BURMA AND THE KARENS

By
DR. SAN C. PO C.B.E.

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1st and only Karen member Legislative Council before Reforms Scheme

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ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE

THE object of this book is to present and to explain to the reading public, and to those who are in authority, the condition of the Karens, the position they occupy, and their aspirations as a nation second in importance of the indigenous races of the province of Burma. It is their desire to have a country of their own, where they may progress as a race and find the contentment they seek. It is this contentment which gives a man or a nation that satisfaction and goodwill and creates that patriotic feeling so essential to the well-being of the nation. Self-respect in a nation begets respect from other nations and races. What a grand thing the achievement of their ambition will be for the Karens, and what praises and blessing will be showered upon those who shall have made it possible. The Karens will then be in a position to show sincere respect to other races, especially to the Burmese, with whom they have been at variance, and in turn the Burmese will find them worthy of respect and esteem.

The thirty years of my life which I have devoted to serving my own people, in the course of which I have had the opportunity of exchanging ideas with those officials and non-officials who represent the opinion of other races, have furnished me with varied experience, and I am emboldened to write this book in the hope that it will stimulate in the reader an interest in the Karens as a race—as a nation which will have to be reckoned with in the struggle for self-determination or for what the present Reforms Scheme may have in store for the province. It has been truly said: "To remove misunderstandings is the real road to abiding peace among men." Some of the statements or comments in this book may displease a few individuals, for there is truth in the

Burmese saying: "ထည်ဖြူနှီးဖို့ခဲနှိုး" (too straight a truth is hard to bear). Should any of my intimate and highly esteemed Burmese friends with whom I have associated and co-operated for many years chance to read this book, I wish them to understand that it is not the expression of my own personal relations with them, but that it represents the feelings of the Karens as a race towards the Burmese in general.

I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness to Major Enriquez, from whose most interesting work *A Burmese Wonderland* I have quoted freely, and to the copyright-holders of Mr. Donald Smeaton's *Loyal Karens of Burma* from which fairly extensive extracts will be found in the following pages, and lastly to Sir Frederick Whyte from whose able discourse in his little book *India, a Federation?* quotations have been made. I also wish to express my thanks to those who have made contributions to Chapter VI.

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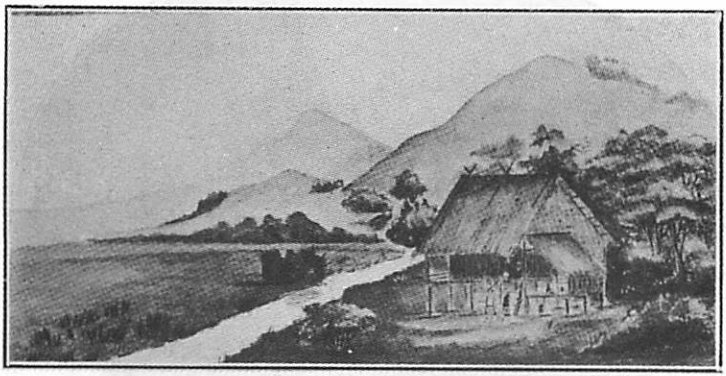
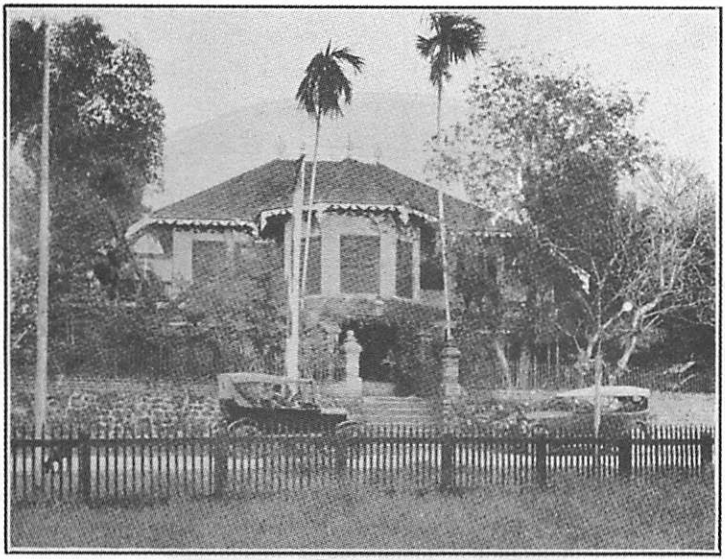


KAREN VILLAGE HUT.



BELLEVUE HALL.

REV. T. THANBYAH, D D.

REV. THRA SHWE MÈ.

BURMA AND THE KARENS

CHAPTER I

A GLIMPSE INTO THE PAST

" They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between.
But neither heat nor frost nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been."
Coleridge.

To gauge the present-day attitude and social status of a nation a knowledge of past history is essential. The Past not only makes the Present more easily comprehensible, but it also enables one to conjecture what the future may hold in store. Just as the physician takes into consideration the family history and previous illnesses of the patient in forming his diagnosis, so must the student of history have some knowledge of past events to guide his opinion.

Whether the Karens originally migrated from Southern China, a contention which is supported by the traditions and physiological appearance of the people, or were the earliest inhabitants of Burma, only to be conquered by more powerful invaders, is not an important point, since the writer is concerned only with the Karens as they are found in Burma to-day. The position of the Karens before the advent of the British was that of a subject race in true Oriental fashion. They were treated as slaves, hence, they made their homes on the mountain-side or on tracts of land far away from the towns and larger villages occupied by the Burmans. High stockades surrounded those Karen villages, and sure death was the fate of all intruders.

Many stories have been told of Burmese cruelty to the Karens, and of Karen retaliation, in which the latter figured more as sinners than saints. Love of independence is inherent in all hill tribes, and the Karens are no exception. It figures prominently in their war-songs and in the national poems handed down from generation to generation, and a Karen will forgo many things for the privilege of having his own way or being left alone. The Karen God-tradition, so firmly believed in and strongly adhered to, was: "Our younger white brother to whom God temporarily entrusted the Book of Silver and the Book of Gold is coming back to return them to the elder Karen brother." So, when news was received that the white brother had arrived in Burma, there was no little stir in Karendom. Adoniram Judson gained the first Karen convert to Christianity in Ko Tha Byu (1828) who lost no time in spreading the gospel among his people, declaring that the long-lost "Book of God" had been brought back by the white brother, and that the Karen God-tradition was fulfilled. Consequently, a number of young men from different parts of the country went over to Arakan, and later to Moulmein, to find the Missionaries who had brought the gospel of Christ and to learn more about the truth, which it was their intention to preach among their own people. Thra Myat Kai of Kozu, the maternal grandfather of the writer, was one of them. The lot of the Karens under Burmese rule had been hard enough, but when the Burmans, made anxious by the rumours of war to be declared between Burma and Great Britain, heard that the Karens were taking up the Christian religion, they proceeded to make life unbearable for the new converts to Christianity. Persecution, religious and political, began in earnest. Karens were caught and thrown into prison, suffering untold agonies, and a few were crucified. One man, by the name of Klaw Meh was nailed to a cross, the abdomen ripped open with intestines hanging down, which the crows were picking while the poor man writhed in agony in an impossible attempt to drive away the crows. His voice gradually grew weaker until at last he died a martyr on the cross like his Master, Jesus Christ, whom he had lately embraced. The Rev. Dr. T. Thanbyah, M.A., D.D., who died only six years ago, was

a witness of the scene, and whenever he had occasion to make the railway journey between Rangoon and Bassein, as the train neared Yegyi Station, he would look out of the carriage window and cry like a child. For, it was near the railway station that Thra Klaw Meh was crucified.

There were countless instances, but to recall them is certainly not pleasant. The cruelties and oppression practised by the Burmese for generations past cannot be easily effaced from memory, and a generation or two ago Karen mothers used to still the cries of their children by saying "A Burman is coming." Even to-day, you may hear a Karen bitterly remarking: "In olden times we were ground down by the Burmese; but now, though enjoying equal rights under British Government, since almost all the Subordinate Officials in Government service are Burmese, we are really as much harassed as before."

If there is a nation which can easily adapt itself to changed conditions and circumstances it is the Burmese. This characteristic of the Burmese, incidentally, recalls the opinion of a travelled American: "If an Englishman puts himself out to please a man he can do it better than any other man on earth." A Burman is an adept in pleasing others when he chooses; unfortunately, a Karen is not, otherwise his lot would be far better than it is to-day.

Some years ago the writer had the pleasure of driving up to Kozu Village from Bassein in the company of a Deputy Commissioner, new to the station, to witness the presentation of a Union Jack and a gun by the Commissioner of the Irrawaddy Division to the Karen villagers for having supplied the largest number of soldiers (over fifty in number) just prior to and during the Great War. On the way, in the course of conversation, the Deputy Commissioner asked "Don't you think the Karens live too much on past history?" The answer was that the Karens have tried very hard to "live down" past history, but unfortunately they are being constantly reminded of it. The Deputy Commissioner was assured that it would not be long before he would personally see for himself the truth of the statement.

