

Personal Recollections of the Upper Burmah Campaign 1886~7

by

Major Richard Holbeche (1850~1914)



(Circa 1883)



Richard Holbeche

(Circa 1910)

Transcription and Illustrations
by Janet Jordan
November, 2017

A copy of the original of Richard Holbeche's following account is kept with the the Holbeche Family Papers in Sutton Coldfield Library (Reference: BCOLQ942.496082HOL)

I believe that it was written sometime in the late 1880s, during which time Richard was stationed in Bengal with The Royal Munster Fusiliers. He finally returned to the Holbeche family home at No. 3 Coleshill Street, Sutton Coldfield in 1891.

He is known to be something of a writer and his "Recollections of Sutton Coldfield in the Fifties" (known to local historians as "The Holbeche Diary", Library Ref: Q726.50942496HOL) was written in 1892 and is a much used source of reference.

The memories of his childhood, in particular, suggest that he was not a budding scholar, yet ultimately he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in The Second Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, by the time he retired in 1892.

For his part in the Third Burmah War, he was awarded the Indian Medal of 1854 with the Burmah 1887-89 Clasp.



Medal and clasp for Burmah, 1887-89

Mandalay
Yesago
Chindwin River
Myingyan
Pakokku

Thayetmyo

Irrawaddy River

Pegu
Rangoon

British Colonial Burmah, 1886-1942



Personal Recollections of the Upper Burmah Campaign of 1886-7.

I think it will make the subsequent part of my paper clearer if I first make a short explanation of the topographical nature of the country of Upper Burmah, the habits and character of its inhabitants, and the circumstances which led to its conquest and annexation by the British Government.

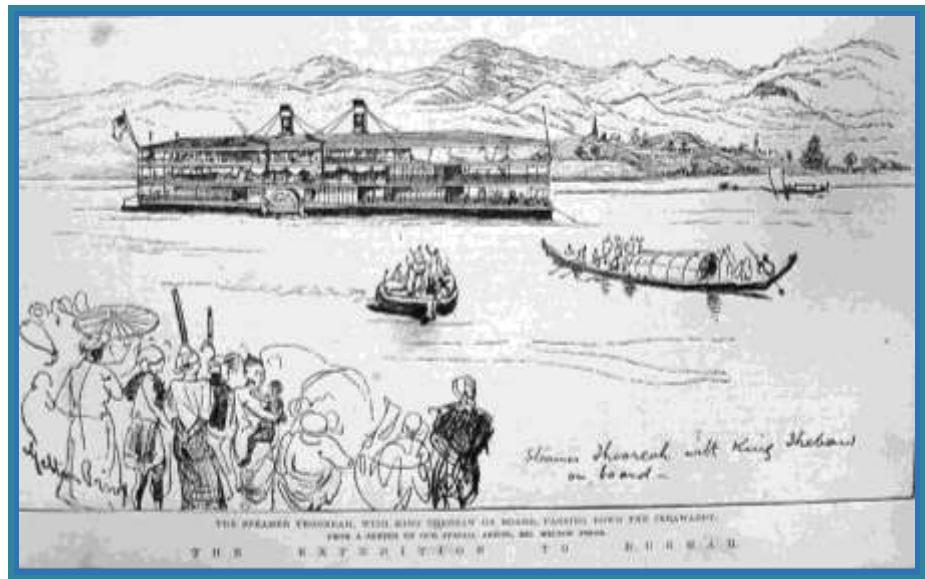
British Burmah, taken by the English in the wars of 1826 and 1852, in the latter of which Pegu was added to our Indian Empire, is bounded on the north by Upper Burmah, on the west by the Bay of Bengal, and on the south and east by the Kingdom of Siam & Upper Burmah. It is a narrow strip of country, running roughly north and south, having a free bord on the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Martaban of some 500 miles. Its capital is Rangoon, a prosperous town built on one of the many mouths of the mighty Irrawaddy (the father of waters).

Immediately north of British Burmah lies Burmah. It will thus be seen that (I speak of Upper Burmah as Burmah, & not British Burmah) Burmah had no access to the sea, and the predecessor of King Theebau, King Mindoon Min, made the "fad" of his life the recovery of his lost child - the fair

province of Pegu - and never to the day of his death abandoned hope that our government would relinquish it. The Irrawaddy which discharged itself by many mouths flows nearly due south. This noble stream is navigable (sic) for steamers for more than a thousand miles, and is the great highway - indeed was the only one in Upper & Lower Burmah, for till our occupation, there were no roads, and needless to say, no railroad. Ascending it Thyatmyo (Thayetmyo) is reached at a distance of about 190 miles from Rangoon. It has been the border station of British Burmah & always strongly garrisoned. Beyond Thyatmyo is the country we have lately added to our Empire.

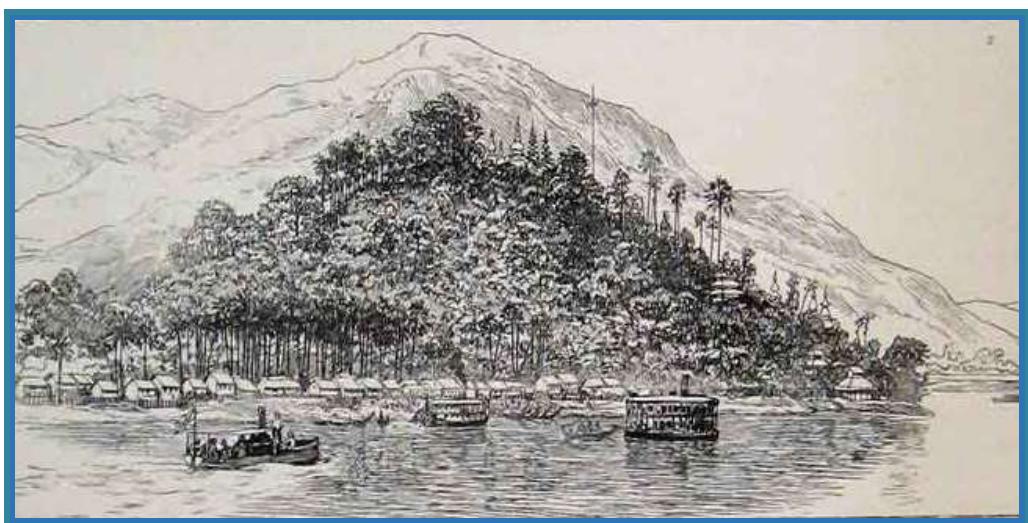
It seems to me strange that the conquest of Burmah interested people so little in England, & that the services of thirty thousand of their fellow countrymen & fellow subjects was only occasionally alluded to in our leading papers in a short paragraph, when some prominent officer, or some considerable number of men have been laid low.

Here we have a country sixty thousand square miles larger than the total area of the British Islands, rich in timber, gold, silver platinum, rubies and mineral oils, with a soil which will grow both temperate, & tropical crops, opened throughout its length by a magnificent water course & last & not least inhabited by an educated, amicable & intelligent people, absorbed into our empire, without the nation, as a whole, giving more than the most trifling interest to it.



