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THE LOYAL KARENS OF BURMA

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

PROBABLY few of those who have read the newspaper telegrams and narratives of the rebellion in Lower Burma, are aware that a neglected little nation called Karens, inhabiting the mountains and forests of the province, have been the staunchest and bravest defenders of British rule. But for the loyalty and courage of the Karens, the rebel Burmese and Shans would, in all probability, have overrun Lower Burma. Had the Karens joined in the insurrection, the Queen's Government would, in all probability--for a time, at least--have ceased to exist; communications with Mandalay would have been cut off, and the invading force would have been hemmed in by an armed people fired to fierce resistance by our reverse in the south. What catastrophe might have occurred it is impossible to say. But it is not unreasonable to predict that the disaster would have had its _contre-coup_ on the far-away north-west frontier, and that the re-conquest of Burma might have been rendered impossible by the withdrawal of all available troops to repel aggression elsewhere. Reporters of events in Burma have been careful to avoid using the ugly word "rebellion" in describing the disturbed condition of the province, and the term "dacoity"--which means robbery generally accompanied by murder--has been almost invariably used. It should be clearly understood that the spirit which is moving the turbulent Burmese is quite as much a spirit of revolt as a spirit of plundering. Let those who urged the annexation of Upper Burma take this to heart and look out

for the future. The spectacle of a revolt in the province which we have ruled for over thirty years is not encouraging to those who have on their hands the task of reducing Upper Burma to submission. The second Burmese war, in 1852-53, was a war of annexation. The third Burmese war, in 1885-86, is a war of annexation and of extinction--extinction, in the people's eyes, both of nationality and of religion. The Mandalay campaign was undertaken with a light heart, in the belief that the people of Upper Burma would welcome us with open arms. Events have proved how ill-founded this belief was. While our army was far away north, on the Irrawaddy, a real campaign--and a bloody one--was being prepared for us in the low country. The people do not want us any more than they did thirty years ago. They rose to throw off our yoke, and they are still carrying on a guerilla warfare against us. They winced under the pinching and squeezing of the king's officers, but none the less they loved the king. He was the head of their nation, the foundation of all the honours they cared for, and the defender of the Buddhist faith. It has frequently been said that there is no patriotism, no national sentiment, among the Burmese. Those who know the country best will, I am convinced, hesitate to admit this. The inhabitants of Lower Burma have undoubtedly prospered under our government during the past thirty years. They have had good harvests, growing markets, and brisk trade. All this they readily allow; but they never bargained for the overthrow of their ancient monarchy. They were proud to know that a Burman king somewhere ruled a Burmese people; and the allegiance of their hearts was given to the king--not to the British Government. Say nay who may, the Burmese people bitterly resent the overthrow of their monarchy. It has also been urged that the war has no religious aspect whatever. This assertion, like many others, is misleading. The Burman cannot conceive of a religion without a Defender of the Faith--a king who appoints and rules the Buddhist hierarchy. The extinction of the monarchy left the nation, according to the people's notions, without a religion. We have overthrown the king and destroyed all traces of the kingly rule. Naturally they look upon this as the destruction of their nationality. Whether we have acted wisely history will decide. The step has, however, been taken, and we dare not now go back. We have to govern a turbulent people inhabiting a vast territory of hills and plains, forests, jungle, and swamp, impassable to troops during more than half the year. Vigour, tact, and skill are much wanted in the administration.[1] But vigour, tact, and skill will be of little avail if we have no source of support in the country itself on which we can rely. The Karen people are at heart loyal to us, and they have proved their loyalty by freely shedding their blood in defence of our rule and in the cause of order. In the face of neglect and discouragement, they have served us nobly and well. The wave of lawlessness and rebellion which swept over Lower Burma immediately after the Mandalay campaign, and which has not yet subsided, was foreseen and foretold by one of the leading Karen missionaries. He warned the authorities that danger was brewing in our own province, and offered to raise a Karen contingent which would keep the rebels in check. The local authorities, however, appear to have ignored the danger, and refused the offer with something akin to a sneer, with what results we now know.

{ [Footnote--1] The pacification of Burma will be no easy task, and, unless gone about in the right way, may be very prolonged and very costly. We have to deal with an insurrection in which the poongyees, or Buddhist priesthood, are taking a prominent part. The poongyees have found willing instruments everywhere. Liquor, opium, and gambling have placed in every Burmese village a large number of men who will not work and are a terror to the community. These men are the dare-devils of the insurrectionary movement. If these wild spirits can be restrained, and if the poongyees can, by a judicious concession, be conciliated, two very important factors in the rebellion will be removed. The first of these

two ends will, I venture to suggest, be best attained by (i.) allowing district officers absolute freedom for a whole year in determining who are the persons of "bad livelihood" in the villages of their districts; and then (ii.) compelling every person found by district officers to be of "bad livelihood" to furnish adequate security from landholders that they will keep the peace. In other words, tie down the turbulent spirits to the land.

I venture to think that there is no a district officer of experience in Burma who could not, within a few months, make out an accurate census of all the bad characters in his district. He has means at his disposal which a district officer in India has not. Having once got the list, compel security. If they cannot find security, send them to jail. It is cheaper to feed them than to hunt them. Give the landholders of villages clearly to understand that the bonds will be rigorously enforced: that, in the event of forfeiture, their lands will be sold up. Make this a prior lien on their landed property, and every man will be on the alert lest his bond be forfeited. This plan was tried, in a modified form, with good results at the close of the last Burmese war. It has infinitely better chances of success now, because--

(a) There are many more landholders now than there were then.
(b) Land is much more valuable now than it was then.
(c) Every man's trade or profession and every landholder's fields are known now.

Probably ninety out of every hundred villages--and certainly every dangerous village--can be thus dealt with.

The second of the two ends--the conciliation of the Buddhist priesthood--will, I venture to suggest, be best attained by establishing a Buddhist Pope at Mandalay.

In addition to these measures, I would advise permanent embodiment of a drilled and armed Karen militia, and distribution of this militia in colonies all over Burma; each colony to live within stockaded villages, and to have special privileges in the surrounding lands allotted to them.

Draw the teeth of the big Shan confederacy by sending embassies, adequately guarded, to the various Tsawbwas. Let these Tsawbwas be summoned to a durbar, where some intelligible policy regarding the relation of the Shan States to the British Government shall be enunciated. Let that policy, whatever it be, once it is clearly stated, be enforced. }

Until, in sheer despair, the Karens rose to defend their own hearths and homes, the Burmese rebels and robbers had it all their own way. Troops could not penetrate the dense jungles; and the Burmese police were cowardly where they were not disloyal. The Karens are splendid forest trackers and ruthless pursuers. When they rose vengeance was swift. They tracked the raiders to their hiding-places, attacked and routed them, hunted the fugitives from jungle to jungle, and cleared the frontier. There can be no question that, with the peace of the entire province at stake, it would have been the boldest and the best policy to array the loyal Karens, at the very outset, against the rebel bands. A body of five thousand Karen skirmishers with General Prendergast's invading force would have cut off the retreat of the Burmese troops, and would have checked the irruption of armed bands into Lower Burma. Much of the anarchy which has disgraced our rule would thus have been prevented. The story of the deeds and sufferings of the Karens in defence of the Queen-Empress's Government in Burma is a deeply interesting one, and

deserves an honoured place in the records of the empire.

The following letters from Dr. Vinton, one of their foremost missionary leaders, gives a graphic account of some of the achievements of the Karens. Like Dr. Vinton, I am an ardent admirer of the plucky little nation, and would claim for them the recognition which they so well deserves:

"Rangoon, Feb, 28th, 1886.

"What with dacoits and the Viceroy, we are having lively times. While we are greatly pleased with the Viceroy's visit, we are heartily glad viceroys don't grow on every bush, or come once a week, for we are all tired out. Of course we had our Karen arch, etc., etc., when the Viceroy came. I proposed to have a gathering of all the Karen clans so the Viceroy should see them. This met Mr. Bernard's views, and a special durbar for Karens was promised. I sent out printed notices all over Burma, and had the dacoits not increased in their depredations, I should have filled the grounds of Government House. The time of the durbar was changed several times, and that, of course, prevented the coming of a great many. At last the clans began to come in. The Burmans were surprised to find such crowds of Karens, all in national dress. On the 22nd I had over fifteen hundred camped all over my compound, and nearly all my own fellows.

"Unfortunately, I had to send back three hundred men to villages threatened by the dacoits.

"The 23rd we got telegrams from Bassein that their delegations thought they could 'honour the Viceroy best by avenging the death of poor St. Barbe.' Maulmain, too, failed me, as they, too, had to meet the dacoits rushing down from their defeat at Papoon. Still, I had twelve hundred in all, with school-children packed solid.

"I had to laugh when I found they had prepared twenty-five cups of tea for my brigade! I gave the tea to the school-girls who sang, and after translating the Viceroy's speech, sent them home highly pleased at their gracious reception. The vanguard, with their flags, was filing into the compound here as I left with the rear the eastern gate of Government House. The reception will do good. The Karens now know the Viceroy recognizes the service they have done in quelling the insurrection, and they will be ready for better service.

"You will have read in the _Gazette_ of the new insurrection and poor St. Barbe's death. This started in the Ma-oo-bin district. They dacoited the police station at Bo-galay, first killing the sergeant and head constable; then pushed for Pyin-da-yay, on the seashore, looting the village and killing the myo-oke's clerk. They then went over to Bassein, and are now roaring in full cry up the hills ending in Cape Negrais. St. Barbe was shot dead without a chance for a fight. He foolishly left the sepoys on board the tug, and went with but one policeman and a guide. All three were shot.

"I don't repeat newspaper news, but come to the discussion of the signs of the times. So far from being done with the dacoits, or rebels, the real harvest is scarcely begun. There are several fresh insurrections just ready to break out, and one false step will put the torch to all Burma.

"I don't believe myself a coward or an alarmist, but I am warning Karens everywhere that the _fight_ has not yet begun. Mr. Bernard told me he

would arm the Karens in any threatened district if they would volunteer. I can put any number of Karens in the field.

"Every mission has promised me a levy _en masse_ of _all_ the able-bodied men. They all agree to refuse all pay and to fight from pure loyalty to the Queen.

"My fellows don't want to join the police--that is social degradation in Burma--but they are ready to fight for nothing till the ploughing begins. They say they want no man worth less than a thousand rupees in immovable property in the fighting line. They want men with something to lose and something to fight for.

"The utter collapse of the police (Burman) is indescribable. They are afraid for their lives, and dare not arrest bad characters or answer the openly treasonable talk of the blackguards.

"Now there is no Upper Burma to retreat to, these fellows are in a tight fix. It seems hard, but the truth is they must simply be shot down and hunted to the death. The strangest of all is the presence of the poongyees [Buddhist priests] on the battle-field. This is unheard of in history.

"My Karens universally interpret this as God's sign that Buddhism is to be destroyed for ever. They say the challenge of Theebaw could be answered by the English Government, but the challenge of the fighting poongyees can only be taken up fitly by Karens under their own missionaries. Every village now is full of bows and arrows to keep off the dacoits between volleys of the fire-arms. It is really curious to see how the dacoits avoid our Karen Christian villages. They have not tried it on us. The fighting my men have had has been at a distance. The dacoits have several times passed among my villages, but with scarcely any damage, while the Karens have turned out and hunted them well. The eastern insurrection has had all the fight taken out of it. My fellows complain that they have to fight with their legs and not their stalwart right arms. The very day of the reception, eight of my fellows came on forty dacoits, and hunted them many a mile, capturing four. They laughingly complained that they had twice too many men, quoting an old war-song, 'Ten to one is only fair play where the one is a Karen.'

"Though this _is_ so still, no one can safely go to the outlying fields or orchards except with armed men.

"So far from being daunted, I never saw the Karen so anxious for a _fight_.

"This is just welding the Karens into a nation, not an aggregation of clans. The heathen Karens to a man are brigading themselves under the Christians. This whole thing is doing good for the Karen. This will put virility into our Christianity."

"Rangoon, May 15, 1886.

"I have been driven to my wits' end to protect my villages. I have been dacoit-hunting literally all the time, and paying my own expenses. Discouragement and officialism have just worn my patience thin. The only comfort I have is that I have succeeded in protecting my villages. You may judge of the encouragement our Karens have received by the fact that three Karens have been arrested for murder, and two actually tried. Their only crime was that they had bravely defended themselves and villages when attacked. The cowardly and disloyal Burmese police have not pulled a

trigger, but they do their best to discourage the only loyal and brave men in the province.

"Two separate insurrections burst on us at once. The one at Shway Gyin was purely Shan. It was headed by the Mayankhyoung and Kyouk-kalat poongyees. The Buddhist priests have headed everywhere, and actually fought themselves--a thing unprecedented in history.

"They cut the locks in the Shway Gyin canal, and attacked Shway Gyin in force. After their defeat they took up a strong position in the hills, and easily defeated Major Robinson's detachment.

"They were at first far too strong to be attacked by the Karens in their head-quarters. The Karens, therefore, confined themselves to cutting off their foraging-parties. They had, of course, few guns, and the Government would give them none, and so they set to dacoiting the rebels, and arming themselves with captured guns. At last, the position of the dacoits became untenable, and they were forced by hunger and the cutting off of their foragers to move on Papoon. Here they were met by the splendid Karen police of the Salween hill tracts, and the whole Karen population of the district. They were soundly beaten everywhere. Quarter was neither given, received nor expected, for the Karens were furious, and fought like Malays running amuck. The rebels were evidently trying to get across into Mineloongyee. The Karen foresters represented to the chiefs in Siam that the timber revenue must at once cease if the rebels got across, and so the despairing Mayankhyoung poongyee found the river Salween lined with fighting men wherever he tried to cross a party. Then he tried to cross to the northward into Karennee, but was cut up by the Karens on his flanks. Hunger forced foraging-parties, and the foraging-parties were invariably attacked.

"Several poongyees' heads were brought in, and all of course claimed as that of the five-thousand-rupee Mayankhyoung poongyee.

"I got news, however, that he had been seen crossing the hills to Toungoo. I, of course, warned our missionaries there, and advised that the poongyee be captured alive, for I knew that unless we had positive convincing proof the Government would never give the reward to the Karens.

"The rebels burst like a torrent on our poor Christian villages. The fighting was hard everywhere. I can note but one case. The village of Tha-ay-kee was attacked on Sunday, while the people were all assembled at the service in the chapel.

"The Karens had no arms, but still the dacoits dare not attack them in the chapel, but merely surrounded them, while a few looted the village.

"The moment the dacoits left, the whole village rushed out and picked up the few guns they had hidden in the bushes while they went to church, and pushed off in pursuit, picking up recruits from the neighbouring villages.

"They fell into an ambush, and their pastor and several of their party were shot dead. Though outnumbered three to one, the Karens rallied, and infuriated by the death of their pastor, they flew at the dacoits and dispersed them with great slaughter. Finally, the whole rebellion was surrounded in the Kaw-me-kho valley, near the foot of the great range east of Toungoo.

"The Karens had few guns in their hands, but mostly used spears, shields,

and bows. The next day was Sunday. After a lot of trouble I got fifty smooth-bores from Mr. Bernard. These were sent up Monday, and Monday night the guns were handed over to the Karens. In thirty-six hours they were on the field, and on Friday the Mayankhyoung poongyee was taken.

"The fighting was heavy and bloody on the side of the dacoits. Hunger had made them desperate, and so they fought for their lives. The Mayankhyoung was captured by a woman, who clutched him till the nearest picket could come in.

"The fight there was specially noticeable, because every Karen clan, except the Pghos, were in arms that day. The Pghos are not found on the Toungoo hills. Even the Brecs, our most physically insignificant tribe, sent a detachment from three days' march away, though they lived out of British territory. The tribes that once were constantly fighting each other, now stood side by side. From a loose aggregation of clans we shall weld them into a nation yet.

"There was the greatest reluctance to admit our claim to the five thousand rupees reward for the Mayankhyoung poongyee. Our proofs were, however, so overwhelming, that reluctantly the five thousand were awarded to the despised Karens.

"In no district have the rebels made head among the Karen Christians. The Burman insurrection that killed St. Barbe started right by my villages. I could have stamped the whole thing out with fifty Karens, but I had to watch it all come to a head and burst. All I could do was to pour in guns into my villages in the vicinity, while the dacoits were being tattooed and enrolled. The rebels tried every Christian Karen village in the vicinity, but, finding the Karens armed and alert, marched on. Our fellows dare not attack, for they would have been tried for murder, and so the rebels swept on, and armed themselves with police muskets and ammunition, and poor St. Barbe was sacrificed.

"When they got among the Bassein Karens, they were promptly hunted out. With the exception of the Shway Gyin insurrection, the rebels seem to be mostly up-country Burmans, who have been down here (in Lower Burma) for several years. Of course, they are joined by all the professional bad characters.

"The dacoits have succeeded in burning but one small outlying village of mine; but they met with such a fierce attack that that band has not been heard of since.

"For all that the Karens have done, I unhesitatingly say that when the danger is over, the Karen will be as soundly hated as ever by the officials.

"The Karen will not _shiko_ [Make obeisance on his knees] if he can help it, and will not have anything to do with those who enforce servility.

"The Hanthawaddy is the only district in which the standard of rebellion has not been raised. There we have the Karens enrolled and many of them drilled, and make things lively at every alarm.

"There was a horrible mistake in the translation of Mr. Bernard's amnesty proclamation of the 3rd of March. The English version offered a free pardon for all crimes committed 'before the issue of this proclamation' (March 3rd).

"The rebels are allowed till the 30th of June to give themselves up. The

Burmese version reads 'before the above-mentioned date.' The only date mentioned 'above' is the 30th of June. This gives free licence for every dacoit to do anything but murder Europeans up to the 30th of June, 1886.

"When I attacked and stormed a dacoit camp, I found a number of these proclamations and letters to the dacoits' friends, begging them to save all the copies of the proclamation, so that each dacoit might have a copy to come in on.

"Much captured and intercepted correspondence shows me that the dacoits argue that as the pardon is the same on the 3rd of March as on the 30th of June, they had better take advantage of the extra four months allowed them.

"I first read the proclamation kneeling in a dacoit camp by the side of one of my school masters, who had been shot dead in the fight with my fingers dabbled in the blood I had vainly tried to staunch. As I had not seen the English copy, can you wonder if I felt savage enough?

"The want of scholarship in Burmese shown above is discreditable. Can it have been disloyalty in the translator? The mistake has caused much bloodshed, and much more blood will be shed in the coming six weeks before the 30th of June."

"Rangoon, July 13.

"God has--to use a Karen expression--hung thousands of lives around my neck, and I have had hard work trying to keep my people alive.

"Everything has been done to hinder me that the circumlocution office _could_ do, and, even after eight months' hard work and the spilling of lots of loyal Karen blood, I am not half armed today, and tomorrow the Burmese threaten their third insurrection. Loyalty such as the Karens have shown must be fire-proof to stand what they have borne. Would to God we could have one half-hour of such a man as Sir Arthur Phayre!

"The sepoy has been 'weighed in the balances and found wanting' in dacoit-hunting. The Burman professional dacoit is already learning he is fully able to lick the sepoy by harassing him till he is tired, and then pitching into him.

"I was lately with a Karen levy tied to the tail of the sepoys. _Seven_ miles a day was the best we could get out of the poor creatures. My levies have repeatedly marched fifty miles on a forced march.

"Whatever since the Karens have done is not one hundredth of what I can get out of them. Red tape is choking the life out of us.

"Meanwhile the Burmese are slaughtering each other on the plea of patriotism, and dare not attack the troops or the Karens. Our levies are the only men who have not shown their backs meekly to the rebels. The mere marching of our 'red heads' has kept the Hanthawaddy district clear of insurrection (all our levies wear a blood-red turban). Your officials show an insane jealousy of the missionaries, and seem to be ashamed that they have no influence among the Karens."

"Rangoon, July 24, 1886.

"The rebellion is by no means ended. The Burmans _must_ fight, whether they will or not. The most dangerous sign of the times is that the Burman villages have not laid in their usual stocks of paddy for their own use.

The disloyal have expected to supply themselves from the loot of the hated Karen villages. The vacillating have from cowardice sold off their stocks, hoping to buy from the Karens. They said they could conceal their money, but their countrymen would burn their paddy if they kept it. Thirty years of peace had led them to suppose that if a man had money he could always buy food.

"From a deficient crop we have exported more than usual, and people are crowing over the deadliest sign of the times. For months to come we must feed Upper Burma from our diminished stocks. I seriously apprehend scarcity will, just before the harvest, force hundreds into crime who would gladly keep quiet. I have warned the Government, as I have all along, but with the usual result. My words weigh no more than Cassandra's.

"Yesterday I was horrified to find an official memorandum preventing the importation of arms, and ordering gun permits to be largely reduced. This order will be seized on by the disloyal Burmese officials, and used to disarm the Karens.

"I am sending in the sternest protest words can frame against such injustice. The Burmese officials and non-officials alike are all gnashing their teeth at the Karens, attributing (rightly) the defeat of the rebellion solely to those 'meddlesome Karens.'

"To enable them to disarm the only friends you have in the province is worse than folly; it is treachery.

"Were the sight not so piteous from the blood which has stained it, I should have been heartily amused to watch your 'regulation pattern' official confronted by the stern spectre of actual war--a spectre that 'will not down' at the exhibition of standard red tape and 'memoranda' written in full form on regulation office foolscap.

"The high official has been warned, and he comfortably turns in his chair, and says, 'Bother those meddlesome missionaries!' and reads over the rose-coloured reports of other officials based on the reports of his disloyal Burmese under-strappers, and calmly says, 'How can those impudent fellows know anything about the country?' Suddenly he is waked from as great a stupor as that of Theebaw when, hourly expecting the arrival of the captive British army, he is told that Prendergast has passed the last defences of the capital, and there is not time even for flight. News comes that the peacock flag is raised and the rebels are marching on him, leaving blood in their wake, and this dignified British official calmly writes a memorandum! He can ask and get a dozen regiments from India at the cost of many lakhs of rupees, but when that bothersome missionary raves at him for guns to arm men who have proved themselves universally loyal, he can't spend a pice! A dignified _non possumus_ is all you can get out of him. The Karens could have put five thousand men in the field for three months without a pice of pay, and ended the rebellion in a way that would have knocked the nonsense out of the Burmans for thirty years to come.

"A telegram to Madras would have sent the arms by next steamer (I wrote to find out), but _non possumus_ was all the result. Now the Burmese have been taught the worthlessness of the sepoy in the guerilla fighting. The sepoy has been 'weighed in the balances and found wanting.' He can't shoot, and takes three hundred cartridges to kill a man at point-blank range. He can't march, and, worse than all, he can't get through the jungle, and he is soon knocked up by jungle fever. At the cost of moving _one_ of those sepoy regiments from India the whole work would have been

finished and much blood saved.

"These rebellions have been _all_ got up from nuclei sent down from up country.

"Many a leader--especially the poongyees--have tried to keep their men from robbery and plunder, but they have found that the natural cowardly ferocity of the Burman at the first taste of blood could not be restrained.

"We are sick at heart at the officialism that paralyzes us all in Burma."

"Rangoon, July 26.

"The 'memorandum' of which I wrote has set the Karens in a blaze all over Burma. I have felt bound to send a protest--a copy of which I enclose. I expect, as usual, a polite slap in the face, giving me to understand (in the most gentlemanly manner) that it is none of my business.

"The effect of this paper is simply deadly. One of my best men wrote me yesterday, 'We must either be killed by the dacoits or join them.'

"We don't want another sepoy from India. We only ask for a MAN. To quote James Russell Lowell's poem in Yankee dialect, written in the darkest hours of our civil war,

'More men! More men is what we want!'

"Even the wealthy well-to-do Burmese help the rebels, and openly talk disloyalty. Why? They say it is a war for religion, and patriots must put up with licence in the soldiers fighting for them. Again, not a wealthy family but has lots of sons and nephews and relatives who have been ground through your Government dacoits mills, and who are in the rebellion, binding their relatives to the peacock flag. The same is true of even your officials.

"The dacoit atrocities are horrible. The unutterable Turk, with his 'Bulgarian atrocities,' would have no chance in a competition with the Burman dacoit. Dacoity is reported, you dash off at the double quick for a dozen miles, Karen levy trotting along abreast, or even ahead of the police officer and missionary on their ponies; you come in and find that thousands of rupees have been taken, the women lashed to platforms and then violated by the dacoits in turn, and kerosene oil poured over their clothes and set on fire. The men, bruised and slashed, have seen all this, and are wailing like women around the horrible, blackened lumps of charred flesh that were once their wives. You are shown where babies have been beaten to a literal jelly in those rice mortars, before their mother's eyes.

"Now, wouldn't you expect that these men would be wild to bring the gang to punishment? Wouldn't you expect to have to restrain their rage? Not a bit. You can't extort a word to help you to hunt the gang down, and hours of questioning give you no hint, though the dacoits have been in full possession of the place for many hours of broad daylight. One old grey-haired Karen leader once turned away disgusted, saying, 'Christ on His cross was not so forgiving.'

"Has this apathy no meaning for you? If not, it is in vain for me to interpret it.

"Burman dacoits have taken the measure of the sepoy, or rather they have

been carefully taught it, and they now know our weakness.

"Your military men cannot be made to see the matter from the Burmese standpoint.

"What should the dacoit _fight_ the sepoy for, unless strongly stockaded, or the sepoys worn out by marching? He has no loot to gain from the sepoy worth the trouble and risk. Dacoits bolt, _of course_, chuckling at their escape, and grinning at the jaded sepoys. Sepoy officer telegraphs a victory, etc., etc., casualties all on our side. Dacoit, chuckling, still thinks _he_ has whipped. Both parties are satisfied, for each has gained all he wanted. Troops move home, and dacoits re-occupy their old position, and go on with their career of blood. Newspapers call for cavalry. What use is cavalry in Burman elephant-grass or on the hills? Every battle merely educates the Burman in old Hyder Ali's Mysore tactics--'only to fight when your legs are swelled up to the size of your bodies,' still hearing the British drums every time they beat.

"Your new Punjabee military police are even a greater failure than the sepoys.

"You have but one winning card that you _can_ play, and it is the Karen.

"Everything that officialism can do has been done to disaffect the Karen, and I seriously fear, as do my brother-missionaries, that even our endeavours will prove fruitless, and even when the right man comes here he will have hard work to wrest the card back again.

"Our only hope is that the cowardice of the Burman, and his ignorance of the way in which Karens are being treated, may lead him to quiet down. If my fears of a fresh outburst next October and November prove true, God alone can help us.

"My brother-missionaries are calling loudly on me to hold on, and let the stern logic of events knock a few ideas into the heads of our rulers, infatuated as they are. I would do so, but--delay means _blood_; we _must_ have some speedy administration of justice. Your jails are full of innocent men, and there is no one to try them.

"The Mayankhyoung poongyee, that our Karens sold to the Government for five thousand rupees--the leader of the entire eastern rebellion--has not even yet been tried. The Burmese openly and tauntingly say we _dare_ not.

"They openly boast that his supernatural powers are such that he is only kept in confinement by an iron rod, three inches in diameter, thrust through the calves of his legs. At the request of my Karens I went down and examined him in the jail, so as to enable them on my authority to deny the statement.

"Things could have been quieted in six weeks, with ordinary foresight and promptitude. It will take six months now for even such as Sir Arthur Phayre, and longer and longer as matters are delayed."

[Copy of a letter from Dr. Vinton to the Commissioner on special duty.]

"Rangoon, July 23, 1886.

"To the commissioner on Special Duty

"DEAR SIR,

"I have just read your memorandum, of the 8th of July, on the proposed increased stringency in working the Arms Act.

"While highly approving the general tone of the memorandum, and recognizing the necessity which prompted it, allow me to make a few representations.

"I take it for granted that the interest of the Government is to arm every loyal man who can defend his arms, and to disarm every disloyal man, or every coward who dare not defend the arms entrusted to him. I respectfully submit that the Karens have amply demonstrated both their loyalty and bravery, and should not be disarmed.

"The practical execution of your memorandum will be necessarily committed to Burmese officials.

"These Burmese officials are mortified at their own failure to accomplish anything for the suppression of the rebellion, piqued at the trust, shown by the Government in the once-despised Karen, and jealous of Karen success.

"They will inevitably use this memorandum to disarm and harass the loyal Karens. To prove this, I have only to point to the fact that when the rebellion was only threatened, the Burmese officials at once commenced to disarm illegally the Karens, knowing that no one else would pull a trigger against the rebels. The Karens protested, and sent a delegation to Sir Charles Bernard, and received from him a solemn promise that the Christian Karens should not be disarmed. This promise I plead. To call a Karen away from his work at the present ploughing season means to starve him.

"This memorandum will enable the Burmese officials to harass the Karens till they 'make it all right.

"I respectfully submit that the universal loyalty of the Karens, heathen as well as Christian, has earned for them a special exemption by name from the operation of this memorandum.

"The experience of the past bloody months has shown that the Karen invariably has fought desperately for his gun, and parted with it only with his life. The dacoits have been armed from police stations and disloyal Burmese villages, and not from Karen villages.

"I have done my best to carry out paragraph 3, and issue not less than five guns to a village, but there have been no guns for sale. Many of the Karen villages have less than five guns, through no fault of mine or the villagers, but simply because there were no guns for sale.

"To check the importation of arms before every Karen village is a fortress bristling with guns held for the Queen by men as loyal and brave as any who fight for her, would be a suicidal policy.

"To make our Karen districts safe we want at least one thousand guns more. With two thousand we could send men to attack outside the tracts where the Karens are numerous.

"Speaking frankly, is it worth your while to harass those who have stood by you faithfully even in the darkest hours?

"You will need help yet, for it is premature to speak of 'the late rebellion.' I am ready to give substantial reasons for my belief that a

dangerous crime-wave will sweep over us just before next harvest.

"To put the matter in a nutshell, I ask that the district officers be directed to prevent any disarming of the Karens.

"If you fear to hurt the feelings of the Burmese by an express exemption of Karens, a private order would be enough. At least allow me to assure the Karens that Sir Charles Bernard's promise that they shall not be disarmed will be held sacred, for they are seriously alarmed at the threats of the Burmese officials, and are sending their leaders to know what this new danger means."

"Yours sincerely,

"J. B. VINTON."