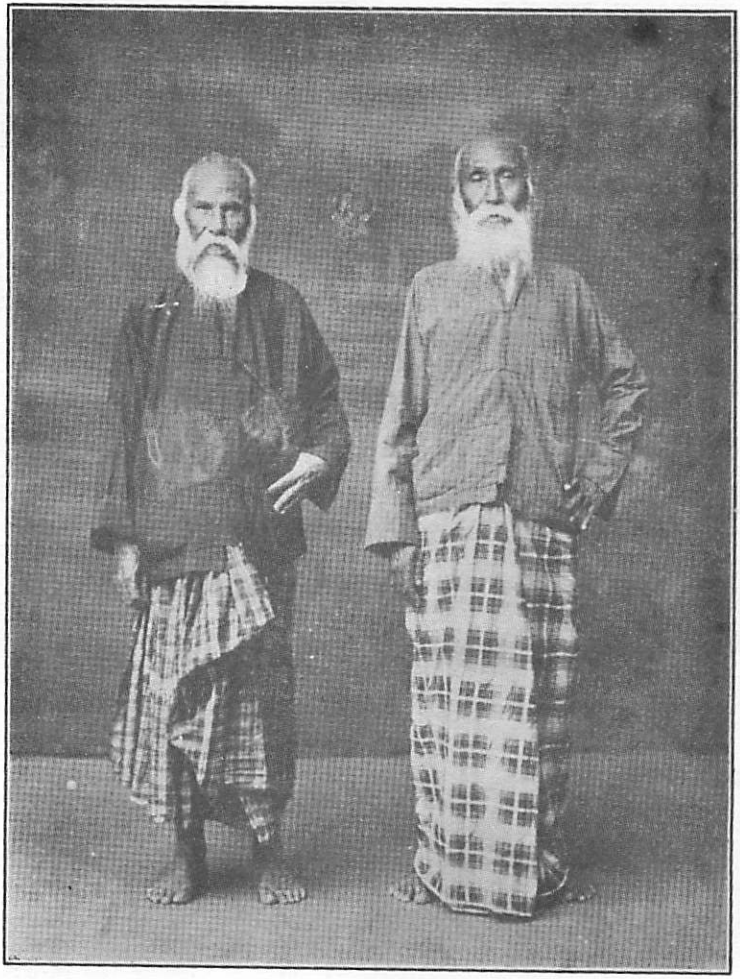
A few days later there was a football match between a Karen team and a Burmese team. The game was hotly

contested (as it always is when Karens play against the Burmese). The Burmese were the first to score, and the play, though fast and exciting, was being cleanly fought. But when the Karens equalised, some members of the Burmese team began to resort to foul tactics, and with the incitement of the crowd in which the Burmans outnumbered the Karens by more than ten to one, the game became very rough. And when the goalkeeper of the Burmese team, on obtaining possession of the ball, deliberately kicked an attacking Karen forward in the face before getting rid of the ball, the game was stopped and awarded to the Karens by the referee. The Deputy Commissioner, who witnessed the match, had perforce to admit the truth of the statement made on the Kozu trip. Trivial as it was, the incident undoubtedly throws some light on the existing situation.

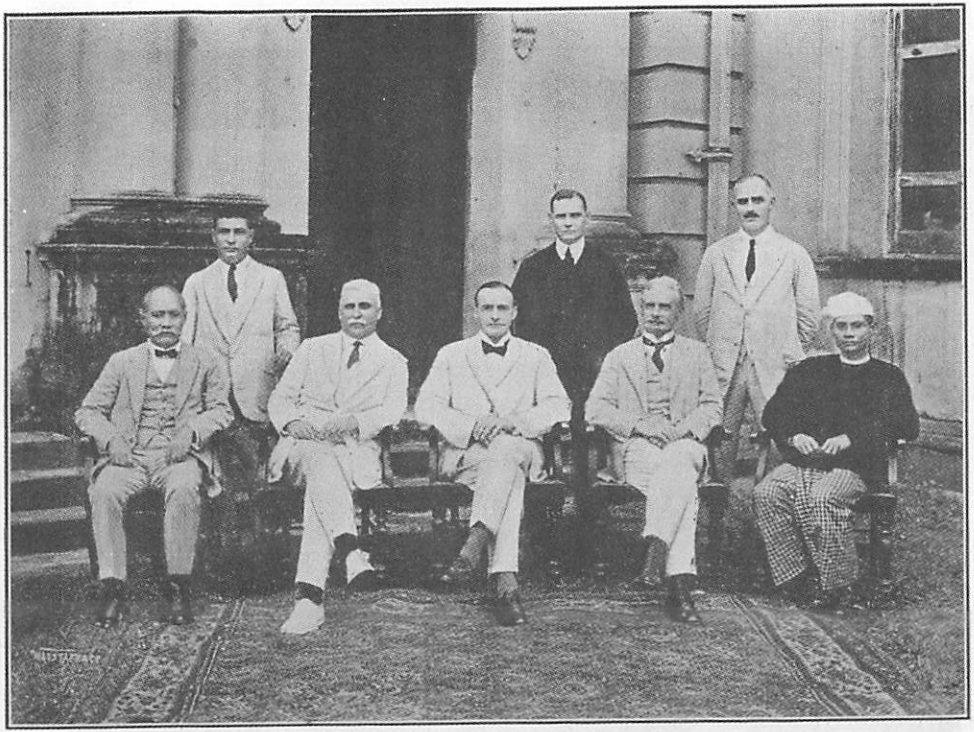
Another incident may be cited as an illustration of the annoyances to which Karens are daily being subjected by petty Burman subordinate officials. Many years ago, at the instigation of a Burmese official of the police force who alleged that those Karens who were licensed to carry guns were not using them legitimately, and that they even lent their guns to dacoits, the Deputy Commissioner ordered two Karens to bring in their guns for cancellation of their licences. But it so happened that these two men had fought under British officers during the troublous times of 1886 when Mr. St. Barbe, who was Deputy Commissioner of Bassein at the time, was shot dead by the dacoits, and had held their guns ever since for services rendered to Government at great personal risk.

At their request the writer went to the Deputy Commissioner and explained matters. The Rev. C. A. Nichols, D.D., K.I.H., who had also taken an active part in the dacoit-hunting of the year mentioned, related to the Deputy Commissioner the story of the part played by Karens in general, and particularly by the two men concerned, with the result that the Deputy Commissioner at once withdrew his order.

British officials in Burma cannot neglect past history. They will find it invaluable as a guide in their responsible task of administration, and there will be heard less often the complaint that "New Pharaohs always forget Joseph of



THRA KÉ and THRA TUKÈ.



THE WHYTE COMMITTEE.

Standing from left to right: SIR P. P. G. WALLA. MR. H. C. HOULDEY. MR. S. A. SMYTH.
Sitting left to right: DR. SAN C. PO. MR. ARBUTHNOT. SIR F. WHYTE (Chairman). SIR F. McCARTHY.
THE HON. U. PÒ BYE (absent).

old." They will be better able to emulate their worthy predecessors who inspired a shrewd critic to venture the following opinion of them: "Nowhere in the world, probably, is there a class of officials . . . possessed of higher qualifications for their responsible duties than the officials of the British Government in India. There are among them not a few who combine with the highest ability and training the beautiful characteristics of an inward Christian life. British Burma owes much to the administrative power of chiefs like Col. Sir Arthur Phayre, Sir Ashley Eden, and not less, certainly, to the Christian wisdom combined with a rare general ability of an Aitchison, a Thomson, and a Bernard."

CHAPTER II

RECENT EVENTS

The Whyte Committee and Communal Representation.

DURING the sitting of the Whyte Committee in 1921, in connection with the Reforms Scheme, there occurred many incidents which were worthy of serious notice. An influential section of the Burmese people was from the very beginning against the Committee and its work, and the great trouble they took in boycotting it might have turned out seriously if the authorities had not been on the alert. As it was, the attempt at boycotting proved to be more amusing than otherwise. Here again, the wonderful adaptability of the Burmese nature in any situation was manifest. They seriously meant to obstruct the work of the Committee, but when they found that their efforts at obstruction were effectively countered, they tried to pass the whole thing off as a joke. This characteristic of the Burmese would be hard to find in any other nation or race.

The Committee met with strong opposition at Mandalay, Rangoon and Moulmein. At Wakema where the Government launch carrying the Committee had to land for a few hours, the attitude of the townspeople was decidedly hostile, even the bazaar-sellers refusing to sell their wares. The unruly element at the landing-stage beat gongs, shouted abusive words and threw fire-crackers and bricks into the steamer as it was leaving the jetty. One of the clerks sustained an injury to his hand, which stirred the captain of the steamer to shout in words much more forcible than elegant or complimentary—which perhaps, were better not repeated here.

At Moulmein the boycotters, under the leadership of U Chit Hlaing, caused some inconvenience to the Committee

and to the local authorities. A prominent Karen gentleman was prevented by them from giving valuable evidence before the Committee. The late Honourable U Po Bye at this place was rather worried and anxious, as he remarked: "It is bad enough to be boycotted, but it is the limit when people actually assemble at the pagodas and pray that the evil spirit (meaning the Committee) be driven away from the town."

In Bassein a hostile demonstration was led by a well-known female character of the town. The late Mr. R. E. V. Arbuthnot, a member of the Committee, taking advantage of the fact that he was mistaken for Sir Frederick Whyte by the boycotters, held the attention of the crowd gathered at the wharf by taking snapshots of them with his camera. He was aided and abetted by Major A. G. B. Roberts, the Deputy Commissioner, in thus obtaining snaps of the agitators with their faces exposed. This interlude somehow damped the enthusiasm of the crowd, and the boycotting proved a huge fiasco.

Taking everything into consideration it must be admitted that the Whyte Committee did its work satisfactorily and well under a chairman with a national reputation. A most capable and broad-minded man, Sir Frederick Whyte was always cheerful and patient. The Committee members, however, also learned that he could be very firm when occasion demanded. Towards the end of the sitting of the Committee one member proved unreasonable and a renegade in respect to a point upon which he had previously agreed. Sir Frederick shouted out the name of the member and demanded in no uncertain manner what he meant by going back on his words. All the other members of the Committee were convinced that the chairman was quite justified in calling down the refractory member in the way he did. But on the whole, taking into consideration the diverse interests represented, the Committee worked together in perfect harmony.