1. A Three tier steamer on the River Irrawaddy

As steaming north, on the high three storied deck of one of the huge flotilla (sic) steamers sailing farther & farther inland, we see nothing but miles of dense jungle, stretching as far as the eye can reach, except an occasional mountain chain in the dim distance. This is Burmah, the river banks being always the same, and very much like in appearance to that part of Windley (Wyndley) pool near the floodgate which takes the surplus water to the stream in the park.



2. River banks, similar to Wyndley pool

There is an occasional town with its numerous white pagodas, and an occasional acclivity which is always surmounted by a graceful little Buddhist shrine.

Of roads there are none, if we except a track through the jungle here & there, which leads to an adjacent village. The boats used are large barges, low in stem & high in stern, & have a house-shaped structure on their decks. Occasionally we come across great timber rafts of teak, floating leisurely down the river, with perfect villages built on them.

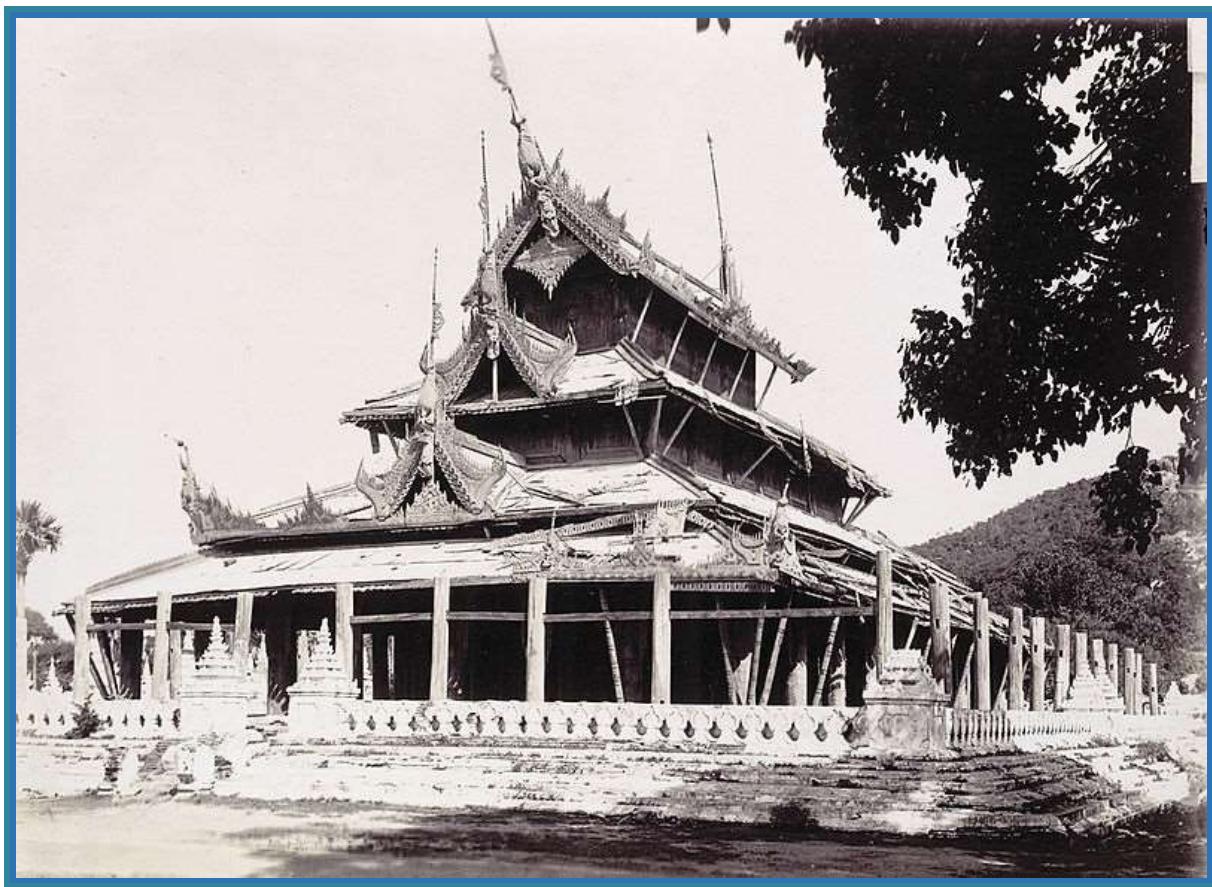


3. Large Barges - high in stern low in front

The Burmans are wrongly described as of the Indo-Chinese family - they are in reality Mongolians & do not appear to me to have the smallest thing in common with our Hindoo Bretheren (sic). They are of the Buddhist faith, believing in

the transmigration of souls, & convinced that if they have lived a good life as men & have practised charity, they are sure of the "Nervāṇā" or perfect rest.

In fact charity is the chief article of their faith, & they practice it. If a man makes money, he does not hoard it but builds a pagoda, or a zāyāt (a shed for housing wayfarers). The consequence is that these buildings are to be found in thousands, through the length and breadth of Burmah, and were of inestimable use to us during the campaign, as we were never able to carry tents.



4. Thudhamma Zayat at Mandalay

The Burman is a light warm brown, as regards skin, athletic, neatly built & is the least dressed man in the world, wearing a bright yellow turband as a head covering, a scarlet check silk shirt, which is short, and a white linen jacket. If we dressed so, we should be accused of want of taste in colour, but it suits him, & a Burman crowd is a thing to see, & resembles a brilliant flower bed. He wears long hair tied on the top of his head in a knot. He is a good cheery laughing man, he washes well, & a Burman "crush" is never offensive to the nostrils. He is accused of being a coward because in the jungle he makes his ambuscade (ambush), fires his volley & decamps (disappears). I do not think that this proves him to be without courage. It is his method of warfare, & I have seen Burnmans hanged & flogged & have never seen them shew fear.



5. Rest after Hunting - Burmah (Myanmar) 1886 (showing typical Burma men)

He is forbidden by the precepts of Guatama (Gautama Buddha, founding figure of Buddhism) to take life. He rarely does so, except it be human. He is very fond of all animals & treats the domestic ones well - He is not offensively humble - indeed while treating you with respect he does not at any time lose his dignity. Altogether he is a very lovable fellow; unlike his Indian bretheren (sic), appreciating a joke, & taking his pleasure merrily.

The women are remarkably captivating. It is true that they have broad noses, but they have such pretty taking ways, & dress so coquettishly, always with a simple flower or two in their tresses, & so merry, that everyone admires them.



6. A Group of Young Women - Burmah 1880s

The worst of the Burmans is, that they are such foul feeders. Everything, dogs, cats, horses that have died some time before, are eaten by these otherwise dainty men & damsels.

As will be seen they were no mean enemy.

