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AT BUDDHA'S GOLDEN SHRINE

The Magnificent Rangoon Temple and How It was Built.

ITS JEWELS BLAZE IN THE SUN

How Indo-China is Changing—Queer Features of the Tattooing Art—American Missions and a Yankee Printing Establishment.

Burmah and the Burmese.

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RANGOON, Burmah, March 23.—[Special Correspondence of THE BEE.]—The great southeastern peninsula of Asia, known as Indo-China or farther India, is fast making history. The French are developing the eastern provinces of Tonquin, Annam and Cambodia, which line the Pacific. The English have now a fast grip on Burmah, and Siam, lying between, awaits only a great European war to fall into the hands of one or the other. The day will soon come when this great territory, equal in size to one-third of the whole United States, will be governed from Europe. Its interior will be penetrated by railroads, and its immense resources will be thrown open to the world. As I write this letter a corps of engineers are at work surveying a railroad from Bangkok, the capital of Siam, to Mandalay, the great city of upper Burmah, and before this letter is published the English railroad, which now runs from this city of Rangoon, 163 miles, to the city of Prome in the interior, will have been extended to Mandalay, and will be open to traffic. This will give Burmah between four and five hundred miles of railway, and the day will come when the line will be extended to Canton in China.

These roads will open up one of the

RICHEST COUNTRIES OF THE EAST.

Indo-China is practically undeveloped and uncultivated. Its people are lazy, easy-going, half-savage races, from the Burmese to the Siamese and the Malays, and they have in the past lived from hand to mouth. They are not accumulators nor investors and their rich soil, forests and minerals are waiting the advent of the immigrant. The immigrant is already upon the ground in the person of the Europeans and the Chinese, and within a generation or so a new race will inhabit it. This race will be the Chinese crossed with the natives. Everywhere I go I find that the Chinamen are doing the business of the peninsula. They are marrying with the natives, and old English residents tell me they are producing a race that is better than either. At Singapore and in the southern part of the Malay peninsula they are crowding the English merchants out of business, and they own grand residences and work with large capital. Here at Rangoon none of the Chinese do coolie labor and in Siam they form already nearly one-half of the population. The English employ them largely, and they engage in all trades and in all kinds of business. They are, so Europeans think, a necessity to the development of a tropical country, and the prospect is that they will eventually own the larger part of farther India. They will not do laundry work here as they do with us, and the lowest grade of work at which you find them employed is carpentering.

Indo-China is still largely a jungle of forest, but its soil is as well fitted to support a great population as is that of India. It is watered by great rivers, and since the British took possession of lower Burmah, Rangoon has become one of the greatest rice ports in the world. One million tons of rice are exported from Burmar yearly, and the rice mills of Rangoon compare in size with the great

FLOURING MILLS OF MINNEAPOLIS.

It takes as much machinery and work to prepare the unhusked grains of rice for the market as it does to make roller patent process flour, and millions of dollars worth of capital are engaged here in this business. The forests of Indo-China are another great resource. In the south you find cocoanut trees by the millions, and I noted of the cargoes that were put on the ships in the harbors of the south that they were owned by the Chinese. Then there is also the teak wood trees. This wood is as hard as ebony, and it takes a polish and has a grain like that of mahogany. It is used for ship timber as well as for furniture, and it is now exported from Burmah and Siam to all parts of the world. In precious stones Indo-China is not lacking, and the rubies of Burmah and the sapphires of Siam are noted the world over. There is gold in some parts of the country and the southern peninsula is one bed of tin, which is now exported largely. Petroleum of several kinds has been found here in Burmah and the evidences may result in the development of a new oil field.