The work of the Committee dealing with communal representation for the Karens brought out some interesting data. The Karens, wherever possible, welcomed the Committee, giving concerts in their honour, and the elders had personal

interviews with the chairman. They felt amply rewarded when Sir Frederick, on behalf of the Committee, expressed the warm appreciation of his Committee of the kindly feeling and the efforts in entertaining them. Musical entertainments were given at Rangoon in the Vinton Memorial Hall and at the Ko Tha Byu Memorial Hall, Bassein. The invitation of Dr. Saw Durmay, to see his white elephant, however, had to be refused for want of time. Karens are lovers of tradition, and a large number of them honestly believe in them, though some of the traditions may seem rather strange and impossible of realisation. Saw Durmay believed in the prophecy: "When three 'whites' meet there will be peace and plenty, progress and prosperity, and an ideal Government will reign supreme," and his invitation was prompted by the desire of bringing together the *Whyte* Committee, the *white* Government and the *white* elephant! Naturally, he was keenly disappointed when the Committee could not stop at Toungoo to see his elephant. These manifestations show that the Karens whole-heartedly welcomed the Committee and their work.

Of the evidence given by Karen witnesses, that given by Mr. Sydney Loo-Nee and Mahn Ba Kin, of Rangoon, and Mahn Po San, of Myaungmya, was most exhaustive and instructive, while a few of the other witnesses were frank and outspoken. One of the witnesses, Saw Pah Dwai, cited recent cases of oppression of the Karens by the Burmans. When asked if he thought the Karens were still as much oppressed by the Burmese as in the olden days, he replied: "The Karens are to-day ten times more oppressed and downtrodden than in former days. The Burmese have learned to be wiser and more cunning in their methods of oppression, and Government are none the wiser." During the sitting at which Saw Pah Dwai gave his evidence a sympathetic British official, after recounting several instances of oppression of Karens that came to his notice in his capacity of a district officer, remarked: "If I were the Karens and could not get communal representation which I consider absolutely necessary at this stage of political growth in Burma, I would emigrate to Siam, where I would fare no worse and might fare better."

Evidence given by high British officials on the subject was divided. A few said that the Karens could fight their own battles any day against the Burmans as they are a compact and well-organised community, but the majority, including the Chief Secretary, Mr. F. Lewisohn, C.S.I., C.B.E., I.C.S., and Sir Charles Morgan Webb, C.I.E., I.C.S., basing their opinion on extensive personal experience, were decidedly in favour of communal representation for the Karens.

Of the Indian Community men like Mr. P. D. Patel (ex-President of the Insein Municipality) and the Honourable Mr. S. Vedamurthi were in favour of Communal Representation for the Karens, which was strongly opposed by the Burmese and Arakanese, among them being the late Home Member, the Honourable U May Oung and a highly respected and intimate friend of the writer, U Shwe Zan Aung. U May Oung claimed that he found the Karens in every respect like the Burmese in their habits, ideas and characteristics, and that no separate constituency was necessary. As a member of the Committee, the writer, by his questions, tried to convince witness of the great difference between the two races, a point upon which most of the other members agreed. U Shwe Zan Aung, in his evidence, stated that Karens have much advanced in education, and would have no trouble in electing their representatives. Mr. S. A. Smyth, C.S.I., I.C.S., the then Commissioner of the Irrawaddy Division and a member of the Committee, asked the witness: "Supposing the Karens wished to elect a Karen for Hanthawaddy district, would there be any chance of their getting their man elected, taking into consideration the majority of the Burmese population over the Karen population?" Witness had perforce to reply in the negative. It was obvious to all that no Karen candidate would ever be elected, since no district in the province has a Karen population anywhere near as large as that of the Burmese.

The evidence from all sources clearly showed that communal representation for the Karens was an absolute necessity, and it remained only for the Committee to decide upon the number of seats which should be allotted. After some discussion it was decided to allow the Karens five special constituencies, and subsequent events have justified

the decision. A short statement which appeared recently in the Press may be quoted, expressing the opinion that Communal Representation has been from the start absolutely essential and is still necessary for the contentment and well-being of minorities. "London, 19th June, 1926: Commenting in an editorial article on the sectarian disturbances in India *The Times* says that many sympathisers in Britain with Indian political aspirations are obviously puzzled and perturbed at the evidence of the extension of the quarrels. The paper adds that the historical past of India is not favourable for a mutual understanding between Moslems and Hindus, and the strength of communal feeling certainly justifies the demand that the next instalment of reforms should continue to safeguard religious and political minorities. Political education in India, *The Times* declares, has not yet sufficiently advanced to dispense with the safeguards. It will also be necessary to maintain the reserved powers of the Provincial Governments in order to meet a dangerous emergency possibly arising from religious disorders until the Indian national union becomes a plain and irrefutable fact."

What applies to India with regard to Moslems and Hindus applies with equal force to Burma with the Burmese and Karens. Earl Winterton, in his speech on July 24th, 1926, in the House of Commons, declared that communal tension in India constituted the greatest menace confronting Government. ". . . fortunately the tension in Burma is more racial than religious, and owing to the quiet and reticent nature of one race the tension does not loom up so prominently as in India, but it is there all the same . . . while the two communities in India are aggressive and not likely to be satisfied or contented with any political or administrative concessions, one of the communities in Burma is amenable, and will be satisfied with any reasonable concession which Government and the other community may make."

THE DELEGATES TO INDIA TO INTERVIEW LORD CHELMSFORD AND THE HON. E. MONTAGUE.

LORD AND LADY READING.

CHAPTER III

SIGNS OF BURMO-KAREN CO-OPERATION

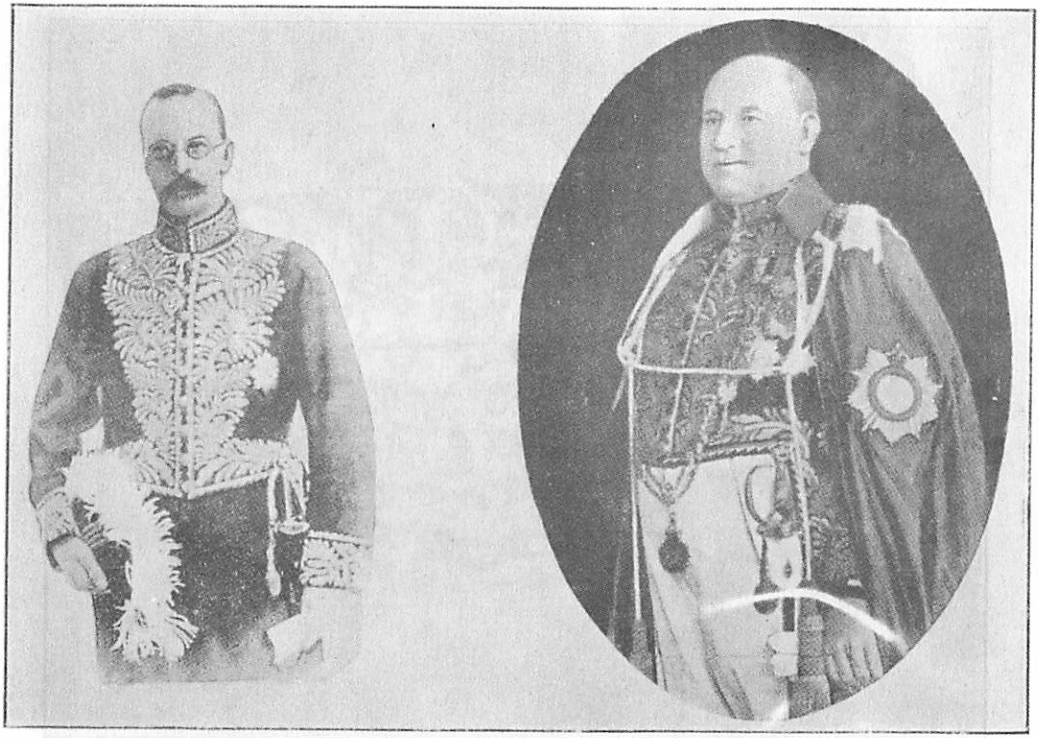
"We are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another, then, is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away."—*Antoninus.*

AMONG the educated class, and in the towns, Burmo-Karen co-operation is possible and usual, and often with most pleasing results if the leaders of the two communities are keen and tactful. No doubt education, more frequent contact, and similarity of aims and objects have created a better mutual understanding, and the Great War has also served the purpose of drawing the two races closer together as comrades in arms. The needs of serious efforts in combating a common foe and fighting for their King-Emperor has taught them the rudiments of patriotism. Loyal Burmese gentlemen co-operated with Government, and the innate loyalty of the Karens, which had been lying dormant for so many years, came to life again. Although there existed so many sore spots not yet healed owing to unfulfilled promises or to neglect, unintentional or otherwise, by Government, and to disdain and the oft-expressed opinion of the Burmese that the Karens are only a "negligible quantity," yet when the need arose, the response to the call of the King and Empire was marvellous. Some of the best Karen schools were depleted of eligible young men who lost no time in enlisting.