The Burman is not an adept liar like most orientals.

The reasons for the war may be briefly stated. When King Mindoon Min died, he was succeeded by the execrable Thebaw. Our government thought it desirable that a British Resident should be received at the Court of Mandalay. Thebaw thought differently, & from time to time insulted our representative & drove him to Rangoon.

In 1880 he & his vicious Queen Soupialat(Supayalat), fearing a rebellion, murdered the whole of their relations, 86 in number, under circumstances of great barbarity, diverting

the notice of the people of Mandalay by giving fêtes on a gigantic scale.

In 1883, he had 500 people buried alive outside the city walls, in order to stave off the small pox. This proceeding naturally created some consternation among his people, & made them envy the inhabitants of Lower or British Burmah, under our mild rule.



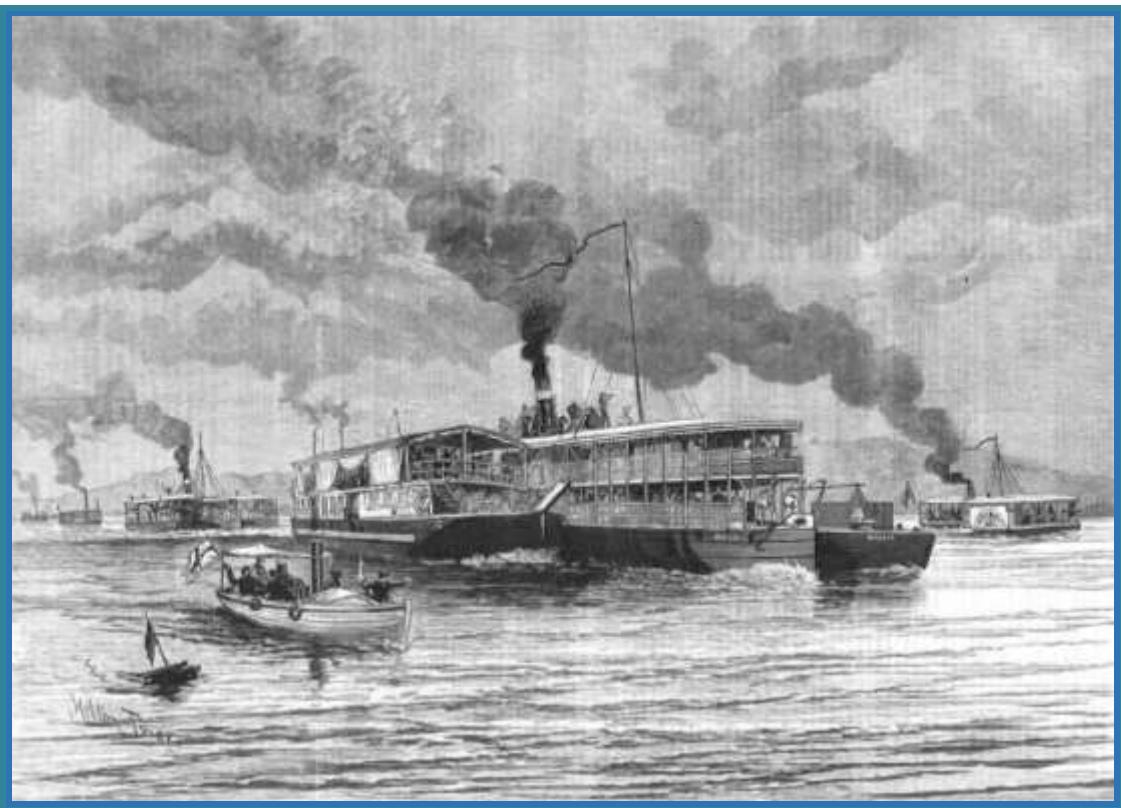
7. King Theebaw and his Queen, Supayalat

Thebaw was a real despot, & executions were going on daily. His wife was even worse & if her lord even looked at any maid of honour, her head was off before the morrow. Things at last came to a crisis & in 1885, an expedition was sent by river from Rangoon. After some fighting Mandalay was taken, the King deposed and sent a prisoner to India.

unhappily Sir H. Prendergast had not a sufficient force to enable him to take & disarm the King's army. The consequence of this was that his soldiers got away with their arms and ammunition, were joined by the whole people, & in short Burmah was in a blaze. Englishmen were murdered & Sir H. Prendergast's force could only hold Mandalay & its large arsenal.

In 1886, the Government decided to send a force of thirty two thousand troops of the British and Indian Armys (sic), and my Regiment found itself at Rangoon on the 3rd October 1886.

We were taken by boat up the Irrawaddy, that is to say that we occupied one large steamer, upon which the officers lived, & a huge two-storied boat was lashed on either side, upon which the men lived. We had a merry time. Each night we anchored, the band played, & being a particularly musical Regiment we had songs & choruses from the flats (flat bottomed boats) & from our own abode, till "lights out" sounded.



8. BURMAH Flotilla of British Troops Going up the Irrawaddy to Bhamo -Old Print 1886

The mosquitoes were terrible & I slept nightly in my breeches and boots. The weather was hot & the men lay naked, for their clothes would not keep these pests from stinging, & we could hear the men "cursing" & slapping themselves all night.

In 9 days we arrived at Myngyan (Myingyan), where we formed a brigade consisting of the 1st Bombay lancers, ourselves, two batteries of artillery and a regiment from both the Madras and Bombay armies.

We then found that our gallant General, Sir George White had arranged his plan of campaign. He found that it was useless to attempt anything in force. We were therefore sent

in different directions in companies or larger bodies to attack the more noted chiefs.

I was sent by boat up the Chindwin river with orders to make a post, and penetrate into the Yao Country.



9. Up the Chindwin River, The Illustrated London News, Dec 16, 1886

The night of leaving Myngyan & the following day were the most miserable I have ever spent. We were under canvas, but were messsing in a wooden house, when bang came a storm. In a second everything, decanters, glasses, dishes, etc, were blown off the table. We rushed off to the camp to see how our men fared, & found no tents standing. In a short time we were up to our ankles in water, for it rained only as it can in Burmah, and to make matters worse, that fell (ferocious) disease cholera was among us, & we saw our poor fellows being carried off two or three at a time to Hospital. No one turned in that night. I buried three of my men in the following morning. The next day I commenced my ascent of the Chindwin River. I had a steam launch with a native boat on either side. I had with me four

combatant & one medical officer and 140 men. The men were so densely packed that no one could sit or lie down.

My feelings can better be imagined than described when I heard the Doctor ask "Where is the Major?" Asking him what was the matter he told me that Private so & so had cholera, later he came at intervals to tell me that others had it. Of course we could not land & had to make the best of it, our poor comrades suffering their agonies literally (sic) in a crowd. We buried them soon after landing at Yesagyo. A company of the 25th Bombay Light Infantry was keeping the post till our arrival, & shewed us all the attention in their power, but there was so little accomodation (sic) that we all had to put up for the night together in a temple, a great white marble image of Buddha looking on me benignly as I slept.