Of the whole peninsula, however, the empire of Burmah is perhaps the best part, and it is, I am told, one of the best paying of England's lately acquired possessions. At the beginning of the present century it was by far the strongest empire in farther India and it is now equal to six states as big as Ohio. Mandalay, which until about three years ago was the capital, is a city of several hundred thousand people, and Rangoon, where I write this letter has 140,000. It is the capital of lower Burmah which has belonged to England since the days of President Pierce. General Grant, when he stopped here on his way around the world, predicted that it would be as big as Calcutta in ten years. It is growing fast and it will, without doubt, be the great city of Indo-China. It is about twenty-nine miles from the sea on one of the many rivers which form the delta of the great Iriwaddy river. The river is navigable for the largest ocean steamers to Rangoon and boats of five feet draft can sail up it for 900 miles. Mandalay is situated on it about five hundred miles from the sea and it forms the great means of interior communication for Burmah. It is one of the greatest rivers in the world in its volume of water and it discolors the sea at points out of sight of land for a distance of 150 miles along its delta. The rainfall of some parts of the interior of Burmah ranges from three hundred to six hundred inches of water a year, and in July this river brings down to the sea the inconceivable amount of ninety-four billion tons of water a day. Supposing there to be a billion people in the world and that these billion of men, women and children have an average weight of ninety-four pounds each, all of the world's aggregate humanity would be outweighed by one day's flow of this river's water. The Washington monument weighs, if I remember correctly, 80,000 tons. It would take eleven hundred and seventy-five thousand such monuments to weigh as much as the daily discharge of this river in July. It is the fourth river in volume in the world, and its

SOURCE IS YET TO BE DISCOVERED.

It rises somewhere in the Himalayas or Thibet and has a wide and fertile valley. The branch on which Rangoon is situated is nearly a mile wide at this point and its waters are almost liquid mud.

Burmah has altogether a population of about five millions. The majority of these are Burmese, and they are a different people than any I have yet seen. The women are beautiful and the men are straight, proud and fine looking. They have olive-brown complexions, straight eyes of dark brown, fat noses, and lips a little thicker than those of the average Caucasian. They have no beards, but in some cases have downy moustaches of black. Their hair is jet black and they wear it long, rolling it up in a bright red or yellow handkerchief and wrapping this around the head so that it stands up for all the world like the bandana of the black auntie of slavery days. They wear a white linen or cotton jacket which reaches a little below the waist, and below this shines out the bright silk or cotton cloth which is wound tightly about the loins and is twisted there into a knot at the front so that its folds hang down between the legs. The women dress in much the same way—their skirt being the American pullback reversed—binding the bare limbs tightly and falling to the ground about their feet. The women wear nothing on their heads and both sexes go bare-footed. Both men and women pierce their ears and the men tattoo their bodies from the waist to below the knees.

Burmah is the land of the tattooed man, and even the artists of Puck could learn lessons in the art of tattooing here. In my visit to the great prison here, which contains more than three thousand men, I saw six thousand tattooed legs. These pen and ink sketches on human canvas peep out at you in every crowd you enter. The origin of the custom I have not been able to find out. It is here the Burmese sign of manhood, and there is as much ceremony about it as there is about the ear-piercing of the girls, which chronicles their entrance upon womanhood. There are professional tattooers, who go about with books of designs, and who will pick a flower or beast upon your leg or arm for a slight consideration. The instrument used is a pricker about two feet long with a heavy brass head. The point is split into four prongs, and in these the ink is held. The tattooer first outlines his sketch and then taking the skin up in his hand pinches it while he puts in the punctures which are to discolor it forever. The coloring matter used is lamp black, which turns a purple with age, and which, when finished, makes the man look as though he was dressed in kid-fitting tights of dark blue. The tattooing is not all done at once, but figure by figure as the boy or man can stand it. When finished there is a complete mass of figures from the waist on a line with the navel to the knee cap, and you often see in addition to this specimens of tattooing on other parts of the body. The people are superstitious about it and certain kinds of tattooing are

SUPPOSED TO WARD OFF DISEASE.