"Rangoon, August 2, 1886.

"Government is beginning to push me about Karen levies for the Thongwa district, and I expect soon to be pushed on the Pegu side; for the Government and Karens are at loggerheads in Pegu. The Pegu Karens fired the first shot ever fired by the Karens at the rebels. They offered to send a levy about the New Year, when Karen levies had never been thought of, and when, of course, secretariat officials laughed at 'the timid Karen' offering to _fight_.

"Now they have been vexed at the arrest of two of their number for shooting dacoits by police too cowardly to imitate Karen courage.

"Now, of course, they say, 'We had better defend our own villages with our own guns, and let the Government fight the dacoits with their petted police.'

"They are having heavy fighting around Ningyan. A private letter from Ningyan, from a British officer, says the dacoits got within thirty yards of the field-pieces, and were beaten off with difficulty. I only hope the reinforcements will arrive in time; for they are besieged, in fact; dacoits trying night attacks, hoping to fire the town.

"The most extraordinary reports are rife of British reverses up country. Mandalay is almost daily recaptured, in rumour, with the most terrible slaughter. The Irrawaddy is burdened with British corpses, according to our disloyal alarmists.

"The limit of Burmese credulity has never yet been measured, and I despair of ever discovering it, provided the lying is only in the direction of flattering his inordinate vanity.

"A Government official told me that not thirty miles from Rangoon no one could be found to believe that Theebaw had been captured. In what I should call dacoit newspapers, circulated in manuscript all over the country, he is described still, by those who claims to be eye-witnesses, as reigning in greater glory than before, having acquired many new titles of honour for the doughty deeds of war performed in person on those miserable cowardly _Kullahs_.

"News last night tells me that a rebellion _in posse_, that I've been watching for months, and kept from bursting several times by marching my levies, is coming on us. Last night's news is that they are beginning to assemble, tattoo, and threaten again.

"I fear we shall have to watch this as we watched the rising that killed St. Barbe, and let it burst, only keeping our villages safe, and letting the Government sup its own folly to the full, as they did with St. Barbe's insurrection, started within a mile of one of our chapels, and which we could have prevented with twenty-five men in an hour.

"We are still hampered to death to get arms to buy. Just on a technical point the other day I was refused permission to distribute a hundred guns I had got out for the Karens. I am now one thousand guns short of making the Karen tracts safe.

"I showed a high official yesterday, by evidence which even _he_ accepted as correct, that floods of ammunition and arms were pouring across the Maulmain frontier from Siam for the dacoits. Loyal Karens were the only men to be harassed. Dacoits could get cheap and abundant rifles of the most improved American patterns. The Karen alone must pay three times ordinary prices for guns more dangerous to him than to the dacoits.

"Even this failed to break the spell which the apotheosis of red tape has cast over all Burma."

"Rangoon, August 17.

"The Pegu rebellion of Burmese burst near the mouth of the Sittang. I was away on the Toungoo hills; but, though there is scarcely a Karen living near where the insurrection began, my people joined Colonels Street and Strover, and fought side by side with the sepoys far away from their homes. At the time the whole native population was convinced that the British raj was at an end, and that the only hope of safety was in joining the rebellion. The Government was simply at an end. Police posts were meekly handing over their arms, and myo-okes running for their lives.

"When the Toongyee detachment marched down to join Colonel Strover, they were taunted that they were going to add their bodies to the heap of slaughtered sepoys. Not a man quailed, thought taunted with stories of the dacoit invulnerability. The Toongyee church had been four times in action before I could be recalled from the Karen-nee frontier. This of course drew down the wrath of the whole Burman population.

"'What business was it of these officious Karens to go and meddle? They were not even threatened by the rebellion. Why should _they_ interfere?'

"The fighting of the Bassein mission was splendid. You will find it noticed in the violent crime report.

"In that report I get special credit for keeping the Hanthawaddy quiet--the only district where the peacock flag has not been hoisted. The Hanthawaddy is my practical answer to the question of the advisability of Karen levies. I am prouder of keeping the insurrection from bursting than of any action we have _fought_ with the dacoits. 'Prevention is better than cure.' Here was the trouble. _No one_ believed the Karen could _fight_.

"On the 7th of November, before the troops crossed the frontier, the Karens came down from the villagers where St. Barbe's insurrection was even then starting. I was not at home, but they thought the case was so urgent that they actually forced an entrance at Government House, and begged for arms from the Government, or to be allowed to purchase. They

went prepared to offer a battalion one thousand strong to accompany General Prendergast. Their fears were laughed to scorn. You can scarcely judge how all Rangoon had lost its head at the time. The only fear expressed was that there would not be resistance enough to justify annexation!

"When I reached my post from my sick-bed in Amherst, Mr. Bernard thought the Karens cowards to be so easily frightened, but said, 'We'll let them buy their guns just to allay their fears.'

"I don't believe Mr. Bernard _ever_ would have allowed us arms had he believed one word of my reports. He merely thought to quiet the fears of the Karen cowards. Even after the Karens had been in action several times, Government House wouldn't believe Karens could fight.

"Before I got back from the Karen-nee frontier, my Karens went to a secretariat official in the last days of December, and offered a levy. The secretariat official was as much astonished as if a rabbit had appeared to him in full uniform and demanded a Henry-Martini rifle and offered to _fight_. Their offer was, of course, politely declined, with a scarcely disguised sneer.

"The key to all this misconception is plain. No one, neither Burmans, Government officials, nor any one, had gauged the quiet work we have been doing among the Karens. _You_ know no one knows Karens. They won't talk to these servility-loving officials. No one visits their villages and sees for himself what education and Christianity have done. The 'timid Karen' has become a _man_, but nobody knew it.

"Had that battalion marched due north from Toungoo, with a British force with them on carts, every Burmese soldier could have been disarmed and killed or captured. As it was, the arms which Sladen failed to take away were used against us. The ammunition and rifles were sent down even to Rangoon for sale. I have _seen_ and _handled_ them myself.

"Thank God! the 'timid Karen' is now a phrase of the past. 'Nous avons changé tout cela' with a vengeance.

"In the first days of the rebellion I was talking with C--, and he laughed at me when I told him I would like nothing better than to raise and command a Karen corps. After spending months with sepoys and these very levies, and seeing the Karens charge, firing one volley, and throwing down their guns and going to close quarters with their huge cleavers, C--came and apologized, saying he was wrong to sneer at men who could fight like that. _No one_ had gauged the unifying power of Christianity, or guessed that these loose grains of sand (the clans) had been welded into a terrible weapon. Men will fight when they know they are _solid_, and no traitors among them.

"A few weeks' desperate fighting changed everything. Captain Parrott was the first to act. Long before Karen levies were sanctioned, Captain Parrott and I had every able-bodied Karen enrolled, and seventy of them regularly drilled. The men were whirled all over the district, wherever the dacoits were sticking up their heads; and if 'prevention is better than cure,' we won more honour than a dozen bloody battles would have brought us.

"Without encouragement, the Karen fought his way through the sneers of the Government officials, till at the durbar, when the viceroy was here, Mr. Bernard said to me, 'I have never been so much astonished as at the Karens _fighting_ so well.'

"The reticence of the Karen helped to disguise him and foster the delusion of the 'timid Karen.' Look at old Thah Mway, or Myat Koung, two of the men who have most distinguished themselves in action. They are quiet, retiring men, with stolid, mask-like faces that show nothing of what is going on under the quiet exterior. No one would take _them_ for heroes, sitting stolidly on my verandah. See those men under fire once, as I have, and you would hardly recognize them. So their eyes blaze then, especially when leading a charge, and you will excuse people for not finding out the work that had been going on behind the stolid exterior of the 'timid Karen.'

"Well, as I told you, the Karen fought his way into notice, and dispelled all these illusions. Then the jealousy of the Government officials of the mission wanted to get matters into their _own_ hands, and get rid of the missionaries. The only good service the Karens have done has been when they have been _let alone_. They have served under their pastors and schoolmasters and hereditary chiefs; but the moment the first coil of red tape touches a Karen levy, it paralyzes it, and you get no good of it. The Burmans around the district officer at once try and disgust the Karens with military service, and send the men off here and there on the most ridiculous wild-goose chases, where there is not the signs of a dacoit.

"No commissariat for the Karens, while the Burmans are feasting on the fat of the land. After thus systematically starving the men and marching their heels off for nothing, the men get surly, and are then reported mutinous and disobedient. Karens, marching every day in the rain, can't get the waterproof cloaks so freely served out to the wretched Burmese police, who never leave their comfortable barracks. All rough service is shouldered off by the police on to those 'Karen dogs,' and so you find the Karens surly, to say the least.

"Whatever the Karen _has_ done--I speak advisedly, and as solemnly as if on my oath--is not the hundredth part of what he _could_ do, and would gladly do.

"At the same time, I am asked to get the men to enlist for Thongwa and Hanthawaddy. Just see how I am treated! My Sniders, which the Karens have proudly carried all over the Hanthawaddy and the Tharawaddy districts, are taken away, and wretched muzzle-loaders issued instead. The Karens felt prouder of those Sniders than words can tell, and the poor fellows looked like death when they stacked arms for the last time on my verandah. They were promised in writing other Sniders of a different pattern; but when the muzzle-loaders came instead, the poor fellows looked abashed indeed.

"Again, I had ordered _all_ my villages for ball-practice, lest, when I called them out, they should 'shoot like sepoys'--a phrase that has become proverbial in Burma the past few months. This exhausted their ammunition (paid for, like their guns, by themselves). They came down for more, but by some 'new rules' begotten by the high official already described they could not buy a kernel of powder for a year.

"I wrote and explained and begged that, as _I_ was to blame, _I_ might be punished, but not to practically disarm the Karens by refusing ammunition. I offered to stop all ball-practice, though the order, I warned them, would be fatal to efficiency; but it did no good. I was informed by the same high official that 'the rule must be maintained.' The powder could only be obtained on 'enlistment tickets.' Not _one_ of the hundreds of brave fellows who have served under my orders in the

Hanthawaddy has ever seen such a thing. What is the result? Hundreds of Karens have gone home surly, to say the least. The Karen is so terribly clannish you cannot scratch one of them but the whole clan knows it and resents it.

"That's the way to get men to serve for nothing, isn't it? At the same time, I reported to the same high official how the dacoits got their arms, cheap and good--the best American rifles down to French carbines. I sent him our missionary to Zuninay to describe the whole trade from Bangkok to Yahaing and Zuninay, and how the arms and ammunition flowed without restriction across the frontier, and were openly sold all over the Amherst district. I offered, if he would give me permission, that I would go across and buy up the arms and ammunition for my Karens. I sent a certificate from the Rev. Mr. Bunker that boxes of five hundred military caps, sold in Rangoon for five rupees, only cost eight annas in Toungoo--smuggled _via_ Molsyai. I pleaded most earnestly against the loyal Karens being the only ones to be refused decent arms and ammunition, while the dacoits were not harassed at all.

"I might as well have pleaded to a post. In the most polite terms, in language expressing the highest gratitude for the noble service done, I was firmly told that the rules were inflexible. It is just such polite, gentlemanly, estimable men by whom empires are lost. Bad men, vicious men, can be fought. Such fine fellows for peace times are our greatest danger to-day.

"While I am calling for enlistments, my best men and my brother missionaries are calling a halt. Can you blame the Karen if he quietly goes off and buys the smuggled ammunition ('to keep it from dacoits,' one said to me this morning), and quietly stockades his villages, and settles down to defence pure and simple, leaving the dacoits to fight it out?

"The Karens are beginning to say to me, 'Let us merely drive the dacoits out of Karen tracts, fighting on our own hook, and not put ourselves under the control of the Burmans.' The Burmans now see the mistake they made in pitching into the Karens, and are beginning to plead with our villages to promise not to attack them, and induce the Karen to remain neutral. This is an old dacoit dodge of many decades' standing. I fear it more than any other. In reply, I am urging it on my people that the brutes are not to be trusted; and that when they have eaten up the Burman villages, they will make a meal of the Karen: 'Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.'

"If I could be let alone I'd have every village trained at ball-practice at their own expense till I could always turn out whatever men I wanted, and at whatever time, and men who wouldn't 'shoot like sepoys,' and known to be dead shots. This alone would prevent the dacoits ever facing us. I don't ask for help or money; I only want to be let alone. Tell me the work to be done, and if I can't get Karens to do it, nobody else need try.

"At one-half the cost the Karens would gladly do the entire work of scouring the Lower Burma, and relieve every sepoy out of the city garrisons for service in Upper Burma. Yesterday morning the first corps of Karen levies crossed the old frontier, marching for Ningyan, where the rebels are in strongest force. I would undertake to march them to Mogoung, far above Bhamo. Under their own officers, and commanded by men they trust, they will go anywhere, and do what no troops can do. You could put ten thousand such men in the field for little more than the cost of a sepoy regiment; but they must be led by _men_.

"_You_ would be pleased to see the change the war has made in the bearing of the Karen. I've seen him flaunt his national Karen dress, and say proudly, '_Yes_, I'm a loyal Karen, and what have _you_ to say to that?' to the proud Burman.

"Near a court-house I saw a Karen chief in full dress. He had brought down some dead dacoits. A dandy Burman, all in silk, with gold watch-chain, tried to crowd him off the road as usual. The Karen pushed him contemptuously out of the way, and sternly said, 'Let _that_ teach you to make way for the Karen "thin daing" hereafter.'

"Yesterday, I got word that the siege of Ningyan was raised, and the beleaguering force was streaming down into the Toungoo district. Konee, with fifty of a Karen levy, alone was left to oppose them. He had cut up one of their foraging-parties; but, as the Burmese were in overwhelming force, he was obliged to try the same tactics. I noted about the Mayankhyoung--decline action, and cut up foraging-parties till he gets the rebels down to the numbers he can fight at close quarters.

"To-day comes serious news from the Rev. Mr. Bunker, who has fought so well all through. He writes, 'Shans just in declared last night that all the Shan people, even Mobyae (heretofore our staunch ally), joined the Myin-Zainy prince against the English, and that in the recent battles around Ningyan the soldiers in uniform were Shan forces.' There seems to be little doubt about this, for I hear from other sources that such soldiers were seen in the battles about Ningyan. If it is true, it is a bad outlook for Government. A Karen just arrived from Ningyan tells me the same story, though he doesn't know that I have the news from other sources.

"Piteous letters were received from the Mobyae Tsawbwa last December. They came to our mission, and were forwarded, with translations, to the secretariat. He said he should be forced to join a league of the Shan Tsawbwas against us, unless he were supported. Now, it appears, his fears have proved true. Neglected by us he has been obliged to join our foes. If we have the Shans on top of the Burmans we shall have a _job_ for Sir H. Macpherson next cold weather I can assure you. Till we can give up harassing our friends and petting our foes, we may as well give up hoping for success.

"Karens laugh at me when I tell them Sir H. Macpherson is going to 'scour Burma' next year. They say the dacoits will hide their arms, send their chiefs into the jungle, and meet the troops, and be good boys till the army passes, and then go ahead again at their normal business of dacoity. In both previous wars the professional dacoits, the Thugs of Burma, retreated to what we left them of Upper Burma, and were amply provided for by the Burmese Government. _Now_ there is _no_ retreat, and there will be no peace till the last head is sent in. This sounds queer from a Christian missionary, but it is the truth. You can't attack dacoity organized into a system for centuries by ordinary process of law. You must regard it as a system akin to an exaggerated Thuggee, and act accordingly."

"Rangoon, August 24.

"I am in a perfect duel all the time about that fatal memorandum I told you of. At the same time that I am praised to the skies, I am simply slapped in the face every day, and harassed till I am ready to hang myself.

"The Karen deputation waited on a 'high official' here, and protested as

vigorously as I had done. It did no good whatever. He was full of fulsome compliments on what the Karens had done, etc., but a magnificent _non possumus_ was all they, I, or other missionaries could get out of him.

"Meanwhile the work goes on. Karens are ordered all over the country to hand in their arms to _Burmese_ officials. In ever so many villages, though they have been months waiting, they have not the requisite number (five) of guns, simply because _there are no arms for sale_. Guns are therefore confiscated, unless they 'make it all right' with the Burmese officials.

"My indictment is--

"1. We warned the Government on the 7th of November, 1885, by Sayáh Too-Thah, at the secretariat, of the insurrection that killed poor St. Barbe. I was not even in Rangoon at the time. The urgency was so great that the old man actually forced his way into Government House, though I was expected only two days after, and pleaded for Government arms and ammunition.

"On my return, I, after weeks of hard fighting, got permission to arm my people. I did so, and so the insurrection, though starting right among my villages, never did us any damage, but went over to Bassein, and was crushed by the Bassein mission. Warnings of the other insurrections were as contemptuously treated, but our missionaries backed me like _men_, and we saved our Christian Karens. We point with pride to the fact that every insurrection has been smothered in blood wherever it came into a Christian tract, while the Government has not quelled _one_.

"2. To do this we armed _ourselves_ at far more than _treble_ price. I scarcely dare think of what God will say to these firms that have _coined_ money out of these poor wretched Karens, impoverished by the dacoits, unable to get a Government gun to fight for their Queen with, and in danger of their lives every day from the rebels.

"To illustrate the case of _thousands_, I mention one whom I helped yesterday. After _three months'_ hanging round Government offices, begging for a permit which the chief commissioner had peremptorily _ordered_, he got his permit. More than a month has the poor wretch been hanging around Rangoon to get a 'permission to purchase.' Yesterday I happened to go into the town magistrate's office, and, of course, a few words of 'vigorous Yankee dialect' (I was too mad to talk English) got me the required papers.

"The poor fellow cried like a child, and knelt before me (you know how much a Karen _must_ feel to do this). He had been a prisoner to the dacoits, and a cross was made for his crucifixion. The dacoits took pains to make the cross Christian, and not Burmese pattern, and he only escaped when the moment had arrived for his crucifixion. He had no idea of escaping with his life, but hoped to win an easier death than crucifixion. He had three shots fired at him within six feet, and plunged through the entire gang, cutting and hacking at him with their swords. This man had 'served' in the field under my own eye in the most gallant manner, and yet this was the treatment he had received from your British idol of red tape!

"3. Though we have served our Queen with our own arms, purchased at rates that would satisfy a Shylock, we have earned no exemption whatever, and must be treated like the universally disloyal Burmans. When I got the permit from the magistrate here, I went over to Scott and Co.'s and bought a Brummagen fifteen-shilling gun, and paid fifty rupees for it. I

have lately _sold the Government_ two hundred guns far better for fifteen rupees apiece.

"4. Whatever we _have_ done for which we are so extravagantly praised is not one-hundredth part what we _can_ do and will gladly do if we can only be _let alone_.

"5. We can easily garrison all Lower Burma at far less than one-third of the present cost; that is, with the exception, of course, of the cities.

"6. We can send detachments with troops to Upper Burma if required. Such detachments would not, of course, be as efficient as in Lower Burma, where the men are acquainted with the country.

"NOW

"The Karens are surly because the men that have served for months and months without pay, are told that they are not 'Karen levies' because they have received no 'enlistment tickets.' They have seen their comrades shot down by their sides. Some carry dacoit bullets in their bodies, and others can show ghastly wounds, but they are not 'Karen levies' till they show their 'enlistment tickets.' Had I waited for these, the Hanthawaddy district would have been in a blaze like all the other districts.

"I have exhausted my powder practising my villages, lest they 'shoot like sepoys.' I am to-day refused the privilege of buying powder at Karen expense, to make my men 'efficient,' till the requisite amount of red tape has been reeled off.

"Can you wonder hundreds of Karens have gone home _sulky_? You know a Karen never storms; he goes home sulky, and when you want him--he's like the Irishman's flea.

"As I wrote you, the country is flooded with incendiary papers. I warned all of our men that the rebellion would soon be using the printing press. Some of the last manuscript papers I intercepted told me plainly they were hoping for a printing-press. I have not seen the papers with my own eyes, but a friend has seen _three_ issues _printed_ in Rangoon. This dacoit seed will bear a bloody crop if it is watered by the present imbecility.

"This is the busiest season of the year, as you well know, when I can scarcely get a sight of my people in ordinary years. Now they are swarming to town to beg for arms--never so anxious as at present. I have officially reported that our mission is _now_ a thousand guns short of making things _safe_, and two thousand short of being able to give _efficient_ aid, yet _nothing_ is done but to _harass_ the lives out of us, when all we want is to arm ourselves at exorbitant expense even to serve our Queen and country."

"Rangoon, October 1, 1886.

"I have just reached home from an enlisting tour, undertaken to pick three hundred men from six hundred volunteers.

"There are too many villages of Karens being dacoited in the north of Sittang for me to be able to distinguish one from another.

"Bunker (the hero of the Mayankhyoung poongyee fights), our man at Toungoo, had come down to consult me, and had to bolt home because the dacoit troops now besieging Ningyan had been making forays for provisions

across the old frontier north-east of Toungoo. Several villages had been dacoited, and Bunker rushed home to do his beset without ammunition to defend himself (we regard our flocks as ourselves). I have not received particulars of the raids; but merely find out that the dacoit troops (I use the words advisedly) now besieging Ningyan are so numerous as to have eaten up all the food procurable in the valley of the Sittang, and that, rather than give up the siege, they have sent their foraging-parties out among our poor half-armed Karens, defenceless for want of ammunition. I find the following letter from Bunker on my table, dated the 28th of September:--

"'DEAR VINTON,--Ningyan is truly in a state of siege. The agent of the B.B.T.C. has just informed me that his steam-launch ran the blockade both _up_ and _down_, and that in going up one sepoy was killed and seven wounded seriously. They were fired at with jingals and _rifles_. Steamers will not run till the blockade is broken. One Bhoda rajah is in command of two thousand troops, and seems to be well armed, and has plenty of ammunition.'

"Bunker adds he has no doubt the police give their ammunition to the dacoits by understanding. He says--

"'At a recent raid on dacoits at Ningyan, the military officer was obliged to take a civil officer so called, a Burmese myo-oke.

"'When he had his troops ready to charge, or about ready, this myo-oke discharged his piece twice, and warned the dacoits, and they all got off scot free. He was arrested, but _not shot_.

"'I have sent up fifty Red Karens, and the B.B.T.C. want twenty more. They seem to be doing very well.'

"This Bhoda rajah and another Dhamma rajah have full swing in the whole Sittang valley, and the troops are simply powerless. I scarcely dare write what I hear about the state of things between the civil and military departments. No military officer can march on the foe without a civil officer. This is often a puppy of a Burman, both a coward and disloyal to the core. Not a shot can be fired till the civil officer permits it.

"My sincere belief is that more than half of the Burmese officials will do all they can do for the rebellion. Only one myo-oke has openly joined the rebellion, for they can be of so much more service to their friends by sending intelligence and ammunition as at present. This Bhoda rajah to whom Mr. Bunker alludes is issuing commissions to hold office in Lower Burma. Five such commissions have been captured by Karens. We shall have it hot in November. I am stockading my villages and enrolling them. The worst of all is the want of ammunition. To get a pound of powder, a Karen must get first at his own deputy-commissioner. This costs time and money for bribes, without which no Karen can get anything from a deputy-commissioner, through the ring of Burmese understrappers. Then he must come to Rangoon and get a second order. This has often taken a week, for if the slightest ruffle in the red tape can be detected, delay results. The other day a permit was impounded for about a week, because the deputy-commissioner had used the wrong printed form, and had corrected it with the pen!

"The thing is simply intolerable when you even think of the distances the men must march, the days they must wait, and the money they must spend to get a single pound of powder. They are allowed no more for a whole year. Be prepared next to hear of Karen cowardice--giving up their arms as

meekly as police.

"Can you fight for your gun without ammunition? I can't.

"I've warned Government that I have not powder to defend my guns, and yet, while I am _personally_ responsible for their safety, I can't get powder without all this circumlocution. The danger to-day is too great to bring all the able-bodied men to town, after marching a week or two to find a deputy-commissioner, and then to wait as they do in the Rangoon office.

"Meanwhile, the dacoits can get plenty of the best American rifles dirt cheap--a quarter of Rangoon prices--and all the powder and caps they want, across the Siamese frontier. The authorities think this source has been blocked, but my Zuninay correspondents tell me of large shipments arriving, and being promptly sent off to their destination. No one is to be harassed but loyal Karens.

"At a large meeting held on the 29th, the Karen leaders told me that the poongyees were tattooing their men, and assuring them of the safe arrival of plenty of arms and powder.

"If we could be as well treated as the dacoits we could fight; but, while disloyal men get their arms and ammunition good and cheap, we are harassed beyond measure.

"The oppression of the punitive tax on Karens seems to be confined at present to the Tharawaddy district.

"I dare not tell the Karens of the Government letter. They are far too indignant as it is.

"To boil down my huge Karen correspondence, the Karens all over Burma that have heard of the action in Tharawaddy all resent it, and many speak of it as base ingratitude, after all they have done and suffered. All express the gravest apprehensions of Karen defeat from the sore want of ammunition, now scarcer than gold. I shall not blame my people if they supply themselves from the dacoit source of smuggled ammunition. I have fought this source of supply for twenty-five years. I regard the present policy of practically disarming the Karens as far more dangerous than any prince pretender to the throne, and its authors are far more dangerous to the peace of the country than any body of dacoit troops now threatening us.

"The minute the troops attack the Bhoda rajah, he will bolt away to the Toungoo hills among our Karen Christians, like the Mayankhyoung poongyee.

"He has no other course open to him, for he has eaten all clean before him elsewhere. Then we shall be asked to act as we did with the Mayankhyoung. We _can't_ do it, for we are not a hundredth part as well prepared for it now as we were then.

"Bunker has written to the authorities that the Bghais _alone_ are four hundred guns short of being _safe_, let alone giving efficient help, as they would gladly do. Worse than all, the few guns they have only invite attack, because of the want of ammunition! Every one of our American missionaries is in the same box. Our Karens say it is an organized attempt to tarnish and snatch away the laurels we earned by last season's brave resistance all over Burma.

"It is a serious question, gravely raised by old and cool-headed Karens,

whether it is not really best to submit to being disarmed _in toto_, stockading and fighting with our bows alone. Some argue it were better to do even this than to pretend to fight and be forced to give up your guns for want of powder."

The following brief but stirring testimony to the fidelity and valour of the Karens, given in an official report by the Inspector-General of Police in Burma, will prove how well-founded is the faith in his people, which Dr. Vinton so often reiterates in his letters, and how natural and how just is his indignation at the treatment which they seem to have received at the hands of the Government:--

"I would also desire to bring to the favourable consideration of Government the splendid work done by the Rev. Mr. Nichols and his Karens. Mr. Nichols himself, at the expense of great personal discomfort, joined one of the pursuing parties while his Karens acted as scouts and advance guards to them all. They on more than one occasion attacked the rebels unaided, killing some of them; but I regret having to record that a small party, in their zeal to overtake the rebels in a country unknown to them, were surprised and slaughtered. Out of fifty-five Government arms, which were made over to the Karens who volunteered to assist Government, they returned fifty at the end of their campaign, the remaining five being taken from five of them at the expense of their lives."

These letters from Dr. Vinton need no comment. They tell a tale which, to say the least of it, does not bode well for the future. Let those who are charged with the government of the country take them to heart. Dr. Vinton's feelings may possibly have been a little embittered by the coldness of the authorities towards his people, and hence, perhaps, the severity of some of his remarks. But his facts are clear and plain. It is high time that the British people lent their ear to the plaint of the Karens and redressed the wrong done them by the listlessness and neglect of our own Government. Notwithstanding their noble services in 1852-53, when the British troops were hard pressed, they were left altogether out in the cold, the good work they did was never acknowledged, nothing was done for them. The missionaries alone stood by them, kept them loyal, and have been fighting their battles ever since. The fears which Dr. Vinton expresses in one of the letters which I have quoted above--that what occurred after the war of 1852-53 will occur again now; that, after profiting by the loyalty, devotion, and bravery of the Karens, the British Government will again forget them--are likely to be realized unless the English people come to their rescue.

It struck me that I might render the Karens a humble service by describing their origin, customs, and singular character, and by endeavouring to interest my fellow-countrymen in their behalf. Burma is popularly supposed to be peopled by Burmese only. Few, save British officers who have been brought into contact with them, know much about the sturdy little Karen nation, which lies wedged in between the masses of Burmese peopling the mountains and forests. The striking contrast between their high courage and the cowardice of the Burmese in the recent disturbances, their loyalty and devotion to the Queen whom they have been taught to revere, would of themselves have been sufficient reasons for letting their interesting story be widely known. But there is more than this. The Karens are a peculiar people. They cling to their national traditions tenaciously. They remember the long and grievous oppression of their former Burmese rulers. The natural antipathy to the Burmese has been handed down from father to son; and to this day, despite the solvent tendency of British rule, the Karen holds himself entirely aloof from his Burmese fellow-subjects.

But it is in the remarkable religious character and history of the Karens that the deepest interest must centre. Their traditions of the elders, telling of a God who had long ages ago confided His Sacred Word to them; of their faithlessness in losing hold of this Sacred Word; their aspirations to recover it; their enthusiasm when, more than fifty years ago, the gospel was first preached to them by the white man, whose advent had been for generations predicted; their extraordinary aptitude in discerning and assimilating the doctrines of Christianity; the almost miraculous success of the American Baptist missionaries both in Christianizing and in civilizing them; the growth of what may be said to be a really indigenous Christianity and a high civilization; and the almost undisturbed harmony between the heathen and Christian Karens, resulting from community in their religious traditions and the feeling of partnership in the Christian revelation, are all subjects of profound interest to the student of social science and religious history.

During a five years' residence in Burma, from 1879 to 1884, I learnt a great deal about the Karens, both from themselves and from their missionaries and pastors. I saw them in their mountain homes and in their secluded dwellings on the plain. My interest in them was early aroused, and has never ceased. Keen personal sympathy with the race and a desire to awaken interest in their behalf have prompted me to attempt the present narrative. It is not often given to witness such a remarkable development of national character as has taken place among the Karens under the influence of Christianity and good government. Forty--ay, thirty--years ago they were a despised, grovelling, timid people, held in open contempt by the Burmese. At the first sound of the gospel message they sprang to their feet as a sleeping army springs to the bugle-call. The dream of hundreds of years was fulfilled; the God who had cast them off for their faithlessness had come back to them; they felt themselves a nation once more. Their progress since then has been by leaps and bounds, all from an impetus within themselves, and with no direct aid of any kind from their rulers; and they bid fair soon to outstrip their Burmese conquerors in all the arts of peace.