In the morning the Bombay Company left for Pakangee (Pakhan-Gyi), an important place some eight miles distant and under my command.

On looking round we found a small timber house which we appropriated, a small though strongly built mud fort, which I afterwards put into a good state of defence and the temple which made an excellent barrack room. The house being slightly detached, had to be guarded at night by a picquet. All Burman houses are built on piles, so looking through our flimsy floor we could see the men who were posted underneath. The river Chindwin ran close to us, and on the opposite side was what was called the Delta, the great rallying place for the enemy. I had no interpreter (sic), & so

was perforce idle for several days, but improved the occasion by running up fresh defences, and surveying the village or town closeley (sic) which was strongly stockaded. One of the things that annoyed me was the fact of being in jungle so dense that 100 dacoits could easily be within a few feet of one, & be able to pour in a volley at any moment. However by constant patrolling we had no such disaster. We, the officers could not even take a walk or ride without a strong escort. Later I mounted twelve men & used to go snipe shooting. I found it difficult shooting snipe to a gallery.



10. Burmese Houses built on piles

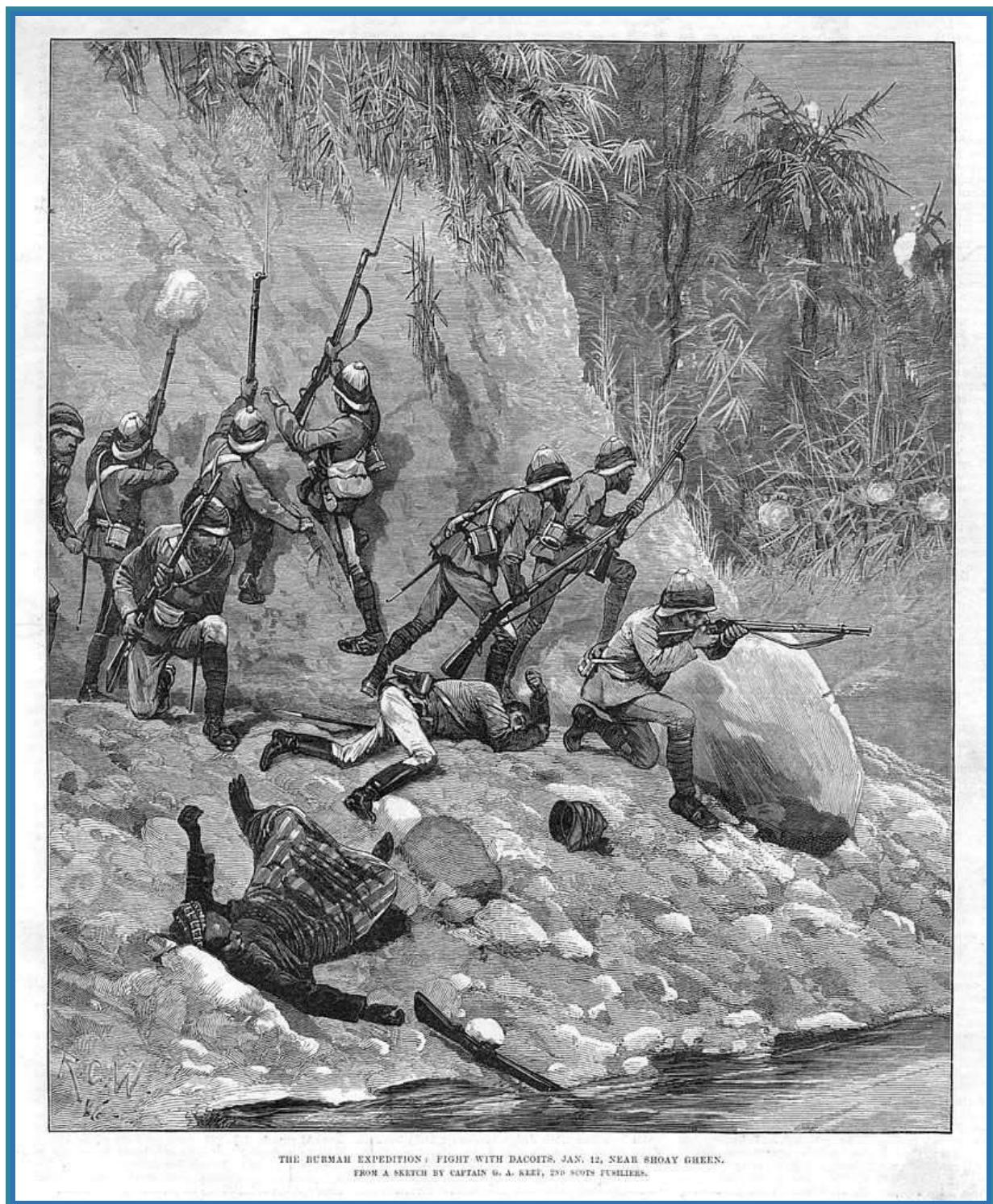
On the arrival of an interpreter (sic), spies were sent in every direction to pick up information of the whereabouts of the chiefs. One Thonoo, and the Kaulè Prince were my particular enemies. I forgot to say that on the night preceding (sic) our arrival, part of the village was burned. A

native company was sent out, and on their way back finding the road blocked came to the conclusion that they were in an ambuscade, & lost several men. The Burmans had very little fear of the Sepoys, who always fought best in conjunction with our own soldiers.

The Post was never actually molested again.

Leaving a small garrison in the post it was our custom on hearing that any force was in our neighbourhood to march at a moment's notice or go up or down river by boats, the former being much the more comfortable method. The jungle being so dense, our supplies, only consisting of tinned beef for so many days, had to be carried by coolies, & as we could never march otherwise than in single file, the column would be of great length, and as all the tracks wound about so much there was always considerable fear of the advanced or rear guard being cut off. It happened occasionally that men through carelessness became detached, their mutilated bodies being sometimes found. It will be evident how open this formation was to attack, and what care & anxiety a march required. Dacoits could lie in wait, unnoticed within a few feet of the column, fire their volley & separate (sic) the next instant without fear of a return shot being fired. This accounted for the large proportion of officers that were killed in the campaign. We generally attacked just before day break, as the Burman hates going to bed & consequently hates getting up in the morning & his outlying scouts are at that time generally drowsy. These latter are generally posted in the palm trees at some little distance from the village. Each village is in

itself no mean fortification, being surrounded by a stockade, or, what is better, a dense thorn hedge which is utterly unbreakable & uninflamable (sic), with a stout timber gate.



THE BURMAN EXPEDITION: FIGHT WITH DAOITS, JAN. 12, NEAR SHOAY GREEN.
FROM A SKETCH BY CAPTAIN G. A. KLET, 2ND SCOTS FUSILIERS.