One kind wards off the snake bite and another prevents a man from drowning. In 1881 a man so tattooed tested the efficacy of his tattooing by allowing his hands and feet to be tied and himself to be thrown into the river. It is needless to say that the current carried him away, and neither tattoo nor man was ever again seen. The only tattooing effected by women is that which produces love in the heart of the desired one of the other sex. This is a triangle of peculiar color, which is put on between the eyes, upon the lip, or upon the tongue as the tattooer prescribes. Its color is made of a mixture called by the Burmese "the drug of tenderness," and it is a compound not much different from the hell broth brewed by the witches in Macbeth. Another kind of tattooing is effected by school boys. It prevents, it is said, the boy feeling the whip when he is punished at school, and it is universally effected by the bold bad boys of every Burmese town.

The Burmese are Buddhist and every Burmese man is supposed at some time in his life to be a priest. The education of the children is by the priests, and the bulk of the population get their education in the monastic schools. You find Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist temples everywhere, and there is here at Rangoon the finest Buddhist monument in the world. It ranks with the Taj Mahal as one of the greatest curiosities of India, and it is the oldest and finest place of worship in Indo China. It is the Shway Dagohn pagoda or "the golden pagoda." Imagine a mountain of gold rising terrace after terrace from a mighty platform and growing smaller as it goes upward until it at last pierces the skies in a golden spire, the top of which is 375 feet from the ground. Make the base so large that it is a quarter of a mile around its outer golden rim and let the slope of the terraces go upward in bell-like stories to the distance of 100 feet from the ground. There is not a block in your city as large as the base of this monument, and its top is higher than any building in America, save the monument at Washington. Its spire is taller than that of St. Paul's cathedral at London and the whole glistens under the blazing sunlight as though it were solid gold. At its top there is now a scaffolding for the great golden umbrella, which the last king of Burmah before Thebaw gave to it, is being restored to its place, and the jewelers are working upon this in the sheds at its base. This umbrella is a great circular piece of gold which is studded with jewels, any one of which would be a fit wedding present for a princess. It cost more than

TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND GOLD DOLLARS

when it was made eighteen years ago. But its long since the winds shook it from its moorings, and jewels and gold came down to the ground. This mighty pagoda has cost millions of dollars. It is of brick and stucco covered with gold leaf as fine as that ever put into an American tooth, and as costly as that which covers the new gold frame which surrounds Mrs. Hayes' picture in one of the white house parlors. It has been regilded again and again, and it its tons of material could be put through one of the great quartz mills of Denver, it would yield as much good ore as a California mine.

The base of this pagoda is on a hill overlooking the city of Rangoon. It consists o two terraces and the other is paved with flags of stone. This is 160 feet above the level of the ground and it covers about fourteen and a half acres. The great pyramid near Cairo has a base of thirteen acres, but the base of this monument is bigger. It is 900 feet long by about seven hundred feet wide, and this fourteen acres is covered with little temples with hundreds of Buddhas of all shapes and sizes, some of which are of gold and others of which have been gilded again and again until the layers of gold upon them are in places as thick as wedding rings. It is impossible to estimate the wealth that stands upon this platform. The shrine has been a noted one as far back as 500 years before Christ was born, and during twenty-three centuries the Buddhists have been laying their offerings upon it. They have added to it all these years until it has risen from twenty-seven feet to its present height. During the last century one of the kings of Burmah vowed he would give his own weight in gold to this monument. He hopped upon the imperial scales and pulled the beam at 170 pounds. The vow cost him $45,000 worth of gold leaf, and it all went into this monument. The monument was regilded in 1871, and it is now being again polished. It is, all told, a mass of brick and mortar mixed with gold, and its outside plated with gold. It has no interior chambers, and it is as solid as a grave stone. Its surroundings are those of worship, and you may any day see dozens of women clad in bright silk gowns and white vests kneeling and bowing before it. They bring offerings of rice and flowers to it, and the air is filled with the perfume of the roses which lie at its base. This base is surrounded by stone figures of kneeling elephants, each of which is the size of the baby elephant in the circus. These have flat places upon their backs, and it is upon these that the offerings are often laid. Here and there are little dove cote like shrines, before which incense always burns, and the roofs of which have been turned by its aromatic smoke into soot. No matter how hot the day, these women and men here kneel, and under the blazing sun prostrate themselves before this golden mountain, and before what they imagine constitutes its elements of sanctity. These are four hairs from the head of the great Buddha himself.