The Burmese opinion that Karens are only a "negligible quantity" was heard, to quote only one instance, a few years ago at a meeting of the Y.M.B.A., at Bassein, when one of their most prominent speakers, in the course of his speech, said: "We need fear nothing from the Karens, for, as far as I can see, they are only a nation of nurses and *ayahmas* (infant-nurses)." Though puerile, expressions of this sort

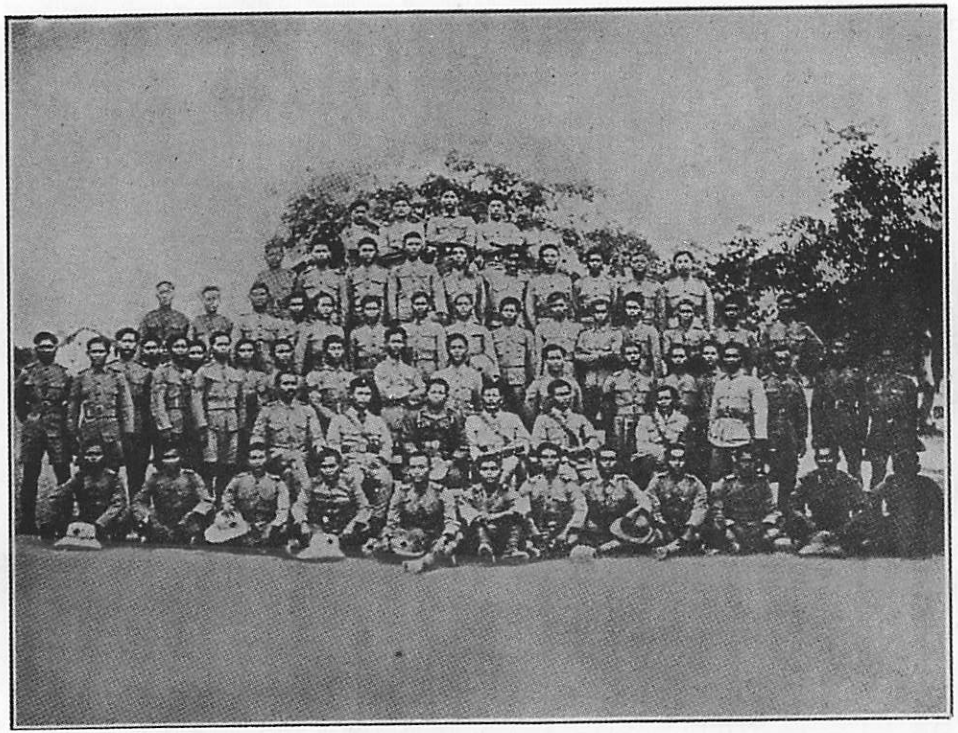
irritate, but happily they are not so common now. Instead, one often hears to-day remarks from Burmese gentlemen to the effect that the Karens are making great strides in education, and are showing that spirit of unity which Burmans ought to copy. While these expressions of opinion, naturally, give pleasure, the Karens themselves do not forget their own weaknesses and short-comings. An intimate and highly esteemed Burmese friend of the writer, who is invariably candid and outspoken, once said, "I like the Karens. I like their simply straight-forwardness, but တဆိတ်မမနုတ်သဘိုယိဆရာရယ်။" The Burmese phrase is very expressive but difficult to translate into English. The idea conveyed is that the Karens are not sufficiently wideawake, they are slow to grasp a hint, an opportunity or a situation. The observation is perfectly correct, and has been frequently repeated by the writer in his speeches to Karen audiences.

It is not at all strange that a Karen is တဆိတ်မ-မနုတ်သူး for from the time he could understand he was taught by his parents to speak the plain unvarnished truth, without "beating about the bush," and at school his character is being trained on the same lines. Therefore, when a Karen tries to be နုတ်တယ်။ and deviates from the truth, as sometimes happens, he makes a poor job of it. As the American slang has it, he is not "slick at it." On the other hand, Burmese mothers teach their children how to be polite, how to ပေါကဝတ်။ (to smooth over things) in their speech and action, often regardless of the truth. The Burmese have a saying "မှုသားမပါ လက်ဝမပျော။" (without a few falsehoods speech is never smooth), and a good many live up to this old saying. A nation is judged by the characteristics and behaviour of the populace, and the writer, in commenting upon Burmese manners and characteristics, refers to the habits and distinguishing traits of the populace. Until recent years the trustees or guardians of Karen schools would not allow the pupils to play football or compete in any sport with outsiders. The inter-racial feeling was bitter, and with just cause. Recently, however, the school authorities have given full permission for the boys to enter into competition with outside teams in various sports. The inter-racial tension



SIR REGINALD CRADDOCK.

SIR HARCOURT BUTLER.



GROUP OF KAREN SOLDIERS.

in the past was created by frequent unpleasant incidents, of which the following is an example. Some years ago, during the visit of the Lieutenant-Governor, among the attractions arranged for the entertainment of His Honour was a football match between two teams representing the Burmans and the Karens. As is usual in a match of this nature, a large crowd attended, and racial feeling ran high. In spite of every precaution taken by the organisers, aided by a large force of the police, and notwithstanding the presence of many high officials, including the Chief of the Province, the game ended in a free-fight, in which the spectators took no small part. To the shouts of "Kill the Red Shirts!" "Kill the Red Shirts!" the red-jerseyed Karen players had to fight their way out of the ground and to make a tactical retreat in order to avoid a more serious fracas. Such incidents are less frequent nowadays, as the result of better education and cleaner public opinion, and, principally, of the higher status of the Karens in the estimation of the Burmese public and other races generally.

A very happy sign of the times is the fact that the Burmese youth, and young people of other races, have sought and are seeking admission into Karen schools. Parents knowing the good moral atmosphere generally prevailing in Karen Christian schools have been led to send their sons and daughters to them. And in the Karens the deeply-rooted prejudice and strong aversion which has existed against admitting children of other races into their schools is gradually and slowly passing away. The writer considers this the greatest advancement towards Burmo-Karen co-operation, and it may in time bring about the welding of the two important races of the Province into one in national aim.

But co-operation is impossible when there exists a form of oppression which has created much ill-feeling. To cite an example, the pastors and elders of a Karen village once came down to Bassein and reported a matter relating to their Township Officer who, it seems, had gone to their village on a Sunday while a prayer-meeting was in progress and ordered the villagers to come out and help carry his luggage to a dak bungalow. The pastor and elders were in a dilemma, for if ever a nation has a high regard for a religious service

it is the Karen Christians. To be called away from prayers, especially when threatened by a Government official, the threats not unmingled with abuses, was indeed an awkward situation. However, the situation was partially eased by one or two elders and the village headman carrying the luggage to the desired place while the meeting was continued. The Township Officer, not satisfied with the autocratic part he had played, must needs go further by taking down the names of some of the villagers and submitting them for prosecution on charges of his own invention. The villagers claimed that the Township Officer never gave any intimation of his coming to the village, that he only decided upon stopping there on his way back from another village when he heard the singing of hymns and knew that the Karens were at church. There is a rule or understanding in village administration which distinctly states that under no circumstances should villagers be interfered with in their religious services and that, wherever possible, Government officials should make use of those who are not so engaged. The Township Officer might have been considerate enough to have landed just as conveniently at a Burmese village close by, especially when the Karens had always shown him due respect in his previous visits to the village and had given him every help and attention required. In fact, on a previous occasion he had expressed himself as being very pleased with them.

At any rate, the matter was brought to the attention of the Deputy Commissioner, who was a man of tact and sympathy, always responsive, and one who would often go out of his way to settle a disagreement between two parties. In this case, however, he was in a measure influenced by the fact that the Township Officer was his right-hand man in these troublous times during the Great War. This subordinate official was a man of great resource, and his explanation and reports on matters within his jurisdiction had always been most convincing and satisfactory. He was, in addition, one of the most loyal of British Burmese subjects. The Deputy Commissioner made private and personal inquiries, and kept the case pending, apparently in order to find some means of settling the matter between the

parties concerned, while the Karens with their elders and legal aid drew up a very formidable case against the officer. Fortunately, at that time there was a Burmese official of high standing upon whose help the Deputy Commissioner always relied in important matters and who also had great influence with the Karens by his intimate knowledge of them and his kindly and sympathetic dealing with them. To this man the Deputy Commissioner confided the matter, and after some round-table talks and a series of "give-and-take" proposals, the two parties came to an understanding, and the matter was settled, not to complete mutual satisfaction, perhaps, but to the great relief of all concerned.

Here was an opportunity when the Deputy Commissioner, as a Christian, might have used his influence and position to prevent further mischief and friction of a similar nature by speaking out, straight, the course Government officials should follow, as it had always been followed heretofore; on the contrary, what he actually said was that he himself had to work as hard on the Sabbath as on any other day, and, therefore he meant to infer that Christians, as well as non-Christians, should have no objection to working on a Sunday. In the words of Kipling's British Soldier:

> " Ship me somewhere East of Suez
> Where the best is like the worst,
> And there ain't no ten commandments,
> . . . . ."

but even in the East of the Suez there are Christians, and people of other persuasions as well, who live the Christian life and closely follow their religious teachings. It is this religious faith which has made Great Britain what she has been and what she is to-day.

It is a matter of regret that in the East the native Christians in the majority of instances, instead of receiving encouragement and help from a certain class of their Christian rulers, are made the object of ridicule and derision. Fortunately there are still those who, in spite of the great temptations and circumstances, "combine with the highest ability and training the beautiful characteristics of an inward Christian

life," and through them the Christian atmosphere still prevails in the general administration of the country.

Major Enriquez, a much-travelled and keen observer, in his book *A Burmese Wonderland* remarked, "The Karens have been the missionaries' one great success in Burma. Indeed, if they have two faults, they are too much Christianity and too little humour." Surely no nation or race of people can have "too much Christianity!" It is too little Christianity that has made sad pages in the history of nations.

As for the apparent lack of humour of the Karens, the *raison d'être* is to be found in the following extract from Mr. Donald Smeaton's *Loyal Karens of Burma*. "The oppression of ages had 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. . . . Among his clansmen and with his chieftain 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 teachings is 'If anyone asks you if you have seen his buffalo, don't inquire the shape of his horns, just say that you haven't seen it, 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 Karen will rather conceal what he knows, frequently to his own hurt." Major Enriquez is an Englishman and a big "Army Head" (literal Karen translation of a military officer), and therefore it was only to be expected that he would not get any humour out of the Karens. Apart from the fact that it takes a long time to get really acquainted with a Karen, Major Enriquez does not understand their language, and an average Karen cannot crack a joke in Burmese.