11. BURMAH: British Fighting with Dacoits

I will give one or two instances of what are called "dours" or expeditions, but it must be remembered that they were of constant occurrence, & we were no sooner at home than we had to start in a different direction. If the expedition was an important one, I would take command, if a small one, one of the more junior officers would go out, for our post was always liable to be attacked during the absence of part of the garrison, and as on most nights we saw villages blazing in the distance we knew that our enemy was pretty well all round us.

Well, on one occasion the Kaulè Prince sent me word that on a certain night he would be at Mebugin & was coming to attack us with 600 men. Finding from my spies that this was likely to be true, and that he was at Mebugin, I ordered the Bombay Light Infantry at Pakoku to rendezvous at a certain place about three miles from the Princes' position with me, and to attack him at daybreak. We marched all night. Unfortunately the Native Infantry failed me, and kept me waiting till nearly dawn. When we did get to Mebugin the sun was getting up, and we were soon made aware that the Burmans were too, for volleys were fired at us, and by the time we had rushed the place the dacoits were in the jungle at the rear. This sort of thing was very disheartening and happened over and over again.

On other occasions, where we had information that a body of dacoits would be crossing the river in the night we would put some 20 or 30 men into a boat. No-one would be allowed on deck, as we hoped to get up river as a cargo boat. It used to be dreary work, all of us lying together in the dirty hold,

smelling of old fish & with a thermometer towards 100°. Then very often we would find on arrival that a native "dug out" or light boat made of one tree, would have passed us on the river and given the alarm.

It was not always thus, for when they would stand, there was fighting.

I recollect (sic) one case out of many, when we went up the river to Shwaytachown (Schweta Chaung, near Mandalay) our old enemy was there. We landed some distance below the village & tramping up the sand got pretty close by day-break. Firing began, and the Burmans would have carried out their usual tactics, but we were too quick for them & had a party in rear of the village. Then there was a good deal of bloodshed. Some of them got into boats, & attempted to cross the river, but were shot in their attempt, or when climbing the opposite bank.

On this occasion a rather curious thing happened. One of my Sergeants, standing under the stockade after the cease firing had sounded, was unfixing his bayonet, looking over the stockade, when a Burman, who thinking all was over, did the same. There was mutual surprise. The Burman jumped over and wounded the Sergeant with his dah (native sword) in the hand.

The Sergeant a powerful little man, clubbed his rifle & let the Burman have it on the head, quite flattening it on one side. I took him with all the badly wounded down to Yesagyo and he lived for more than a week. Not only are

the Burmans very tenacious of life, but as I have mentioned bear pain with the utmost fortitude. I have often seen wounded men brought in most desperately cut about & with awful gunshot wounds. Dr Kirkpatrick would go through his probing process without eliciting a groan or causing any change of expression. On several occasions the dacoits attacked, & killed and wounded numbers of our friendly Burmans. A dah is a beautiful weapon, being of soft metal it will take a very fine edge, and being very heavy will cut through most things, taking off an arm or leg quite cleanly. We used to do all we could for them, & they were very grateful, and often recovered in the most wonderful manner. On the other hand our wounded rarely got well & a wound as a rule meant death. From the humidity of the climate fever always set in, and then the end was not far off.

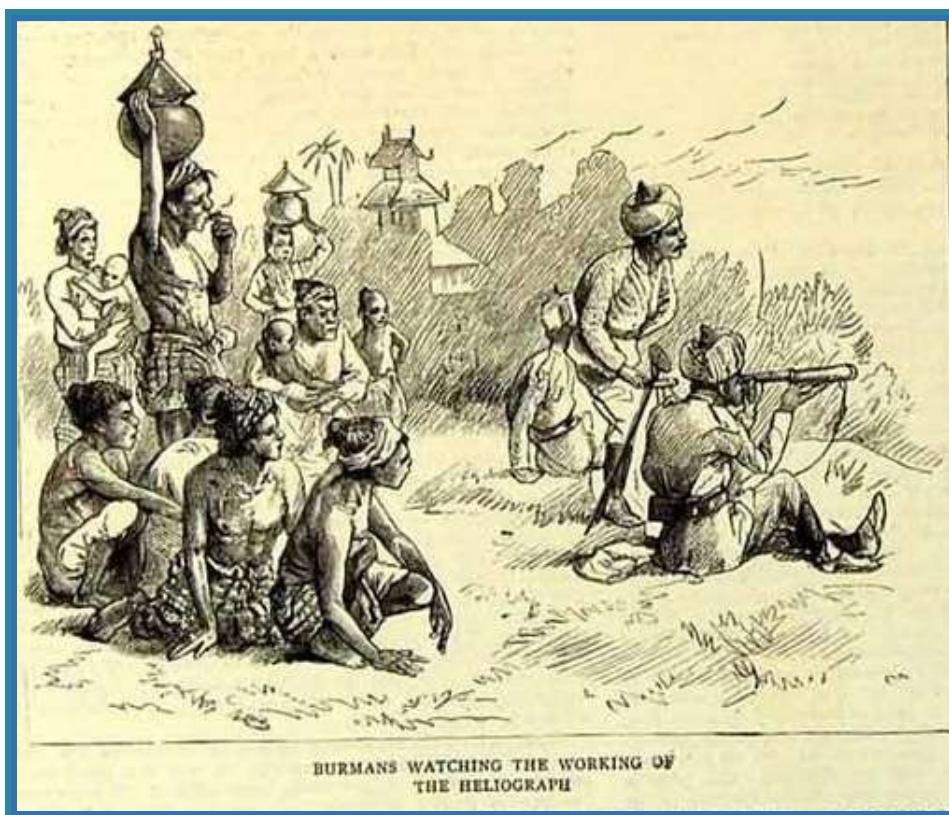


12. A 'Dah'

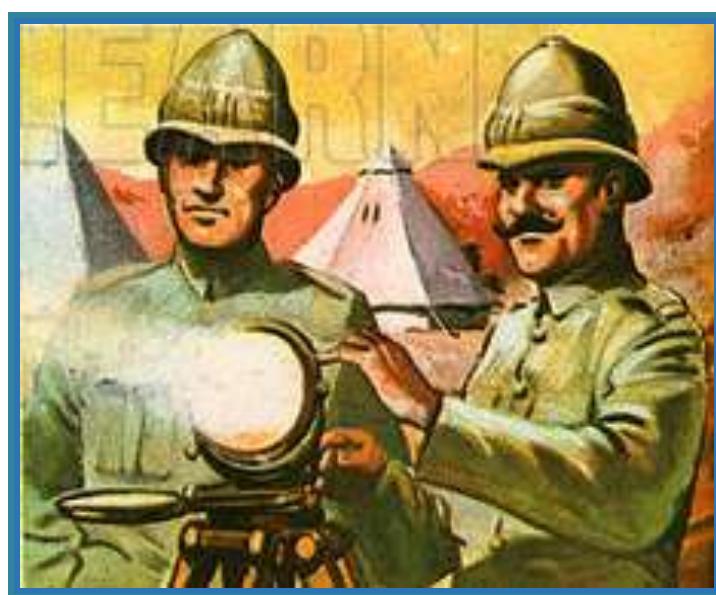
These perpetual long marches often forty & fifty miles, oftentimes without success, got very tedious and then we were so much shut out from the world. The men were throughout (after the cholera) in excellent health, and in wonderful marching trim. In some of our expeditions we had to march with only short rests for 24 hours at a time. This was trying, particularly as after leaving the river, water was so scarce. Often we would get to water & the Doctor would tell me that it looked suspicious (for Orientals, when enemies, generally tamper with the water) I would tell the jaded men that we must get on till the next. It was very trying, but a soldier with all his faults is a rare fellow if you take him the right way. They would quite understand it and buckle too again.