In writing the story which these chapters contain, I have made no attempt at literary finish. My leisure is scanty, and I have not been able to do more than piece together the fragmentary notes taken at odd times and places during my five years' service in Burma. I claim no literary merit, therefore, for the book, and trust that readers will find compensation for defects in style and arrangement in the facts of interest which I have endeavoured to bring together.

CHAPTER II - THEIR ORIGIN, LANGUAGE, AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

A NUMBER of theories have been put forward regarding the birthplace of the Karen nation. Some say they are a Thibetan race; others assert that they came from the north of China; a third supposition is that they are the aborigines of Burma; and a few enthusiasts, fascinated by their remarkable God traditions, have been bold enough to declare that they are one of the lost tribes of Israel. It appears certain that they are not the aboriginal inhabitants of Burma. Their own traditions tell of a "river of running sand" which they had to cross, and of the great tribulations which they endured in crossing it. The Karens regard the "river of running sand" as an immense quick-sand, where the sands roll like the waters of a river. Fa Hian, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited India about the fifth century, describes the great desert north of Burma, between China and Thibet, as a "river of sand," and in the Chinese map of

India this long tract of desert is marked "quick-sands." The prominence given in tradition to the crossing of these sands show that the movement must have been a difficult and important one for the race. The wilderness of sand was evidently the desert between China and Thibet, which the Chinese pilgrim describes thus: "There are evil spirits in this river of sand, and such scorching winds that whose encountereth them dies and none escape. Neither birds are seen in the air nor quadrupeds on the ground. On every side as far as the eyes can reach, if you seek for the proper place to cross, there is no other mark to distinguish it than the skeletons of those who have perished there." The Karen traditions describe it as a "fearful trackless region, where the sands rolled before the wind like the waves of the sea." Malte Brun, on the authority of Marco Polo, says, "The country of the Caride is the south-east point of Thibet, and perhaps the country of the nation of the Cariaines, which is spread over Ava."

It seems very probable, then, that the Karen are a people from the borders of Thibet, who crossed the great desert of Gobi into China, and found their way by gradual descents into Burma. They claim a common descent with the Angami Nagas of Assam, and there is much in common between them and the Khyens and Kakhyens of Lower and Upper Burma. It cannot be ascertained what were the causes of their migrations, or when they appeared for the first time in Burma. In the "Life of Monsignor Percoto," the first Italian missionary to Burma, we read that Father Nerini found "wild populations styled Cariani (Karens) living separately from others, and in full liberty." This was about A.D. 1740. But they had been then settled for generations in the country, and were looked upon as savages. It would appear that, after crossing the river of running sand, the Karens did not march at once into Burma, but settled down on the borders of Western China, and from the colony of Jews there, in all probability, learnt the "Traditions of the Elders," the coming back of the White Book, the return of the long-expected Messiah, and the roll of parchment or skin to be brought to them by the white foreigners. Their traditions point to a desperate blood feud which arose between two branches of their race whilst living in China. The Chghaws [Pronounced Sgaws] (or male) branch had a great dispute with the Pghos [Pronounced Pwos] (or female) branch about a fine which the latter were adjudged to pay for having murdered one of their own chiefs called Pu Tha Get. The Pghos refused to pay the fine, upon which the Chghaws prohibited social intercourse and intermarriage between the two branches. This sundering of two branches of the nation was widened and intensified by periodical warring and reprisals, till eventually the Pghos had to leave China altogether, and marched down southward into the plains of Burma. The third branch of the nation, to which the Karen-nees, or Red Karens, belong, is called "Bghai." The Red Karens assert that sixteen or seventeen generations ago they were driven from a region in the kingdom of Ava, and that they were part of a Chinese army. This account of their origin seems not improbable; for about A.D. 1400, to which their account would take us back, the Chinese invaded Burma, and were twice defeated and driven back.

It would appear, then, that of the three branches of the Karen nation the Pghos were the first to enter Burma. They had been driven from Western China by the Chghaws, and in their retreat southwards appear to have followed the course of the Salween river. Leaving a few scattered bands behind them near Toungoo, they turned south-eastwards towards Siam, and then crossed over to Mergui, whence they spread again north and north-west by the coast-line, finally settling down along the deltas of the great rivers. The war-songs of the Chghaws relate that they "drove the Pghos to drink brackish water." Hence it is that we find the Pghos occupying the great sea-board belt from Mergui and Tavoy to Moulmein, and

thence, with only a single break near Rangoon, along the delta of the Irrawaddy up to Cape Negrais, on the border of Arakan. Very few Pghos are to be found inland of the great deltaic regions. Their head-quarters are still near Moulmein, at a place called Dongyan, where they established their first stronghold. Here they were attacked again and again by the invading Siamese, and finally taken in captivity to Siam. They, however, worked out their freedom, and the majority, leaving a few scattered colonies in Siam, returned to Dongyan, which is the great Pgho centre to this day. The Chghaws, having driven the Pghos to the sea, occupied the great central range of hills called the Pegu Yoma. They still are almost the sole settlers in these hills, but they have spilt over the plains immediately below, and now occupy the hills and jungles of the Irrawaddy district, large parts of the Shwegyin, Prome, and Henzada districts. They extend from the Arakan Yoma range on the west to the Salween river on the east. They are replaced by the Khyens on the north-west of the Prome district. The Khyens are believed to be an offshoot of the Karen nation, and their social and religious customs are very similar to those of the Karens. Dr. Mason, the great missionary scholar of Burma, regards Khyens and Karens as one and the same. It seems not improbable that they and the Kakhyens also may be the descendants of captives taken during the perpetual inter-tribal wars before the final descent into Burma. It seems, in any case, pretty certain that they have a common origin with the Karens. The territory which the great body of the Khyens inhabit is the mountain track from the east of Assam to Yunnan. But there is a large Khyen colony round the head waters of the Chindwin river in Upper Burma, and traces of a Karen population of considerable size have, it is believed, been found on the same river. Chghaw and Pgho Karens are also found in Siam, in the valleys of the Meinam and the Cambodia--descendants of captives taken by the Siamese during the invasion of Tenasserim.

The Bghai branch seem to have come into Burma along the line of the Toungoo hills somewhat later than the other two branches of the nation, but they never passed beyond these hills. They are the boldest and most warlike of the Karens, and the Karen-nees, or Red Karens, are the blue blood of the tribe. The Red Karens are the only tribe of the nation which succeeded by desperate struggles in resisting Burmese aggression and preserving their independence. They are the typical Bghai Karens, and occupy a compact little mountain territory on the north-east of British Burma, which they hold under chiefs of their own in complete independence, paying an annual small tribute to the British Government for the guarantee against aggression which has been given to them. They are proud of their lineage, which they say they trace from the rising sun. Every Red Karen has a rising sun--the crest of his nobility--tattooed on his back. In challenging to combat he does not slap his left folded arm with his right palm, as the rest of the Karens and the Burmans do, but, coiling his right arm around his left side, strikes the tattoo on his back. This action is supposed by him to rouse the magic power of the symbol.

The Bghais are thus, as will be seen, more concentrated than the Pghos and the Chghaws. They occupy the entire northern part of the Toungoo hill tracts, and the chieftains of the independent Karen-nees are regarded as the heads of the tribe. The Bghai of British Burma is an offshoot of the Karen-nee, or Red Karen. The Red Karen calls one large clan of his brethren in British Burma the "trouser-wearing Bghai;" while the latter speaks of his Red Karen brother as the Eastern Bghai.

The division of the Karen nation into these three great tribes--the Chghaw, Pgho, and Bghai--is a very ancient one and although there is perfect cordiality and freedom of intercourse between them, intermarriage is not frequent. This, however, is rather the result of the segregation,

under the force of external circumstances, of the three tribes than of any customary law. The division, too, although stoutly maintained, never stands in the way of combination for a common object by the entire nation. Indeed, as will afterwards appear, the power and willingness to combine as a nation for a common end is a characteristic which stands out in the Karens most prominently, and is the main ground of hope for the stability of their national existence.

The Karen language is monosyllabic, and belongs emphatically to the Tonal family of languages. The syllables are all open; there is no final consonant, except a nasal occasionally found in the Bghai and Pgho dialects. There are no closed syllables at all. Compound words are formed by agglutination. The case formation and the declension of nouns, as well as the conjugation of verbs, are all by suffixes and affixes to roots. Words in pairs are a peculiarity. They are not reduplicatives, but agglutinatives used to intensify the meaning of the word, or to form a new idea respecting a group. Every word, as the Karens themselves say, has its "wife," or its synonyms in the same relation as the wife stands to the husband in Burma--that of the better and stronger half! The Burmese language has the same tendency, but not so marked as in the Karen. In formal, polite address both the "husband" and "wife" words are used. For example, _kathe-kachaw_ means "elephants," although _kathe_ by itself means "horses." Again, _khai o kwa o_ means "sword-sticks," or (in Burmese) _dahs_, although _kwa_ means an "axe." The agglutinatives together convey a meaning more intense than either of them singly, and the "wife" word contributes the greater strength of the two. Reduplication of words in Karen conveys an adverbial signification.

The Karen language has no affinity whatever for the Burmese. It belongs to the same family as the Chinese, but it must early have separated from the parent tongue. It has no written character. It was never written till Dr. Wade, the American missionary, reduced it to writing, using the Burmese consonants.

The Karens thus have no written literature. But they are the possessors of a rich bard literature, which has been transmitted from generation to generation by men whose special business it is to commit to memory the traditions, legends, songs, and homely folk-lore; commend to the young their duties to elders and parents; recount the heroic deeds of old and of the race from memory; and teach students to be their successors as depositaries of the national traditions and folk-lore.

Supreme importance is attached to the correct transmission--exactly as originally rendered by the elders--of the story of God's dealings with the nation. They believed that God, who had cursed the Karen for losing the written Word, would certainly call upon them some day--near or distant, they knew not--to say how much they remembered of it; and that the blessing to each would be apportioned according to the care with which its words and truths had been treasured up. Hence the jealous care and extraordinary accuracy with which the God traditions--the Palladium of the nation--have been handed down from generation to generation. A literal translation of the more important of these traditions is given in the Appendix. Most of them could be recited with propriety in any Christian church in England.

The Karens are small in stature, but broad and muscular. Those who live in the hills are not so robust in appearance as those of the plains, the weakly forms of the hill-people being due to the greater hardship of their lives and the toughness of the struggle they often have to fight for very existence, even under a British government. The skin is naturally fair, like that of the Chinese; and the features of those of

pure blood are Caucasian in type--a characteristic which has been deemed by some to support their claim to have been one of the lost tribes of Israel. The hair is straight and black. The eyes are black. But in the north sometimes brownish hair and hazel eyes are found.

The houses of the Karens are of various shapes and sizes. In the plains, generally each family occupies a permanent dwelling. In the hills, an entire village community lives in a long barrack of bamboos and rough-hewn timber.

The heathen Karen may be said to be almost omnivorous. "Every animal from a rat to an elephant, every reptile from a sand-lizard to a serpent, ants, grubs, every bird, every fish, and the whole vegetable kingdom adorn their tables." But, curiously, they will eat none of the monkey tribe except the white-eyelid monkey.

The dress of the people varies a good deal. Some of the clans wear tunics, striped and plain; others, chiefly in the north, wear trousers, often handsomely coloured and embroidered; a few go about almost naked. The dress of the Red Karens (Karen-nee) is peculiar. The men wear short red trousers with narrow black or white stripes. Below the knee are black bands of twisted thread. A wrapper of white, with a few red or black stripes, is wound round the body. A bright red turban is worn on the head, and an ornamented bag is hung across the shoulder. The female dress is very picturesque. "The head-dress is a large red or black turban wound up to form a small tower on the top of the head. There is no gown, but a cloth like the Roman toga, tied by two corners on the right shoulder, and the left arm is sometimes kept covered, but more often it is drawn out above the garment. A second piece of cloth like the first is kept in the hand like a loose shawl, or tied around the waist. One of these garments is usually red, and the other black, though occasionally both are red. For a petticoat, another rectangular piece of cloth is wrapped two or three times round the person, and is kept in its place by a wampum belt some half a dozen inches in diameter. Another enormous band of beads is worn below the knee, and on the ankles large silver bangles. Ear-drops are worn both by men and women."

The Karens all sing--they have an inborn love of music--and beautiful singers they are. Their music is nearly all wild and plaintive, like that of the Scottish and Welsh highlanders. [Two specimens of national Karen airs are given in the Appendix.] Their minstrels are both men and women, and in their bone-feasts each village bard competes with the other--a man being pitted against a woman. The imagery used in many of their odes is rich and pleasing. The flowers, the birds, the great cliffs and crags, the rivers, the stars are all themes of song. It is a rich treat to hear a whole school of two hundred boys and girls singing one of their own hymns in parts. The voices are all sweet and the melody charming.

CHAPTER III - SOME OF THEIR NATIONAL CUSTOMS

INFANT betrothals are not uncommon, but they are becoming less frequent than they used to be. As a rule, a young man chooses for himself the girl whom he wishes to marry. He begins by obtaining the permission of the girl's parents to paying his addresses--not, however, to the girl herself, but through the parents. "He then selects a go-between, who first consults a chicken's bones. If they give an unfavourable reply, the matter is allowed to drop; if, on the other hand, the answer is favourable, the go-between arranges the match, and when this is done a

feast is given by the young man's friends to those of the girl. If a girl breaks her engagement, she has to pay the expenses of the feast; but she is at liberty to receive the addresses of another suitor if her betrothed declares publicly that he desires to forfeit all that has been spent, which is the recognized way of breaking off the match."

The marriage ceremony is simple. "The bride is conducted to the house of the bridegroom's parents in a procession with music, and as she ascends the ladder she is drenched to the skin with water. Before the company leave, two elders, one on behalf of the bride and one on behalf of the bridegroom, take each a cup of spirits; the first repeats the duties of the husband in case of the wife's death, and the latter replies, acknowledging that such are his duties--one of which is that, should she be carried into captivity or killed in a foray, he must purchase her freedom or obtain the price of her blood. Each elder then gives to the other to drink, and says, 'Be faithful to your covenant.' This concludes the ceremony."

The Red Karens never betroth their children in infancy, and their marriage ceremony is a singular one. "The two young people having made up their minds to marry, and the parents having given their consent, the bridegroom makes a feast in his house, to which the bride and some female companions come. During the feast, the bridegroom presents a cup of spirits to the bride, asking, 'Is it agreeable.' This she takes, replying, 'It is agreeable.' She and her companions remain all night, and, returning home next morning, prepare a feast to which the bridegroom and his friends come, and the ceremony of presenting the cup of spirits is again gone through, this time the bride being the questioner. Occasionally the reply, given playfully, is, 'Not agreeable,' when the spirits must be offered and the question asked till a favourable answer is received. The feast in the bride's house completes the whole ceremony."

Polygamy is not permitted, but is occasionally practised by those of the Karens who are brought much in contact with the Burmese.

They have an odd way of naming their children. The names given are sometimes those of ancestors, sometimes descriptive of the parents' feelings, such as "Joy," "Hope;" often those of the seasons in which the children were born, as "Harvest." In many cases the child owes his name to some circumstance that occurred about the time of its birth, as "Father returned;" or to some peculiarity in its appearance, as "White" or "Black." On other occasions it is named after some bird, beast, mineral, or tree, as "Heron," "Tiger," "Tin," "Cotton." Those who, on growing up, develop some peculiarity, receive a kind of nickname, to which "Father" or "Mother" is attached, such as "Father of Swiftness," "Mother of Contrivance." Frequently the parents change their names when a child is born to them.

Their custom when an infectious disease breaks out in the village is a stern one. In ordinary illnesses they treat the sick with decent kindness, but they will not afford any assistance to a person--even one of their own kith and kin--attacked by an infectious disease. "An outbreak of cholera or small-pox will temporarily depopulate the villages in large tracts of country, the inhabitants flying from the disease with terror, and living in the forests till they think that they can return to their homes without danger of contagion. The individual who has, or is supposed to have, imported the disease is held responsible for all the deaths, and must pay the price of the lives lost. If he dies himself, or is unable to pay, the debt remains for his children and descendants to wipe off. Every illness is looked upon as inflicted by the spirits, and

though the Karens have some knowledge of medicine, resort is not had to it till incantations have been tried and the spirits have declined to be propitious."

Warfare has, of course, ceased since the country came under British rule. But an account of their war-customs of the olden time--and which still prevail in the fierce forays of the Karen-nee--will be of some interest.

War is never declared. A wrong having been committed, the avenging tribesman never make any declaration of reprisals, nor intimate that war is to be waged. The great object is to take the enemy completely unawares. Nor is war waged ostensibly between one village and another. There is always an individual at the head of every war on whose account the war is made, and who acts as general, but never goes to the fight himself. If the season is deemed favourable, the head of the war kills a hog or a fowl, and, taking a portion of the heart, liver, and entrails, he mixes them up with salt and rolls the mixture up in a leaf. This symbolizes typing up the heads of his enemies. Then, after a prayer to the Lord of heaven and earth, he sends out spies to see how best the enemy's village may be attacked. If the spies report favourably for the attack, the head of the war sends out to collect volunteers for the foray, forty or fifty from each village of the tribe. When all have assembled, a feast is given, at which spirits are freely drunk. But before handing round the spirits, the head of the war pours out some slowly on the ground, and prays, "Lord of the seven heavens and the seven earths, Lord of the rivers and streams, of the mountains and hills, we give thee spirits to drink and rice to eat. Help us, we entreat thee. We have tied the heads of our enemies. Help us. Make their minds forgetful; make them to forget themselves--that they may sleep heavily, that their sleep may be unbroken. Let not a dog bark at us, let not a hog grunt at us. Let them not seize a bow, a sword, or a spear. And may the Lord keep my children and grand-children that are going to attack our enemies, and deliver them from all harm. May they, be delivered from the bow, the sword, and the spear." After this a fowl is killed, and its bones reverently consulted. If the omens are unfavourable, the tribesmen are dismissed to their homes to wait for a more auspicious day. If they are favourable, the head of the war leaps up exultingly and calls for two volunteers to escalade the first house of the enemy's village. The two volunteers come forward, and he addresses them thus: "You are a hunting dog; you are a wild boar. If you succeed you are worthy of a buffalo, and you shall have it. If you fail, if you are killed, let not those you leave behind ask a buffalo of me; let them ask a fowl. Let them not ask of me a silk garment on account of your death. You say you are bold, you say you are fearless. You go the first, you return the last. If our enemies follow and you run away, and anything happens to the people, you are responsible." After this address the tribesmen go off, singing war-songs:

"We march in order like white ants,
We cross a stream and trample it down;
We arrive at the foot of the house,
We reach the foot of the ladder;
Blood flows like a stream of water,
Blood flows down under the house.

"The mother cries herself to death;
The great hawk flies over the house,
Pounces down on the chief's red cock;
The great hawk swoops around the house,
Carries off its prey at the foot of the house;
The great hawk flies away,

Leaving the chief behind weeping."

When the party reach the house, the first rush is made by the two volunteers, and the rest follow. The house is stormed. All the men are killed, whether armed or unarmed. Such women as are thought likely to be useful or profitable as slaves are taken and bound. All the rest are killed. Infants are always killed, and children are often barbarously massacred. Their hands and feet are cut off, and their bodies hacked into small pieces.

Slavery is common amongst all the tribes, and one of the Bghai clans sell even their relatives. Defaulting debtors, captives in forays, confirmed thieves, widows and widowers who cannot pay the price of the deceased, those who have brought or are supposed to have brought infectious diseases--are all sold into slavery. Elderly men and women find no purchases; they cannot work. Men and women of middle age fetch as much as from two to three hundred rupees. Boys, girls, and children are valued at from three to four hundred rupees.

CHAPTER IV - THEIR AGRICULTURE: PEE BEE YAW, THE GODDESS OF THE HARVEST

THE Karens are tillers of the soil. They do not engage, as the Burmese do, in trade. When communities descend into the plains, they take to the ordinary Burmese paddy-growing, in which they very soon outstrip the Burmans. Their villages are always the most prosperous-looking. Those in the hills still follow the primitive and destructive methods of their forefathers. Their system, briefly, is to cut down and burn the trees on a hillside, and then sow their crops on the mixed soil and ashes. Next year they migrate to another hill and repeat the same operation, leaving the first hill to recover its natural vegetation, till after six or seven years they return to it. They thus migrate annually to different hills, and each year finds one hill denuded of its vegetation, cultivated, and then forsaken for another. The proper cycle of rotation is usually regarded as seven years. In the seventh year, the people come back to the hill where they had started, and commence their operations over again. In January or February, the cultivator goes out to search for a good site, and, having found one which suits him, he picks up a clod of earth and puts it under his pillow. If his dreams are favourable, he sticks to the site which he has chosen; if unfavourable, he must renew his search till he finds a spot the earth of which brings a good omen to him in his sleep. He then goes out with his family and cuts down the trees on his patch, which is called a _toungya_. This is done by commencing at the bottom of the hillside, and making slight notches in the biggest trees and leaving the small trees untouched. Ascending gradually, the notches made in the larger trees increase in length and depth till the top of the hill is reached, where all the larger trees are completely cut down. These, falling on those below, push them downwards, and an impetus is created which increases as it moves steadily down the hill, until with one great crash the whole forest vegetation is prostrated. The fallen trees are left as they lie till April, when the mass is dry enough to burn. A house of bamboos is built in a sequestered spot near the _toungya_, the dry timber is lighted, and soon the whole of the fallen forest is reduced to ashes. The heat of the fire splits up the soil, and the ashes enter the crevices and fertilize the land. In May or June, after the first downpour of rain, rice is sown, holes being dibbled in the ground and the seed dropped in. When the rice has come well up, cotton, capsicum, and maize are sown between the ridges. Near the house are planted sugar-cane, yams, and betel. A little hut is built up in the

middle of the _toungya_, or cultivated patch, in which a boy or a girl is placed to frighten away the birds and wild hogs, and, after two or three weedings, the crop is reaped in October. The grain is threshed out by beating the ears against a beam of wood, or treading out the grains with their feet; for they have no cattle like their lowland neighbours. While the crops are still on the ground, the men and the women fish and hunt to supply the family with food, and gather all sorts of forest produce, till harvest-time. When the rice crops have been gathered, the little granary is stored with paddy, and the head of the family, accompanied by his wife, goes down to the plain, and sells his betel, fowls, wild honey, beeswax, and wild cardamoms, and thus obtains money for clothes and taxes. In some parts--notably the hills of Shway Gyin--tobacco is extensively grown, and yields a good return in cash. Burmans and even Chinamen go up to the Karen settlements and make purchases.

The friendly divinity of the harvest, called Pee Bee Yaw, is invoked annually when the crops are sown. The story of Pee Bee Yaw, the Karen Ceres, is an amusing and characteristic one:--

There once lived a young pair of orphans, brother and sister, whose parents had left them only four annas in silver. In accordance with the ancestral custom of the Karens, they had been driven from the long house or barrack in which the whole clan lives, lest the misfortune of orphanhood should prove contagious.

They maintained a precarious existence by the most laborious toil, living in a little hut at some distance from the clan to which they belonged.

A famine arose in the land, and the clansmen were obliged to go to a neighbouring country to replenish their slender stock of grain.

When Po Khai's (the orphan boy) paddy was exhausted, his sister brought out the cherished piece of silver their parents had left them, and asked him to go and purchase grain with their fellow-clansmen.

In a despairing mood, he said, "What is the use? Four annas' worth of rice will prolong our miserable lives but a few hours. As starvation is inevitable, let us meet our fate at once."

His sister pleaded that, unhappy as their lives were, they were still sweet to them. She showed him that as they had entered the world with great pain, trouble, and care to their parents, so they should not leave it till every means to prolong existence had been exhausted. To please his sister, Po Khai went, following the clan at a distance, as he would not be allowed to mix with their party. When the party returned, they saw in the depths of the jungle by the side of the road an old woman her body up to her neck completely covered with creepers, which had wound themselves firmly around her body.

As the party approached, the old woman screamed, "Cut me loose, cut me loose."

The clansmen declined, as the old woman would want to go home with them, and would eat them out of house and home.

After the whole party had passed, Po Khai came along.

The old woman redoubled her cries, as there was but one left from whom she could hope for release. Po Khai thought to himself, "I must die, and even if the old woman goes home with me it can make but a few hours' difference."

So he cut away the creepers, and the old lady skipped dancing out on the road, saying, "Hurry up, grandson, for grandmother is perishing with hunger."

The old woman really was Pee Bee Yaw, which means "Grandmother with the bound waist."

When the sister saw her brother returning, she thought, "My brother must be mad to invite guests to dinner when four annas' worth of rice bought at famine prices are all our store."

Her brother, seeing her frowns, hastily ran up into the house and begged his sister not to refuse the hospitality universally shown by the Karen. He reminded her how their parents had never sent any one hungry away, and begged his sister to keep up the ancestral custom, even though they were in the very jaws of death.

The old woman at once skipped into the kitchen, and called the young girl to cook in haste, as she was very hungry.

With a heavy heart the young girl was just pouring all the rice her brother had brought home into the pot, when the old woman checked her sharply, "What a wasteful child! Seven grains of rice are quite enough."

"Grandmother," replied the girl, "I know how to cook a pot of rice, but I don't know how to cook seven grains of rice alone."

The old woman spoke up sharply. "Obey orders when your elders command you, and ask no questions."

Abashed at the sharp tone of the old woman, the girl counted out seven kernels, and the old woman approached the pot with mystic passes, and the pot became full.

At seven grains to a meal, Po Khai saw that the rice he had purchased was amply sufficient for his wants, and knew that a good power had stepped in to save him.

When the news of the daily miracle reached the clan, they assembled and claimed Pee Bee Yaw as their guest on the ground of prior discovery.

Pee Bee Yaw refused to go with them, reminding them that they had forfeited their right as the first finders by their refusal to cut her loose from the creepers. Of course this refusal laid the foundation of much hatred towards Po Khai and his sister.

When it came time to cut the _toungya_(hill garden), Pee Bee Yaw told Po Khai to clear the jungle from seven hills and prepare them for planting.

"How can I clear seven hills?" asked Po Khai.

"Ask no questions when your elders order you," was the old lady's sharp reply.

Just as he was leaving the house, Pee Bee Yaw gave him a dah, with orders to try it.

When he reached the chosen spot, Po Khai raised his dah against a huge tree. It fell without even waiting for the blow. "Well, that's the sharpest dah I ever used," blurted out Po Khai, as he watched the crash

of the huge tree.

Of course the seven hills were all cleared off before breakfast.

Po Khai wondered how this huge field was ever to be planted and reaped and the grain thrashed, but he dared ask no questions, as Pee Bee Yaw always rebuked so harshly. He went on in blind faith in the old woman's power. At the sowing season, Pee Bee Yaw danced over the whole field and a perfect shower of paddy started from her fingers and toes and from every fold of her clothing, and so the field was well filled with grain. The crop prospered splendidly, and soon the bending ears, over a foot in length and filled to the very extremity with golden grain, gave promise of such a bountiful harvest as had never been known before.

Po Khai wondered how this grain could ever be harvested, but still dared not ask.

The clansmen, wild with rage at the boundless wealth which they had just missed, and which had gone to Po Khai, now summoned all the clans within a day's march to join them in stealing Po Khai's paddy. Men, women, and even children joined the raid. Some reaped, others carried the bundles. Some threshed and winnowed, while others carried home the paddy. After a most laborious night's work of many hundreds, all of Po Khai's grain was carried off. Fancy the looks of Po Khai when he found nothing but trampled stubble where he had left waving grains!

Following the trail of the thieves, he picked up seven sheaves dropped by the way. On reporting to Pee Bee Yaw that these seven bundles were all that was left of their crop, she coolly told him to build seven huge paddy bins. Po Khai did so with the unquestioning obedience which had become a habit with him. When the bins were completed, but not roofed, a sheaf was put in each, and Pee Bee Yaw commenced dancing among the bins and singing a call to the grain, wherever it was, to return to its proper owner. At once the paddy came flying through the air and fell in a perfect shower, till not a single grain was left with the thieves.

A solemn council of all the clans was then held, and their indignation knew no bounds. "We thought to ruin Po Khai, and we have been made nothing but his coolies, and even worse; nothing is left us even for our wages." So they arranged to steal the paddy again, from the bins this time.

Po Khai spent the day, by Pee Bee Yaw's orders, in cutting a huge pile of clubs and making a large number of cords.

When they went home in the evening, Pee Bee Yaw said, "Ropes tie and sticks beat." When the clansmen came to steal the paddy, the ropes bound each to a tree and the clubs began to beat a rat-tat-too on their unlucky backs. To entreat the deaf cords and clubs was, of course, useless. Next morning Po Khai found his tormentors in his power, and half dead with the terrible beating they had received.

They readily took the oath, considered by hill men to be inviolable, never to molest him more.

Pee Bee Yaw then said she must return to her abode in the skies, to wash down her house there, as the hens had surely filled it with dust. To enable her to do so, she told Po Khai to raise the two beams by which the native plough or harrow is dragged, into a perpendicular position. She then took the form of a cricket, crept up to the yoke, and flew away.

(The custom of raising the yoke in air and placing a cricket on the perpendicular poles that support it is still followed by the Karens. It is considered a very good omen if the cricket crawls upwards and takes flight from the top.)

During Pee Bee Yaw's absence, Po Khai married a young and beautiful wife. His great wealth obtained from the sale of his crop, made him a great match. Unfortunately, he did not tell his bride the secret of Pee Bee Yaw's help in raising so large a quantity of grain, but took the credit to himself. When Pee Bee Yaw returned with the planting season, she took up her abode in the _toungya_, so as to watch over the growing grain.

Po Khai's wife was curious to discover the secret of her husband's great success in paddy cultivation, and so went out one day to the field. Po Khai was not there. When she saw Pee Bee Yaw she was jealous, supposing her to be her husband's paramour.

The young bride attacked her rival fiercely with a club, and beat her over the whole field. Pee Bee Yaw, vainly attempting to escape, jumped into a crab's hole, and has never been seen since.

This amusing little story keeps the people in good humour at their toil, and is recited with great gusto at the harvest-home.

