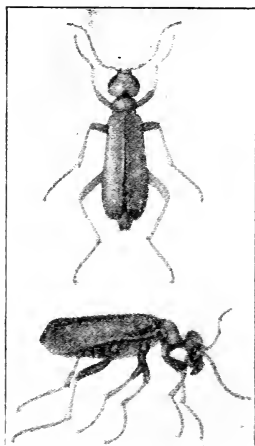
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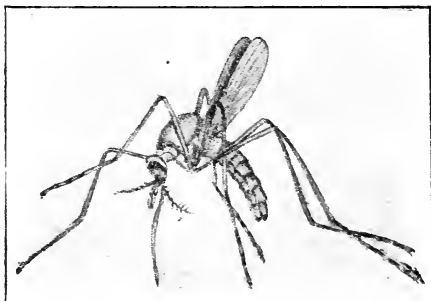
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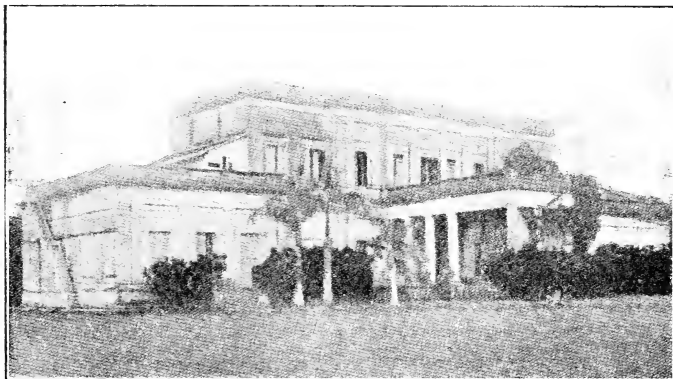
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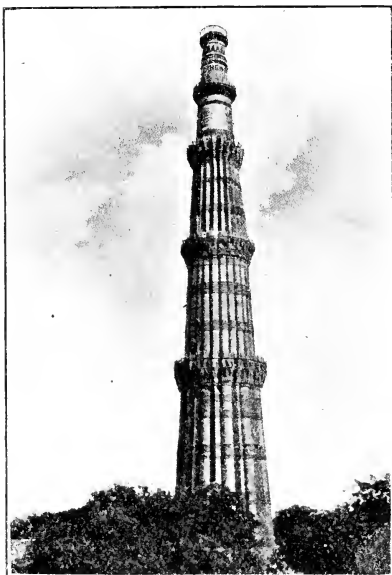
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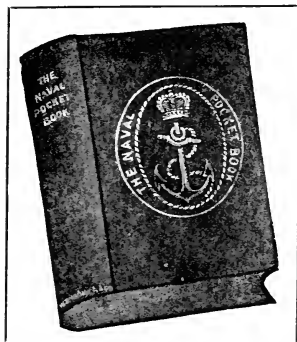
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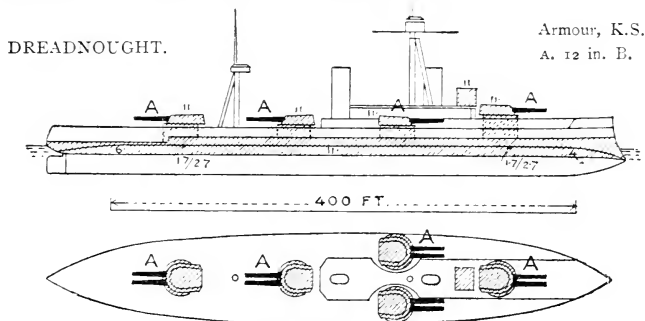
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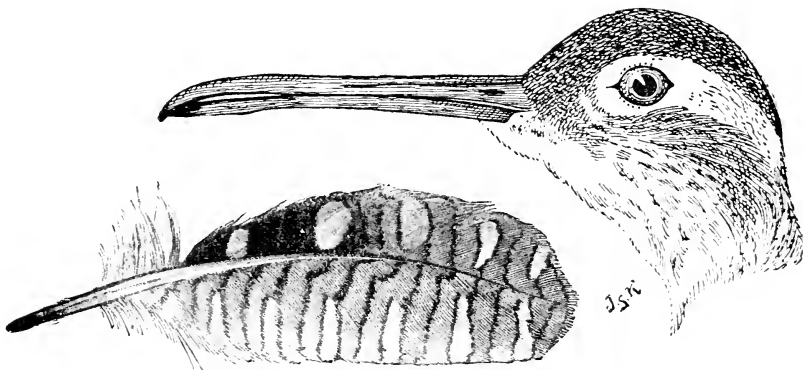
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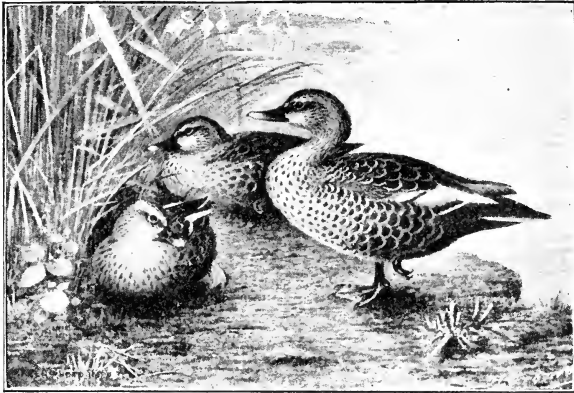
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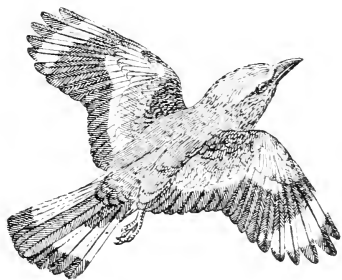