Our station lay very low & we could not communicate with Myingyan, but there was a hill of 1800 feet to the west. We established a heliograph station on it. Thus I would communicate with them, & they would flash it over our heads to Myingyan. I found it a doubtful advantage for I used to get all sorts of impracticable orders from the General there, who did not know our country at all. If it could have brought us vegetables or beer we should have blessed it. We did pretty well however when we were in our station. We killed a bullock every day, but on the march it was the tinned beef, which after a time palls on one. Of course we could not carry fresh beef, as it goes bad in a day & we took no baggage. I should say that during the whole campaign officers were only allowed 80 lbs of baggage so that one had to do without many comforts; bedding & two shirts was

nearly all that was carried. Razors were of course discarded. Lucky was I to have holsters.



13. Burmans watching the working of the Heliograph

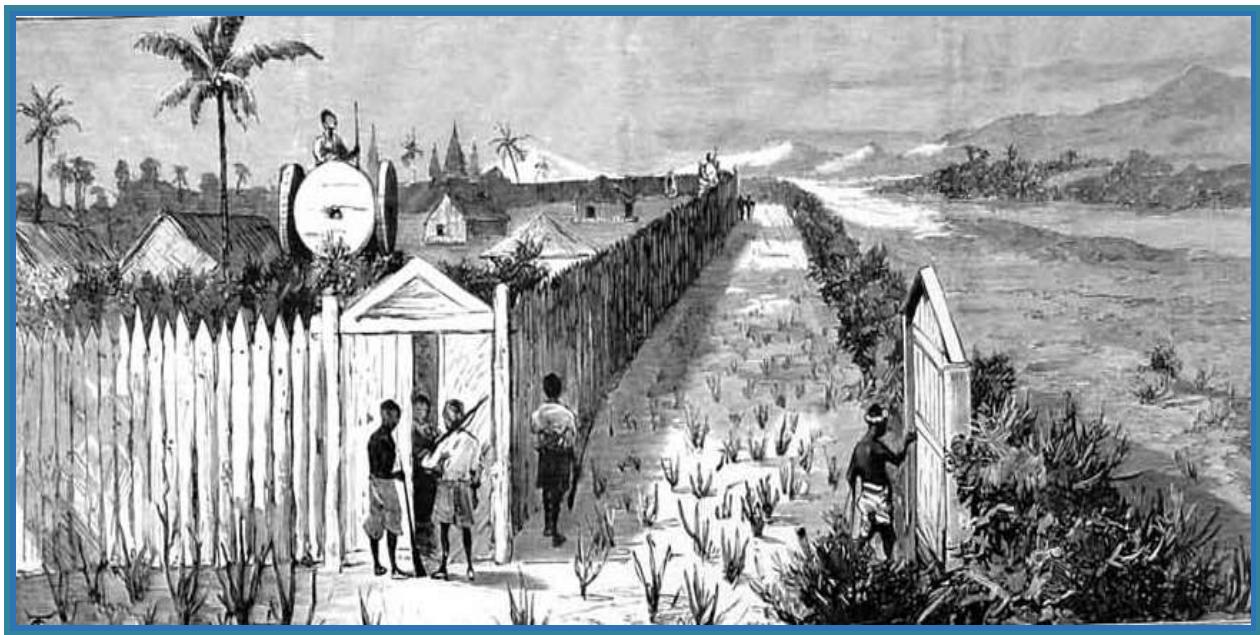


14. Heliograph using the sun to send messages by morse code

To return to the Heliograph. It was really very useful when we were out on dours, for in the jungle we could communicate with the hill when miles away, & so get news from our station that all was well etc.

I would here say that I invariably swam my horses across the rivers, on two occasions across both the Chindwin and Irrawaddy. Nothing is simpler if you know the way & I was astounded to hear that there had been so much difficulty in getting horses to swim over little streams during the later cavalry manoeuvres in Berkshire. Elephants used to swim the rivers continually.

It must be remembered that the same sort of little war was going on in hundreds of places all over Burmah. Towards the end of March the chiefs who had hitherto escaped & having been hunted from pillar to post found themselves with very small followings, and a general disarmament was ordered. A few fire arms were given up, but it required pressure to be used to obtain the bulk of them. For this purpose we used to draw a cordon round a village in the night, and enter at day break. If the arms were given up, so much the better for the inhabitants. If they were found concealed punishment was meted out with no sparing hand. It was wonderful how adept we grew in surrounding a place without the people being at all aware of our proximity. I have often looking through the stockade, seen the women get up and begin getting their breakfast things ready not knowing that there were sixty red coats round them.



15. A Stockade

On one occasion as I was approaching a village I saw a horseman galop (sic) away. I discovered that this was Thonoo. I caught the head man of the village and took him in to my post, about 20 miles, and handed him over to the commissioner for punishment. Considering him alone guilty, his village was not burned. On the following day the commissioner sent to tell me that he knew where Thonoo was, & was sending me a guide who would take me to the village. I started but had not gone far when I found that the so-called guide was no other than my friend of the previous day, thus saving ourselves a 40 mile march.

The dacoits disposed of their prisoners as a rule by crucifixion, but they were guilty of the most awful barbarities, torture & mutilation being quite a science. It was the first word of advice to everyone. "Whatever you do, keep your last cartridge for yourself." Large prices were

offered by the chiefs for any prominent officer's head, and smaller prices for those of more junior officers.

When the country round Lingadaw & Yetagyo (the size of Wales) was fairly settled, we were ordered back to Myingyan, sepoys relieving us. The consequence was that the night after we left, the sepoys were desperately attacked & suffered much loss. I was very sorry to leave without being able to possess (sic) myself of the person of the Prince for soon afterwards he attacked a party of the Hyderabad Infantry, killing two gallant (sic) officers (one a great personal friend of my own) & a number of sepoys.

The losses in the war up to this time, to quote from an Indian paper, "were a Major General, some hundred officers and a number of men equal to a brigade."

I think I may here quote an extract from the same article, which will give some idea of the magnitude of the enterprise.