The difficulty experienced by the Karens in having to speak Burmese in public and in courts of law is a national grievance which they would like to see rectified. Very few Karens can make themselves "at home" with the Burmese language. It is easier for an educated Karen to express

himself in English than in Burmese, although he comes in daily contact with Burmans and is obliged to speak their language. This is one of the principal reasons why Karen schools are to-day clamouring for the privilege of having their language made a compulsory subject in place of Burmese, as they have to make a mental translation of the English into Karen and then into Burmese whenever they are required to translate English into Burmese. Very recently, however, the sanction of Local Government was obtained for the Karen language to be a compulsory language up to the High School Final in Karen schools.

There is no doubt that by tact, education and untiring propaganda the two races will gradually get into the real spirit of mutual confidence and co-operation but it will be a slow process. The suggestion contained in a subsequent chapter, however, if considered practicable and therefore acceptable, will achieve that mutual confidence and respect so much desired within a decade.

By their usually honest and straightforward dealing and simple ways the Karens have gained the confidence and respect of foreigners like the Chinese, Indians and Europeans, and this confidence, shown by the other races, is promoting in the Burmese some respect and a better feeling towards the Karens.

CHAPTER IV

IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMPLETE CO-OPERATION UNDER EXISTING CONDITIONS

You can work it out by Fractions, or by simple Rule of Three,
But the way of Tweedle-dum is not the way of Tweedle-dee.
You can twist it, you can turn it, you can plait it till you drop,
But the way of Pilly-Winky's not the way of Winkie-pop.

Kipling.

THE Karens have been living for many centuries in Burma under Burmese rule, but they always managed to live apart by themselves, and to retain their nationality and characteristics. Then again, under British rule during a period of more than one hundred years, there has been frequent contact and often long association, in one place with other nationalities, yet they have kept their nationality intact by avoiding inter-racial marriage. They cannot yet intermingle with other races with any mutual benefit or good result. Undoubtedly, villages inhabited solely by Karens thrive and progress far better than those in which the two races are mingled.

The Karen is shy and backward, and often lacking in the spirit of competition, while a Burman is usually assertive, forward and aggressive. The natural consequence is that a Karen is always at a disadvantage when he has to compete with a Burman for any post or favour from Government. It has been seen over and over again that a Burmese boy with a Middle School qualification will obtain a post in preference to a Karen boy who has passed the High School Final. Obviously, there can be no keen co-operation between two individuals or two parties as long

as one of them feels himself unjustly treated, and nurses a grievance.

A police official of high standing, hero of many fights during the troublous times of 1885 in Burma and on the frontiers, once made an interesting comment while on the subject of Burmo-Karen relations. He said: "The Burmese people can never be a great nation, nor can they expect other nations to co-operate with them wholeheartedly unless and until they can eliminate the idea that they are superior in every respect to other nations and races."

A deplorable trait in the Burmese youth of a certain type may be noted. The tendency to make fun of other people sometimes in a spirit of joking but more frequently with the intention to insult and provoke. Almost any day can be seen young Burmans strolling the streets deliberately insulting by their actions and foul language young women who happen to pass by. The victims are usually unoffending women and girls of other races, but occasionally even their own women folk and European women are not exempt. Certain very intimate and highly esteemed Burmese friends of the writer have time and again condemned the objectionable ways of the Burmese youth, and for that reason do not care to send their daughters to schools where there are Burmese boys or to attend which daily the girls have to cover a distance with the possibility of meeting groups of boys of that type on their way. The sight of young women, instead of arousing in them a spirit of respect, the spirit of chivalry with which the youth of many other nations are imbued, seems to have just the opposite effect.

And at the police training depôts a casual observer may witness sentries on duty running to their places to salute a passer-by whom they have mistaken for one of their immediate superiors, only to laugh on discovering their error and make all sorts of insulting remarks. Such behaviour is, unfortunately, too common among the Burmese police and reflects most unfavourably on the Force. All these little objectionable traits make it difficult for others to co-operate with people of that sort.

Recently a case came to the notice of the public, creating a great stir in the local Karen world. It may be cited as an example of many other similar affairs. A young Burmese clerk on a steamer plying between Bassein and a district village was in the habit of calling at the latter place on a young Karen friend who had a sister. After a short time the clerk made advances to the girl through her brother and, the suit being favourably received, took her to wife. Some time later, however, the clerk was transferred to another route, whereupon he with the consent and sanction of his family took another wife, this time a Burmese girl. The deserted Karen wife and her brother heard of this marriage, and the brother went quietly to the man and, reminding him of his promises, remonstrated with the latter about his conduct to his sister who was now in a condition to become a mother. The brother was insulted and roundly abused for being an ignorant jungle Karen, and was told that he and his sister, having made fools of themselves, must abide by the consequences. The girl then went personally to plead with her husband, but she, too, had the same reception. Some few days later as the steamer on which the clerk was working landed at Bassein a young man was seen to rush at the clerk, stabbing him with intent to kill. Fortunately for the victim the knife broke and the wound did not prove fatal. The Karen lad immediately gave himself up to the police, declaring that he had done it to avenge his sister who had been dishonoured. The accused has been sent to prison for four years.

A Karen, whether Christian, Buddhist or Animist, regards marriage in any form whatever as a sacred and solemn act, and the vows never to be broken or dishonoured. It was natural, therefore, that the Karens when they heard of the affair showed silent approval, finding justification for the act, though it was legally culpable, in the dastardly behaviour of the clerk.

The Burmese people, however, very often make light of marriage and promises to women, and a case like the above, which a Karen regards as a great moral wrong, is treated lightly by them. The marked difference in the attitude of

the two races on a point of this nature—on a point, in this instance, which concerns the home life of a nation—this difference in moral outlook is a serious obstacle to co-operation. It deters a Karen from associating more freely with a Burman.

CHAPTER V

THE KAREN CHARACTER

That self-made man, Benjamin Franklin, attributed his success as a public man, not to his talents or his power of speaking—for these were but moderate—but to his known integrity of character. "Hence it was," he says, "that I had so much weight with my fellow-citizens. I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in my language, and yet I generally carried my point." Character creates confidence in men in high stations, as well as in humble life.

Haven.

THE characteristics and peculiar traits of a nation are best seen through foreign eyes, and those of the Karens have been most thoroughly studied and described by the authors of the two books already referred to in a previous chapter. Major Enriquez gives, in addition to a criticism of the Karen character, much interesting data regarding the distribution, origin and tribal history of the race. He describes the Karens as being scattered throughout the Delta, Pegu, Tennasserim and the hills of Eastern Burma from the Shan States in the North, right down to Tavoy and Mergui in the South, numbering about 1,102,000 as compared with roughly 8,000,000 Burmese. In the Census Report for 1911, the Karens were shown as belonging to the Tai-Chinese group, and this view, ascribing a Chinese origin to the Karens is the most convincing yet offered and generally accepted. The two most important divisions of the Karens are the Pwo and Sgaw, and they are sometimes classified, according to their location, as Plain Karens and Hill Karens. Of the people Major Enriquez gives the following opinion: "They are by no means a warlike race, and are indeed remarkable for a certain shyness . . . aloofness and reserve are marked characteristics. Their former condition was deplorable and, but for the advent of the British, they would probably have

RED KAREN GIRLS.

CHOIR AND BAND OF SGAW KAREN HIGH SCHOOL OF BASSEIN, DRESSED IN KACHIN COSTUME.

disappeared like the Talaings. As it is, they are now a greatly flourishing race, passionately loyal to the British Government."

"The Karens, especially the Sgaw, have adopted Christianity extensively. Owing to missionaries' activities, they are often better educated than the Burmese, though by nature less intelligent, and have been taught to co-operate and to cultivate their racial individuality. Indeed it would be better if they associated more freely with the Burmans. Their outside affections, however, are reserved entirely for the British. They have no delusions about Home Rule. The more anti-British the Burmese become, the more passionately loyal are the Karens."

"The Plain Karens are highly civilised people, intelligent and well-educated. It is sometimes stated that Hill Karens make the best soldiers. I very much doubt it. They are extremely reserved and suspicious and are not naturally courageous, though their courage can be cultivated. These wild Karens run from strangers, especially from the Burmans, for whom they retain the old hereditary fear. . . . As a whole, these Hill Karens are suspicious, morose and gloomy. There are many missions in the Laiktho hills, and wherever the people are Christians they are fierce observers of the Sabbath, so that it is impossible to travel among them on a Sunday."

"The Karens are extremely hospitable: strangers can and do enter the houses and help themselves to food without asking permission. The villagers are so honest that the rice is left in the bins out in the fields far away from houses. These Karens are of splendid physique, tireless walkers and keen sportsmen. . . ."

The above is a recent opinion of the Karens as known by a British military officer, and is on the whole correct. Now, the opinion of a British civil officer, Mr. Donald Smeaton, M.A., of the Bengal Civil Service, an officer who spent many years in Burma, and was well qualified to express an opinion may be quoted from his book *The Loyal Karens of Burma*. The comparison with the Burmese in some of the passages is interesting, and what he said about the Karens forty years ago is true with a very few exceptions of the Karens to-day:

"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 guards 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 Karens) will take no transmitted orders. They have been known insolently to refuse to obey their employers' 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 the fruit garden, knocked down one of his master's cousins who came to take some fruits. 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."

"Out 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 Burma dacoit, from his perfect knowledge of wood-craft, which enables him to live for months in the jungle without any supplies, and to shift the scene of his crimes as 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 the 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."