The Karens to this day use the sort of well-curb of earth thrown out by a crab about the mouth of its hole, as the representative of Pee Bee Yaw. This lump of earth is placed on the threshing-floor at harvest, and offerings are made to it. During the rest of the year it is kept in the paddy-bin with the greatest care, while fowls are sacrificed to it, and a small portion is nibbled off and cast out into the field, just before certain rhymed incantations are made, which are supposed to be necessary to the welfare of the grain. To this day the hill Karen will never cultivate land near his house. Pee Bee Yaw hates women, owing to the beating she received, and no risk must be run of her meeting a woman and deserting her post in anger.

The hill Karen always stores his paddy far away from his house, because it is Pee Bee Yaw's gift and he dares not let her know that he feeds his women with it. Each day's supply of paddy must be cleaned as soon as brought home. Pee Bee Yaw is supposed not to recognize in the white rice the yellow paddy she gave.

CHAPTER V - THEIR FOLK-LORE: ONE OF THEIR SATIRICAL TRADITIONS

STORY OF SAW KAY

AT Mya-yah-doung (about ten miles east of the present station of Wah-net-khyoung, on the Prome road) there once lived a great Karen chief called the Yellow Chief. He had a son named Saw Kay (Mr. Crooked). He was a cunning, idle, and lazy fellow. The Burmese Government seized on the entire clan, and sent them under guard to cut a huge teak tree into a war-boat and drag it to the river-bank. Saw Kay was the only male not seized. He was spared to carry the rice the women were forced to clean out for the food of the working party. Saw Kay's mother had two large and very fat hogs, which she had petted so long that she could not bear to have them killed. Saw Kay's mouth watered every time he looked at their fat sides, and as his entreaties to be allowed to kill the hogs were in vain, he laid a plan to induce his mother to gratify his appetite for

pork.

He went to his father, and with a profuse gush of tears told him that his mother was dead, sobbed out a pitiful tale of how his mother had been seized by cholera, and had died alone, deserted by all the women of the clan, and how he alone had buried the body and performed the funeral rites. Leaving his father under guard, plunged in the depth of woe at this untimely bereavement, he returned to his home, and told his mother that his father, while at his work, had been killed by the boat rolling over on to him. He described the fearful appearance of the corpse, mangled by the crushing weight that had mutilated it beyond recognition, and, beating on his breast, exclaimed against the brutality of the Burman guard, that would not even permit the removal of the corpse to the ancestral burial-place (a terrible thing to the Karens).

It must be remembered that Saw Kay was the only means of communication between the working party and their home, and that the lies of Saw Kay ran no risk of detection.

The mother, bathed in tears, said, "Well, he was a good husband to me, and the least I can do will be to make the usual funeral feast to his memory, even if his bones do not lie with those of his fathers."

So one of the hogs was killed, and Saw Kay gorged himself to repletion. Soon after, he began his plans for a second feast, and went to his father with proposals for a re-marriage. He said, "Father, we shall need some one to cook for us and weave our clothes. Now, I lately saw a woman who looked exactly like mother, talked like her, and acted like her. In fact, if I had not buried mother with my own hands, I should have claimed her as my own mother. Now, you had better marry her. Let me act as the go-between and negotiate a marriage."

The father replied, "If she is like your dead mother, it is all I can ask," and consented to the match.

Saw Kay then went to his mother, and told her that as soon as the clan returned from their work they would be driven from the long house in which the entire clan lived, in accordance with the ancestral Karen custom, which banished widows and orphans from the house, lest their misfortune prove contagious. He urged her to a second marriage saying that he had met a man in the forest so strikingly resembling his dead father, that if he had not buried his father with his own hands he should say it was his own father.

The mother said that if the proposed individual was only half as good as her deceased husband it was enough, and consented to the match.

In this way Saw Kay was the first one to arrange a marriage between his own parents.

When the clan returned on the completion of the boat, the second hog was killed for the marriage-feast.

Saw Kay, of course, presided, trusting to the impossibility of his parents having any private conversation in the crowd of invited guests. Both, of course, were much struck by the very peculiar resemblance to the supposed dead partner, but they had been prepared for this by Saw Kay's previous description. In high feather, Saw Kay performed the marriage ceremony over his parents, and ushered them to the bridal-chamber.

Judging rightfully that "the ground would be too hot for him to tread on"

on the morrow, Saw Kay shouldered a hind-quarter of the hog slain for the feast, and marched to the _tai_ (long mountain house) of a neighbouring clan.

He took care to time his arrival so as to find none of the men at home. When he entered the _tai_, the women crowded around him, their mouths watering at the sight of the very fat hind-quarter of pork Saw Kay had brought with him. He reported that he had speared a wild hog too heavy to be carried home, and that he was returning for help to bring in the rest of the carcase.

"If you have a whole carcase, sell us this," spoke up an old woman, and asked the price.

Saw Kay asked one hundred rupees for it. (Karens then buried all their money for fear of the Burmese Government.) The woman, never seeing money, knew nothing of its value.

"Oh, if my husband was only at home, I'd make him buy me this delicious pork!" groaned the old woman.

"Go and ask him," said Saw Kay; "he is just beyond those bushes across the ravine."

The old woman ran round the head of the ravine, while Saw Kay whipped across unknown to her. On reaching the bushes she shouted, "Husband, husband! may I buy a quarter of very fat pork for a hundred rupees?"

Saw Kay, from the other side of the bushes, called out personating her husband "Yes; and buy it quickly, lest you lose so good a bargain."

The old woman ran round, while Saw Kay rushed across the ravine, and was found sitting quietly in his place as if he had never stirred. The old woman dug up the money, and Saw Kay hastily left with his ill-gotten gains, rightly judging that the place would be too hot for him when the men returned from their work.

He then went down to the "Prince's Road," knowing that seven great Burmese merchants, with five hundred carts laden with up-country silk _patsoes_ were soon to pass the spot. He carved a staff with peculiar figures on it, and buried his hundred rupees a few inches under the ground in little deposits of from two to five rupees each.

When his quick eye detected the merchants riding in advance of their carts, he pretended to be absorbed in his pursuits, and, flourishing his staff with mystic passes, he would shout, "Hey for five rupees!" strike the earth, and dig up the money; "hey for two rupees!" strike the earth, and dig up the money. The merchants watched his proceedings, saying to themselves, "Fool, not to wish for a lakh of rupees at once." On their approach Saw Kay feigned great fright, and tried to escape. The merchants held him fast, and tried to frighten him into a bargain for the magic staff. He pleaded hard to be allowed to keep it, and said, "Perhaps the stick may be destined by fate to me alone."

The merchants threatened, and offered money, until at last he, with apparent reluctance, sold the staff for a thousand rupees. The merchants dared not try their staff till they reached Rangoon, lest the possession of so great a treasure might cause them to be murdered by their own camp-followers. Of course, the magic staff failed them. They were unable to search for Saw Kay till all their cargo of silk _patsoes_ was disposed of, which took all the rains.

In the forest, Saw Kay met a widow, who had been driven from her clan, and who had a posthumous daughter. Being brought up alone in the forest, the young girl had never seen a man. The tale waxes eloquent in praises of the young woman's beauty, and tells how the magic glance of her melting eye brought a body-guard of the most savage beasts around her; how, whenever she stepped out into the sunshine, the birds would close their ranks, flying over her so as to form a canopy over her to prevent her beautiful complexion from being tanned by the sun; how the carols of the birds accompanied her steps while waking; and how the birds watched in deathlike stillness over her siestas. It was a case of love at first sight, and the happy couple entered the nuptial state amid the wild enthusiasm of the beasts of the forest enslaved by the marvellous beauty of the lovely bride. The newly married couple spent the rains in the seclusion of the forest.

With the opening of the dry weather, the merchants came up in great wrath to hunt down the dog of a Karen who had dared to cheat royal Burman merchants.

With hundreds of their camp-followers, they beat every strip of jungle and scoured every plain, till at last one morning Saw Kay's little hut was surrounded by men eagerly thirsting for his blood.

Hastily giving his wife and mother-in-law directions what to do, he sprang out on the verandah and seized a small bow hung there merely to frighten the crows, and commenced a wild dance with the most extravagant gestures to divert the attention of the men closing up around him from the attempt to escape of his wife and her mother. The two women stole away unperceived, as no one knew of Saw Kay's marriage, and they were only on the look-out for the audacious Karen.

"Slave of a Karen!" shouted the merchants, as they seized on Saw Kay, "even your blood will not fully avenge the insult you have inflicted on us."

Saw Kay reminded them of the extreme reluctance with which he had parted with the magic staff, and of the threats by which his consent to the sale had been extorted, and told them the staff was evidently assigned by fate to him, and that they, unworthy on account of their avarice in grasping so much at once, were unable to avail themselves of it. He pleaded to ears deafened by long-nursed rage. He then rose with dignity, and said, "Since nothing but blood will appease your anger, I refuse not to die. I only ask to be allowed before my death to give you all a good meal of fowl-curry that I may die in the odour of serenity, doing good even to my murders."

"Dog of a Karen!" yelled his foes, "do not think to appease us by so trifling a gift."

"I hope not to soften your hard hearts; I only ask to depart this life in a forgiving spirit."

All the party were very hungry, and finally consented. Surrounded by guards holding ropes attached to his waist, and ordered to cut him down at the first attempt to escape, Saw Kay took the little bow and started with the whole party for the jungle, to shoot wild fowl for the curry he had promised. When wild fowl were met he refused to shoot, saying there were not enough in the flock to feed so many. He was really only making time for his wife and her mother to follow out his directions.

At last, a large flock of wild fowl was met with, and he fired towards them; but the weak bow failed even to reach the fowls as they whirred away.

Saw Kay shouted after them, "Go home and cook yourselves, go home and cook yourselves," and carefully concealed the bow while his captors were watching the fowls.

The merchants expressed their disgust at being thus fooled, and were on the point of killing him at once, but Saw Kay begged them to return to the hut and watch the result of his shot.

They did so, and found, to their surprise, a great pot of rice and a steaming kettle of capital fowl-curry that the two women had cooked in the absence of the party by Saw Kay's orders. While they enjoyed the feast, the merchants said, "The scamp did certainly cheat us about the staff, but this bow is worth having. It would be very handy on our long journeys to have a bow which would not only shoot but cook our game for us." They offered Saw Kay his life if he would only give up the bow to them.

He refused, saying he was too lazy to work, and as his money was lost with the magic staff, and if now he lost his food with the magic bow, life was worthless to him.

To cut a long story short, they offered more and more, till finally they paid him a thousand rupees for the magic bow. Saw Kay, on his release, pushed with his wife and her mother still farther into the depths of the forest. Of course, the magic bow failed as the magic staff had done.

With redoubled rage, the Burmese merchants started afresh in search of the daring Karen who had twice outwitted them. After many days' fruitless search, they again surrounded Saw Kay's new hut.

The wife and mother attempted to escape again as before, but failed. Saw Kay concealed his wife in the house, and kept his mother-in-law with him on the verandah. As soon as his enemies came within hearing, Saw Kay said in a violent tone to his mother-in-law, "You wretched old wife of mine, how can any one live with a withered old crone like you? Become a virgin, or I will beat you with this rice-pestle till you do so."

He seized the old lady by the waist and threw her down violently, and rolled her up in a mat, whispering to her to crawl out of the end of the mat and escape. The old woman this time succeeded, as the attention of every one was taken by the peculiar talk and gestures of their prey.

Saw Kay struck the roll of matting several very heavy blows with the rice-pestle, shouting, "Become a virgin; becomes a virgin!" He threw the roll of matting across his shoulder and ran into the house.

His foes rushed into the house to seize him, but at the mere sight of the young and lovely wife all fell prostrate before her. They slowly rose, and with dazzled eyes bound their victim and took him to their masters, telling them they had with their own eyes seen a wrinkled, toothless old woman changed by the blows of the clubs into this lovely vision of beauty.

The merchants held a long consultation over the beauteous prize. They said, "We have been terribly cheated twice, it is true, but we _see_ here that there _can_ be no deception in this wonderful club. Our wives we married while young, and we love them too much to divorce them, yet we

cannot but confess they are not as handsome as they once were. This club, renewing the youth and beauty of our wives, will be our most valuable possession."

After a long mixture of threats and tempting offers, the merchants bought the club for a thousand rupees, and returned to their camp on the plains, and the same evening all made widowers of themselves.

The magic club seemed as much a failure as the magic staff and the magic bow had done.

The unfortunate wives, when taken out of the rolls of matting, were stone dead, killed by the blows they had received.

The merchants were, of course, wild with rage at being deceived the third time. Distrusting their own ability to cope with the wily Karen alone, they laid a formal complaint before the governor of the district stationed at Myountaga, and begged that condign punishment might be meted out to the slave of a Karen who had dared repeatedly to cheat royal Burmese merchants.

A levy of every male between fourteen and sixty years of age was at once ordered, and the entire forest was carefully scoured.

Hearing of Saw Kay's wonderful cunning, the governor ordered every one of the beaters' ears to be carefully stopped with wax. Saw Kay was captured.

What were his pleas, and how he tried to escape his fate is unknown, as, owing to the governor's precaution, no one could hear a word he said.

Saw Kay was sentenced to death, and every Karen in the district was brought in to attend the execution, that hereafter no "dog of a Karen" should ever dare to take such liberties with their masters.

That each of the seven merchants might have a share in his death, Saw Kay was put into a long cylindrical basket with stones at each end to sink it, and the basket was laid on the brink of a steep bank which overhangs a deep pool in the river. At the word of command each merchant was to give a kick to the basket, and thus roll it into the river.

A grand breakfast was given by the merchants to all the assembled crowds in honour of the final victory over their cunning foe, which they now felt was secure. During breakfast Saw Kay was left alone in the basket, his guards deeming him securely fastened. They feared lest in the scramble for breakfast they might lose their share.

While everybody was away, an up-country boatman, with a cargo of silk _patsoes_ and much jewellery, was attracted by the sight of the crowd, and thinking it might be a capital chance to sell his wares, he landed just where Saw Kay's basket lay.

"Hi! you fellow in the basket," he asked "what are you doing there?"

Saw Kay replied, "The King at Ava is dead, and the astrologers have pronounced that I am the only one who can succeed him. I refused the crown, and as the astrologers have decided that in my lifetime no one else can peaceably ascend the throne, I am now to be drowned."

"Fool!" replied the boatman; "to avoid what any one would risk his life for, you give up your life."

Saw Kay piously talked of the many temptations of a kingly life, and the many deaths a king must cause, and said he had deliberately weighed temporal against eternal riches, and had chosen death rather than the throne.

"Ah!" said the boatman "don't I wish I had your chance."

"What will you give for it?" said Saw Kay.

"My boat and its cargo," replied the boatman.

"Agreed," was Saw Kay's reply. "Hurry and take my place before any one comes to notice our proceedings."

The boatman set the Karen at liberty, took his place, and was firmly tied in by Saw Kay, who quietly took his seat in his new boat to watch the execution.

When breakfast was over, the drums beat to assemble the crowds, the bands began to play, and the dancers to celebrate the victory of the royal Burman over the despised Karen. As the merchants advanced to roll their enemy into the river, the poor boatman shouted from the basket with all his might, "I _will_ be king, I _will_ be king."

"A great _king_ you'll be," was the reply, as the merchants rolled him into the pool. The rest of the day was spent in feasting and dancing to celebrate the victory over the Karens. Next morning, as the merchants were packing their carts for their return, Saw Kay walked into camp with sublime impudence, with jewellery all over his person, and silk _patsoes_ hanging over his arms and shoulders, the spoils of the up-country boatman.

Every jaw fell, and stammeringly they asked him how he came there.

"Didn't I say yesterday that I would be a king? Now I am one. It happened that the road to heaven leads right into that pool, and you rolled me exactly into the road that leads to the abodes of the blest. There I saw all your deceased relatives and ancestors, who expressed great wonder that none of you ever visited them. They have sent you these gifts to show you the marvellous riches of that glorious country. I could not bear to return, but your friends begged me so hard to return and show you the way that I could not refuse."

"How can we go?" asked the merchants.

"Easily," replied Saw Kay. "Make me eight baskets, and I will tie you into seven of them and follow you in the eighth."

The baskets were made, Saw Kay rolled the merchants into the pool, and returned with all their wealth to Mya-yah-doung.

CHAPTER VI - SOME OF THEIR FIRESIDE STORIES

THE HARE

A TIGER and a hare once made a friendship by drinking together the mingled blood of both (a Karen custom to this day). The tigers then were pure yellow without stripes. They went off to cut thatch for their

houses.

The tiger took his breakfast done up in a parcel. The hare made up a bundle of cow-dung to resemble the tiger's breakfast parcel. Both cut busily away at the thatch till breakfast-time, when the hare went to the tree under which their parcels had been placed, and called the tiger to breakfast.

The tiger said he could not come just then, for he wanted to cut more thatch before the sun became too hot to work.

The hare replied, "Don't you know when you are late to breakfast your food changes to cow-dung?"

The tiger went on cutting thatch, and the hare ate up all his breakfast.

When the sun became hot, the tiger came in hungry, and found nothing but cow-dung in what he took for his own parcel. "Didn't I tell you so?" said the hare.

Soon the hare pretended to have a severe attack of fever, and the tiger offered to carry him home.

"How can I ever stick on your smooth glossy back?" said the hare. "You must tie some bundles of thatch on your back to form a saddle for me."

The tiger firmly bound some bundles of dry thatch on his back, and the hare crawled upon them. On their way home the hare began striking his flint and steel together.

"What noise is that?" asked the tiger.

"Only my teeth chattering in the ague," replied the hare.

Soon the hare blew the sparks into a blaze, and jumped off, laughing at the fearful scorching borne by the unfortunate tiger, who bears the marks of his burns to-day in his stripes.

The tiger, of course, swore vengeance, and set off in pursuit of the hare.

The hare, seeing him coming, climbed up into a bee-tree, and crawled up to the bees so stealthily as not to be noticed by them.

The tiger roared out, "Come down and I'll swallow you alive, you faithless friend."

"There are white, black, grey, and speckled hares; I'm not the only hare," replied he. "Prove that I am guilty before you eat me."

The tiger could not do so, and, accepting the denial of the hare, asked him what he was doing there.

"I am watching my grandfather's fan," was the reply.

"What's your grandfather's fan good for?" asked the tiger.

"Oh, it cools you off without the trouble of fanning yourself. Can't you hear the rushing of the wind from it?" was the reply.

The tiger mistook the murmur of the bees for the breeze, and, smarting

with his terrible burns, thought that a self-acting punkah would be very handy just then, and so asked to be allowed to watch "his grandfather's fan" for the hare for a few hours (bees build in a semicircular fan-like shape under a bough in Burmah).

The hare consented, and told the tiger that a gentle pat with his paw would increase the current of air to any desired extent. The tiger crawled up, and lay at full length on the limb; but, feeling no cooling breeze, struck the bees with his paw. Of course, he was attacked by the whole swarm, and nearly killed by their stings. With redoubled rage the tiger started again in pursuit.

The hare awaited his arrival where two trees crossed their trunks and creaked with every gust of wind.

"Come here, you doubly faithless friend, and I'll swallow you alive," roared the tiger.

As before, the hare pleaded an _alibi_, and challenged the tiger to prove his identity with the hare that had wronged him. The tiger, with no proof at hand, accepted the hare's statement, and asked him what he was doing there.

"Oh, I'm watching over my grandfather's harp," was the reply. "Can't you hear its song?"

"What's the good of your grandfather's harp?" asked the tiger.

"Oh, it lulls you to sleep in spite of all pain," answered the wily hare.

The tiger, smarting with his burns and the stings of the bees, longed to forget his pain in sleep, and so asked to be allowed to take the hare's place for a few hours. The hare consented, and told the tiger he had only to put his paw between the trees when the wind blew, and the most enchanting airs of music would soon wait him to dreamland. Of course, the tiger's paw was caught between the trees and fearfully crushed.

Thrice cheated, the tiger again limped off in pursuit. This time he found the hare had fallen into a pit dug to catch game. When called on to surrender himself for death, the hare denied his identity as before, and said--

"How could I have cheated you so when I have been watching my grandfather's game-pit all the time? Here I have more game than I can eat."

The tiger, smarting with burns and stings and crippled in one paw, could no longer run down game, and so asked permission to jump down into the pit, and eat the game that fell in.

The hare agreed, and, as soon as the tiger was safe in the pit, began tickling his burns with a straw.

"Stop that, or I'll throw you out of the pit," said the tiger.

The hare kept on tickling, and at last the tiger threw him out of the pit altogether. The hare then ran to some Shans, who had dug the pit, and told them that so large a tiger had fallen into a pit that they would need even all their women to drag it out of the pit.

"Who'll watch our children?" said the Shans.

"I," replied the hare.

While the villagers were gone, the hare killed all the children by sticking arrows into their eyes, and ran up into the roof of one of the houses. When the Shans returned, they were of course enraged at the death of their children, and pursued the hare, who hid in a shallow hole in the rocks. The Shans tried the hole with a long rattan to see how deep it was, but the wily hare coiled up the rattan as fast as it was thrust in. Rattan after rattan was joined on, till the Shans were discouraged at the idea of trying to dig the hare out of so deep a hole with their knives alone. They all went home for digging-tools, leaving a blear-eyed man to watch.

While they were away, the hare came near the mouth of the hole and asked the many why he did not cure his sore eyes, and told him he had medicines with him which would cure him instantly.

The watchman, by the hare's direction, put his eye down to the mouth of the hole, when the hare killed him instantly by thrusting an arrow into his eye. He then cooked part of the blear-eyed man's flesh, and hid behind a rock. The Shans returned, and, seeing flesh roasting over the fire, thought their watchman had killed the hare, and left their share of the flesh for them.

After they had feasted heartily, the hare shouted, "Look behind the tree," and then bolted.

Behind the tree they found the mangled remains of their comrade.

The hare from his great wisdom soon became the umpire to whose decision all the disputes of the forest were referred. Among many famous decisions of his is that of the case of the tiger and the boar.

THE TIGER AND THE BOAR

A tiger and a wild boar were brought up as foster-brethren, and pledged themselves to an eternal friendship. The boar became very fat as he reached maturity, and the tiger's mouth watered every time he looked at his friend's fat sides, and he began to seek an excuse for eating him.

One morning the tiger went, with much feigned sadness, to the boar, and told him he had been disturbed by bad dreams, and told his friend, "I dreamed that I ate you, and your fat sides tasted deliciously."

"Well, what of that?" said the boar.

"The trouble is," replied the tiger, "we tigers have an ancestral custom which compels us to make true any dream we have, and so, however reluctant to break our friendship, I _must_ eat you."

The boar refused to be bound by any tiger's custom, and after great dispute they agreed to refer the matter to the nearest king, and set out for his court. When they reached the palace, the tiger told the boar to go right in, and he would follow soon. The boar took his seat in the audience chamber, but the tiger secured a private meeting with the king; and offered him a bribe of a hind quarter of the boar to decide in his favour.

Crowds assembled to see the strange spectacle of a lawsuit between two wild animals. The sight of the boar's fat sides made the mouths of the

king and queen and nobles water till the floor was bedewed with saliva. The bribe, so tempting, of course, caused the case to be prejudged. The tiger pleaded the sanctity of ancestral customs, and with plentiful tears bewailed his sad fate in being _compelled_ to eat so valued a friend.

The boar pleaded the inviolability of the ties which bound them together. The boar pleaded in vain, for his fatness showed so temptingly the bribe the tiger had offered that the case went against him. When the decision was made, the boar demanded seven days in which to dispose of his property and make provision for his family, and was released, after taking a solemn oath to return for death on that day week. While sadly visiting his old haunts, the boat met the hare, and was asked why he looked so sorrowful. The boar replied by telling of the sad fate that awaited him.

"When? In such an insignificant case as this hire _me_ as your lawyer," said the hare.

The boar, of course, retained the hare as his legal adviser, and on the appointed day the two went to court together.

The boar claimed the right to bring farther pleas in his case, as he was now represented by proper legal counsel. The hare panted and pretended to be completely out of breath, and said he must have a nap to rest him before he could do full justice in so important a case. A mat was spread for him, and the hare pretended to drop asleep, while the king and queen and nobility looked with watering mouths at the fat sides of the boar.

At last the hare sprang up, and, clasping his hands in ecstasy, he exclaimed, "What a glorious dream I have had! I dreamed that I eloped with the queen, and how I _did_ enjoy her embraces. We hares have an ancestral custom that we _must_ make good every dream we have, so I _must_ elope with the queen."

With that he seized the queen's hand, and began dragging her away.

The king saw he must reverse his previous decision in the case of tiger and boar, or have his favourite queen ravished before his eyes, so he hastily decided against the sanctity of ancestral customs, and freed the boar.

THE TIGER AND THE MAN

A poor _toungya_ cultivator left his breakfast every morning in his hut in the _toungya_, and a tiger came and stole it every day. The man in his anger set a trap of huge logs so arranged as to fall on any animal which touched the bait. The tiger was caught, and badly crushed by the logs, but was still alive. When the man came in on hearing the roars, the tiger pleaded hard for his life. He admitted the daily theft, but urged that theft was not a capital crime, and that he had been so severely punished already by the fall of the trap that he ought in justice to be released from the trap.

The man refused, saying he feared the tiger would eat him if released. The tiger swore most solemnly never to attempt revenge, and was released.

As soon as he was out of the trap he seized the man, and was about to devour him. The man pleaded the sanctity of the oath just taken. The tiger told him necessity knew no law, and that, crippled as he was, he could no longer catch game for his daily food, but _must_ eat the man or starve.

The hare happened to be passing, and the case was referred to him for decision.

The hare, with a wise look, said, "I can't understand this matter clearly. Now, you both act out just what each did."

The man told where he hid his breakfast every day, and showed how he set the trap. The hare said he could not understand the trap, and made the man set it to show how it was done. The tiger was then ordered to show what he did, and accordingly entered the trap, but walked round gingerly, carefully avoiding the spring of the trap.

"I don't see that anything happened to you that you can justly complain of," said the hare. "How could you have received these terrible bruises?"

The tiger edged nearer and nearer, till at last he touched the spring, and the trap fell again.

"Out _dah_ [A long-handled knife or cleaver] and attack him," said the hare, "and never again restore an advantage to an enemy too strong for you."

THE TIGER AND THE ELEPHANT

A tiger and an elephant once made a bet as to which was the largest. The winner was to eat the loser. They agreed to leave the decision to the men of a neighbouring village. Both were to go near the village and roar by turns, and listen to what the villagers said. The elephant roared first. It is well known that the elephant never roars except when in pain, so the villagers said, "What ails that little elephant? What can be attacking him?" The tiger then roared, and the villagers said at once, "There! it's a tiger that is attacking the little elephant. He must be a monster to prey on elephants."

"There! do you hear that?" said the tiger. "You are pronounced a little elephant, while I am called a monster. Now I'll eat you."

The elephant begged for a week's delay, to enable him again to visit his birthplace and his ancient feeding-grounds, and to bid good-bye to his family. The respite was granted, and the elephant swore to be on hand at the appointed day.

The elephant, on revisiting the pool from which he was accustomed to drink, wept so profusely over his sad fate that his tears made the stream salt. The hare lived farther down the stream, and when he found his drinking-water brackish he started up stream to see what had defiled the water.

When he found the elephant, he asked why he looked so thin in flesh, and why he wept so profusely. The elephant told the story of the lost bet, and the hare laughingly replied, "If that is all, hire me as your lawyer, and I'll soon set you free."

The hare's legal services were retained, and both proceeded together on the appointed day to the place of rendezvous. They went a little early.

The hare told the elephant to feign death, and when he bit him on the ear to raise his head, and when he pulled him by the end of the trunk to move in the direction in which he was pulled.

As soon as the tiger came near, he saw the hare skipping over the huge,

apparently dead carcase, every now and then nibbling the ear of the elephant, when the huge head of the elephant would rise as if the hare had lifted it. Every now and then the hare would pull at the trunk, and the whole body of the elephant would roll over as if by the efforts of the hare. The tiger thought the hare had killed his elephant, and said to himself, "That's a wonderfully strong little fellow, to kill my elephant and drag the body about so easily. I don't believe even I am a match for him. I'll try and get my elephant peaceably, but I shall not dare risk a fight with a beast that can kill and drag about a whole elephant like that." On going nearer, the tiger said, "Hallo! what are you doing with my elephant?"

The hare replied in a grumbling tone, as if his mouth was full of food, "One elephant is not enough for my breakfast; have you come to eke out my meal with your flesh?"

The tiger, in great fright, said, "I came to eat and not to be eaten," and rushed in terror to the dense jungle, roaring with rage at losing his food.

In the jungle he met a monkey, to whom he recounted the story of his lost elephant.

The monkey said he would plead the case if his legal services were engaged, and recover the lost elephant.

The monkey said he could not walk to the place, but the tiger must carry him on his back. (He really only wanted the honour of riding a tiger) The monkey tried again and again, but the tiger's skin was so smooth and glossy, he fell off at the first forward step. At last, the monkey cut creepers and lashed himself firmly to the tiger, and thus rode to where the hare and the elephant had last been seen.

The hare, seeing the monkey riding the tiger, guessed what had taken place, and so called out, as soon as they were within hearing, "Hallo! monkey, your father borrowed _seven_ tigers of me, and do you think to pay the debt with one?"

Hearing this, the tiger said to himself, "I hired this fellow to plead my case, and it seems he has come to pay his debts with my carcase," and in his fright rushed off through the dense jungle.

The poor monkey was dragged till half dead by the creepers around his waist, and to this day has a very small waist.

THE HARE AND THE ALLIGATOR

Some crows conceived a spite against an alligator, and contrived a plan to kill him and feast on his flesh. They went to the alligator and told him they had found a mountain pool which was perfectly alive with fish, and that they would guide him to it if he would only throw them out an occasional fish. The crows guided the alligator far away from any water, till the poor fellow was nearly worn out with the journey, so long for the alligator's short legs. When the alligator was tired and refused to go further, the crows would tell him the wind murmuring among the pines was the dashing of the waves on the sides of the pool, now near at hand, and so coaxed the alligator farther and farther away from water in hopes he would die from fatigue and thirst.