"...For the difficulties of their campaign have been sadly, perhaps purposely, mis-understood and underrated by certain party fanatics.* (*This alludes to the supposed unfriendliness existing between Sir Frederic Roberts & Lord Wolseley.) It is true that we cannot point to any brilliant (!) actions such as Tel-al-Kabir, Cesuvaful, Hassassin, or Khatoum, but for two years an enormous number of troops have been cheerfully & uncomplainingly performing most difficult service under the most unfavourable circumstances. Sir George White may not have

sacrificed human life for the sake of cheap notoriety.....but he has successfully completed a prolonged series of movements in an unknown country, with a pestilential climate. Under his instructions, ably carried out by his Lieutenants, troops have scoured a country in which the Nile Delta, or Achanti would be lost.

...That the service has been deadly, the melancholy casualty roll sufficiently proves, and the number of officers & men killed & placed hors de combat in action, places this war far beyond the category of some military promenades."

Very welcome was the order to return to Myingyam after our banishment. We crossed the Chindwin about 2 miles broad, marched all night across the delta & then took boats down the Irrawaddy. My greatest delight after that of seeing my own bretheren (sic) was that of getting rid of my beard. To my dismay, I found that I was not to go with Head Quarters with the Regt. but to remain at Myingyam with three companies.

However in a short time I was ordered up to Mandalay to take command in the Palace. Never shall I forget my first sight of Mandalay with its hundreds of gilt spires, each covered with numbers of little bells, which the lightest wind moved & which gave out a delicious harmony particularly at night.



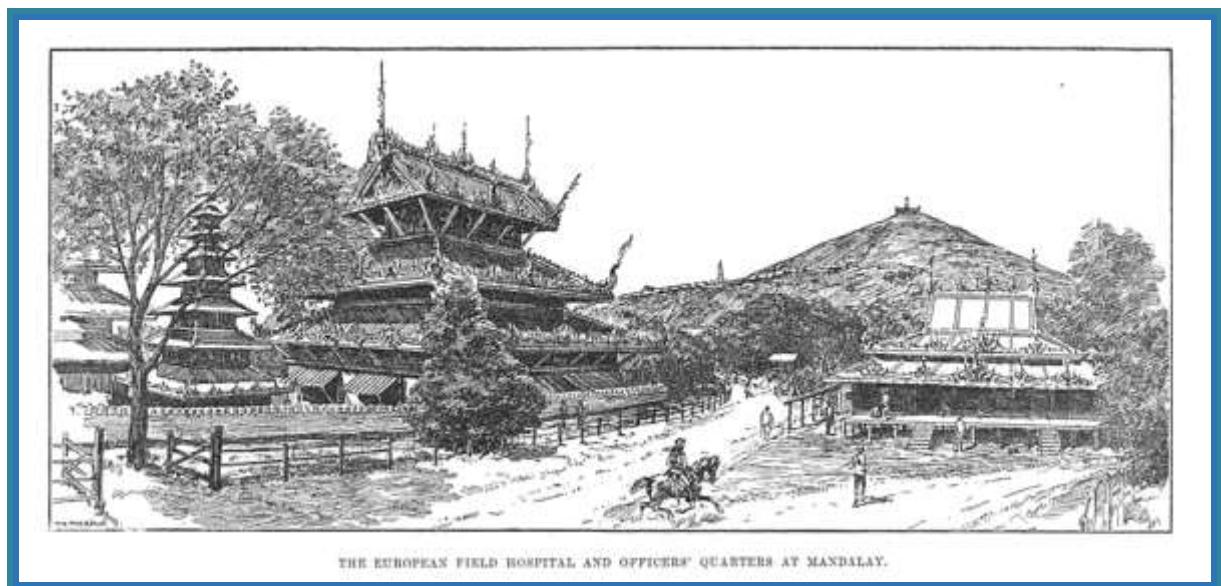
16. The British in Mandalay, Scene at the Palace, 1887

It is the most wonderful place & globe trotters have found it out, particularly Americans, & are an unmitigated nuisance, forcing their way in, without the courtesy of sending in a card. One who called himself the Judge of Chicago, I dealt rather summarily (summarily) with. Everything is of carved teak & gilt in its entirety, not tinsel but real thick gold leaf. The building in which our officers lived cost King Theebaw thirty lacs to build (£300,000). It is inlaid with looking glass & the effect is superb. The Palace is already falling into decay, as our government urge that they cannot afford to keep it up. This to my mind is scandalous, & as we take the revenue, our first duty should be to preserve so unique a specimen of Oriental architecture.

My Regiment or rather the Head Quarters were located about 3 miles from the city & I used to ride up to see them daily. The Palace was not a comfortable or convenient quarter, hot & stuffy, & full of mosquitoes; and it was poor comfort to think that even the inside of our cupboards was gilt. Mandalay (see photographs [Richard left none with this account]) is $1\frac{1}{8}$ miles square. A moat 100 yds broad bounds it. Inside the moat is the city wall & in the middle of the square is the Palace defended by a teak stockade with sides of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile.

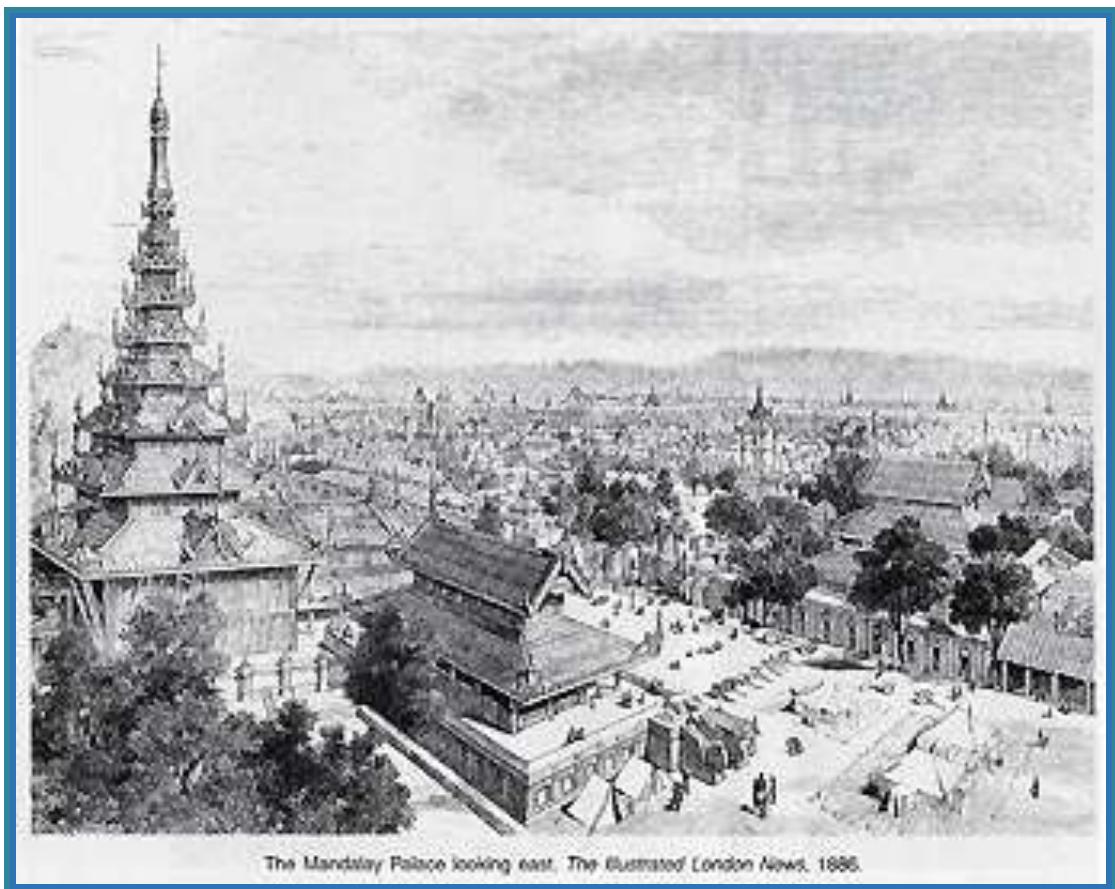
Soon after my arrival columns were sent into the Shan States to co-erce the Shans. We are an aggressive race, & should not abuse the Russians. We pick a quarrel with a country and annex it. We took Burmah from the King and