"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 school-boys 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 boys reached the village the old chief eyed suspiciously the hampers of rice and vegetables, and was very indignant when he was told that 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 down 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 in finding out what is wrong. If he is aggrieved by any act of a Government officer, he says nothing openly, but quietly passes on the word that the officer in question is 'no friend of the 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 in-

difference 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 sympathised 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 took 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 aversions 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 Burmese 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 for this, they said, 'It is no use, and we cannot bear to fawn or 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 the 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."

A trait which had not been mentioned in the above descriptions is the respect for elders and old people which is traditional with the Karens, and which forms the moral of the following characteristic and amusing story:

"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 Karens, they had been driven from a 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 the supply of paddy of Po Khai, the orphan boy, 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 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 slipped dancing out on the road, saying, 'Hurry up, grandson, for grandmother is perishing with hunger.' The old woman was really 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 never sent anyone 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 slipped 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 into the pot all the rice her brother had brought home 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 only seven grains of rice.' 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 the time came to cut the *taungya* (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 threshed, 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 grain!"

"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 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 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 hillmen 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 shafts 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 the 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.)

The legend also inculcates the doctrine of hospitality—a virtue which has been observed almost to a fault. Many a poor Karen has suffered because he has failed to show a little discrimination in the choice of his guests. In the year 1897, out of one thousand four hundred prisoners in the Bassein jail sixty were Karens, and of this number more than half had been sent to prison either through having received into their houses strangers guilty of some crime or through being incriminated by the latter. Sometimes the unsuspecting Karen is persuaded by a scheming stranger to infringe upon the law, only to be betrayed subsequently by the stranger who had partaken of his hospitality.

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Bengal Civil Service.

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DR. SUMNER VINTON and
PO PIKE SAN

CHAPTER VI

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

THE Rev. W. C. B. Purser, M.A., in an article entitled "The present situation in Burma" which appeared in *The Young Men of India* for March 21st, 1921, says:

"The Karens although slightly less numerous than the Shans in Burma, are of far more political importance, partly on account of their living in lower Burma within comparatively easy access of Rangoon, partly because, through Christianity, they have made rapid progress during late years in education and general prosperity. There must be considerably more than a quarter of a million Karen Christians; of these the larger part have been won to Christianity by the American Baptist Mission, but in addition to large numbers connected with other missions who are entirely independent of western organisation and belong to the Karen National Church. There are also many thousands of Karens who call themselves Christians, of these the best known are the followers of Bishop Thomas Pelleko, who sees in the name of our Lord a connection with the Karen word *Khli*, a bow, and had designed a mysterious ceremony to bring out the significance of this fact."

"The Karens are a 'peculiar people' in more than the Biblical sense of the expression. They have been held in contempt as hardly better than animals, and have been subjected to age-long oppression by their Burmese neighbours. So it can hardly be wondered at that they have developed a clannishness and reserve which is almost morbid. This is, however, breaking down as a result of the confidence which their Christian education has given them, and under the leadership of Dr. San C. Po; and with their new bi-lingual paper to guide them, they are sure, sooner

or later, to play an important rôle in the public affairs of the Province."

Mr. V. W. Wallace, a former Commissioner of the Irrawaddy Division, in an unpublished Preface contributed to a Revised Edition of the *Loyal Karens of Burma* which it was proposed to publish, says: "It is with much diffidence that I have undertaken the task of writing a preface to this new edition of Mr. Donald Smeaton's book *The Loyal Karens of Burma*. The only excuse for my doing so is that it was the perusal of this work that first drew my attention to the Karen race, and caused me to study their language many years ago, so that I was, I believe, the first official to pass the test for the Sgau-Karen language in 1891.

"Since then many European officers have passed the examinations in both the Pwo and Sgau dialects, and even in the Bghai or Red Karen language, as well as in the Taungthu tongue, which is really one of the Karen dialects."

"The action of the Government in sanctioning rewards to those who mastered these languages was largely due, I think, to the influence of Mr. Smeaton, and has naturally directed attention to the various Karen tribes, and has caused many to interest themselves in a race that was at one time much neglected and misunderstood."

"Readers at this date must bear in mind that the original edition was written during the stirring times of the war of annexation in Upper Burma by an official new to the country, and to the forms of unrest caused by such a state of affairs. They must also remember that the Rev. Dr. Vinton, the American Baptist Missionary from whom Mr. Smeaton collected so much of his information regarding the people of whom he wrote, was also an enthusiast who had so indentified himself with his converts as to be scarcely able to see anything except from the standpoint of the Karen. To these earnest men the methods of the higher officials and the caution necessary in dealing with a little-known race seemed to be the most glaring folly."

"The fault lay with the Karens themselves to a very great extent, and not wholly with the district officials, who might ordinarily have been expected to know the people

of a country that had been under British rule for about thirty years. The fact is that the Karens are a shy race, suffering from a sort of desire to keep aloof from all other people, and seldom showing any wish to interview officials unless they have proved their friendliness by learning their language and customs and moving amongst them. Even then, to many persons, the Karen may appear to be surly and ungrateful, but this is only due to his natural shyness and the repression of all outward signs of his feelings."

"Mr. Smeaton appears to have been greatly mistaken in his views of the consequences of the annexation of Upper Burma, and seems not to have been aware of the causes that made that step imperative if the Lower Province was to be safely held. As we all see to-day, Upper Burma has progressed wonderfully under the rule of the King-Emperor; railways and irrigation works have changed the face of the country and rendered it almost immune to scarcity or famine, while the great oil fields have been made to yield their wealth and bring prosperity to the most barren traet in the land. With regard to the Karens, however, nearly all of Mr. Smeaton's desires have now been fulfilled. The Karens have their own schools, and Karen educational officers have been appointed. Nearly a thousand Karens are to-day serving in the Military Police, there are many Karens employed as Myooks, and in the Provincial Civil Service, and it is pleasing to know that the Karens have come forward loyally during the late great war, and have furnished more men in proportion to their numbers than the Burmans themselves for the Burma Regiments lately raised."

"They also have the honour of being represented on the Lieutenant Governor's Council, and have shown in many non-official capacities their fitness and ability to undertake the duties of citizenship."

"I believe that the Karen race has, under British rule, a great future before it, provided the people preserve their nationality, and combine as one people to progress, not by sudden leaps, but by slow and certain movement towards higher civilization, showing the same loyalty to the British Government that they have shown in the past. They must learn more self-confidence, and take greater interest in the

affairs of the country while retaining their reputation as a law-abiding and trustworthy race."

A. G. Campagnac, an octogenarian of long experience in Burma, writes:

"Opportunities, many, varied, and of special nature have been afforded me for the study of the Burman and Karen characteristics. I have known them for the last fifty years, with a degree of friendly intimacy, in their homes, and their out-door lives, and in their vocations. I have been closely associated with the Karen missionaries, with Rev. Morrow at Tavoy, Rev. Rand at Moulmein, Rev. Bunker at Toungoo, and the 'American-Karens,' the versatile Doctors Vinton and Nichols at Rangoon and Bassein; I have gone out with them in their missionary itineraries, and have availed myself of being present at their Association gatherings. These missionaries have not only got into the shoes of the Karens, but have entered into the very lives of the people and into their thoughts, and the people have an abiding confidence in their American teachers."

"Hence Mr. Donald Smeaton, M.A., I.C.S., the then Financial Commissioner, advised the Government in his book, *The Loyal Karens:* 'Work as far as possible with the missionaries to whom the Karens and the Government owe so much. Listen to their counsel.' Smeaton rightly calls them "The Loyal Karens," because he had an intimate and accurate knowledge of the brave, willing, self-sacrificing services rendered by the Karen levies under Vinton, Bunker and Nichols (the veteran of 101 fights still holding the fort) during the rebellious rising here, there and everywhere."

"Smeaton strongly urges on the Government the advisability of encouraging the national aspirations of the Karen people, and points out that the aspiration most deeply imbedded in their minds and their cherished wish is that their nationality be kept intact, and that their language be not neglected and allowed to die out."

"People naturally or instinctively know what is good for them, and these Karens have lived for a generation in the fond expectancy of one day having a country and a home

which will be their very own. Even now they are found clustered together here and there among themselves."

"The strength of their cohesion may well be seen in the Karen High School at Bassein; an educational institution such as this is not to be seen even in India. Here we see the strong spirit of co-operation, the will to do the best for the good of the community, rich or poor, the ability to accomplish so much educational and cultural work of a high order. They have their own fully qualified medical men, and nurses, sympathetic and efficient for services most valuable; they have their engineers working at their rice and saw mills; their staff of educationally qualified school teachers; their devoted pastors who control schools and churches in the different villages. They are a self-contained people. Music, in its richest form, is their heritage; and in their High School at Bassein, with its eight hundred to a thousand pupils, boys and girls, they have their band of musical players, and in their great Assembly Hall they have a great pipe organ, at which a Karen young lady presides. Their music has attracted so much attention that years ago, at the invitation of the Viceroy of India, Karen young ladies sang at Government House in Calcutta, and their musical talents were spoken of with much *éclat*. People such as these will surely wish to be in their own peculiar element and atmosphere. One may admire, at a football match, their co-operation, their powers of endurance, their quickness of movement, their quick judgment and their fair play and consideration for others."

"The Burmans have had their dynasties of Kings and their Ministers of State, their standing armies, and their influential monastic system. The Karens have had none of these, and hence their instinct and ideal of life are different. They do not aspire to be kings, rulers or governors, and have no visions of kingdoms and principalities, but from earliest days their desire has been to be friendly and helpful to all with whom they come into contact; they are absolutely in no way hostile to or even jealous of the Burmans; but are always ready to give a helping hand when needed to a Burman, whom they call "Brother," but they long to live together among

their own people, a socialistic life in a broad sense. They wish to educate themselves to a high standard of civilisation and culture."