At last, when all worn out and nearly dead, the alligator met a cartman, who told him that there was no pool in the neighbourhood. The alligator

pleaded hard with the cartman to carry him home, as he was too much exhausted ever to get home alone.

The cartman pitied him, and lashed him firmly on the cart like a log, and took him home. The jolting and tipping of the cart made the ropes cut into the alligator and really seriously hurt him.

When they reached the pool, the alligator begged the cartman to drive the oxen part way into the pool, so that he could get off the cart into water deep enough to float him, as he was too much exhausted to walk even a step on dry land. The cartman drove into the pool as far as he dared, and the instant the alligator was released, he seized one of the oxen and was about to devour him. The cartman pleaded for his ox, and protested against the shocking ingratitude of thus rewarding one who had just saved his life.

The alligator said he was so badly injured by the cutting of the cords which bound him to the cart that he could no longer catch his accustomed meals of fish, and must either eat the ox or starve.

While they were debating, the hare came along, and the case was referred to him for decision. The hare examined the cuts made by the ropes, and said, "You really have been seriously wronged by some one, but you have not yet shown that the cartman was the one who injured you. Now, I don't clearly see how this all happened. To enable me to understand the matter, let each show just how he acted."

The alligator climbed on the cart, and the cartman tied him down, the alligator all the time crying out, "Tighter yet, tighter yet; you bound me tighter than that," being anxious to show as strong a case of cruelty as possible.

When the cartman could strain the cords no tighter, the hare said, "Now take your club and pay him off."

The cartman beat the alligator till he was almost dead, and till the alligator in his pain burst the cords and escaped more dead than alive. The alligator of course vowed vengeance against the wily hare, and laid in wait for him to catch him when he came down to the river to drink. The hare evaded his foe for a long time, but at last was caught.

"Um-m-m-m," chuckled the alligator, as he held the hare fast in his horny lips.

"That's a woman's cry," said the hare; "a _man_ would call out, 'Ha-a-a,' when he had gained a victory."

The alligator, anxious to vindicate his sex, shouted, "Ha-a-a," and of course opened his lips with the open syllable. The hare jumped out, and pulled out the alligator's tongue as he fled, so that to this day alligators have no tongues.

THE HARE AND THE SNAIL

The hare was so much puffed up with pride at his many victories over the beasts of the forest, that he began to tyrannize over the weaker ones. He specially abused the snails, tormenting them so that they could no longer earn enough by their work to pay their taxes to the snail king. They laid a formal complaint before their king, and asked either for deliverance from the hare or a remission of taxes.

When the snail king heard this he flew in a rage, and went at once to the

hare and asked him why he thus injured his subjects.

"What are you good for that you should challenge my right?" said the hare.

"I'm good at running races," said the snail, and challenged the hare to a trial of speed.

Choking with laughter, the hare agreed. The snail stipulated that, as he was an aquatic animal, he should run in the creek to the goal, which was to be fixed at the mouth of the creek. This provoked a fresh burst of mirth from the hare, who thought that, as the advantage of a straight course on shore was his, he was doubly sure of victory.

The match was arranged for the next morning. The goal and starting-points were fixed, and the snail went home and stationed one of his subjects at each bend of the river, while one was hid at the goal. The snail king went to the starting-place. The word "go" was given, and the snail king jumped into the river, and the hare trotted off gently, sure of victory. At the first bend of the river he shouted, "Hallo, snail!" Far ahead the reply came back, "Here!"

"Well, that fellow runs well," thought the hare, and began to strain every nerve and make his best time, but at each curve a snail ahead shouted, "Here!" and when he came to the goal, a snail was quietly nibbling at the flowers placed there to mark it.

All snails look so much alike that the hare never suspected that the snail that he saw at the goal was not the same that started in the race. The hare was never beaten till he began to oppress the _poor_. (His cheating of the powerful is not deemed disgraceful by the Karens.)

THE HARE AND THE KING

A certain king once was so proud that he became almost unendurable to his subjects. The hare went to rebuke him.

He came into the court and called out, "Hey, you fellow, who are you, anyway?"

The answer was, "I am the king."

The hare replied, "Well, I'm only a jungle beast, and don't know what 'king' means."

"A king is one who has nothing above him." was the reply.

"Well, I declare! Is there nothing above you?" questioned the hare, with a look of astonishment.

"Nothing," answered the king.

"Well, I never saw a man with nothing above him before, and I want to take a good look at you."

"Look your fill," the king replied.

The hare stared at the king for hours, till an urgent call of nature led the king to attempt to leave the court quietly, without attracting noise. The hare called out, "Hey, you king, where are you going to?"

The king, abashed, sat down again, and went on with business.

This was repeated several times, till the king could hold out no longer, and blurted out, "If you must know, I'm going."

"Ah! you're no king," shouted the hare; "your own bowels are your master. They demand food, and you are powerless to resist; they send you on private errands, which you are compelled to do." The hare then went on to show him death, sickness, and old age were all above him, and that he must obey them, and that by his own definition only God was king.

THE HARE AND THE BUFFALOES

A black and a white buffalo grazed peacefully together in a large plain.

The hare went to the black one, and told him that the white one had said, "That black buffalo eats so much I shall be starved."

He then went to the white one, and reported that the black buffalo had said, "That white buffalo eats so much I shall be starved."

In this way he soon raised a fight, and while the buffaloes were goring each other, the hare kept skipping from the head of one combatant to the other, and urging them on to fight with greater fury.

By a misstep he fell between the two just as their heads met, and was crushed to death. Even wisdom and running like that of the hare will not save a mischief-maker.

The hares multiplied rapidly till they filled all Pegu. Such was the dread inspired by the marvellous cunning of the progenitor of all the hares, that no animals or men dared to venture to live in Pegu.

When Taw-mai-pah's [The mythical ancestor of all the Karen clans.] descendants began to find the Toungoo hill tracts too strait for them, a wise man arose among them who proposed to colonize Pegu.

"Who dares to go there?" was the reply of all. "Tigers, elephants, alligators, and men have all been beaten by the cunning hare, and what chance have we?"

The wise man undertook the task of conquering the hares. He went to Pegu on a pretended visit and, talking to the hares, said, "It's strange you should all hang together so well. Your progenitor, single-handed, conquered all beasts by his cunning; are you less wise than he that you unite yourselves so closely? Why don't you live a hare to each bunch of kaing grass, and each trust to his individual cunning?"

This roused the pride of the hares, and they followed his counsel. When the hares were separated, men and beasts attacked them, and lived for years on their flesh, till not a hare is left in Pegu to-day, even for a curiosity. Disunion means defeat.

CHAPTER VII - SOME OF THEIR NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE oppression of ages has made the Karen reticent and very suspicious up to the point where he yields his confidence. If he thinks he can trust you, he passes at once from the extreme of suspicion to excessive confidence, and yields himself unconditionally. He knows no half-measure

in this. A party of Karens once came to Dr. Vinton in Rangoon from the Cambodia. They had been shown his signature by a travelling teacher. When they came into the doctor's house, they cautiously talked round the bush for a time, and no one could make anything of them. At last, professing a desire to see English writing, they asked Dr. Vinton to sign his name, and took it off to the end of the verandah, where they carefully compared it with what seemed to be a piece of dirty crumpled paper. Each line was studiously examined, till they were convinced that the two were identical. They flung down their swords and daggers, rushed to the doctor, and wrung his hands, and arms with a true Karen welcome. The little bit of crumpled paper with Dr. Vinton's signature had been jealously guarded by them all the long way from the Cambodia. When they found the man whose name it bore, their suspicions were completely disarmed, and they in an instant felt as much at home with him as if they had known him for years.

The regular hill Karen will obey but one man, whom he regards as his head. A European Police Superintendent once told me that one of his Karen guard had refused to obey some trifling order given him by the Inspector-General of Police. The Superintendent said to the Karen, pointing to the Inspector-General, "That's my master," "Obey him, then," answered the Karen, "as I obey you, who are my master." The Karen-nees (Red Karen) will take no transmitted orders. They have been known insolently to refuse to obey their employer's wife (and it must be remembered the wife is by far the better half in Burma), although perfectly submissive to the employer himself. A case came to my notice of a Karen-nee, who, while working in a fruit-garden, knocked down one of his master's cousins who came to take some fruit. The master had at last to go to the garden himself. Of course, this unmanageable sort of fidelity becomes toned down with education; but it shows how the Karen looks to his head, and him only, for direction and advice.

Cut adrift from his clan, the Karen is a dangerous fellow. Some wild spirits there are among them who have separated themselves from their own people and taken to a roving, lawless life. The Karen dacoit is far more dangerous than the Burman dacoit, from his perfect knowledge of woodcraft, which enables him to live for months in the jungle without any supplies, and to shift the scene of his crimes as the fancy suits him. Luckily Karen dacoits are very rare. Glance at a party of Karen villagers starting off in pursuit of a gang of raiders. Each man has a long sausage of rice from six to eight feet in length, and some four inches in diameter, round his shoulder, crossed at his left side, and the ends tied together at the waist. His musket is slung to his back, with some salt, red pepper, and dried fish. As he stands before you without any other baggage, he is equipped and ready for a month in the jungle without going near a house or a village. He cooks his food in green bamboos, and will be off scouting for a month without giving his enemy a sign of his presence till he closes with him. He shows all the skill of the American Indian in tracking and concealing his own trail.

Among his clansmen and with his chief he is frank and cheerful. With strangers he is timid, suspicious, and retiring. When he descended from the hills to the plains, he, to use his own words, "lived between the legs of other men." One of their old sayings is, "If any one asks you if you have seen his buffalo, don't inquire the shape of his horns; just say, 'I haven't seen him,' for that ends the matter at once." This reticence often makes the Karen appear stupid, awkward, and obstinate, which he really is not. He will take refuge in "I don't know" and a blank stare simply to avoid further questioning.

A Burman is keen to show off his knowledge--sometimes more than his

knowledge; a Karen will rather conceal what he knows, frequently to his own hurt. They have a little story which illustrates this. Once upon a time there was a King of Ava wedded to a Karen maiden. The young queen's relatives accompanied her to the capital. The king's followers were raised to places of honour, but the queen's relatives were left out in the cold. The queen was annoyed at this, and one night lectured her royal spouse on this neglect of her people. The king said, "Your relatives are not fit for posts of honour." The queen, however, pleaded hard for them, and at last the king consented to give them a trial. Accordingly, a Karen was appointed joint-gardener with a Burman. A few days afterwards the king, while walking in the royal gardens, sent for the Karen and, in the presence of his courtiers, asked him about the condition of the fruit. The Karen bluntly answered, "They are no bigger than my fingers and toes."

The king then called the Burman and asked the same question. The Burman replied, "The fruit, alas! is not yet fit for your Majesty's table." The queen was then called, and the king said to her, "Just imagine your wishing me to appoint your friends to offices of state. Why, they do not know even how to speak properly."

Strange to say, notwithstanding, the Karen's suspicious nature, his hospitality is unbounded. He will entertain every stranger that comes, without asking a question. He feels himself disgraced if he does not receive all comers, and give them the very best cheer he has. The wildest Karen will receive a guest with a grace and dignity and entertain him with a lavish hospitality that would become a duke. Hundreds of their old legends inculcate the duty of receiving strangers without regard to pecuniary circumstances either of host or guest. One of the missionaries once wished to pay a visit to an old Karen chief whom he had known for many years. As he was about to start, a score of his schoolboys begged hard to be allowed to accompany him and see the hoary chieftain. It was a serious matter for the missionary to take with him a set of hungry school-boys, to eat the village out of house and home, so they took provisions with them. When the boats reached the village, the old chief eyed suspiciously the hampers of rice and vegetables, and was very indignant when he was told they were the provisions of the party. In vain the missionary pleaded that he knew how bad the last year's paddy crop had been, and how ill the villagers could afford to feed his party. The old man was inexorable; he had been disgraced before his clan and in his own eyes. So the stores of rice and vegetables were given up and left under a guard till the party were about to leave, when a double quantity of fresh food was forced on them as a punishment for the offence which had been unwittingly committed.

The Karen accepts hospitality as freely and in the same spirit as he gives it. He regards it as his inviolable right to entertain all strangers and to be entertained by them in turn; and he is indignant enough with the Burman whom he has often feasted when, as occasionally happens, a like generous treatment is refused to him. Sometimes this unreasoning hospitality brings him into trouble. I have known of a Karen feeding a lot of Burmans of whom he knew nothing, and who had come on a cattle-lifting expedition. The Burmans were seized, and gave up their unlucky host's name. The Karen was sent to jail with the Burmans, although entirely innocent of any knowledge of the crime committed by his guests. He had never questioned them; they came to his house, and he took them in. When the poor fellow came out of jail, he was not one whit deterred from his customary hospitality. "Why," said he, "should I do wrong and give up my ancestral custom because the Government did me wrong?"

A Burman will quarrel and fly into a passion, and when he has cooled off he will be as good a friend as ever again. The Karen will not show his passion, but will hold fire for, perhaps, years. A cursory acquaintance leads one to fancy that the Karens are far more peaceable than the Burmans. It is not so, however. Certainly, they do not quarrel so openly or so often, but their hatreds are far more serious and irreconcilable, although you see less of them. In trying to reconcile two Karens who have been enemies perhaps for years, it is often very difficult to get them even to state their grounds of complaint. In many cases a mere statement of the facts and a brief explanation are sufficient to put an end to the quarrel. The parties are found to be utterly ignorant of each other's grievance: each had sulkily brooded over his fancied wrongs and merely avoided the other.

A Burman, when angry with you, shows at once by his noisy clamouring what the matter is. He cools down very soon after he has had his say. A Karen who is angry with you severely lets you alone, and you have serious difficulty often in finding out what is wrong. If he is aggrieved by any act of a Government officer, he says nothing openly, but quietly presses on the word that the officer in question is "no friend to Karens." The wrong done, or believed to be done, is never forgotten, and the officer concerned will never be able to get any active help from the clansmen. Their singular clannishness leads them to adopt the prejudices of any of their number who has, or fancies he has, a grievance. Rightly or wrongly, they believe that the British Government, although desirous to be just to all, does not care for them. They have a rooted conviction that they are looked down upon; that their English rulers are fond of the Burmans, but despise the Karens. I fear there is a good deal of ground for this conviction. The Government has hitherto looked with indifference on the Karens; has never made any serious effort to conciliate them or win their confidence. Everything has been done for the Burmans; nothing, or nearly nothing, for the Karens. They see this and take note of it. They respect us and are loyal because they know that life, property, and the honour of their women are safe only under our rule. But we have failed to secure the allegiance of their hearts. The Government has neglected them, and they feel the neglect keenly. We have failed to obtain the real headship over them, because we have never touched their hearts. The fealty to chiefs of their own blood they would have transferred to the English ruler, if he had only courted it, striven to understand them, and sympathized with their aspirations. The consequence of our neglect of them is that they have none to look to but their missionaries. Christian and heathen alike look to them as their protectors; and fortunate for us it is that the missionaries have always been the noble, unselfish, high-minded, loyal men they are.

The ordinary Burman is cringing to his superiors and overbearing to his inferiors. The Karen loathes this. His chief--whoever he be--is _primus_, but _inter pares_, and it is a bitter thing for him to have to ape Burmese servility in the local courts presided over by Burmese judges. If you allow a Burman to dispense with the _shiko_, or obeisance, which by ancient custom he is bound to make to his superiors, he despises you. Treat a Karen firmly and kindly, and he behaves like a real gentleman. He is easiest led when you treat him with familiarity, as one under your protection, and claim his respect from your own character and ability to lead him. Important failures of justice have been known to occur in our own courts, owing to the Karen's distrust of us and his rooted aversion to Burmese ways and Burmese authority. He speaks the Burmese language very imperfectly--far more imperfectly than he understands it. He is secretly enraged at having to do obeisance (_shiko_) and say "My lord" to a Burman officer and to the Burman subordinate officials and underlings who throng the public offices, and too often form a hedge around our

courts impenetrable to a Karen. When questioned, he frequently takes refuge in "I don't know" and a blank stare, hoping to get off to his jungle and to his work. This is, of course, against him, and often leads to miscarriages of justice. I have heard intelligent Karens say that not one-half of the cases of cattle-theft from their villages ever come to light, or are even reported to the police. When I asked the reason of this, they said, "It is no use, and we cannot bear to fawn and cringe to a Burman who, after all, won't help us." They would rather try and run down the thieves themselves than be detained from day to day with "Come to-morrow at ten o'clock" for their cold comfort! An English official of rank once challenged to the proof the assertion so often fruitlessly made that Karens could not get access to him. The person to whom the challenge was addressed asked permission to walk round his court, and see if he could not find an instance ready to hand. The official had not been seated in his office ten minutes when a Karen was brought to him who had been dancing attendance for full five weeks to get a chance of paying in his fishery tax. The poor fellow had followed the English officer in vain from stage to stage, carrying the money in his hand, while notices to pay and summonses were accumulating at his house. The records showed no sign of the petitions which he had sent intimating his readiness to pay his tax, and he appeared as a defaulter when all the time he had been vainly trying to get a chance to square up accounts.

The attitude of the Karen to the Burman is distinctly hostile. The cruelties and oppression practised by the Burmese for generations cannot be easily effaced from their memory. Karen mothers still the cries of their children by telling them, "A Burman is coming." I have heard a Karen say, "In olden times we were ground down by the Burmese; now we are free, and enjoy equal rights with them under the British Government. Nevertheless, since all the subordinate officials are Burmese, we are really harassed just as before."

A Burman is wise in his generation. He never dreams of worrying an educated Karen, for he knows he would catch a Tartar if he did. But the illiterate and simple are often victims of rapacity and wrongdoing.[2] Our Government goes very little below the surface in its management of subject peoples. We seem to fancy that codes of rules and regulations cut and dry are all that is necessary. It is rare to find any sympathy--born of a real appreciation of the ideas and wants of communities--influencing our acts as a ruling power. Our methods are thoroughly Procrustean. We treat all alike. We do not appear to understand what national prejudices and aspirations are, or why there should be any such. When other powers threaten the independent existence of nationalities, we are eager enough to interfere. But the charity that adorns us in Europe is doffed in Eastern Asia.

{ [Footnote--2] The following is an extract from a report in 1882 by an assistant commissioner, on the extortions practised on Karen by Burman money-lenders:--

"The Burman money-lender seldom or never lends money to the Karen excepting against payment in paddy; the paddy is thus bought a year or ten months in advance at about one-third of its value, and this paddy is taken as principal and interest on the money lent. The interest thus taken is considerably higher than that taken by Burmans among themselves. They generally lend to Karens at sixty per cent, per annum, to friends at forty-five per cent., and to relatives at thirty per cent., and the entire amount repayable (in the case of friends and relatives) cannot be more than double the principal. They only insist on payments in paddy when the borrower has no property whatever to give as security for the money lent.

"The Karen's signature to the bonds is generally obtained by a threat to sue him in a civil court. These people have a great fear of appearing in the courts; they think that they have but little chance of justice against money-lenders, who are the most influential people of the district. They also believe--I cannot say with what reason--that the pleaders they engage hardly do justice to their cases, and are often bought over by the other side; they have also some difficulty in expressing themselves in Burmese, and are seldom examined through interpreters.

"Probably their chief reason for avoiding the courts is the fear of seeing their land sold in execution of a decree. They use every endeavour to save their land. In some cases I have found them going from year to year to different money lenders, borrowing every year to repay the old debt with interest, in order to save their land."

Three cases out of thirty-two officially reported in 1882 will illustrate the remarks of the assistant-commissioner, and will show why the Karens think that the Burmans are favoured at their expenses.

Case I.--"_Nga Hpon, Karen cultivator, states_: Ten years ago, I bought a _patso_ for twenty-five baskets of paddy from Moung Hpay Toh (Burman). Three years ago, Moung Hpay Toh attacked my threshing-floor, containing 250 baskets of paddy. This year, the court bailiff and Moung Hpay Toh made me sign a fresh bond for 130 baskets of paddy."

(Moung Hpay Toh, the Burman usurer, was afterwards obliged to tear up the bond for 130 baskets of paddy, in order to stop further investigation.)

Case II.--"_Nga Shway Loung, Karen cultivator, states_: Three years ago, I borrowed forty rupees from Moung Moh, Burman money-lender. I have repaid him 100 baskets of paddy (paddy selling at 100 rupees per 100 baskets) and 100 rupees, and he still claims from me forty-eight baskets of paddy."

Case III.--"_Mee Lain, Karen cultivator, states_: I originally borrowed forty-five rupees from Moung Lin, money-lender, Tantabin. He persuaded me to 'make registration' for this amount for 400 rupees; he then sued me and got a decree against me. My land and fifteen buffaloes were seized. Moung Lan, trader and money-lender, Tantabin, then lent me 410 rupees to pay off the amount of the decree; for this I was to repay him 900 baskets of paddy. He also lent me fifty rupees, for which I was to repay 100 baskets of paddy, and ninety-eight rupees without interest. I have repaid Moung Lan 660 baskets of paddy; he still claims from me 700 baskets of paddy and ninety-eight rupees. Moung Lan, who is present, states that he will agree to accept 340 baskets of paddy, still due, and ninety-eight rupees in full satisfaction of his debt. Mee Lain agrees to this, and an endorsement to that effect is signed by both parties on the back of Mee Lain's bond."

Here are further extracts from correspondence in illustration of some of the other ways in which Burmans harass the Karens:--

Demi-official letter from Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, British Burma, Land Revenue and Agricultural Department, to the Settlement Officer, Bassein, dated July 27, 1883.

"One of the principal Karen missionaries here has addressed the chief commissioner about the persecution which he declares the Karens are subjected to by blackguardly loafing Burmans, who, whenever the Karens

take up a new habitation or village, come and settle down in their midst and among them, thieving, drinking, opium-eating, etc. The missionary declared that the Karens in parts have no life of it, and have to move about to get rid of these pests. He added that, in consequences, nothing in the shape of permanent schools can be established in Karen villages.

"Mr. Crosthwaite has the idea that you spoke to him to much the same effect in Bassein, and I think I have heard you allude to the obstructions of Burman pests in Karen communities. Is it so, and have you any personal knowledge of this state of affairs? If the facts be as they are reported, the chief commissioner has quite made up his mind to find and apply a remedy. Probably it would take the shape of a grant or lease at a nominal revenue of an area for a village, the grant or lease, of course, carrying the right in the lessees to keep out all intruders. Will you kindly say by return--

"(a) If you are cognizant of this sort of persecution of the Karens;

"(b) If you can mention any specific cases (and, if you can please state them);

"(c) What remedy you would suggest, and how you would work it;

"(d) Whether in your opinion the migratory tendencies of the Karens are in any way owing to this persecution and intrusion;

"(e) Whether the facts apply to the Plain Karens as well as to the Hill Karens?"

Demi-official letter from Settlement Officer, Bassein, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, British Burma, Land Revenue and Agricultural Department, dated July 30, 1883.

"I believe that the account given by the missionaries of what is actually taking place in Karen villages is substantially correct. I called attention to this state of things in my report two years ago (see paragraphs 12 and 13, Settlement Report, 1880-1881), and described it in the very words of your present letter. I have continually heard complaints in the Karen villages of Burmese loafers settling down among them, stealing their property, swindling them out of their lands and crops, and introducing opium and gambling among them. In several cases I have myself written demi-officially to the deputy-commissioner, and asked him to interfere. I remember doing this is the case of the villages of Gonyindan, in Kanywa circle, and Kyaiklat, in the Paybin circle. The Karens will not, as a rule, come to officials and complain unless they see them in their villages, and in the two cases I have just mentioned, the people would not have gone to the deputy-commissioner unless I had given them a letter. The reason of this is, I believe, that nearly all the officials are Burmans and leagued against the Karens. A petition is presented to the deputy-commissioner; he sends it back for report to the thugyi, who has appointed his creatures as ywalugyis, and if the ywalugyi of the kwin is a Burman it is very certain that, unless the deputy-commissioner has been himself to the spot, a report will come back stating that the Burmans have lived in the village for a large number of years, and that they should not be ejected.

"What I have said applies chiefly to the Christian Karen villages, but the state of things is much worse in the case of the heathen Karens. They are more ignorant, and being more easily led away, the Burman finds in them an easy prey. They are afraid of the officials, so that their complaints are never heard of. In the Aingmè and Kyaukkanni circles, I

found the Karen villages in a dreadful state. The Burmans had settled down in nearly all their villages; they had swindled them out of their lands, and in many cases reduced them to a state of semi-serfdom. The Karens had taken to opium-eating, and in one or two villages I found that women and young children were opium-eaters. The ywalugyis were in many cases Upper Burman gamblers and opium-eaters, who, instead of helping and protecting the villages, either swindled them themselves or helped others to do this. I called attention to this in my report of the cases of oppression among the Karens, but I believe these ywalugyis are still there. The ywalugyi of Kangyidaungale figured prominently in two or three cases; the ywalugyis of Kyonsain and Kwingyi are opium-eaters and gamblers, and were swindling the Karens out of their money and land; the ywalugyi of Yegalok had swindled a Karen out of his land (this case went up for the chief commissioner's orders). These are the names and facts that I remember at the moment, but there are more of them. These men are, as a matter of fact, appointed by the thugyi, and are as rule his creatures, and it is no wonder that people will not petition when the report has to go through such channels.

"The rule in this district and most others, I believe, has always been for the ywalugyi to grand house-sites and permission for building in the villages under him. The thugyi is in some cases supposed to do this himself, but he as a rule leaves it to the ywalugyi. When the ywalugyi is himself a Karen, he does not allow the Burmans to settle down in his village. There is no written rule as to the agency through which house-sites should be granted in villages; but if it were made a rule that they should be granted through the thugyi or ywalugyi, a written order from the deputy-commissioner that no Burmans should be allowed to settle in a certain village or within a quarter of a mile of it would be sufficient.

"I think that the Burmans who have already settled down in Karen villages should be compelled to remove their houses when their presence is complained of. I do not know under what law this could be done, but the deputy-commissioner has hitherto done it where the intruders had not held the land for twelve years. The migratory tendency of the Karens is naturally increased by this state of things, and they fly away as soon as the Burmans have taken possession of their lands.

"I do not think that this state of things would be found among the Hill Karens, as the Burmans do not like living entirely away from their own countrymen; but I have no information on this subject.

"Whilst writing on this subject, I may allude to another common complaint among the Karens--the paddy-thefts. The Burman loafers who settle among them are as a rule thieves, and they go at night in the kwin to the different threshing-floors, carry off sheaves, and thresh them in the jungle. There is hardly a kwin in which these petty thefts are not committed every night; and I have often seen in the jungle sheaves which had been threshed out by the thieves the night before. The thieves are very seldom caught, and when they are caught the punishment is so very light that it has no deterrent effect whatever.

"I think that the best remedy for these complaints of the Karens is to give them Karen ywalugyis and thugyis whenever the majority of the population is Karen; for the subdivisional officers to visit the Karen villages in the interior, and hear themselves the complaints of the people; and I also think that Government should encourage the study of the Karen language, as officers who understood the language would more easily gain confidence.

"D. M. S." }

The following extract from an unpublished address to the Viceroy of India by a representative Karen, after the first Burmese war, will show what the condition of the Karens was under Burmese rule:--

"Through the goodness of God, my nation, sons of the forest and children of poverty, ought to praise thy nation, the white foreigners, exceedingly; and we ought to obey your orders, for the Karens, the sons of the eastern forest, have neither head nor ear. They are poor, and scattered everywhere; are divided in every direction; at the sources of the waters, and in the glens above them. When they fall among the Siamese, the Siamese make them slaves. Whey they fall among the Burmans, the Burmans make them slaves. So they live on one stream beyond another, and cannot see each other. They have had other things to do rather than visit. The Burmans made them drag boats, cut rattans, collect dammer, seek beeswax, gather cardamoms, strip bark for cordage, clear away cities, pull logs, and weave large mats. Besides this, they demanded of them presents of yams, the bulbo-tubers of arum, ginger, capsicum, flesh, elephants' tusks, rhinoceros' horns, and all the various kinds of vegetables that are eaten by the Burmans. The men being employed thus, the women had to labour at home. Sometimes the men were at home four or five days in two or three months. They were compelled by the Burman rulers to guard forts, to act as guides, to kidnap Siamese, and to go from one place to another, till many dropped down dead in the midst of the jungle. Notwithstanding they did all this, they had their arms twisted behind them, were beaten with stripes, struck with the fist, and pounded with the elbow, days without end.

"In the midst of these sufferings, they remembered the ancient sayings of the elders, and prayed beneath the bushes, though the rains poured upon them, or the mosquitoes, the gnats, the leeches, or the horse-flies bit them. The elders said, 'Children and grandchildren, as to the Karen nation, their God will yet save them.' Hence in their deep affliction, they prayed, 'If God will save us, let Him save speedily. We can endure these sufferings no longer. Alas! where is God?'

"Sometimes the Burmans would kidnap the Karens in Siam and carry them up to Ava, to the presence of the king; and thus separated from father or mother, husband or wife, child or grandchildren, they yearned for each other, and many sickened and died on the way before reaching the monarch's feet. Sometimes the Siamese kidnapped the Karens in Burma, and subjected them to like treatment. The Karens in Siam knew that those whom the Siamese brought from Burma were their relatives, and their tears flowed when they saw them; yet they dared not to tell the Siamese, or supplicate for them. So those in Burma, when they saw the Burmans leading away the Karens they had kidnapped in Siam, knew they were their cousins; yet they dared not speak or entreat for them, for if they said they were their relations, or begged for them, death was the immediate consequence. Moreover, the Karens dared not dwell near the cities; for the Burmans took away all their rice and paddy, and everything they had, and carried off their women by force. Hence they went far off, and dwelt on the streamlets, and in the gorges of the mountains. After all, the rulers sometimes took their paddy; and, in a state of starvation, they would eat at random the roots and leaves of the jungle, and thus great numbers died. Sometimes the rulers assembled them together near the city, where, having nothing to eat, great numbers died of sickness and starvation. Sometimes they would have to carry rice for soldiers under march, and being unable to cultivate their fields, great numbers died of hunger from this cause. Then those whom the rulers called, if unable to go, either from sickness in their families or in their own persons, had to give

money to the officers that came, and money for the rulers that sent them; and if they had no money, they were compelled to borrow of the Burmans, and thus became their slaves.