finding that the Shan States were between us and China, absorbed them.



17. Burmah European Field Hospital & Officer's Quarters at Mandalay
Old Print 1887

To my great disgust I did not get a column & so had to content myself with garrison life. It was pleasant enough. We soon had a club in the King's Garden House (where he abdicated). A flat, & steeple chase course, polo, paper chases & every pleasure that the British Officer loves. The snipe shooting was beyond even the dreams of a sportsman. Then we had elephant catching in the khedda (where the animals are driven into a large enclosure and each elephant is taken out with the help of tame elephants and tamed), which if it were not so intensely exciting, would be considered by us very brutal. We gave moonlight entertainments to the ex-ministers & their families, where the show of diamonds & rubies would put a state ball at Buckingham Palace into the shade. Sing songs & concerts continually. Our Irishmen revel in them.



18. The Mandalay Palace, The Illustrated London News, 1886

But all this time our comrades (sic) were having a hard time in the Shan Hills & many a good fellow & true did not get back to Mandalay.

About this time I had a very repugnant duty to perform. Two diseases, cururi and Surra, attacked the horses. We were shooting them morning noon & night & the cavalry regiments (4) scarcely took a horse back to India. My first charger went to ground with the rest to my intense grief.

One word about the Burman ponies. They are the best in the world, but will not live out of Burmah, while horses cannot live there. They are small, will jump wonderfully, carry any weight, live on sticks. They will carry you up steps,

over tree trunks, across ravines, take to water like retriever dogs & you cannot get to the bottom of them, but they have the drawback of having no mouths. "Drawback" is not a word to use in describing them.



19. Mounted Infantry (on Burman ponies), 1886

I subsequently accompanied Sir George White in his tour towards the South of Thibet & up the You You (Yao Yao) river, but there is scarcely space in this paper to describe it. There was no fighting, but the new people I saw, the whirlpools, passes & other interesting matters connected with this hitherto to us unknown part of the world made a great impression on me.

Source of Illustrations

Front Pages Richard Holbeche (Circa 1883) photo possibly taken when he became a Major

Richard Holbeche (Circa 1910) photo taken after he was made a Knight of Grace by the Order of St. John

Medal and Clasp for Burmah 1887-89

Map, identifying some of the places Richard visited.

1. A Three tier steamer on the River Irrawaddy
2. River banks, similar to Wyndley pool
3. Boat high in stern low in front
4. Thudhamma Zayat at Mandalay
5. Rest after Hunting - Burmah (Myanmar) 1886 (showing typical Burma men)
6. A Group of Young Women - Burma, 1880's
7. King Thibaw and his Queen Supayalat

Richard Holbeche in Army Uniform. Photo attached to 'Notes on Sutton Coldfield' by Richard Holbeche, as part of the *Harcourt Family Papers*, Birmingham Archives Department (MS 689/18a)
See also *The Holbeche Diary* Sutton Coldfield Library Ref:Q726.50942496HOL

JORDAN, Janet: *Lieutenant Colonel Richard Holbeche*, Sutton Coldfield Library Ref:BCOL Q942.496092HOL

Author's photograph showing an example, from the Medal Collection of Christopher Davies

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Antique Print 1886 Burmah Irrawaddy Mya-Doung Redmond Second Defile 238P188

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BURMAH Families on their way to Mandalay for British Protection from Dacoits. Old Print 1886

[www.wikivisually.com/
Thudhamma_Zayat](http://www.wikivisually.com/Thudhamma_Zayat)

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Rest after Hunting - Burmah (Myanmar) 1886

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A Group of Young Woman - Burmah 1880's

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King Thibaw and his Queen Supayalat
The Illustrated London News, Sat. Jan 16, 1886

8.	BURMAH Flotilla of British Troops Going up the Irrawaddy to Bhamo	www.ebay.co.uk . BURMAH Flotilla of British Troops Going up the Irrawaddy to Bhamo Postcard.
9.	Up the Chindwin River	www.old-prints.com Sketches from Burmah - Up the Chindwin By an Irrawaddy Flotilla Officer (Captain A.B. Rimmer, Steamer Pathein) The Illustrated London News, Dec 16, 1886
10.	Burmese Houses built on piles	www.gutenberg.org.files Project Gutenberg's A Civil Servant in Burmah, by Herbert Thirkel White. Burmese Houses
11.	BURMAH British Fighting with Dacoits	www.ebay.co.uk BURMAH British Fighting with Dacoits near Shoay Green ~ Antique Print 1886
12.	A 'Dah'	www.oriental-arms.com Burmese Dah Knife
13.	Burmans watching the working of the Heliograph	www.ebay.co.uk Old Print with Bombay Troops Upper Burmah Watching Working Heliograph
14.	Heliograph using the sun to send messages by morse code	www.lookandlearn.com Heliograph
15.	A Stockade	www.antiqueprints,maps.com The Village of Kyouk-Pa-Doung Myo in a state of defence against dacoits
16.	The British in Mandalay, Scene at the Palace, 1887	www.allmyanmar.com The British in Mandalay, Scene at the Palace, The Illustrated London News, 1887
17.	Burmah European Field Hospital & Officer's Quarters at Mandalay - Old Print 1887	www.ebay.co.uk/item/BURMAH-European-Field-Hospital-amp-Officer's-Quarters-at-Mandalay
18.	The Mandalay Palace	www.allmyanmar.com/Mandalay-Palace The Illustrated London News, 1886
19.	Mounted Infantry (on Burman ponies), 1886	www.old-print.com Print No. 60. 1886 Mounted Infantry Metila, Burmah