There are many relics of Buddha in the various Buddist shrines as there are pieces of the cross of Christ in the relic chambers of the churches of Europe. The story is that

BUDDHA GAVE THESE HAIRS

to two pious brothers with directions that they should deposit them on this holy hill. This monument was built over them, and it is one of the legends concerning it that there is in the interior a shaft running from the top down to the basement and filled with gold, and silver, and precious stones. Whether this be true or not the antiquarian of the future must decide.

Speaking about Buddhism, it is among the Buddhists that the Christians found their hardest missionary work. One of the oldest missions of the United States is here in Burmah, and it was during the administration of President Madison, and while the war of 1812 was in progress, that a Baptist missionary and his wife first landed in Rangoon. This was in 1813, and the name of the missionary was Adoniram Judson. Now the Baptists have, all told, about thirty thousand converts in Burmah. Their mission schools are found in every part of the country, and here at Rangoon is one of the most enterprising mission colonies in Asia. I asked, upon my arrival, where I could get the best guide book to Burmah, and I was referred to the Mission Press. I found here a book store that would do credit to an American town and a printing establishment which would be considered large in any city of America. It had over eighty employes and it was turning out publications in eight different languages. It has a pay roll of over a thousand dollars a month and this in a country where money brings ten times as much as it does at home. It was doing its work by steam and all its machinery came from the United States. Mr. F. D. Phinney, the superintendent, spoke of this as he showed me over the establishment. "We get all of our presses from the United States," said he. "They cost twice as much as those of English make, but they last more than four times as long."

This establishment does missionary miscellaneous printing and binding. It has a monopoly of the school book trade of Burmah, vernacular and foreign, and it has its agents in every large center. It sells books and stationery of all kinds and it makes lots of money. All this goes into the missionary business and it is a live institution run on American business principles for the glory of God. I am not a Baptist, but I like the way the Baptist missionaries do their business in Burmah. They are bright, cultivated, wide-awake fellows and they are doing much in the work of civilization. Many of them have spent a lifetime in the work and two of the pleasantest old ladies I have ever met were the widows of two missionaries. One had spent fifty-one and the other sixty years in Burmah, and I found them both up to the times, good talkers, bright-eyed and cultivated, working away in their eighties, translating and directing the people, among whom their best years have been spent.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

The Romance of a Brass Button.

New York Mercury.

She told him that men were false,
That love was a dreadful bore,
As they danced to the Nanon waltz
On the slippery ballroom floor.

He said that her woman's face,
The crown of her shining hair,
Her subtle feminine grace,
Were haunting him everywhere.

He told her his orders had come
To march with the dawn of day;
A soldier must "follow the drum"—
No choice but to mount and away.

A sudden tremor of fear
Her rallying laughter smote,
As he gave her a souvenir—
A button from off his coat.

He went to the distant war,
And fought as man should do;
But she forgot him afar
In the passion for something new.

His trinket amongst the rest,
She wore at her dainty throat;
But a bullet had pierced his breast
Where the button was off his coat.

The Health of Railroaders.