"Furthermore, the Karens were not permitted to go into the presence of the rulers. They were only allowed to hold a little communication with the Burman that was set over them. At one time, in the days of Diwoon, when the Karens were fast dying off with starvation, and were so employed that they could not cultivate the land, my uncle, who is a chief, determined to go and ask the governor to give the Karens liberty to cultivate the land and raise provisions to a small extent. So he went unto Diwoon, but he was thrown into prison immediately. His brethren had no rice to bring him, and they could feed him there only with the stems of wild plantain trees, the male blossoms with their spathes, and the young shoots of bamboos.

"Great ruler, the ancestors of the Karens charged their posterity thus: 'Children and grandchildren, if the thing come by land, weep; if by water, laugh. It will not come in our days, but it will in yours. If it come first by water, you will be able to take breath; but it first by land, you will not find a spot to dwell in.' Hence, when the Karens were in the midst of their intense sufferings, they longed for those that were to come by water, to come first."

The village economy is very important among the Karens. The village is, so to speak, the federate unit. Among many of the clans it is simply a big barrack, containing eighty to one hundred families. The roof is nearly flat, shielded from the rain by split bamboos cut in lengths and laid like tiles. A long hall runs through the entire building, and the separate suites of rooms occupied by the different families open into this hall. Each family has two rooms and an open verandah for drying and cleaning paddy. The village has its circle of hills all round for its cultivation. In times of danger these villages form alliances with the other villages of the clan, and these alliances are cemented by marriages among the young people. The women thus married are mutual hostages for the perfect good faith of the villages to one another.

The chieftainship of the village is generally hereditary, but does not necessarily run in the line of primogeniture. Personal ability and capacity for leadership often override the claim of the first-born. As danger from without increases, these confederacies extend, and the federated villages are more closely knit together. Some great chief arises who becomes the natural head of the confederacy, and he is blindly obeyed by all. As danger subsides, the bands are loosed, and mutual jealousies among the chiefs lead to internal quarrels and separation of interests.

The hill Karens believe that they are the rightful owners of all the land ever cultivated by the members of their village community. Their destructive _toungya_ cultivation rotates over the hills within the village circuit once in seven years. Between the periods of cultivation of any hillside, they regard the land as lying fallow and just as exclusively their property as the land immediately under cultivation. They say that the inferior quality of the land in the hills necessitates a longer period of fallow than is required in the plains. Each member of the village has an undivided share in the communal land. If the chief were to sell this land, or any part of it, without consulting them and dividing the proceeds fairly, those who had not received their just shares would consider themselves aggrieved and to have acquired the right of reprisal. This right of reprisal is exercised in a curious way, and takes its character from the fusion or absorption of the individual in

the clan.

A Karen has, or fancies he has, a claim against a member of another clan. He brings his claims before his chief. If his demand is allowed by his own clansmen and rejected by his opponent's, he is not restricted to recovering from the individual debtor, but may recover from any member of the other clan who may come in his way and be able to pay. A remarkable instance of this occurred not many years ago. A gentleman from Bassein was travelling among the Kakhyens (who are brothers of the Karens, and have many customs in common with them) in the Bhamo hills. He was suddenly seized, and his ponies and other property confiscated, and he was told that the value would be credited on the claim for blood-money due to the clan for the death of a young Kakhyen, who, while in attendance on an English officer a year before, had died of small-pox. He was desired to recover from the offending officer, who was beyond the reach of the Kakhyens. This proceeding was, to a hill Karen, no robbery, but a customary and legitimate method of realizing what was due. A sad example of this same custom came under my own observation. A plot of land of about one hundred and twenty acres, which had been for generations cultivated by a village of hill Karens near Toungoo, was sold by the two chiefs of the village to a planter who had settled near them. There was considerable difficulty in arranging the terms of sale, and some disinclination was evinced by certain members of the village to part with their shares. However, after a lot of haggling, the terms were agreed on between the two chiefs and the planter. The Government became aware of the ticklish nature of the transaction, and directed the local officers to be very careful, and see that every villager was made fully aware of what was going on. The two chiefs, however, had in the mean time been arranging matters in their own way, and the villagers were dissatisfied with the share of the purchase-money allotted to them. They were aggrieved. The planter himself was at the time beyond their reach; but the planter's son, a young man fresh from England, was on the spot when the time for reprisal came. He was shot dead in his house; and it was an open secret that the murder was deliberately resolved on by the villagers, who elected one of their number to do the dead. To the murders it was of no consequence that the young man was not even in Burma when the land was bought. As a member of the family that was occupying their land on what they deemed unjust terms, he was regarded as individually responsible, and the claim was paid in his blood.

This primitive method of obtaining redress used constantly to give rise to feuds between clans, and among the Red Karens it is a perpetual source of discord, and the pretext for frequent bloody forays. Danger from without alone prevents a perpetual succession of civil wars. When external war is imminent, a curious method is adopted of settling rapidly, and in a wholesale fashion, all internal feuds, so as to clear away all enmities and permit of united action. In 1868, the Karen-nees (Red Karens) were fighting for very existence with the Burmese invaders. Strong, united action was absolutely necessary to repel the invasion. At the full moon of Tagoo (April), all the clans of Western Karen-nee were summoned to appear at the village of Kyet-po-gyee, the head chief. The old man had just died, but his two sons, Koontee and Koonsha, took his place. All the disputes among the clans had to be settled before they could make the great propitiatory sacrifice. In the assembly of the people, the question was solemnly asked, "Who shall confess the sins of the nation?" Some one was proposed, who at once rose in pretended horror, and utterly refused because he could not bear the burden of blame that would surely be cast on him by those whose sin had been revealed. The man rushed wildly from the assembly. He was hotly pursued by the crowds, brandishing their knives and spears in the most savage manner. The hunt was an exciting one, the fugitive straining every nerve to escape, and

his pursuers heading him at every turn. At last, he was captured, firmly bound, and brought into the reassembled parliament. Knives, spears, and daggers were pointed at him by every one. The most violent threats were hurled at him, and he was ordered to confess the sins of the nation. With great seeming reluctance, he said, "I take you all to witness that it is not of my own free will that I disclose the sins which you have committed. Had I changed myself to a bird, you would have flown through the air after me. If I had transformed myself into a fish, no pool of the Salween would have sheltered me from your hot pursuit. Had I changed myself to a rat, and hidden in the hollow of a bamboo, you would have cut me out. I only confess because every pointed and edged weapon now threatens my life." He then confessed: "People from the Myo-thit village stole ten buffaloes from the Shwegalay village." This charge was investigated, and, after both sides had been heard, the case was summarily decided, and restitution made on the spot. The confessor was then charged on pain of death to proceed with his disclosures. "Po Thin, of Kemaw village, eloped with Ma-pee, of Mogoung village." This case was investigated and decided; and so on till the file was cleared. All this had, of course, been carefully arranged beforehand. The flight of the confessor and the display of force were contrived so as to prevent the clans or villages charged with wrong-doing from getting up a feud with the confessor. After all the cases had been tried, the sacrifices began. Each village brought its buffalo to the improvised altar. All who could reach the animal placed their hands upon it. Those who could not reach it laid their hands on those who could. The assembly was taken to witness that all claims had been satisfied, and that they could now make an atoning sacrifice. A prayer was offered that the guilt of the clans during the past year might be transferred to the buffalo, which was stricken dead by a blow from an axe. The flesh was divided into small portions. Each person ate a part of his share, and took home the other part to bury in his field, in proof that all the year's sins had been duly atoned for, and thereby to induce the earth to yield her increase undeterred by her abhorrence of man's crimes.

The method of binding individuals, villages, and clans in confederacies is somewhat singular. The contracting parties bind themselves by drinking spirits in which the blood of both has been mixed, and in which a number of weapons have been dipped. The blood of each is supposed to live as an agent or ambassador in the blood of the other, and thus either prevent or witness and avenge treachery. The weapons are likewise invoked to avenge treachery.

Confederacies and powerful chiefs contract with one another, after going through certain strange ceremonies. Dr. Vinton made a compact in 1868 with Koontee, the son of Kyet-po-gyee, chief of Western Karen-nee, which he thus described:--

"An ox was chosen with the greatest care; great attention was paid to the points of the animal, that it should be perfect in every part, and that no unlucky arrangement of the hair on any part should make the compact void.

"When, after looking over several hundred cattle, a lucky one was found, I paid half the price, and the chief the other.

"We stood each on one side of the ox and crossed our hands on the hump. The high priestess of the race (in this case Koontee's own mother) stood in front of the ox. It was her duty to kill the animal at the proper time, but old age had made her far too weak for the office, so a stalwart Red Karen stood with his axe and knife ready to obey her orders.

"The compact made was recited, I bound myself to report faithfully to the Chief Commissioner of British Burma the exact state of the contest with the invading Burmese forces, and, whenever Koontee's messengers came properly accredited, I was to correctly translate their communications, and urge to the extent of my ability the claims of Western Karen-nee to protection and friendship.

"In return, Koontee bound himself to protect our native preachers, and to tolerate schools, and the free exercise of the Christian religion. Each was asked whether the pledge was recited aright. The old priestess then, solemnly raising the right hand, said, 'Whichever party fails to the extent of his power to keep this contract, may he die like this ox.' The poor brute was stricken dead at a blow.

"It was divided longitudinally with a surgeon's care. I was told that if, in splitting the animal, the spinal marrow had been severed completely on either side the ox would have to be rejected and another killed. A right shoulder and left hind-quarter was given to one party, and a left shoulder and right hind-quarter given to the other.

"Koontee's share was given out in small pieces to his subordinate chiefs, and I was prohibited from selling, giving away, or otherwise disposing of my share. It must all be eaten by my party. Of course I had to salt a part of my share to ensure its being all eaten by my party of twenty-five strong.

"The horns were carefully marked to correspond, and were to be used in accrediting messengers from one to another. This ceremony was performed by the Deputy-Commissioner of Shway Gyin, on the part of the Government, with Kyet-po-gyee, the Western Karen-nee chief. The horn, set in silver, was proudly shown me afterwards.

"On my way home, the villagers of Moso on the frontier mistook my party for Burmans under the lead of French officers known to be with the Burmese troops, and the son of the chief, then in charge of the post in his father's absence, swooped down on us and demanded our surrender. Knowing I had my ox-horn handy, I did not demur, and we were marched into the village. I produced the horn, and reminded them that the clan was pledged for my safety. The village knew well they were pledged, and feared lest their apparent faithlessness should be speedily avenged. My pardon was begged, the mistake explained, and even though I assured them I bore no ill will, the young chief would not rest content without escorting and guiding me two days' march to atone for his blunder.

"Many times the mate to my horn was produced by Koontee's agents, and often my horn was recognized and honoured in Karen-nee when carried by native preachers."

CHAPTER VIII - HISTORICAL TRADITIONS: TAW-MAI-PAH, THE MYTHICAL ANCESTOR OF THE KARENS

ON the slopes of the Nat-toung of Toungoo lived a very old man, who was afterwards known as Taw-mai-pah (grandfather of the boar's tusk).

A huge wild boar ravaged the _toungyas_ of the old man's sons and sons-in-law, till the injury done became unbearable. Such, however, was the size, strength, and ferocity of the brute that no one dared to attack him. The old man at last devoted his life for the welfare of his

children, knowing well that they would all be starved if the boar's ravages were not checked. After a furious combat the boar was slain, but the old man was too much exhausted by his exertions to carry home any of the meat. On his return, he sent his sons and sons-in-law to bring in the carcase, but they could not find it, though the ground, trampled into bloody mire, bore testimony to the fight that had taken place. They returned empty-handed and chaffed the old man about his boasting to have killed a boar he had not even mastered. The old man was furious, and told them they were not smart enough to fight the boar, or even to bring in the carcase when he had been killed for them.

At last, to settle the dispute, they all went to the spot, and found the carcase really missing; but, on searching around, they found a tusk of the boar, red on one face, white on another, and blue on the third. The boar was a supernatural one, and by his defeat had lost so much of his magic power that his tusk had dropped out, though his life was regained. Taw-mai-pah took the tusk home with him, and made it into a comb. When he first used the comb he became suddenly young again. It was very lucky he was amid his whole assembled family, or they would never have recognized him in the brisk young man who had renewed his youth by the magic power of the boar's tusk. Taw-mai-pah's family multiplied with wonderful rapidity, as, of course, the boar's tusk was constantly used to renew their youth, and to set death and old age at defiance.

Soon they filled the Toungoo hills, and even established themselves in the city of Toungoo itself. The land not being able to support their increasing numbers, Taw-mai-pah started on a long journey to find a place where the land was rich enough to support his family with little or no work. He said he had conquered disease and death, but the evil of hard work still remained to be conquered. The trial to which he subjected the land of each district he visited was this. He dug a number of holes, and tried to see how many holes the earth from one hole would fill. On this side of the Cambodia, he found the earth from one hole would fill four holes of equal size. This he did not consider sufficient, and so he crossed the river, and found that the earth from one hold would fill seven similar holes. This satisfied him, and he returned to bring his huge family. They all marched together as far as the river, and there they all complained of hunger. Some one told them that certain shells were good for food. They commenced boiling them with roselle (then a new plant to them). After boiling the shells for many hours, they tried to see whether the shells were soft or not; but of course the hard outer shells had not softened, and so they concluded the shells were not cooked enough. Others arrived at the same conclusion from noticing the red juice of the roselle. "Of course," said they, "the shells are not cooked enough, for you can see the blood still flows red from them." Taw-mai-pah began to get impatient, and wanted to march on, but his descendants refused to start till they had had food. Taw-mai-pah said he would go ahead and mark the path by cutting down trees and brushwood. After boiling their shells a long while, the people met some Chinamen, who laughed at them, and showed them how to break an air-hole in the top of the long shell and suck out the contents.

After dinner, they started after Taw-mai-pah, but, seeing that the wild plaintains along the path had sprouted six or eight inches since they were cut, they concluded Taw-mai-pah was too far ahead for them to follow, and so they returned to their old quarters.

Since losing the magic comb, which Taw-mai-pah took with him, of course old age and disease and death have ruled over the Karens as before.

Taw-mai-pah, while his clan was multiplying so rapidly, took Chinese

wives for some of his descendants, and from them the Shans are descended. He took Siamese wives for others, and from them are descended the Toungthoos. Some took Hindoo wives, and from them are descended the black Karens of the Toungoo hill tracts. Taw-mai-pah, still young with his magic comb, will one day assemble all his descendants and feast them with a boar, the rib-bones of which will be seven cubits long, and the fore-foot of which will be seven hands in circumference. Taw-mai-pah's children will not be able to understand each other when they meet, but must learn each other's language.

CHAPTER IX - THEIR NATIONAL RELIGION AND THEIR GOD-TRADITIONS

THE Karens are remarkable for believing in one eternal God, Creator of all things "who is like the air, and lives in the sky, as does the wind, and like the wind goes everywhere, but who has no place in their paradise, who originally dwelt amongst them, and only left them after fruitless endeavours to draw them to Himself. They abhor idolatry, and regard Buddhism with contempt. Their belief in the character and attributes of God is absolutely identical with the teachings of Christianity, and requires no modifications to make it a fully developed Christianity save the teachings of Jesus Christ as the Revelation of God and the Saviour of Man. One of their sayings of the elders, handed down from generations, is, "All things in heaven and on earth, O children and grandchildren, God created them. Never forget God; pray to Him every day and every night." On the other hand, the Karen looks upon God as having long since deserted him on account of his sins, and left him to the persecution of demons, which cause sickness, death, and all the ills of life. He insists that the demons are so near and God so far away that he is in no way disloyal to God when he sacrifices to demons. He merely temporizes with them till God's promised return. To the heathen Karen, "the word is filled with invisible spirits. Every living being, be it man or beast or creeping thing, has its La (spirit); and every mountain peak, tree, cataract, and river has its lord, and every lord a number of attendants, agents to carry out his will, who are the La of those who have died violent deaths. These lords reside near the physical object which they protect, seated on the mossy crag, under the forest tree, or in the foaming torrent. Their attendants, the ghosts, smoking pipes with gold and silver stems, and armed with swords and spears, lurk in every nook and cranny, and should a luckless Karen ignorantly touch one of these powerful guardians, or step upon their attendant's unseen weapons, they rise in anger and afflict him with sore diseases, and must be propitiated with bloodless sacrifices."

Nature is thus to him bristling with actual and possible mischiefs and evils of all kinds. Wherever he goes he is in danger. His life is a life of perpetual terror. He never knows when or how he offends one of these malevolent beings till the punishment swoops down on him. But the ghosts and their masters the lords are not the only enemies whom the Karen dreads. In old times, they say, "God made a mixture of the flesh of every animal, and directed them to eat the whole, for if they omitted to eat any portion, the animal whose flesh had not been eaten would hereafter become invisible and eat them. Accidentally they neglected to eat of the flesh of the Na, since which time it preys upon them, causing sickness and death, and is incarnate in tigers, serpents, and other wild animals and reptiles, and must be driven away from their fields and their houses. But perhaps the most formidable danger to which he is exposed is the attack of seven spirits who are always on the watch to kill him, and who are pledged to destroy him--one by the mouth of a tiger, one by old age,

one by sickness, one by drowning, one by the hand of man, one by a fall, and the last by every other means."

But although thus in perpetual dread of malignant attacks which he can never foresee, he is not left entirely unprotected. His guardian spirit, his benevolent La, "accompanies him, seated on his neck or head; and as long as he so remains the Karen is safe from all attacks. But this La may be enticed away by others, or may jump down, or may wander away during the body's sleep--and then follow sickness and death. If a man pines away, his La is supposed to be wandering, and must be called back with an offering of food."

The demons are supposed to cause sickness by stealing away the protecting La or spirit from the sick man. The first thing done when any one falls ill is to attempt by some slight offering to propitiate the demon, and induce him to return the stolen La. The first offering is generally made at the crossing of two roads at evening time by some relation of the sick man. When this means fails, the sick one grows worse, and the demon is supposed to have rejected the offering. The great sacrifice must now be offered under the leadership of the eldest female living ancestor of the sick person. This sacrifice can only be performed by an unbroken family. The absence of a single member renders it unavailing. It is this that makes it so hard for a Karen to avow himself an out-and-out Christian, and to take the decisive step of baptism. Belief in the efficacy of the great propitiatory sacrifice to the malignant demon still clings to those who are and admit themselves to be "almost Christians," and the rite is jealously guarded. A Karen falls ill. His relatives are summoned--not invited--to the great sacrifice. A Christian relative from conscientious motives refuses. If the sick one dies, the Christian is looked on as his murderer, just as much as if he had plunged a dagger into his heart. Across the frontier, a blood-feud would be the result. Hundreds of Karens are found all round the Christian villages who firmly believe themselves to be Christians, attend the Church services regularly, give liberally, live outwardly as Christians, give up liquor and profligacy, and yet are not baptized. They beg earnestly to be baptized, stipulating only to be allowed to be present at the sacrifices of their relatives, and, for form's sake, to put a single morsel of the offering between their lips. They plead that they have no wish to perform the sacrifice themselves, or to have it performed on their behalf; but they urge that they dare not become utter outcasts, and be regarded as the murderers of their kith and kin. They freely admit that they have no faith in such childish ceremonies, but they cannot bear to be cut adrift from their families with the curse of blood on their heads. In pleading thus for admission into the Christian Church, they have been known to urge as authority for their claim the teaching of the Apostle Paul about "meat offered to idols," and Naaman "bowing in the house of Rimmon." Dr. Vinton told me that, on first assuming charge of the Karen mission on the death of his father, he was astounded to see whole families coming up for baptism. The first thought which naturally occurred to him was that only one or two of the applicants probably had undergone the real change of heart, and that the rest had applied merely in deference to the opinion of the elders. This fear was, however, he said, soon dispelled when he inquired and found out how and when the change of heart had taken place. It was then, he said, seen how great had been the strugglings for years in the families. The husband would point with tears to the scars which his drunken fury had left on his long-enduring wife for refusing to join the family sacrifice. One after another had been touched till all had come together, proclaimed their faith, and sought admission to the Church.

When any member of a family is seen to be irrevocably determined to become an out-and-out Christian, his heathen relatives often try to

induce him to submit to a childish ceremony. They ask him to feign sickness. They then offer sacrifices to the demons on his behalf, as if he were really ill; then they mourn for him, as if he were really dead, and go through a mock funeral to make the demons believe that he is dead, so that at the next sacrifice his absence may not be regarded as causing a break in the family.

To illustrate the way in which the heathen Karen harmonizes his demon sacrifices with his loyalty to God, here is a parable which they tell:--A man and his wife once lived in a wild forest. They were obliged daily to leave their children at home while they went to work on their distant _toungya_ or forest clearing. They owned a large sow and a litter of pigs. One day, during the absence of the parents, a tiger came up and killed the sow and ate her up. On the return of the parents, the terrified children crawled from their hiding-place and told of the peril in which they had been. The parents, knowing full well that the tiger would return, made a high platform, so high that the tiger could neither spring nor climb into it, and next day placed the children and the litter of pigs on it. The tiger came, and, disappointed of his prey in the house, soon scented out the children. He sprang upwards at them, but fell short. He tried to climb, but the hard smooth surface of the bamboo defied his claws. He then frightened the children by his terrible roars. So in terror the children threw down the pigs to him, one after another. Their eyes, however, were fixed not on the tiger, but on the path by which they expected to see their father come. Their hands fed the tiger from fear, but their ears were eagerly listening for the twang of their father's bowstring, which would send the arrow quivering into the tiger's heart. And so, say the Karens, although we have to make sacrifices to demons, our hearts are still true to God. We must throw sops to the foul demons who afflict us, but our hearts are ever looking for God.

The Red Karens keep the month of Tagoo (April) absolutely sacred to the worship of the one God. During that month demon sacrifices are strictly prohibited.

Perhaps, however, the most convincing proof of the Karen's firm belief in a personal God is to be found in some of their hymns. The following is one of their ancient hymns handed down by their bards from generation to generation. The translation is true to the original both in words and metre.

"Father God is very near,
Lives He now amongst us here;
God is not far off, we know--
Dwells He in our midst below.

"'Tis because men are not true
That He is not sent to you;
'Tis because men turned to sin
Now no longer God is seen.

"All upon the earth below
is but God's foot-rest, we know;
Heaven in the heights above
Is God's seat of truth and love."

It is interesting to note in these verses a peculiarity common also in Hebrew poetry--parallelisms. The thought of the first couplet is followed by a repetition in the next in a slightly varied form.

The Karen ideas of a future state after death are somewhat indefinite,

and it is difficult to disentangle the childish, extravagant details from the two or three articles of their belief. They believe that rewards and punishments will be meted out in the next world according to the deeds done during life on earth; and they believe that the future state will be one of activity, similar in many respects to the life led on earth. They further believe that the spirits of those who have been righteous and have kept God in their hearts here below, are permitted to watch over the destinies of those dear to them whom they left behind. Their conception of the destiny of the human soul is totally different from that of the Burmese. The Karen believes that the soul will be actively employed. The Burmese, who are all Buddhists, believe in _nirvana_, or complete absorption, absolute extinction of individuality--a deathless, dreamless sleep of the soul swallowed up in the Infinite. The Karen believes in a living, personal God; the Burman is a blank atheist.

When nearly sixty years ago, the attention of the American missionaries was first drawn to the Karens, they found them in possession of a remarkable set of traditions, both in prose and poetry, exactly corresponding with the history of the creation and the fall of man as told in the Bible. Many of the national traditions vary in details locally; but these God-traditions, as they are called, are found to be absolutely identical everywhere, from Mergui to Toungoo, and from Cape Negrais to far east of Zimmay, in Siam. They tell, how, after the fall, God gave the Bible to the Karens first, as the elder branch of the race; that they neglected it, and that God in anger took it away from them, and gave it to their younger brother, the white man, who, however, was placed under obligations to restore the Word to the Karens, and teach them the true religion after their sins had been sufficiently atoned for by long subjugation to other races.

It has been suggested by some that these traditions may be only the echo of the preaching of Percoto, the great Italian missionary, who visited Burma about the year 1740. But there are two circumstances which completely bar such a supposition. The Italian missionaries did not penetrate far into the country of the Karens. They found them savage and inaccessible, and did not attempt to teach them. And, even if they had preached to them the story of the creation and the relation of God to man, there was not time between Percoto's visit and the advent of the American missionaries in 1828 for the story to become a national bard tradition. It must be remembered that all the Karen traditions are sung or recited from memory; none of them are written, for there was no written language. The period which elapsed between Percoto and the American missionaries was not long enough to allow of the whole story becoming part of the traditions of the clans. It appears most probable that their origin dates from the time when the Karens had not yet entered Burma and that they were derived from the colony of Nestorian Jews who made their way by land from Armenia to China in the early Middle Ages, and whose track the Karens must have crossed in the journey southwards. This supposition is strengthened by the remarkable similarity between portions of the moral code of the Karens and the Law as expounded in the Old Testament, by the resemblance of some of their sacrifices to the Jewish rites, and by the belief which is universal among them that they once received a roll of parchment containing the Law from God. During all these hundred years, the Karens, holding fast to what had been delivered to them, have been looking steadily for the advent of the missionaries and the fulfilment of the prophecy of restoration. This expectant attitude has been the cause of several fanatical risings among the Karens, stimulated by false prophets who have from time to time come forward and incited them to rebellion. The last of these risings occurred in 1840, when thousands of Karens marched unarmed on Rangoon, under a leader who had announced himself to be the chosen of God sent to deliver

the nation. The fanatics were met by Burmese troops, and slaughtered almost to a man.

The Karen-nees, or Red Karens, claim superiority over the other tribes from their possession of metal plates, which they declare to be part of the original written Word given to them by God. They say that, although they sinned equally with the rest in losing the knowledge of reading and writing, they have shown so much reverence for these plates that God will be far more merciful to them than to the other tribes. They proudly attribute their independence to the special favour thus shown them. These plates are looked upon as the palladium of the clan, and are guarded with jealous care. Copies of them have been taken and shown to European and Oriental scholars, but, so far as is known, they have not yet been deciphered.

CHAPTER X - THE AMERICAN MISSION AMONG THE KARENS

"OFTEN, perhaps, had the Christian voyager gazed on the rocky promontories of Burma, crowned with their whitened pagodas that glow amid the eternal verdure of tropical climes, but he little thought that the misty mountain-tops in the distance threw their shadows over the dwellings of a people that, generation after generation, had charged their posterity never to worship idols. Xavier had passed their mountain homes when he went to look on, but not to enter, inhospitable China, and found a surreptitious resting-place, and grave upon its barren rocks. Swartz had laboured half a century to destroy the three hundred thousand gods of India without hearing of the nation that had rejected them all from the remotest ages. Carey had made his forty versions without a line for the people that were longing with hope deferred for the word of God. And Judson had lived seven years in Rangoon, preaching the eternal God, before a single Burman would admit His existence; while the poor unnoticed Karens were continually passing his door, singing by the way--

"God is eternal. His life is long--
God is immortal. His life is long:
One cycle He dies not,
Two cycles He dies not,
Perfect in great attributes,
Age on age He dies not."

The Roman Catholics, who preceded the Protestants in Burma many years, appear to have entirely overlooked the Karens; and it was not till after the first Burmese war that these people began to attract attention. Up to 1828, they were, as a separate nation, unknown. They were looked upon as a mixed horde of aboriginal savages. No one had dreamt of their being a united little people, with such a history and such capacities for national life as they have. The incident which first brought them to notice was a striking one. A Karen called Ko Tha Byu, debt-slave to a Burman, had been set free by Dr. Judson, and employed as a water-carrier. Ko Tha Byu found a Christian tract one day as he was working in Dr. Judson's house. It was in the Burmese language, and he read it with difficulty. At last, however, he mastered it, and its teachings struck him as singularly like the teachings of the God-traditions of his people. His eyes were opened; he discovered that at last the long predicted return of God to his nation through the white man had been fulfilled. Fired with this knowledge, and overcome with joy at the glad tidings which he was now able to bring to his degraded and debased fellow-countrymen, he went forth as an apostle among the people and

laboured for a generation, proclaiming the restoration of the Karen nation and the return of God to them after centuries of expectation. He became the means of opening up to the American missionaries a field of enterprise of which they had never dreamed. The field has been ardently worked ever since. [3] Its success has been unique in the history of missions, because it has at once satisfied a great national religious need, and in doing so has developed a national civilization. Three processes have ever since been simultaneously in operation--Christianity, education, and civilization. The Karens regard these three as indivisible parts of the message which for ages their ancestors had firmly believed God would at some time or other send to them. They cannot see why a lesson in arithmetic should not be given at a Sunday school. They cannot understand a church without a school, or a school without a church, or either of these without material advance in civilization and in the comforts of life; better houses, better food, and more money with which to live, enjoy life and do good to their fellows. Each of these ends is looked upon as the necessary accompaniment of the other. In this linking of religion with all that is good, useful, profitable, and happy in daily life lies the secret of the marvellous success of the Karen mission in the past, and the bright hopes for the future. Christianity is looked upon as a great end in itself, but equally as a powerful lever for raising the condition of the people. It is no dying race--no race in its decadence, like the Sandwich islanders, that Christianity has got hold of here; but a young and vigorous race, springing up with marvellous elasticity from the grinding oppression of centuries. In common with the American missionaries, I sincerely believe in the capacity for development of the Karens, and in the power of Christianity to develop them. There is intense vitality in the race. Under all the crushing tyranny which they have borne, decimated as they have been by constant internal struggles, they have still been increasing in numbers, and peace and protection under British rule have enabled them to multiply rapidly.

