

**PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF BRITISH BURMA
AND ITS CHURCH
MISSION WORK IN 1878-79**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649506705

Personal Recollections of British Burma and its Church Mission Work in 1878-79 by J. H. Titcomb

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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OF

BRITISH BURMA

And its Church Mission Work

IN 1878-79.

BY

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First Bishop of Rangoon.



LONDON :

Published for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,

BY

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON, AND CO.

2, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

1880.

133. e. 58.

LONDON:
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR,
BREAD STREET HILL, E.C.

PREFACE.

THE following pages have been drawn up at the request of the Rev. H. Tucker, Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and several other friends, under a hope that they may advance the cause of Church Missions in a country which, while at present little known, is yet full of the deepest interest. They are sent forth by the author for no other purpose than to create sympathy with him in his labours; to extend information concerning a remote portion of the Indian Empire; and to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The See of Rangoon, taken out of that of Calcutta, was founded in 1877 through a noble effort of the diocese of Winchester. To the sum of 10,000*l.* raised in that diocese, another 10,000*l.* was added as a benefaction from the Societies for "Promoting Christian Knowledge" and for the "Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," and from the "Colonial Bishops' Fund." To these sources of endowment the Indian Government also consented to add the pay of a Senior Chaplaincy. This connection between Rangoon and Winchester has been memorialised in the heraldic arms of the former; on the left side of which stands a "palm-tree" intersected by a shield bearing the "sword of St. Paul and the key of St. Peter." The diocese was created by Letters Patent from the Queen in

the year just stated ; providing it with two archdeaconries, and constituting it a part of the ecclesiastical Province of Calcutta. Its area is coterminous with that of British Burma, including also the Andaman and Nicobar islands, and comprising altogether a territory of more than 100,000 square miles.

British Burma consists of three divisions : Arakan, Pegu, and Tenasserim, extending along the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal, from Chittagong in N. Lat. $22^{\circ} 30'$, to the kingdom of Siam in N. Lat. 10° . The shore, passing by Akyab toward the Bassein river, is rugged and rocky, with a perfect labyrinth of creeks ; and is faced by a series of fertile islands, some of which contain valuable wells of mineral oil.

Following E. and N.E. to the mouth of the Rangoon and Sittang rivers, the coast is flat and low ; skirting the great delta of the river Irrawaddy, which covers an area of about 11,000 square miles, and is intersected by an immense network of tidal creeks, with paddy fields yielding rich harvests of rice. The richness of the soil may be imagined when the reader learns that, beneath these rice crops, alluvial mould can be often pierced to the depth of twelve feet. From the river Sittang, the coast turns southward, parallel to the western boundary of Siam ; inclosing a long and narrow strip of Tenasserim, and facing, at a distance of about twenty miles, a long and beautiful chain of islands called the Mergui Archipelago.

The mountain ranges of British Burma, like its political divisions, are threefold ; that of the Pegu Yoma running northward from Rangoon into Upper Burma, and being about equi-distant from, as well as parallel to, the Arakan range on the west, and the Tenasserim range which lies to the east and south. Some of these mountains abound in limestone ; and in certain portions there is found granite, greenstone, and hornblende. In Tenasserim even coal has been discovered ; but, owing to the difficulty and expense of removing it, the seams are not worked. Excellent tin, however, exists there ; also copper ores

in small quantities; and ores of manganese and iron in abundance. Lead has also lately been found in the northern mountains of Tenasserim, as well as in the islands of the Mergui Archipelago.

The principal towns and rivers will be spoken of in connection with the personal narrative which is to follow. Nothing, therefore, will be said of them in this place.

The communications throughout British Burma are mainly effected by water, there being only about 700 miles of road throughout the whole country, and one railway. The tracts of uncultivated land are enormous. These consist of mountain ranges, and other regions covered by pathless jungles. Nevertheless there exists a culturable area capable of reclamation; which, if once effected, would add untold wealth to this young province of the Indian Empire. It is said, for instance, that, in Pegu alone, there are no less than 13,418 square miles of waste land which only requires population in order to become as fertile as any in the world. Even at present there is a total area of land under cultivation to the extent of 2,951,265 acres; and the percentage of increase is steadily rising every year.

The population of British Burma, as reported last year (1877-78), amounted to 3,011,614 souls.

In reference to commerce, the export trade both foreign and coasting, during last year, increased by twenty-one per cent. over that of the preceding year. Of the foreign trade of the province, Rangoon took 94.4 per cent., while of the coasting trade 62.7 fell to the share of that city. The gross receipts of revenue for the same period were 1,988,244*l.*; out of which, after disbursements of every sort, as much as 544,338*l.* (nett cash) was remitted to the imperial exchequer of India.

It is needless to observe, after this interesting (though perhaps somewhat dry) statement of facts, that the material prosperity of the country is very great; and that, under wise administration, it is likely to develop with rapidity. As its wealth, however, largely lies in non-Christian hands, *i.e.* among Buddhists, Parsees,

Chinese, Jews, Armenians, and Mohammedans, it must not be supposed that the prosperity of Rangoon is any true measurement of the local resources available for Christian Missions. Many a long year will have to pass before British Burma can look within herself, however prosperous, for the due supply of her own Missionary finances. Till then, she must still turn her eyes to dear old England,—that “mother in Israel”—who never refuses where she can give of her bread and substance to refresh the faint-hearted and the weary.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

BRITISH BURMA.

CHAPTER I

Introduction—Leaving England, and the voyage out—Arrival in Rangoon
—Reception—Description of Rangoon and its Inhabitants—General
ignorance of its position and character—The nature of its climate.

As these are personal recollections, my readers must kindly consent to a considerable use of the first person singular without indulging in any cynical remarks. No man can give an account of his own experiences unless the egotistical "I" play some part in his story. To suppress it would be an affectation of humility at the expense of truth. Admitting it, therefore, as a necessary ingredient into this narrative, just as a visitor within a foreign city consents to his garrulous *com-missionnaire* for purposes of information, let me commence by remarking that I accepted the Bishopric of Rangoon in November, 1877, with mingled feelings of faith and fear. The difficulties at first appeared insuperable. How could I, at the age of fifty-eight, break up my parish work, my home, and family? Everything said, "Impossible! You have never hitherto resided in a tropical country, and you have too many family roots and responsibilities at home to allow yourself to be transported to such a distance." In this state of feeling I had almost given up the idea, when voices from one side and another made me pause and count the cost as in the light of a