The life of railway men does not seem to be very healthy nor yet a very enjoyable one, if any reliance is to be placed on the observations of medical men who have given some attention to the subject. According to M. Duchesne, railway men improve in health during the first four years, but at the end of ten years they are tired out, in fifteen they are actual suffers, and very few can remain in the service after twenty. These general conclusions have been supplemented by Dr. Lichtenbag, of Buda-Pesth, who found from examination that out of 259 railway employes, ninety-two, or more than a third, suffered from ear disease. Engine drivers are especially liable to rheumatism and pneumonia, and after some years' service a certain proportion of them become dull of sight and hearing. Others suffer from a mild form of spinal concussion, muscular feebleness and continuous pains in the limbs. They are also apt to develop a peculiar mental state—a sort of cerebral irritation—with excessive nervousness and morbid sensations of fear.

Didn't Hurt the Man.

A man at Somerset, Pa., was walking with a sack of flour on his shoulder and a large dog behind him. Both were unaware that a train was approaching from the rear, and were crossing a creek upon the railroad track, when the man was suddenly hit by the dog's body hurled at him by the engine, and man, dog and flour were knocked into the water. The dog and flour perished. The man is all right.

The Smallest Church in the World.

The smallest church in the world is said to be the Catholic church at Tadousac, at the mouth of the Saginaw river. Its extreme capacity is not more than twenty people. This church is supposed to have been founded by Jacques Cartier.

TRAMP ON NO MAN'S LAND

How Cut-Off Island is Reached and Bounded.

THE SANDS OF THE SAHARA.

The Inhabitants of the Island, the Houses in Which They Dwell, and the Dust They Swallow, Etc., Etc.

Cut-Off Island.

"Well, this is a terrible place to walk a mile to get to!" growled a young man as he paused midway on the wooden bridge that connects Cut-Off island with the mainland, at the foot of Locust street.

He leaned against the wooden rail and watched three boys who were out on the sandbar making futile attempts to kill one of those noisy and deceptive birds known to the male juvenile as kill-a-dees. They were armed with an old-fashioned, muzzle-loading shot gun, for which the bird seemed to have no respect whatever, persisting in remaining within easy range.

The young man leaned against the wooden rail all right enough, but he didn't, as they say in story books, gaze across the broad expanse of waters, principally because there was no broad expanse of that element to gaze across—nothing but mud—green, slimy, odoriferous mud.

Cut Off island. The name is not euphonious; the place is unattractive. The island, so called, is now really a peninsula, the water having receded in the lake so far northward as to leave a broad strip of mud as a connecting link between the former island and the city.

Cut Off island is a big sand-bar, that is all, destitute of trees, unless by a stretch of imagination the scrubby young willows that grow in nearly impassable density and cover the island, except where they have been cleared away by the inhabitants, can be called such.

Cut Off island has had something of a building boom recently—that is since the Sunday closing order went into effect in Omaha, and unpainted board edifices dot the island sand-bar here and there near the western and northern shores.

Discontinuing his cogitations the reporter, for it was a reporter, continued his way across the bridge onto the island. It was hot and the heat from the burning sand into which the feet sank half way to the shoe tops could be felt through the leather. There is a manner of street running from the bridge a few hundred yards eastward, and then terminating in willows. Willows seem to be the beginning and end of everything on Cut-Off island.

Taking the left-hand side of the straggling street, the wanderer strolled along a few yards until he came to a large two-story, hotel-looking, unpainted, pine board building, announced by a small black and white signboard to be the "Cut-Off Lake house." The house is yet in an unfinished condition, and only three or four rooms are in use. One of these, a large apartment on the ground floor, is fitted up as a bar-room, and adjoining it is another large apartment, evidently intended for eating, and possibly dancing, purposes. Two men were chatting upon the porch extending along the front of the edifice, but as the reporter drew near, one got up and strolled up the road. The newsgatherer turned into the bar-room and was followed by the other lounger, a one-legged, pleasant-faced individual, who hopped across the floor on his one leg without crutches and took his position behind the bar. A cigar was purchased and an attempt made to engage the man in conversation concerning the island, its inhabitants and so on, he was not very communicative except on one subject, that being the excellence of the fish to be caught in the lake and their freedom from the affliction of worms, newspaper reports to the contrary notwithstanding. Upon the shelf behind the bar lay two substantial navy revolvers, and there being no empty chambers noticeable in he cylinders, the young man before the bar took it for granted that they were there for tusiness, and considered it unnecessary to bek any questions concerning the necessity afor having them within such handy reach.