{ [Footnote--3] In a minute by the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, dated May 1, 1863, I find the following:--"The district of Toungoo was occupied by British troops early in 1853.... At that time nearly the whole of the Karen tribes on the mountains east of Toungoo--that is, over an area of more than two thousand square miles--were in a savage state. The Burmese Government never had authority over any of the tribes living more than a day's journey from the city and river. In process of time, from the constant labour of the (American) missionaries, many thousands of the mountain Karens were instructed in Christianity, abandoned their savage mode of life and their cruel wars, and lived as Christian men and women.... I assert, from long experience among similar tribes, that such results could not be obtained by the civil administration, unaided by missionary teaching. }

Another secret of the great success of the American mission in the past is this--that the movement has been truly a national one, a genuine uprising of the people themselves. Nine-tenths of the work which has been accomplished has, under the guidance of the missionaries, been done by the Karens themselves. They have brought to the movement their great powers of combination, and, what is of immense importance, they have worked on their own lines, incorporating in the new national structure all that was valuable in the old. They seem to have instinctively perceived that, to secure the benefits which they knew would result from the adoption of Christianity, they must work as a nation, retaining such parts of their ancient constitution as would fit in with the new departure. The Christian section has never lost touch with the heathen section. The old hegemony, the unswerving allegiance to leaders, even the tribal organization with all its important incidents, have been maintained. A Christian Karen is just as much one of his clan as he ever

was. He eagerly adopts anything new that will improve his condition and the condition of his village or his clan, but it must be introduced just as anything new would have been introduced in the olden time. He adopts a sewing-machine or a new loom with alacrity, because he knows that good will come of it to his people. Hundreds of Burmese come and watch the new looms which are at work in the Karen villages; but when asked to adopt them, they shake their heads--their ancestors had never used such things. On the other hand, try and make a Christian Karen adopt anything independently of his clan, try and make him feel himself a unit, separate from his village, and you will see his conservatism at once. Ask any one of them, "What do you think of this or that new plan?" He will ask, "What do the elders say?"

The mission is no sickly exotic, planted in an unfriendly soil; but a plant of the universal Christian religion, so thoroughly acclimatized as to be really indigenous. I have heard the Karens sometimes blamed for their "provoking independence," for their pertinacity in developing along their own lines. But is not this independence the very best guarantee for the permanency of the results attained?

Judging by its past history and its present aspect, it may be predicted that the mission will end in planting among the Karens a distinct, independent branch of the Christian Church, and in establishing with it and through it a national civilization. The Christianity and the civilization will be in reality indigenous--attained by a process of evolution distinctively Karen. Were the views of Christian truth and the religious experiences of the Karens identical with those of other races, it might be feared that they were spurious. There is just enough idiosyncrasy in both to show that the seeds of Christianity and of civilization have been affected by the climate and soil in which they have been planted, and that the products are no mere servile imitation of the foreign article. The mission will grow both by accretions from the heathen and by increase from within itself. The heathen Karen looks on its complete success as a foregone conclusion. He watches the solid Christian phalanx working and growing as one man, and contrasts it with the disunion of the Buddhists all around. He often says, "I can't give up my liquor or break loose from my family ties, but you will get all _these_," pointing to his children.

It may perhaps be asked whether the success of the Karen mission is not due mainly to its material progress. The suspicion naturally arises that in a downtrodden race which feels conscious of powers and aspires to elevate itself, the success won may be spurious, and may be due to other causes than a sincere adoption of the great doctrines of Christianity. I am convinced, from what I know and have seen, that it is not so. I believe that devotion to the Christian faith has supplied the one link that was wanting to complete what may be called the federative capacity of the Karens, and make their national unity strong enough to resist all disintegrating forces. Nothing that the Government has yet done has succeeded in rousing the people to a sense of their dignity as men or as a nation. The Government has given them nothing around which their national aspirations could rally. Christianity at the hands of the American missionaries has done this. Once a village has embraced Christianity, it feels itself a head and shoulders above its neighbours, and all the energies of the people are at once employed in making their village worthy of the name. No labour, no expense are spared. The Christian village must be clean, healthy, neat; it must have the best school and the best church they can afford. Nothing will satisfy till all these are accomplished facts. Money-aid from the missionaries is not sought; the people do it all themselves--plan, contrive, and carry out. They are proud of their new condition, and their zeal knows no bounds.

Their children must be well-dressed and educated, intelligent and industrious in their calling, better tillers of the soil, better hunters, better foresters than their fathers, because they are now animated by a new spirit, fired with a new zeal, and their wits are sharpened by education. Nothing is too good, too costly, with which to honour and adorn their new faith. Their hereditary longings appear to be entirely satisfied. The coming of Christianity has honoured their national traditions. They feel themselves and their ancestors justified before all men. A new life opens out to them--a new career, for which their forefathers had sighed in the ages of hardship and oppression and slavery. They are proud to devote their lives to working out the high destiny which they believe God had in the long past prepared for them. They have spent thousands of pounds, earned by hard toil, on their churches and schools. They will not have anything but the best. It is not the influence of the missionaries which has done all this. All that the missionaries have done is to strike the latent spark that has kindled them. The Karens are going far beyond the short-sighted policy which would put every educated men into the ministry. To use their own words, "A mission must have a full chest of tools--must have lawyers, doctors, engineers, schoolmasters, and every sort of tradesman." I have asked numbers of them this question: "Will your solid unity continue after you have reached your aim, or will the Karen Christians become merged in the mass of educated men in Burma, and lose the characteristics of their race?" I have explained to them that, their confederacy having originally sprung from confessed weakness, it is possible that the strength gained by Christianity might, by removing the original cause, destroy the effect. In every case I have met with am emphatic denial of the possibility of such a result, and the retort that the cohesion is stronger among the educated Karens than among the illiterate, and that with material prosperity the craving for a united Karen nation increases. And so it is. The possibility of a separation of the Christian sections of the people from the heathen was, some few years ago, foreseen by the more enlightened, and a movement was at once set on foot to prevent the commencement of such a process. A National Karen Association was founded (1881)--representatives of all the clans, Christian and heathen, with the avowed object of keeping the nation together in the march of progress; of allowing all Karens, without distinction of belief, to meet on a common platform. In a future chapter I shall enter more fully into the objects of this association. I mention it here to show that, far from any separatist tendencies showing themselves, the enlightened Christian party--which is the party of progress--is daily evincing a keener desire to preserve the national unity and elevate the entire race. There is in this a ground of high hope. The mass of the Karen Church of the future will be, in my opinion, intelligent, educated cultivators of the soil. From these will spring up, through their schools, their professional and business men. These will form the cutting edge of the nation, gaining incisive power from the weight and cohesion of the peasant mass from which it sprang. Not many years can this vigorous young giant be kept in leading-strings. Several of the Karen missions are already financially independent and entirely self-maintaining. The time is not far distant when the leadership will pass from American hands into those of Karen blood. I do not believe that the Karen Christians will ever become a caste that implies segregation. They will rather develop into a body like the Parsees in India; but they will be more powerful than the Parsees, because their backbone is an intelligent peasantry. I do not believe that any community can become really powerful if it is separated from the land. The one weak point in the Parsee--as also in the Jew--is that he never is a tiller of the soil. With all their wonderful shrewdness as traders, the Jews never become a power, because they are divorced from the soil. I have heard it said by an officer of great experience in Burma and a keen observer, "The Burman cannot stand before the Karen. The Karen

and the native of India will divide Burma between them." There is some ground for this prediction. A race which despises manual labour is doomed. The Burman will not toil for his bread if he can get it in any other way. The Karen has a vast capacity for hard work, and sees no shame in toiling with his hands. Strange, indeed, it would be if in the distant future the Karen should become the master and the Burmese the servant, and if, as was predicted fifty years ago by an eminent missionary on his death-bed, "The Burmese should receive eternal life at the hands of those who were once their slaves."

The Christian Karen looks on his missionary as his paramount chief, and his pastor as his local chief. Under their leadership, he readily combines to support schools and missions among the heathen. He does not think himself aggrieved when taxed for the support of schools in which he has no children. If it were to be suggested to him that there was any unfairness in his being so taxed, he would say, "Why, that school belongs to my mission." His submission to his chief is not slavish, by any means, but voluntary. He submits because he knows it to be necessary that he should. He claims the right to grumble and growl in council, and to have all his objections patiently heard; but when his leaders decide he feels bound to follow. In return for his obedience, he considers that he has an absolute title to protection. The local church takes the place of the clan-unit, or village. These churches are federally united into associations or missions, which look up to the missionary as their leader. These associations take the place of the confederacies of clans. Affairs are managed under the Christian _regime_ just as they were in the olden time by the council of leaders. Everything is informal. In a public meeting regularly conducted on modern methods the Karen feels cramped; he loses his freedom of speech. An informal council assembles and debates in a free and easy way; there is no restraint either on speech or gesture. Say it is the expense of a school that is under discussion. The proposed budget of expenditure is laid before the meeting and examined item by item. Every one has a voice, but the natural veneration of the Karen for old age, long experience, and proved ability throws the pith of the discussion into the hands of a few of the older grey-heads. Every one jealously reserves his right to grumble and freely express his dissent, but he submits cheerfully if the vote is against him. His clan has spoken through its chiefs, and this ends the matter. In a meeting at which I was present, the question was, how to raise funds for the support of an important school. The leaders were at their wits'-end. The poor yield of paddy in the previous season and the enhancement of the Government land-tax had sadly crippled the people. After many proposals had been put forward and rejected, it was suggested that a tax of fifteen rupees for each pupil should be levied. This was a new thing, and it was strenuously opposed by many present; but, after an animated discussion, the informal vote was taken and the tax levied. All then went over to the chapel, and in formal convention ratified what had been done. Those who had grumbled loudest paid down their money cheerfully. The meeting broke up pleasantly, because all saw the necessity for the measure taken, and because their objections had been patiently listened to. Had the meeting of the leaders been held with closed doors, had the growling been choked off and the growlers snubbed, had any restraint been set on free expression of opinion, there would have been a row at once.

Slowly the idea has been gaining ground, even among the most ignorant and backward of the Karens, that there is some hope for their despised and outcast race. Their desponding cry used to be, in the language of their old proverbs, "We are the leaf, other races are the thorn; if the leaf falls on the thorn, it is pierced; if the thorn falls on the leaf, the leaf is pierced all the same." "We are the egg, other races are the rock: the egg fell on the rock, and it was broken; the rock fell on the egg,

and the egg was broken." "If I tread on the ordure of a Burman, he exacts a fine; if he treads on mine, he exacts a fine." The idea has now permeated even the lowest that Christianity and education combined will enable the Karen to hold his own. Hence the wonderful sacrifices he is making.

It is worth while to watch some rough, unkempt old Karens, fresh from the jungle, sitting for hours in one of these schools, listening to recitations in geometry or algebra, as if they were the most fascinating tales they had ever heard. I asked one of these old fellows what it was that pleased him in all he heard and saw. He said, "There is a day of jubilee coming for the slave Karen. I can't see the light myself, but I can see those who can." The marks scored by the pupils of a village are copied out, taken home, and discussed with as much pride by the other villagers as by the parents. Watch the crowd that sits from three to four hours through a school-examination. They do not pretend to understand one-half of what is said, yet you see unflagging interest in all of them, both those who have children in the school and those who have not.

An aged Karen, who was sent as a type of his race to the Ethnological section of the Calcutta Exhibition in the end of 1883, was met by the small band of Karen boys who had gone to Calcutta to study for the university. It was pleasant to see the filial regard of the youngsters for their venerable but illiterate clansman. At parting the old man addressed them. He told them how proudly he had watched them pass their various examinations before leaving Burma, and how he had rejoiced in their progress. He told them that the times were being turned upside down, and that the educated young men must lead, and their old fathers must follow. He warned them of the temptations to which he had observed they were exposed in Calcutta, and pleaded with them to make good use of the great privileges which they enjoyed. The almost paternal pride of the old man in "his boys," as he called them, although they were no relations of his, was a pleasing and touching spectacle.

A striking proof of the genuine public spirit which animates the Karens was given not many weeks ago. When the Mayankhyoung poongyee was captured, the Government reward of five thousand rupees was given to the captors--the hill Karens. The question then arose how to dispose of the money. It was put to the vote, and resolved by the villagers without a dissentient voice that the money should be given to the schools, which, they proudly said, had made men of them.

CHAPTER XI - CHRISTIANIZING A HEATHEN KAREN VILLAGE

A HEATHEN village asks for a native preacher. Perhaps some of the children have been to a Christian school; perhaps the preaching of the missionary has excited some discussion among the young men, who see more of the busy world around them than their fathers did; or perhaps, as frequently happens, some man who has been brooding for years over the God-traditions of the people, begins to wonder whether Christianity may not be the long-expected deliverer of his race. Or it may be that some of the residents have gone on business to a Christian village, and, noticing the sober, industrious lives of the people, and observing how happy and comfortable all of them are, have been puzzled to know how this change has come about, and have inquired. They have been pointed to the Bible, and led to desire to know something of its teaching. Their request is brought before the Karen Home Mission Society, with a statement of what they will do for the support of any man who may be assigned to them. This

is insisted upon as a pledge of good faith.

A pastor is chosen and sent, but with no promise or certainty of any salary. He knows that he is sure of nothing but bare subsistence. He takes with him a stock of quinine, some carbolic acid for wounds, plenty of aperient pills, vaccine tubes for a crusade against small-pox--the arch-destroyer in these jungle villages--a few other simple medicines, and off he goes. During the day he keeps up a school. Every evening he rings his gong, and gives a short Bible-reading, followed by prayer, and talks with the people in a free, easy way about some of the simpler doctrines of the Christian religion. He attends to the sick, praying over them before administering medicine, urging them no longer to fear the demons as the causes of sickness, but to place themselves directly under the protection of God, who has now returned to them, often alluding to the casting out of demons by Christ while on earth. Much that the preacher has to tell them they already know, almost by heart. From their childhood they have heard of the great wonderful God, but they have been taught to think of Him as far distant from them, as angry with them because of their sins. They know He is the Creator of the world and of man. They are proud to acknowledge Him, but their pride is the pride of an outcast of noble lineage whose only solace in poverty and misery is that he had a great and noble ancestor. The assurance given by the pastor that God has now come back to them, and wishes them to meet Him half way, is a revelation which stirs them to the depths of their hearts. Some marvel and can scarcely believe; others doubt; a few at once grasp the truth with ecstasy. All feel that something has happened which their forefathers had said and their minstrels had sung would one day happen; and all are impressed with the necessity of setting their houses in order, and of making their village worthy of the pastor who has told them such wonderful news. Although only a few of them accept the whole truth at once, all of them connect the coming of the pastor with the prophecies which they have so often heard of the restoration of the Karen race, and believe that something good is coming. All feel that they have risen somewhat in the social scale; and it is a point of honour to make their children worthy of the great future which they feel may be in store for them.

Not many months pass before the preacher has become the leader of all the business and real life of the place. Being the only educated man in the vicinity, he has to draw up all agreements and manage everybody's business for him. His advice is asked about everything, and as experience shows him to be a safe guide, he is implicitly followed more and more as the sagacity of his counsels is proved. Everything does not go smoothly however. Bouts of drunkenness and rioting occur, and the preacher is sometimes much disheartened. But he patiently shows the rioters the folly of their conduct and the sin and danger of once more embroiling their nation with the God who had condescended to be reconciled to them. One after another surrenders himself to the preacher's influence. The children begin to take home some of the knowledge of Scripture which they have picked up at school. Above all the music of the hymns goes right to the Karen's heart. His own national music was plaintive and lugubrious--in the minor key, with scarcely a major passage. It voiced the sad, querulous plaint of a race that confessed itself deserted by God. The Christian Karen will scarcely ever sing a minor air. Bold stirring march music of marked rhythm--that gives voice to an imprisoned drum-beat in every throb of the singer's heart--alone satisfies him. The words cling to the music, and bring lasting comfort to many a home.

All this time the spiritual life of the village as a whole has, perhaps, not been visibly touched. Many a man, however, broods over the thoughts of the preacher's last sermon as he follows his plough or fells the giant

forest trees. The wife croons over a hymn-book as her spinning-wheel buzzes, and wonders what the "fort" is which she is called upon to "hold," and who it is that is "coming."

As the months and years go by, and the village grows in numbers and in wealth and comfort, the pastor, old and grey, comes to be perfectly revered. His influence and authority are enormous. He is the living embodiment to the villagers of all that Christianity, education, and civilization have done for them. It is amusing to notice the way in which he sometimes exercises his authority. Often he will not allow a man to sell his paddy himself, for fear he will waste the proceeds. So he sells it for him, devotes part of the proceeds to paying any debts outstanding against him or repairing his house, returning him the balance by instalments. The man submits, because he knows it is for his good, and the integrity of the pastor is above suspicion. Often the pastor picks up reckless, improvident men over head and ears in debt. He brings them home to the village, sets them to work, collects all their wages, pays up their debts by instalments, and keeps them at work, teaching them practical lessons of industry. When a man's debts have thus been paid, he will be trusted little by little until he has shown that he has acquired habits of perseverance and thrift.

The pastor sometimes keeps a printed book, in which is recorded every financial transaction of the village. He draws out on printed forms all papers about rent of land, hire of buffaloes or oxen, hire of coolies, and the like. He is the general umpire to see fair play. When a man dies he is executor of his estate, and manages for the widow and orphans till the youngsters are old enough to take affairs into their own hands. The pastor thus holds in his hands the tangled threads of all the village business, and is the real centre of its life.

It is but natural that in proportion as the pastor is loved by his flock he is hated by the Burman money-lender, who has been fleecing the village for years. The very first thing a preacher sets about when he arrives in a village is to pay off the Burman usurer. He does not sit down quietly and let the money-lender play his old tricks. Soon the village is worked out of debt, and ere long it has money to lend instead of borrowing. Instead of hiring themselves out as labourers, you soon see the villagers hiring coolies--often Burmese--to work on the gradually enlarging rice-farms. The Burmese themselves sometimes remark that nowadays things are turned upside down. You will see thousands of Burmese coolies hired by Karens, but you will never find a Karen coolie in a Burman household. They often quote an old prophecy, which runs thus: "A foreigner may be a 'sir,' a Karen a lord, while the Burman is of no account at all _(a-la-ga)_." Soon you find the preacher investing the earnings of his people in land and renting it out to Burmans. He does this to prevent his Karens spending the money and in order to have land ready for the rising generation to cultivate; for, as he says, "If the people go on multiplying like this, there will be no room for them; we must widen the farms and stock them well."

The Government official, even if anxious to do his best, has not a tenth part of the power for good, moral and material, among the Karens which their pastor or schoolmaster has. The pastor decides more suits, settles more disputes, and does more real business than half a dozen _myokes_, or local judges. I once met a Burman _myoke_ in the house of a Karen pastor. The Burman laughingly said to the pastor that he would have to arrest him some day for defrauding the revenue. "How so?" asked the preacher. "I can scarcely sell any stamped paper while you live in my township," was the Burman's reply; "for you decide many more suits than I do." "I've no lawyers nor stamped papers in my court--that's the reason," replied the

Karen pastor, laughing heartily.

Incidents like these, the simple story of a reformed Karen village, teach a lesson of serious import to our Government. We go about the business of civilizing subject-peoples far too mechanically and with but little real knowledge or appreciation of the human natures--the flesh and blood--with which we are dealing. This is why we remain aliens wherever we go. This is why our cut and dry civilization goes only skin-deep. This is why our schemes of self-government find no genuine support among the populations of the East. Our heads are hot and busy, but our hearts are cold as stone. Our administration lacks the one essential of permanent success--the first, second, and third excellence--sympathy. There have been gifted men--notably, the late Sir Arthur Phayre--with a real genius for governing nations in their infancy. Phayre's name is revered by the Karens. He had the remarkable faculty of leading wild, ignorant tribes by the heart; and he could make them do just what he liked. But the Phayres have been sadly few.

CHAPTER XII - POLICY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TOWARD THE KARENS

THE best way of learning how to govern a people is to consult the people themselves. Depend upon it, there is something worth keeping in their time-honoured usages. Much there may be to prune away, but there is sure to be a residue of good which will repay cultivation. The frame-work of the original constitution may have become overgrown with a good deal that is harmful; the ancient customs may, from vicissitudes of fortune, from oppression and hard times, have been turned to bad account; the old order of things may have been a good deal disturbed by contact with other races or by internal quarrels; but if the original polity can only be disentangled from the noxious accretions which have weakened or hidden it perhaps for ages, it will supply the true principles on which to govern. There is a capacity for self-government in every people, but it varies with race and climate. The highest excellence in any administration must always consist in the perception of this capacity, and in leading it into those channels for which it is best suited. We have conceded what may be called a limited self-government to the people of India; but we have made the concession without discernment of the varying capacities of the races and classes to whom it has been granted. We have dealt with all alike, neglecting distinctive national characteristics. We have failed to seize the true spirit of self-government in the East. Both in method and in scope we are wrong. We have, to use a homely illustration, tried to make legs do the work of arms, and arms the work of legs; and at the same time we have offered a sphere of activity where fingers are best employed. Just as the Burmese make their great gongs of a mixture of all sorts of metals, fine and base, so we manufacture civilization in the East. We melt down all the subject races into one huge mass, and then cast them ruthlessly in our Western mould. But the parallel ends here; for the Burmese gongs has a true ring in it, whereas the product of our wholesale civilization has not. We have no art in our government. We do not understand the civilization of human varieties. We would supply, at short notice, administrative machinery, on contract, to every country under the sun, and drive it by a big high-pressure compound engine at Whitehall; and we would supplant all indigenous processes by patents of our own. The result of our method is this: that the reforms which we endeavour to introduce strike no real root; the soil and climate are not congenial to the plant. The year 1986 will, I fear, find the millions of India not one whit more able to govern themselves than they are now. We have nowhere fostered the growth of real national life. We are endeavouring to create

a New English India. The product will not be much to our credit.

Why should we not try--if only as a political experiment--to give the Karens a chance of growing as a nation in their own way? Why should we not try and bring their wild growth under cultivation, grafting on the ancient roots as time and experience improve our perception and increase our skill. We have here a little people--probably under a million in all--who aspire to keep their own nationality intact. Why should we not allow them, encourage them, to do so? The result may be of the highest interest in the future, and cannot fail to be fraught with great benefit to the people themselves; it will strengthen British rule, and safeguard it in the times of trouble which may yet be in store for us in Burma.

What, then, have the Karens to say for themselves? Have we any indications of the future to which they look forward, of the destiny to which they aspire, and of the way in which they would work it out? Here is a literal, unembellished description of the programme which they have set out for themselves. I give it as I received it from the lips of one of the most intelligent of them, speaking as a representative of thousands of his clansmen, both Christian and heathen:--

"The Karens, as highlanders, for self-preservation and defence, have for ages been indoctrined with the policy of association. Living as they do in their long houses on the hills, forming a family group, having a common hall, to meet and to discuss tribal matters of peace and of war, they have a facility for combination.

"On their emigrating to the lowlands, and living in separate houses in villages, the current of association and combination seems to be interrupted--dormant, but not extinguished, till, among those Christianized, it is again brought into play in the formation of associations for the promotion of Christianity, where delegates from churches are appointed to meet and act in union for a common object.

"This return current combined only the Christian Karens, and though it indirectly benefited the heathens in a measure, yet directly it left the heathen Karens untouched.

"This segregation of the Christian Karens split the Karen race into two sections, the heathen and the Christian. The former, with no means of educating themselves--the written language being not theirs, the white Book sealed to them--uncared for by the State, as their voice could not be heard, are no better off than in the days of Burmese rule, because of their ignorance. On the other hand, the latter, with his village school, his newspaper the _Morning Star_, the Association of the Churches, the Home Mission Societies, the Missionary Conventions, the High Schools, is prepared to start in life with every advantage.

"To many of us who have been benefited by Christianity, it appears that this facility of combination can be utilized for the heathen Karen in common with the Christian--that there is ground wide enough for us all, without distinction of belief to meet on a common platform, united by tied broader even than the ties of religion; to pursue purely secular objects, and thus benefit our younger brothers, and in lifting them up lift ourselves too. The most of us know that for the civilization of a race, the mass must be raised as a solid body.

"I for one firmly believe that the hope for my race is in our schools. The people must help themselves, and not depend entirely upon the State. With this great factor of civilization at the command of the race, every success could be confidently hoped for for the elevation of the Karens.

"Hence we deemed that a representative body representing the Karens from all parts of British Burma has now become a necessity.

"Such an Association is needed--N. Karen Association, 1881--

"1. To utilize the clannishness of the race by having a common platform for heathen and Christian Karens, and thereby keep the nation together.

"2. To enable the Karens to help themselves and one another in case of oppression and wrong in purely secular affairs, and thus free our missionaries in a large measure from the charge of 'interference' with officers of Government--deferring to the guidance and counsel of our missionaries in all points compatible with their labours for us.

"3. To help young men of ability through scholarships to study in Burma, India, or England for the liberal professions, and to further the schemes of Government in the education of the race.

"4. The Karens being largely an agricultural class, the time will come when this combination would be useful for the promotion of agriculture, inasmuch as the Karen, if he desires to be a 'land-holder' under Government, must improve the land, now being impoverished from year to year, and nothing added to the richness of the soil. To make the work of an agriculturist remunerative, we think that the day is not distant when manual labour alone will not do, but that a knowledge of manures and soils, rotation of crops, and other kindred subjects, would be indispensably necessary. In case an agricultural school for Karens is needed, this Association, the greater portion of its members being cultivators, would be of great use.

"To the Government the move would be useful--

"1. To lead the Karens from their Utopian ideas, dangerous from the gullibility of ignorant Karens, and the liability to be led astray by pretended prophets.

"2. To help the Government in all the schemes for the amelioration of the condition of the race.

"3. To form a telephonic line of communication by which the Government can make itself thoroughly understood by even the most ignorant, and to transmit to Government all grievances or causes of complaint.

"To an ordinary Karen, whose religious thought is bounded by fear, and whose simplicity leads him to be easily led astray by seers and prophets, and who imagines that there is in store for him an inheritance in Tau-Mai-Pa's land, 'flowing with milk and honey,' there are two great hopes for him which have by no means died out.

"1. A religious crusade under a supernatural leader (Minloung) against the worship of demons and foreign religions, to a religion of pure Theism and a National Church.

"2. An exodus under a Moses to a land of bliss, there to enjoy the inheritance of Tau-Mai-Pa.

"These ideas have worked for ages, and even in the Burmese reigns have cropped up in insurrections under Minloungs, or fanatic leaders. In the transition from Burmese to British rule, these insurrections have been followed recklessly by people who are otherwise loyal to the Government.

"It is our wish to bring our more intelligent and educated men into constant and direct contact with the mass of heathen Karens. Wisely counselled, this movement will in a simple, practical way enable Government to reach the mass of the Karens through their leaders, and, in accordance with the Karen ideas of clanship, educate the mass to work for themselves."

Is not this a spirited manifesto? The educated and Christian section of the people wish to bind themselves closer than ever to their illiterate and heathen tribesmen, in order to raise the nation as a whole. They love to remain Karens, and they desire to make themselves and their brethren worthy of the name. Their advancement would lose all its charm unless it brought with it advancement to the whole nation; their progress would have no beauty to them unless it were shared by all. The little manifesto is evidence at once of the truest patriotism, and of a high capacity for self-government and self-development. It does not often fall to the lot of an alien government to be favoured with such an opportunity as this affords. Let the British Government for once try the experiment of civilizing and elevating a people without denationalizing them. Recognize once for all the fact that the Karens are a separate nation, distinct from the Burmese in origin, manners, religion, and traditions. Let them feel that their aspirations to keep together and grow as a nation are respected and appreciated, and that we are ready to co-operate with them in their efforts to realize their ideal. Above all, show them sympathy. The question naturally arises--What is the Government to do more than it is doing at present? What are the measures which should be taken? In attempting to answer these questions, I would begin by postulating the three attributes of Karen nationality as we find it, to wit, their language, their ancient customs and organization, and their religion. No people can long survive the extinction of their language. The policy of the British Government has hitherto been rather to discourage and disparage the Karen language, and to compel adoption of the Burmese language, both spoken and written. The language of the courts is Burmese; Karen has no official recognition. The local administration refuses to have anything to do with Karen schools, unless the Burmese language is the vehicle of instruction and the medium of examination. The Karen language is tabooed together. The following remark was made recently by a Karen villager:--"As a Karen I am good enough to fight for the British Government, but I must become a Burman before I can get back from my village school one rupee I have paid the Government in educational taxes." Few, if any, of the officers of Government can speak Karen. Communication between the Karens and their rulers is through interpreters, generally the missionaries. The missionaries, headed by the great Judson, have rescued the Karen language from oblivion and given it a certain permanency by reducing it to writing in the Burmese character. The way, therefore, is open. Let the Karen language be officially recognized as the vehicle of communication between the officers of Government and the people. Endow Karen schools with liberal grants-in-aid, as the later Education Commission have recommended. Liberate them from all obligations to teach the Burmese language. Require all officers to qualify in Karen. Appoint Karen officials [4]--qualified also in the Burmese language--in all parts of the province where Karens preponderate. Issue all official communications, instructions, proclamations, Acts and Rules, in both Burmese and Karen. Insist on Karen being taught in all the schools, and require every one who may be in any way associated with Karens in any official capacity to learn their language. Give prizes for proficiency in Karen as well as in Burmese. Encourage the missionaries in their study of the language. Let it never be forgotten that there is no road so straight to a man's heart as through his mother-tongue.

{ [Footnote--4] There are, I believe, 120 myo-okes, or subdivisional officers, in Lower Burma, of whom only six--if indeed so many---are Karens, although the Karens form from one-fifth to one-sixth of the entire population. }

If the language is perpetuated, the national customs will probably take care of themselves. The clan organization, autonomy under representative leaders, is the national characteristic which stands out most prominently. The Government can best perpetuate this, and thereby render the most signal service to the cause of self-government, by following the lead of the American missionaries in their educational policy. In a previous chapter I described the way in which the schools are organized and managed by the people with the aid of the missionaries. Leave the schools in the hands of the people as much as possible. Let them, whenever possible, appoint their own teachers. Let the communities for whom schools are provided appoint their own delegates to administer the funds and advise Government on all points connected with the working of the schools and the extension and improvement of the means of education. In all matters connected with education, let these delegates, as representatives of the communities, be invariably consulted. Appoint Karen inspectors, chosen from the _clite_ of the former pupils. Employ the delegates, as committees, in the periodical inspection of the local schools. Allow them the nominations to a certain number of scholarships for the University, reserving the remainder for open competition. Grand special concessions, such as temporary exemptions from land-tax, to cultivators who can read and write their own and the Burmese language, and who have attained a certain proficiency in science. Encourage in every possible way domestic industry. Make music a branch of ordinary school education. Facilitate the extension of education to backward, sparsely populated, and unhealthy regions by offering grants in aid to neighbouring communities who may wish to help their poorer and less fortunate brethren. Encourage in every way the education of girls equally with boys. Much depends upon the women of the family. Work as far as possible with the missionaries to whom the Karens and the Government owe so much. Listen to their counsel, and, where the people desire it, let them be associated with them in the management of the schools. It is in the encouragement and promotion of education on these lines that the Government can perhaps do most to strengthen the national unity of the Karens.