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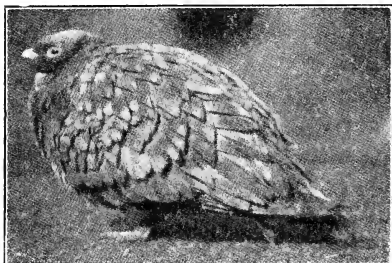
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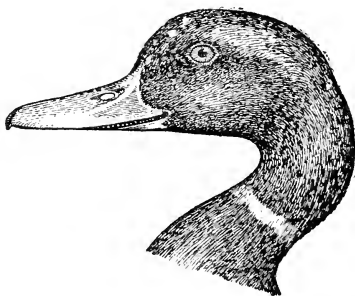
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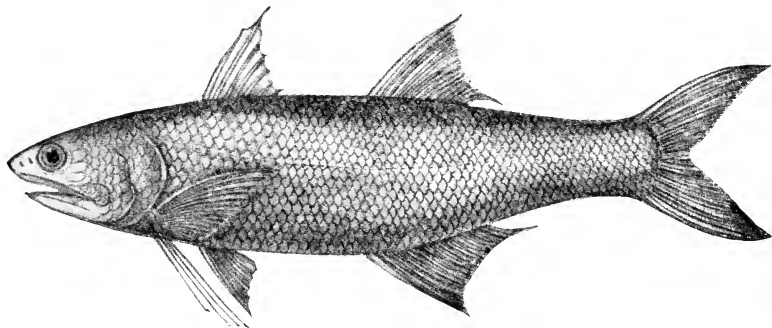
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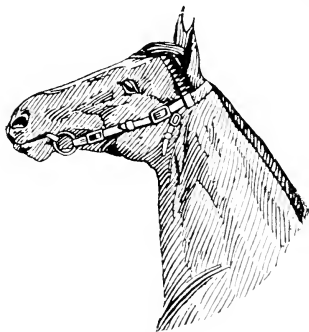
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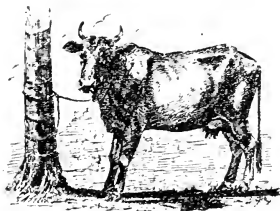
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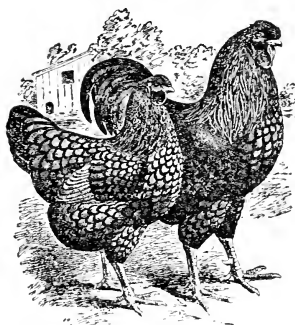
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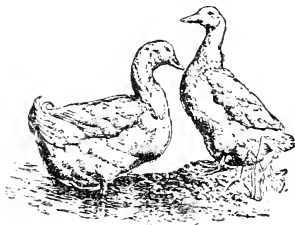
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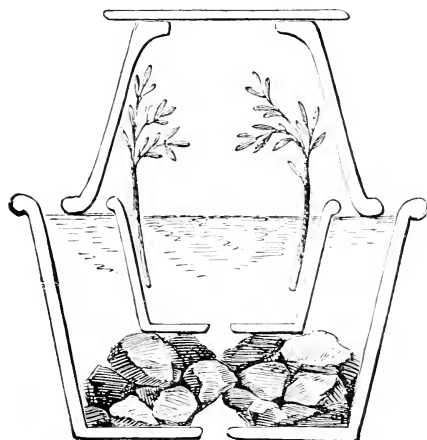
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