"Thousands of them have embraced Christianity, the religion to which their ancient traditions pointed; and Christian people of whatever nationality are not aliens to them, nor is a British Government an administration of foreigners. Christianity has taken a great hold of their minds and their hearts. They are as a body, a truthful, guileless people. They are keenly sensitive to the smallest harshness or to injustice, but they are also intensely appreciative of the smallest token of kindness or friendliness. In earliest times their intuitive loyalty to the sovereign they pride in calling their "Great Good Queen" was inspiring."

"In Mespotamia the Karen contingent did yeoman service, and the first man shot dead on that field was a Karen youth of Kozu. Loyalty to the British Raj is ingrained in their very constitution, and fidelity to the King-Emperor is a duty, sacred and religious."

Mr. Edwin Rowlands, who has been engaged for many years in Burma both in mission work and in the field of education, writes:

"Having spent several years among the Karens, the writer is privileged, by the invitation of the author, to say something about this sturdy little race.

"The different tribes of Karens in Burma number well over a million souls; the majority, however, are still primitive. When we speak of the Karens we generally think of that part of the race which lives under civilised conditions—very largely Christian, with whom we come in contact in the large towns and certain districts. These, for us, stand for, and speak for the race. And there is a host of them—some seven score thousand! The casual observer sees no difference between them and the Burmese, to him they are Burmese. Apart from government this little people owes its identity and unity—its consciousness of itself, and its expression, —to Missions. Missions have 'made' the Karens,—called a 'nation' into being, given them a place in the sun! With

the aid and protection of Government and their own efforts, they owe their education, their organisation, their outlook, their progress, to Mission work; and this is gratefully and loyally recognised."

"The Karens, through their churches, are perhaps the best organised among the people of Burma; they are also possibly the best *trained in the use of the franchise.* Most of the Christian community, though far from all, are connected with the democratic Baptist Mission—here they are trained in the use of the franchise; the hundreds of churches elect, and pay largely, their own pastors, and the superintendent is elected by vote. Here is an intelligent, trained, independent electorate to help carry out the Reforms. Again, they have *training in organisation*—their churches, their schools, their large annual associations, call for this. Their support of education under the initiative of their leaders is in some cases *phenomenal.* This progressive community includes chiefly the Sgaw Karen and Pwo Karen branches besides the Paku and Bwe; there are also some Karen Buddhists. The writer's experience has been almost wholly among the Sgaw branch."

"It may be said, in passing, that a primitive branch of the Karens—Karenni—still occupy the only independent part of Burma."

"As is natural with a small race, the Karens may be called *clannish.* This is not an aggressive clannishness—rather one of aloofness. In towns they have the Karen 'quarters' —a part of the town where they reside—their own villages, living their own life, and whole Karen 'districts.' They do not, perhaps, take a *sufficient* part in the general life, but this will grow."

"The late W. T. Stead called the people of Wales 'a nest of singing birds.' This may be as appropriate to the Karens —they have *a natural gift of song,* and it is developed. Some of the most pleasing singing in Burma is in their churches. Their singing at Agra a few years ago was a revelation. It is striking to hear a growing youth humming bass as he passes the window, or a girl naturally falling to singing 'seconds.' Singers and poets are by nature sensitive: and these two branches may indicate also a power of culture.

The Karens are sensitive. They are apt to cover their wound with the wing—to nurse their grievance in silence. They are appreciative of kindness, but not demonstrative in its expression."

"This leads to the mention of another point—their *power of passive resistance*. If this little race was united in their opposition, there is no race in Burma, perhaps, which could equal them in their power of thus resisting—it is something akin to obstinacy. Yes, and they can also rise in response to a proper appeal."

"M. Smeaton wrote a book entitled *The Loyal Karens of Burma*; the title was well chosen. Not once, nor twice only have they proved this *loyalty* to Government, this has been proved not only when it was to their own interests also, but otherwise. Their intelligence and their appreciation naturally lead them to loyalty. It is not always, perhaps, that this has been fully reciprocated. But this is not the only kind of loyalty. And many can testify to the loyalties of this little people."

"One is prepared for a look of doubt when one says the Karens are *enterprising*. They are not noted for this in business, though there are cases enough. Scour the outposts and we find its members scattered throughout the province, in different departments and avocations—quite a little host in Siam. Their sturdiness and solidity fit them for this. We find them as Mission pioneers among the northern tribes, serving Government in different departments, civil and military and the big companies; teachers, quite a host; mechanics; men in forests—famous elephant catchers; outposts, mines, etc."

"Years before the Kinwun Mingyi's Mission to Europe we find two Karen boys sailing for America from Moulmein in the *Lady Elma Bruce* in 1865—the one returning with his degree and training for a leading place as a Minister of the gospel, and the other a 'crack' baseball player for the University, returning with a Normal training. In or about the same year we find still another youth going, and returning with his M.A., to serve his people to old age—he passed away recently. It shows some enterprise that the Karen village of Kozu, some seventy houses, should boast of three who went to America

and four across to India. It is also interesting to mention the Karen, Dr. Saw Durmay (Po Min), who had the enterprise to take his white elephant to England and America."

"One might pass on to one more point—*courage*. This virtue is not the monopoly of any one race. What the Karens did during the dacoities of the 'eighties of last century showed this. Give them the leader that appeals to them—note their response. Probably not only relatively, but absolutely, this little race responded at the time of the Great War with a number exceeding that of any race in Burma—thanks largely to Dr. San C. Po and other leaders. As military police they are well known. The Karens are a peace-loving people, and in the past were subject to no little oppression. To recall the words of a candid critic, Mr. C. F. Hertz, D.S.P., C.I.E., in a speech to which the writer listened: 'The Karens are a peace-loving people, and for the sake of peace they have in the past stood a lot of high-handedness and oppression from some of their neighbours. This peace-loving disposition has been mistaken for timidity. Now, I need not tell you that you are not, in the true sense of the word, a timid race. I have seen Karens in circumstances in which they have shown themselves quite the equal in pluck to any other race inhabiting this province.'"

"The writer in travelling with a police officer and speaking of this little people recalls, perhaps, his exact words when he said, 'The Karens are the boys; I would go anywhere with Karens, or with Gurkhas.' Effective as they can be when roused in this connection, it is still better, perhaps, in the grim persistent battle of life."

"The Karen is apt to stick to the simple, direct, primitive manners of his forefathers, and not be 'flexible' enough in certain circumstances. He sometimes loses by this. One would sum up correctly, perhaps, by saying, that the Karen does not arrange a good enough show-window to indicate the good stuff inside the shop! In one word one would describe the Karen as—*sturdy*."

"In the background of all is Karen womanhood. The name of Karen womanhood stands high. Writers on Burma are one in this. Female higher education has made rapid strides in recent times. The service of Karen womanhood

in the state runs into three channels: child-nursing, teaching, and sick-nursing, in all of which they render sterling service."

"In the words of Dr. Gilmore: 'In order that the national contribution of the Karens be helpful to other nations they must live their own individual life, and at the same time live in intercourse with other nations; they must live their own life to maintain their peculiar characteristics in order to contribute them to the common life of the races of Burma and enrich that life.'"

CHAPTER VII

KAREN CELEBRITIES

"O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us."
Burns.

SOME prominence has been gained by a few Karens, not so much because they are men of talent, zeal, earnestness and sincerity as because the methods adopted by them for their people, whose interests they undoubtedly have at heart, have excited many and diverse remarks from their friends and enemies.

Among these may be mentioned the great Po Pike San or Po Hsan Ye, "Bishop" Pelleko or Klebopa, Saw Pah Dwai, A.T.M., Barrister-at-Law, and Dr. Po Min or Saw Durmay, of white elephant fame. These men have tried, each in his own way, to do their utmost to help and uplift their people, champion their cause, and fight their battles, and as one modestly said, "To make the Karens known, at least." Their aims and objects are highly commendable, and that spirit of helping their oppressed countrymen has always been present. But the question arises—with what success have they met by the methods they have employed?

Po Hsan Ye

The story of the life of the late Po Hsan Ye has an obscure beginning and a mysterious end, and, up to date, there has been no reliable evidence to show whether he met his death accidentally, by falling into a well or through foul play. At any rate, his disciples and those who actually believed in his infallibility up to this day hold that he still lives. It is this belief that has given opportunities to

some pretenders to extract sums of money from the ignorant people.

It has been related that many years ago Po Pike San was a Buddhist, and that his whole aim was to become a Zawgyi (a holy man). A Zawgyi is a person who has lived a saintly life in solitary seclusion and is capable of performing miracles. However, in order to attain this state of power he has to meet and overcome some of the greatest temptations and hardships. Po Pike San, on the highest peak of the Shwegyin Hills called Thet-keh-daung, had attained this state. For many years at the foot of a little white pagoda which he had built, he practised the five precepts (ဘဝငါးပါး). Burmese, Karens, Shans and pilgrims of other nationalities came and worshipped at the place and saw the "holy man." But it appears that while living a saintly life he had a female partner whom he called "mother" and who took part in all his adventures, bore all the hardships and, like himself, conquered all the great temptations that came her way. Some years later Po Pike San came down from the hill and settled down in a large village made up of his so-called "children." It was here that a missionary met him and eventually converted him and all his "children" to Christianity. The conversion was looked upon with doubt by some who thought that he had an ulterior object, while to others he was a sincere seeker of the Truth who had found it like the great apostle Paul of old. At any rate, the subsequent actions and manifestations of this really wonderful man never clearly demonstrated his absolute sincerity.