In their village life, too, a good deal may be done. Delegate to the village elders such municipal and other public functions as may usefully be discharged by them, with the consent of the communities. Allow the village communities to keep their villages to themselves, and to peremptorily eject the blackguard Burmans who now infest so many of them. Permit of settlement of disputes by constituted courts, consisting of selected elders of the village. In as far as possible let the elders be responsible for the good conduct of the village, and for the peace of the adjoining tract. Recognize the power which ancient custom has given them, of defending their village and their lands from dacoits and raiders; and, I say it advisedly, do not be too squeamish about the way in which they repel the raid and punish the raiders. Recent events have shown the unwisdom of the policy of emasculation which has been lately followed. The Karens have begun to think that they dare not lift a hand in their own defence. They were not at first, allowed to arm themselves, although they were in constant danger from armed rebels and dacoits. At length, from sheer necessity, the local administration was forced to arm them and send them forth to fight in defence of the Queen's authority. And what followed? No sooner was the immediate emergency at an end than they were ordered to be disarmed, although their villages were threatened on all

sides, and the arms which they carried had been in many cases purchased by themselves. Karens have in one or two cases, I believe, been put on their trial for adopting a rigorous method of self-defence in a region overrun by Burmese rebels. This is not as it should be. The best defence a village has, is, or should be, the villagers themselves, and the burden of proving excessive or culpable reprisals should lie on those who provoked them. While Lower Burma is in a state of anarchy and rebellion, it is little short of madness to disarm the villagers and terrify them by threats of judicial vengeance if they should dare to hit the rebels and dacoits too hard. [5]

{ [Footnote--5] A very serious case of injustice to Karens has been reported in the newspapers, and the report has received subsequent confirmation in certain details. The story is that, in a certain district which had been much disturbed, a punitive police-tax was levied on the villages which had been conspicuously turbulent, or had harboured marauders, or which had failed to warn the authorities of the movements of dacoit gangs in their vicinity. This tax was to defray the cost of extra police stationed in these villages. The tax is said to have been assessed and collected by Burmese tax-collectors. The injustice complained of is this: that loyal Karens, and even those who had aided the authorities in quelling the disturbances, have been taxed alike with disloyal Burmese. If this be true, it is most discreditable, and may be most mischievous. The following extract from a letter dated September 13 seems to leave little room for doubt on the matter: "I first saw punitive tax-bills imposed on _actively_ loyal Karens on the 2nd of May.... The very villages whose contingents I that day enrolled had their punitive tax-receipts stamped in the court that very day." }

The last attribute of Karen nationality is--their religion. My readers will perhaps wince at the bare mention of the subject. But in the case of the Karens the policy of Government is much simplified. We, as a Christian power, occupy common ground with the Karens in regard to religion. The Christian section have a faith identical with our own. The heathen section are in reality theists in an attitude of expectancy--expectancy for what? for a revelation from the common God. Christianity has been found to satisfy the expectations of those who have been earnestly looking forward and upward for a fulfilment of the ancient prophecies of their seers. The so-called heathen section see that in Christianity the God of their fathers has revealed Himself; they admit intellectually the truth of Christianity, but they refuse, as yet, to conform to its self-denying ordinances. In openly sanctioning and encouraging the teaching of the Christian religion to Karens, the British Government would be in no sense interfering with the religious freedom of the people. It would, in doing so, be only helping the Karens to a rapid and complete attainment of what their ancestors of old believed and they themselves avow to be their rightful possession. Were a _plebiscitum_ of the people to be taken on the question--the right of the Karen nation to be taught Christianity as the promised revelation from the God of their fathers--it would, I am certain, be carried almost unanimously. In promoting the spread of Christian doctrine, therefore, among the Karens, the British Government would be guilty of no usurpation of power, but would simply be fulfilling at once the historical destiny and the universal wish of the people. The position is a curious and unique one. Rarely, if ever, has it been the good fortune of any Christian State to be placed in a position of such legitimate and commanding influence over the religion of a people.

The Karens, as I have already shown, look on Christianity and education as inseparable factors in their cultivation. A school must always have a church, and a church can never be without a school. State encouragement

to their school should be accompanied by State aid to their churches and missions.

Much, however, remains to be done for the material comfort and well-being of the Karens. Thousands of them live from hand to mouth in feverish jungles and on sterile mountain-tops, struggling, body and soul, for the barest subsistence. Their wives and their children toil ceaselessly for their food. The land they cultivate yields grudgingly, and only to hard and incessant labour. Civilization makes but slow progress amongst a people living from hand to mouth, and migrating every year. The children should be rescued from the daily exhausting labour which they now have from sheer necessity to undergo. The only way to accomplish this is to give the people permanent paying cultivation. The Government should endeavour by every possible means to draw the hill Karens down to the plains, and settle them on good rice-growing hands. Those who have already settled in the valleys and on the rivers have learnt lowland cultivation, and now make the most successful rice-growers on the plains. Grasp the children freed from killing labour, for the school, and you will very soon find the communities prosperous and happy, and you will be raising a great permanent bulwark of strength for British rule.

Only one remark in conclusion. We have many difficulties yet to face in Burma. The annexation of the upper country will not be the unmixed blessing either to ourselves or to the people which many seem to suppose. It is an accomplished fact now, and we dare not recoil from the responsibility which we have imposed on ourselves. That there is trouble in store for us, both from within and from without, seems certain. That from within is the most menacing, and many for years be the most dangerous. Our thirty years' rule in the lower country has been, on the whole, less successful than in any other province of the Indian Empire, from causes which it is unnecessary here to describe. It will be of incalculable advantage for us to have the loyal Karen people occupying points of vantage all over the country. They are at heart true to the British Government; the Burmese are not. Let us, then, cement the Karen allegiance. They owe all they have to their missionaries under the protection afforded by British rule. They have a firm belief in the good intentions of our Government, even although these intentions have as yet borne but scanty fruit. It is the highest and best policy to bind them closely to ourselves, to show by our attitude towards them that we wish them to be a strong and prosperous community, and to give them every facility for developing a national civilization and a national religion. If we succeed we shall not only have achieved a great triumph of administration, but shall also have raised a living wall of defence against aggression from without and turbulence from within.

APPENDIX
TRADITIONS, APPARENTLY DERIVED FROM THE SCRIPTURES

God Eternal

"God is unchangeable, eternal,
He was in the beginning of the world;
God is endless and eternal,
He existed in the beginning of the world.
God is truly unchangeable and eternal,
He existed in ancient time, at the beginning of the world.
The life of God is endless;
A succession of worlds does not measure His existence,
Two succession of worlds do not measure His existence.
God is perfect in every meritorious attitude,

And dies not in succession on succession of worlds."

God Omnipotent

"The Omnipotent is God,
Him have we not believed.
This Omnipotent one,
We have not believed."

God Omniscient

"God created men anciently,
He has a perfect knowledge of all things;
God created men at the beginning,
He knows all things to the present time."

God Omnipresent

"O my children and grandchildren! the earth is the treading-place of the feet of God, and heaven is the place where He sits. He sees all things, and we are manifest to Him."

"God is not far off. He is among us. He has only separated Himself from us by a single thickness of white. Children! it is because men are not upright, that they do not see God."

His Countenance Shines

"The face of God is said to shine continually like the rays of the sun; and the wicked dare not look straight at Him."

His Glory enlightens Heaven

"There can be no night in heaven, there can be no darkness; for the rays of God enlighten it continually like the sun."

He cannot look on Iniquity

"On those that use obscene language, or swear, or commit fornication, or drink, or kill, the righteous One in heaven cannot look. Avoid wickedness, for the righteous One in heaven cannot look upon it."

He created Heaven and Earth

"God created heaven and earth. The creation of heaven and earth was finished."

The Sun, Moon, and Stars

"He created the sun, He created the moon, He created the stars. The creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars was finished."

Man

"He created again (creating) man. And of what did he create man? He created man at first from the earth. The creation of man was finished."

Woman

"He created a woman. How did He create a woman? He took a rib out of the man and created again (creating) a woman. The creation of a woman was

finished."

Life

"He created again (creating) life. How did He create life? Father God said, In respect to My son and daughter, I love them; I will give them My great life. He took a little piece of His life, breathed into the nostrils of the two persons and they came to life, and were real human beings. The creation of man was finished."

Food, Quadrupeds, and Birds

"He created again (creating) food and drink. He created rice, He created water, He created fire, He created cows, He created elephants, He created birds. The creation of animals was finished."

Eden

"Father God said, My son and daughter, your Father will make and give you a garden. In the garden are seven different kinds of trees, bearing seven different kinds of fruit; among the seven, one tree is not good to eat. Eat not of its fruit. If you eat, you will become old, you will die. Eat not. All I have created I give to you. Eat and drink with care. Once in seven days I will visit you. All I have commanded you, observe and do. Forget Me not. Pray to Me every morning and night."

The Temptation, and Fall

"Afterwards Satan came and said, 'Why are you here?' 'Our Father God put us here,' they replied. 'What do you eat here?' Satan inquired. 'Our Father God created food and drink for us; food without end,' Satan said, 'Show me your food?' And they went, with Satan following behind them, to show him. On arriving at the garden, they showed him the fruits, saying, 'This is sweet, this is sour, this is bitter, this is astringent, this is savoury, this is fiery; but this tree, we know not whether it is sour or sweet. Our Father God said to us, "Eat not the fruit of this tree. If you eat you will die." We eat not, and do not know whether it be sour or sweet.' 'Not so, O my children,' Satan replied; 'the heart of your Father God is not with you. This is the richest and sweetest; it is richer than the others, sweeter than the others, and not merely richer and sweeter, but if you eat it you will possess miraculous powers: you will be able to ascend into heaven, and descend into the earth; you will be able to fly. The heart of your God is not with you. This desirable thing He has not given you. My heart is not like the heart of your God. He is not honest; He is envious. I am honest; I am not envious. I love you and tell you the whole. Your Father God does not love you; He did not tell you the whole. If you do not believe me, do not eat it. Let each one eat carefully a single fruit, then you will know.' The man replied, 'Our Father God said to us, "Eat not the fruit of the tree," and we eat not.' Thus saying, he rose up and went away. But the woman listened to Satan, and, thinking what he said rather proper, remained. Satan deceived her completely; and she said to him, 'If we eat, shall we indeed be able to fly?' 'My son and daughter,' Satan replied, 'I persuade you because I love you.' The woman took one of the fruit and ate. And Satan, laughing, said, 'My daughter, you listen to me well; now go, give the fruit to your husband, and say to him, I have eaten the fruit; it is exceedingly rich. If he does not eat, deceive him, that he may eat.' The woman, doing as Satan told her, went and coaxed her husband, till she won him over to her own mind; and he took the fruit from the hand of his wife, and ate. When he had eaten, she went to Satan and said, 'My husband has eaten the fruit.' On hearing that, he laughed exceedingly, and said, 'Now you have listened to me,

very good, my son and daughter.'"

The Curse

"The day after they had eaten, early in the morning, God visited them; but they did not (as they had been wont to do) follow Him, singing praises. He approached them and said, 'Why have you eaten the fruit of the tree that I commanded you not to eat?' They did not dare to reply, and God cursed them. 'Now you have not observed what I commanded you,' he said; 'the fruit that is not good to eat, I told you not to eat; but you have not listened, and have eaten. Therefore you shall become old, you shall be sick, and you shall die!'"

Origin of Sacrifices to Demons

"After this, one of their children became very sick, and the man and his wife said to each other, 'We did not observe God's command, "Of the fruit of the tree eat not," but we ate. Now what shall we do? God has cast us off; we cannot tell what to do. We must go and see Satan, and ask him.' They arose and went to him. 'O Satan,' they said, 'God commanded us, Eat not of that fruit. Thou saidst, Eat; and we hearkened unto thy words, and ate. Now our child is sick, what wilt thou say? What wilt thou devise?' Satan replied, 'To your Father God you did not hearken, you hearkened unto me; now that you have hearkened unto me, hearken unto me to the end.'"

Satan then institutes the principal sacrifices, offerings, and ceremonies that are practised in worshipping demons. First, he orders a _hog_ to be sacrificed; and when that fails, a _fowl_; and after that, he prescribes the mode of fortune-telling by fowls' bones, with many other rites and ceremonies, the details of which would not be interesting."

Creation and Fall, in verse

"In ancient times God created the world;
All things were minutely ordered by Him.
In ancient times God created the world;
He has power to enlarge, and power to diminish.
God created the world formerly;
He can enlarge and diminish it at pleasure.
God formed the world formerly;
He appointed food and drink.
He appointed the fruit of trial;--
He gave minute orders.
Satan deceived two persons;
He caused them to eat the fruit of the tree of trial.
They obeyed not, they believed not God;
They ate the fruit of the tree of trial,--
When they ate the fruit of trial,
They became subject to sickness, old age, and death.
Had they obeyed and believed God,
We should not have been subjected to sickness;
Had they obeyed and believed God,
We should have prospered in our doings.
Had they obeyed and believed Him,
We should not have been poor."

Temptation and Fall

Although the elders say, "Satan is a being of super-human powers, able to take the form of either male or female," he is usually represented as a

woman; but in the following fragment he appears in the character of a dragon. This tradition is further remarkable for the names of the progenitors of the human race; and it is worthy of observation, that had it been a modern composition, Adam would not have been _Thah-nai_; nor Eve _E-u_ [_U_, pronounced like the French _u_.], but _A-wa_, as written and printed by both Protestant and Catholic missionaries in Burma:--

"God commanded man anciently;
Satan appeared, bringing destruction.
God commanded man formerly;
Satan appeared, deceiving unto death.
The woman E-u and the man Thah-nai
Did not meet the eye of the great dragon;
The woman E-u, and the man, two persons;
The dragon looked on them, and they did not meet his mind.
The great dragon deceived the woman and Thah-nai;
How is it said to have taken place?
The great dragon succeeded in deception, deceiving unto death;
How is it said to have been done?
The great dragon took a yellow fruit,
And gave to eat to the son and daughter of God:
The great dragon took a white fruit,
And gave to eat to the children of God.
They did not observe all the words of God;
They were deceived, deceived unto death:
They did not observe all the commands of God;
They were deceived, deceived unto sickness:
They transgressed the words of God,
And God turned His back on them:
Having transgressed the commands of God,
God turned away from them."

Tree of Life, and Tree of Death

"O children and grandchildren! in the beginning, God, to try man, whether he would or would not observe His commands, created the tree of death and the tree of life, saying, concerning the tree of death, 'Eat not of it,' He wished to see whether man believed. Not believing, he ate of the fruit of the tree of death, and the tree of life God hid. Because the tree of life has been hidden, men have died since that time."

"Temptation, temptation, the fruit of temptation,
The fruit of temptation fell on the ground;
The fruit of temptation was bad,
It poisoned to death our mother;
The fruit of temptation, 'Do thou eat it not.'
In the beginning it poisoned to death our father and mother.
The tree of death came by woman,
The tree of life by Man!"

The Curse

"O children and grandchildren! because in the beginning man ate the fruit of the tree of death, poison descends to us and we all die."

Angels

The Karens believe that there are beings in heaven who have never sinned, and that they are employed in executing God's purposes:--

"The sons of heaven are powerful,

They sit by the seat of God:
The sons of heaven are righteous,
They dwell together with God;
The sons of heaven are good.
They lean against the silver seat of God.
The beings whom God employs to execute His purposes,
Have, to the present time, the reclining-place of God."

Satan

Satan is known by several names; among which the most common are Ku-plau, the deceiver, from his deceiving the first man and woman, and Yaw-kaw, the _neck-trodden_, from the belief that man will ultimately tread on his neck, or overcome him. The Karens believe that he was formerly a holy being in heaven, but that he disobeyed God, and was driven from heaven:--

"Satan in ancient times was righteous,
But he transgressed the commands of God;
Satan in ancient times was holy,
But he departed from the love of God;
And God drove him away,
He deceived the daughter and son of God,
And God drove you away;
For you deceived the daughter and son of God."

"O children and grandchildren! though we were to kill Satan, he would not die; but when the time of our salvation comes, God will kill him. Because that time has not yet arrived, he still exists."

Deluge

Though I have never met with any direct traditions of the deluge, indirect allusions are occasionally found in their fabulous stories. For instance, "It thundered, tempests followed; it rained three days and three nights, and the waters covered all the mountains." Again, "Anciently, when the earth was deluged with water, two brothers, finding themselves in a difficulty, got on a raft. The waters rose and rose, till they reached to heaven; when seeing a mango-tree hanging down, the younger brother climbed up it and ate; but the waters suddenly falling, left him in the tree."

Dispersion of Men

"O children and grandchildren! men had at first one father and mother; but because they did not love each other, they separated. After their separation they did not know each other, and their language became different; and they became enemies to each other and fought."

"The Karens were the elder brother,
They obtained all the words of God;
They did not believe all the word of God,
And became enemies to each other:
Because they disbelieved God,
Their language divided.
God gave them commands,
But they did not believe Him; and divisions ensued."

Resurrection

The astronomical systems of all the nations around the Karens teach that the sun, moon, and stars revolve round a great north mountain, in planes

parallel to the surface of the earth; while the Karens retain the old idea, that the heavenly bodies go round the earth, descending under and rising above. Under the earth they suppose that there is another world, where people go at death. It is enlightened by the same heavenly bodies as the earth; but its days and nights are the reverse of ours, the sun rising there when he sets here. It is regarded as an intermediate state, where all the dead go, and where the inhabitants are employed much as the inhabitants of the earth, corresponding to the Jewish idea of Sheol.

Connected with this subject, the Karens have an obscure notion of a final resurrection. One of their old prophecies says--

"O children and grandchildren! you think the earth large. The earth is not so large as the Entada bean. When the time arrives, people will be more numerous than the leaves of the trees, and those who are now unseen, will then be brought to view. O my children, there will not be a hiding-place for a single thing on earth."

The Karens explain this by saying that the earth is as large as a bean when compared with the whole of God's works. Concerning the numerous people that are to appear, they confess their ignorance, but think that the inhabitants of Hades (the invisible, or lower world) are intended, whom God will cause to come up on the earth.

Another statement is, that after the world is burned up, God will come and raise men to life again; when "the lazy shall become dogs, but the industrious, men."

TRADITIONAL PRECEPTS
APPARENTLY DERIVED FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Love to God

"O children and grandchildren! love God, and never so much as mention His name; for, by speaking His name, He goes farther and farther from us."

Prayer

"O children and grandchildren! pray to God constantly by day and by night."

Repentance and Prayer

"O children and grandchildren! if we repent of our sins, and cease to do evil, restraining our passions, and pray to God, He will have mercy upon us again. If God does not have mercy on us, there is no other one that can. He who saves us is the only one God."

Idolatry

"O children and grandchildren! do not worship idols or priests. If you worship them you obtain no advantage thereby, while you increase your sins exceedingly."

Honour to Parents

"O children and grandchildren! respect and reverence your mother and father; for, when you were little, they did not suffer so much as a mosquito to bite you. To sin against your parents is a heinous crime."

"If your father or mother instruct or beat you, fear. If you fear not, the tiger will not fear you."

Love to Others

"O children and grandchildren! do not be fond of quarrelling and disputings, but love each other. God in heaven looks down upon us; and if we do not love each other, it is the same as if we did not love God. O children and grandchildren! quarrel not, but love each other."

Relative Duties

"O children and grandchildren! parent and child, master and slave, husband and wife; let not the child deceive his parents, the slave his master, nor the wife her husband."

Associates

"O children and grandchildren! do not associate with the wicked. Those that associate with robbers, become robbers; those that associate with the honest, become honest; those that associate with the passionate, become passionate."

Murder

"O children and grandchildren! do not take the life of man. If you kill, you must bear your sin. In the next world you will be killed in return."

Wantonly killing Animals

"O children and grandchildren! we may eat anything on earth without sin, for God created them all for us; but do not kill or destroy anything wantonly. If we kill or destroy wantonly, we sin."

Robbery

"O children and grandchildren! do not forcibly take the property of another. Observe, my children, that robbers quickly become slaves. Should you even be a slave, good remains; but there is no calling on God in hell."

Theft

"O children and grandchildren! do not steal the goods of another; for the owner worked for them until he sweat. Thieves will have to repay."

Adultery and Fornication

"O children and grandchildren! do not commit adultery, or fornication, with the child or wife of another; for the righteous One looks down from above, and these things are exposed to Him. Those that do thus will go to hell."

"If you meet the wife of another, avoid her, and pass on the lower side of the road."

Polygamy

"O children and grandchildren! if you have one wife, lust not after another female or male; for God, at the beginning, created only two: one

male and one female."

False Swearing

"O children and grandchildren! that which is not true, swear not to, by the true One. Swear not to that which you do not well know."

Lying and Deception

"O children and grandchildren! do not speak falsehood. What you do not know, do not speak. Liars shall have their tongues cut out."

"O children and grandchildren! do not use deceitful language, but speak the words of truth only. The righteous One in heaven knows everything that is said."

"O children and grandchildren! do not talk at random concerning that which you do not know. Random talkers speedily become slaves."

Swearing

"O children and grandchildren! do not curse, or use imprecations, and do not use obscene language. If you curse, or use imprecations, they will return on yourselves."

Giving Alms

"O children and grandchildren! give food and drink to the poor; and, by so doing, you will obtain mercy yourselves."

Doing Good to all Men

"O children and grandchildren! according to your ability, relieve the distresses of all men. If you do good to others, you will not go unrewarded; for others will make like returns to you."

Idleness

"O children and grandchildren! while in this state here on earth, be not idle, but labour diligently, that you may not become slaves; and when persons visit you, have food and drink to give them."

Covetousness

"O children and grandchildren! do not envy the possessions of others. Though exceedingly abundant, covet them not. Work yourselves, and eat your own things."

Intemperance

"O children and grandchildren! do not be guilty of excess in eating and drinking. Be not intemperate, but take that which is proper only."

Obedience to Kings

"O children and grandchildren! obey the orders of kings, for kings, in former times, obeyed the commands of God. If we do not obey them, they will kill us.

Earthly-mindedness

"O children and grandchildren! do not covet the good things of this world! for when you die, you cannot carry away the things that are on earth."

"O children and grandchildren! do not desire to be great men, and possess authority. Great men sin exceedingly, and when they die, go to hell."

Anger

"O children and grandchildren! never get angry. If we are angry with others, it is the same as if we were angry with God. The righteous One looks down from heaven upon us. The person who looks on the great and small, the vile and the wicked, children and youth, without anger, and gives them food and drink, he shall be established unchangeably."

On Forbearance and Humility

"O children and grandchildren! though a person persecute you with deceit, anger, and revenge, though he strike you, thump you, beat you, do not return him evil. If you return evil, you derive no advantage thereby. Then with the heart forbear, and speak to him respectful words; by doing thus, you will not go unrewarded."

"The man who without anger endures all with humility shall be established unchangeably, for, by doing thus, the advantages of meritorious qualities are his."

Love to Enemies

"O children and grandchildren! if a person injure you, let him do what he wishes, and bear all the sufferings he brings upon you with humility. If an enemy persecute you, love him with the heart. On account of our having sinned against God from the beginning, we ought to suffer."

How to act when One Cheek is struck

"O children and grandchildren! if a person strike you on the face, he does not strike you on the face; he only strikes on the floor. Therefore, if a person strike you on one cheek, give him the other to strike."

When spit on

"O children and grandchildren! if a person spits in your face, do not spit in his face in return. He only spits in the air."

The Two Roads

"O children and grandchildren! the road that leads to heaven is a tract scarcely discernible, but the road that goes to hell is very great."

NATIONAL TRADITIONS

A People beloved of God

"O children and grandchildren! formerly God loved the Karen nation above all others, but they transgressed His commands, and in consequence of their transgressions we suffer as at present. Because God cursed us, we are in our present afflicted state, and have no books. But God will again have mercy on us, and again He will love us above others. God will yet

save us again; it is on account of our listening to the language of Satan, that we thus suffer."

The Word of God

In one of their old war-songs, the Sgaw Karens boast in possessing the Word of God:--

"Though thou sayest the Pghos are insignificant,
Thou must pay a fine for killing them.--
The Sgaws have the word of Jehovah;
They will pay no fine for the life of Pgho."

Departure of God

Many of the Karen traditions both in prose and verse allude to the departure of God, but to what event reference is had, it is difficult to say; for all the accounts are evidently fabulous in their details. For instance, "The elders said that God, returning anciently, said to the Karens, 'Karen, guide Me.' The Karens replied, 'The weeds are very thick, we cannot guide Thee;' and God said, 'May you pull up weeds generation after generation.' Coming to the Burmans, He said, 'Burman, guide Me.' The Burmans replied, 'We are hewing out a canoe, we cannot guide Thee;' and God said, 'May you hew out canoes generation after generation.' So said one after another in succession till He came to the white foreigners, the younger brother, to whom He said, 'White foreigner, guide Me.' The white foreigner replied, 'I have no ship, no boat, I cannot guide Thee; but I wish to guide Thee.' Then God made him take off his hat and put it in the sea, and it became a large golden ship; in which they conducted God away to the West. When they arrived, God blessed them, saying, 'May you ride in ships and boats; may you cross waters and reach lands: may you dress in fine clothes: may you be handsome: may you have rulers from among yourselves: may you have large towns and great cities.' Then God went up to heaven, and the white foreigners returned. Hence it is that the white foreigners are more skilful than all other nations, and ride in ships to the present time."

Some poetical pieces represent God as calling upon the sun, moon, and all created beings, to come at His departure; as in the following fragment:--

"God about to return commanded, commanded;
God about to depart commanded, commanded;
He commanded the sun to come and weep for Him,
He commanded the moon to come and weep for Him,
He commanded the birds to come and weep for Him,
He commanded the squirrels to come and weep for Him."

Return of God

The return of God is confidently expected; and the dead trees are represented as blossoming on His arrival:--

"At the appointed season, God will come;
The dead trees will blossom and flower;
When the appointed season comes, God will arrive:
The mouldering trees will blossom and bloom again;
God will come and bring the great Thau-thee; [a mountain so called, which is to be the seat of future happiness, according to some statements]
We must worship, both great and small,
The great Thau-thee God created;
Let us ascend and worship.

There is a great mountain in the ford,
Can you ascend and worship God?
There is a great mountain in the way,
Are you able to ascend and worship God?
You call yourselves the sons of God,
How many evenings have you ascended to worship God?
You call yourselves the children of God,
How often have you ascended to worship God?"

Sometimes He is represented as coming with a trumpet:--

"God comes down, comes down;
God descends, descends;
He comes blowing a trumpet,
He descends sounding a trumpet;

Blowing, He gathers men, like the flowers of the Areca [The flowers grow thick and are very numerous.]
Sounding, He gathers people, like the flowers of the Areca."

Sometimes angels in glory would seem to accompany Him, while the great among the people play on golden harps:--

"The glittering, the angels of heaven,
The dazzling, the angels of heaven:
The great trumpet that God comes blowing!
The great one that strikes the golden harp."

In one fragment God is represented as coming in rags:--
"O children and grandchildren! before God comes, Satan will come deceiving men; and in order to deceive, he will come dressed in fine clothes and handsome attire; but follow him not, children and grandchildren! After Satan will come One with scarcely clothes enough to cover Him. Follow Him.That One is God. When God comes, He will take the appearance of the poorest of men, and will dress in rags. Follow Him."

Sometimes God, it is said, is to save them by His youngest son:--
"O children and grandchildren! God will yet save us again. He has saved us twice, and His youngest son will be able to save us again."

Appearance of Satan

Some statements represent Satan as coming to deceive men before God returns. The elders said,--

"O children and grandchildren! before God arrives, Satan will appear, and the unrighteous, and the lascivious, and adulterers, and deceivers, and the contentious will follow him; and when they have all gone after him, there will be happiness, and God will come."

Darkness to come

A Karen assistant, after reading the account of the plagues in Egypt, related the following:--"The elders said, There will yet be a great darkness; the darkness will be such that men will not be able to see each other, and they will be compelled to creep and feel. At that time the fagots will become serpents, and the bamboos, snakes; and people will feel here, and they will lay their hands on a serpent; and there, and they will lay their hands on a snake."

King

Many of their compositions represent them as expecting great temporal prosperity under their kings:--

"O children and grandchildren! the Karens will yet dwell in the city with the golden palace. If we do well, the existence of other kings is at an end. The Karen king will yet appear, and, when he arrives, there will be happiness."

For this they have been in the habit of praying. The following are specimens of their prayers:--

"O Lord, we have had affliction for a long succession of generations; have compassion, have mercy upon us, O Lord. The Taling kings have had their season, the Burman kings have had their season, the Siamese kings have had their season, and the foreign kings, all have had their season; the Karen nation remains. Let our king arrives, O Lord. Thou, O Lord, whom we adore, to whom we sing praises, let us dwell within the great town, the high city, the golden palace. Give to us, have compassion upon us, O Lord."

"O Lord, the God whom we adore, have compassion, have mercy upon us. Let us have kings, and let the city, the town, the great town, the silver city, the new town, the new city, the palace, the royal residence arrive to us all, O Lord. Have compassion, and grant unto us, O great God."

Sometimes they represent themselves metaphorically as becoming civilized, while other nations become barbarous:--

"The elders said, Children and grandchildren! the high mountain will be levelled; and the plain will become a sink. The deer will ascend the mountains, and the wild goat will descend to the plains."

"The great mountain will become a plain,
Children be happy and play:
The great mountain will be levelled,
Children be joyful and play."

Some compositions represent the Karen king as the sole monarch of the earth, and that there will be neither rich nor poor in their reign, but that all will be happy.

"Good persons, the good,
Shall go to the silver town, the silver city;
Righteous person, the righteous,
Shall go to the new town, the new city;
Persons that believe their father and mother,
Shall enjoy the golden palace.
When the Karen king arrives,
There will be only one monarch;
When the Karen king comes,
There will be neither rich nor poor;
When the Karen king shall arrive,
There will be neither rich man nor poor;
When the Karen king shall come,
Rich and poor will not exist."

They believe when the Karen king comes, the beasts will be at peace, and cease to bite and devour one another.

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THE END