Leaving the place and proceeding along the dusty road, the reporter passed a small one story shack, where, according to the sign above the door, the best kettle whisky is dispensed. Several men and one woman, the latter evidently connected with the place, were gathered about the bar. It was a noisy and unprepossessing crowd, and not having any particular desire to become more intimately acquainted with any of them, the writer strolled on. Two hundred yards further west he found the "Island House," run by a young German. The proprietor was alone, and seeing an opportunity to gather some information, the now travel-stained scribe stepped through the open door and sat down at one of the two tables in the room and called for a glass of soda.

The young German bustled about and soon had the drink ready.

"Tell me," said the visitor, "is this island in Iowa or Nebraska?

"It's in Iowa. You bet it is in Iowa, if it wasn't, you know, we could'nt keep open Sundays," said the voluble young fellow. "You see, they try to make out we are in Nebraska and send cops out here Sundays to make us shut up, but we don't do it. We give 'em the laugh because we are in Iowa. Government license, that's all the license we have to pay here, because, you know, we are in Iowa.

"I suppose you do the bulk of your business on Sunday, don't you?

"Oh, yes. We don't do anything during the week scarcely. But on Sundays it's lively, I tell you. Oh, we have faro, roulette, hazard and all those games running. The island is crowded with people from Omaha.

"All men?

"No, there's lots of women. I'm going to make a fourteen room house out of this, so that gentlemen and their lady friends can be private.

The young fellow strolled back to the bar, drew off a glass of stale beer, drank it at a gulp and then returned to his guest.

"This island," said he, "is going to be a city some day. We are going to have a town laid out and a bridge built to Council Bluffs."

"Did you have to pay anything for the ground upon which your building stands?"

"Yes, thirty or forty doll——"

"What's that! What's that!" came in a rasping female voice from above. "Forty dollars! This lot cost $250, I'd have you know. This lot's a corner lot and aint none of your cheap property," and the voice was followed down stairs by a tacky-looking female, who looked as though she was ready to carry the argument further, but the reporter didn't care to discuss the real estate question, and having paid for the vile stuff he had called for, took his departure.

The wind had risen while he was inside, and when he sallied out into the open air, he found the dust rising in clouds. But not to be deterred by this, he struck out through the willows towards the northern shore of the island. Within a few hundred yards he passed two other saloons. In front of each of these places from six to twelve empty beer kegs were piled, relics of the past Sunday's debauch.

The tramp of a half mile or more through the sand and in the disagreeable wind, was in no wise calculated to lessen the unfavorable opinion formed of the island. There was but little to please the eye along the way. The grass was wilted looking, and there was nothing attractive about the monotonous willows. He passed a dairy, and a house where a laundry sign swung in the wind, but outside of the saloons, these were the only places where there were any evidence of business. Over on the northern shore three more saloons were found, the most pretentious of which is conducted by Captain Kent, who also owns and operates a boat house, where one so disposed can secure a fairly good craft. The wind had made the lake very rough, and all the boats were drawn well up on the shore.

No stop was made here, the reporter continuing his way along the shore. It would take a vivid imagination to find anything of interest in that toilsome tramp through the willows. People at the salons said that there were a few houses scattered through there, but if this is true they are well hidden by the willows. That walk around the shore to the eastern edge seemed ten miles long, but in reality only about one-third of that distance was covered.

The river is narrow at this point, and the muddy water of the Missouri swirls along in swift eddies—growling as it goes. It's a lonely spot, any way, over on the eastern edge of the island. No one lives about there, and as far as desolation is concerned, one might as well be in the center of Sahara.