There was something singular about Po Pike San, reverently called Po Hsan Ye after his conversion, in that whatever he did the Burmese people never criticised nor obstructed him in any way. Perhaps it was due to the fact that he was once a Buddhist who had attained that height of spirituality which could do nothing wrong. He was reputed to have saved up a tremendous amount of money, and to have buried it on the top of some hills. At any rate, besides giving substantial financial help to the Vinton Memorial Hall which stands as one of the Karen achievements, he built many buildings, particularly half a dozen

magnificent edifices which have been the wonder of travellers journeying by train. These buildings served as rest-houses for travellers, and a meeting place for the Karens of the vicinity, and supplied ample accommodation for the annual Karen Christian or National meetings. While Po Pike San was alive, the buildings were more or less made use of, but after his death they fell into disuse and most of them have fallen into the hands of money lenders.

The influence and personality of this man was simply wonderful among a certain class of Karens, and he was such a man of mystery that people of all classes were not satisfied until they had seen him, and had shaken hands with him once in their lifetime. One of his methods of procuring money was to invest in a few hundred rupees worth of safety pins which he would sell for one rupee each. People would pay for them without a word just for the sake of having a memento of Po Hsan Ye. He was also a peculiarly effective "beggar." His requests from possible donors would start at a thousand rupees, then a hundred and gradually lowering to one rupee or even one pice. Generally his appeal was successful before the minimum was reached. He would receive the money that was given him in a silver or brass bowl containing water. "For," he said, "money is hot, and it must be cooled down and washed in water to make it fit for good use." These odd little acts of his were looked upon by a certain class of people as mystic rites.

Whatever savours of mystery interests and attracts most men, and an interesting habit of Po Pike San was his choice and use of words with a double meaning. Some British officers kept a close watch upon the old man, as they thought he was an impostor and did great harm to poor ignorant people, while others did not take him seriously, but, instead, regarded him as a harmless and eccentric specimen of humanity.

"Bishop" Thomas Pelleko Klebopa (ဒီးပိုးဘိုး, *meaning "Father of the Bows")*

The "Bishop," who is of historical interest, was a member of the Church of England, but by his peculiar interpretation

of the Scriptures and other eccentricities, he was later struck off from membership of that Church. Whatever may have been his previous history, he first became known to the public when he was arrested on a charge of preaching sedition, and appeared before Judge David Wilson, I.C.S. The Judge took the view that "Bishop" Pelleko was no more than a religious crank, a type which is very common even in Western countries, who made a peculiar interpretation of the Bible, and that when he exhorted the people not to pay taxes to Government, he only meant taxes in a spiritual sense. He was discharged after some months of detention in jail.

The peculiarity of "Bishop" Pelleko's doctrine was that the name of Christ should be associated with a bow, claiming that the first four letters, Chri, should have been Khli (which means a bow in Karen)—and hence Christ would be known as Khli-Bo-Pa (Father of the Bow). This explanation is obviously unsatisfactory. But those who are acquainted with the rhymes or poems of the hill people will understand how easily mistakes arise when these verses are handed down verbally from father to son. "Bishop" Pelleko died a few years ago, but his disciples still continue his method of worship, and seem truly sincere in their belief. Strange as it may seem, there are many disciples in various parts of Burma who are following his doctrine. One of them who lives near by, in Bassein District, claims the power to take away the sins of his disciples by placing an arrow on his bow and shooting away the sins for a fee.

Dr. Saw (Durmay) Po Min

Saw Durmay is a man, still comparatively young, notable for certain actions and undertakings which are very unusual, and with such vast aims that it would need a Solomon or a Mahawthata to foretell the ultimate result.

The birtn-place of this outstanding man was somewhere in Kyaukkyi, but his sphere of activities has been mostly in Toungoo, Toungoo hills, and vicinity. It has often been asked by those interested whether Dr. Saw Po Min was

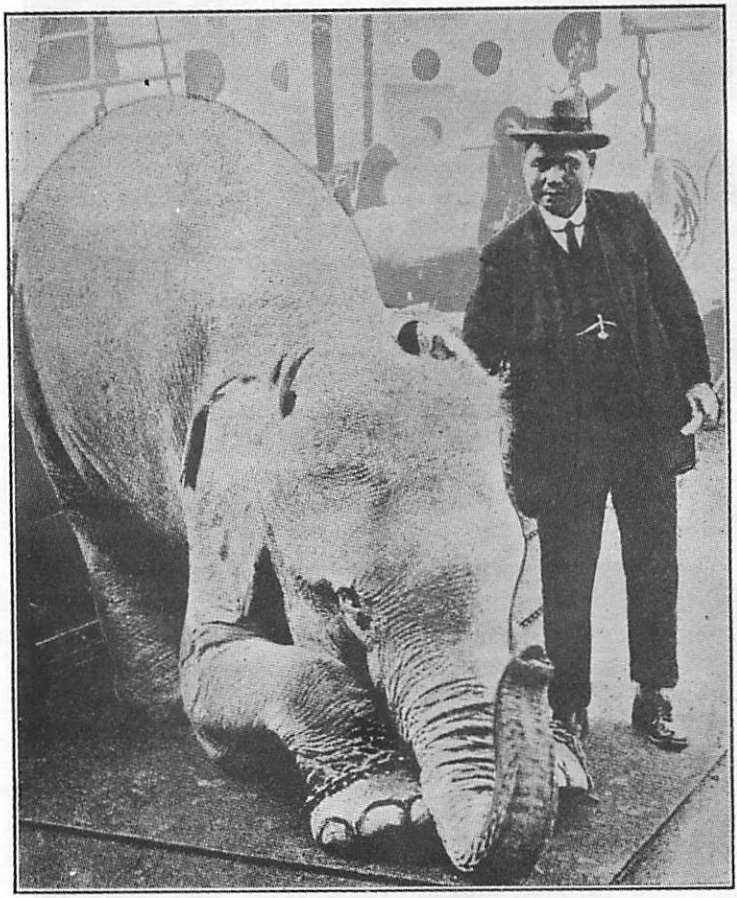
really a qualified medical man. It seems that Dr. Po Min studied in Calcutta for some few years and while there he took great interest in medicine, attended clinics, learned how to compound medicines, etc., by special permission of the physician-in-charge, and eventually made the acquaintance of the Surgeon-General. After some time, he gained some knowledge of drugs and their actions, compounding, and the treatment of the ordinary and more common diseases. On his leaving Calcutta, he received a certificate from the Surgeon-General, certifying to his knowledge of drugs, compounding and treatment of ordinary and common diseases, and that he might be trusted to treat them. He has also a knowledge of indigenous drugs and method of Karen treatment.

His real name is Po Min, but he is also called Durmay by his intimate friends, and this name he has adopted as a part of his surname owing to an incident which happened while he was in London. There appeared in one of the London illustrated papers an article on elephant catching in Burma with sketches of the methods, etc. Dr. Po Min was the man who gave particulars of the methods in use and his name was mentioned in an article which stated that the "Burmese Method" of catching elephants was very unique and humane and that the result was very good all round. Dr. Po Min at once had it published in the paper that the method of catching elephants as described by him was not Burmese but Karen, that indigenous elephant catchers were Karens and not Burmans and that he, Dr. Po Min, was a Karen and not a Burman. The *Burma Observer*, having seen the article, commented to the effect that if Dr. Saw Po Min was so keen on making a distinction and prided himself on being a Karen, why did he own a Burmese name? This article in the *Burma Observer* touched Dr. Po Min to the quick and he immediately announced in the papers that henceforth his name would be Saw Durmay (Durmay means a black ant that runs on the ground, and when it bites it produces a very painful, hot sensation). Subsequent events, however, have shown that Dr. Po Min has not quite discarded his former name but now has it "Dr. Saw Durmay Po Min."

From the above incident, one may conclude that Dr. Po Min is one of those strong-headed men with a great amount of courage behind him. When the Burmese sent their delegates to England some years ago in connection with the Reforms Scheme, in spite of the unwillingness of some of the Karen elders and the fact that funds were not available for the purpose Dr. Po Min formed one of the two delegates saying, "I am going even against the wishes of some of you, and I am going at my own expense, so you can have nothing to say." He went there late for the sitting of the Selborne Committee, but he remained there and did, among other things, a good turn for the Karens in republishing Mr. Smeaton's *Loyal Karens of Burma* which he distributed to a number of prominent people in England and to some officials in Burma. This book, which gives a very accurate account of the Karens, contains many valuable suggestions relating to the policy Government should pursue, and by which the Karens could be made to realise and appreciate to the full extent the good intention of Government, and which at the same time would be of great mutual benefit to the rulers and the ruled.

During the Wembley Exhibition, Dr. Saw Po Min sent two elephants with his Karen Mahout to increase the attractiveness of the Burmese exhibition. Recently he took his famous white elephant to the London Zoo, personally, and created quite a sensation. Incidentally, when the white elephant first left the shores of Burma it so happened that the rains did not set in at the usual time. There was a delay of some weeks, and this delay in the onset of the rainy season was attributed by some to the white elephant having been taken away from Burma, as on a previous occasion in the time of Waythandaya Min, when he gave away his white elephant to another country, drought and famine followed and lasted until the day the white elephant was brought back.

To have captured a real white elephant is indeed a very rare achievement—it is said that such an event has happened only a few times in the long history of Burma. White elephants are considered sacred in Burma and Siam, and Dr. Po Min must have some definite plan as to the ultimate



SAW DURMAY AND HIS WHITE ELEPHANT

KAREN STUDENTS AT JUDSON COLLEGE.

disposal of the one captured by him. Meanwhile this parading and exhibition of the white elephant by him will no doubt have the effect of making the Karens better known to the general public. There are many Karens who expect great things from Dr. Po Min and his activities, while not a few are puzzled in their attempt to conjecture the final outcome of his recent unusual undertaking.

Dr. Po Min has had strange experiences, to which he attaches great importance. For instance, there is a story that a hen once flew up and perched on his shoulder and laid an egg which dropped into his pocket, and the writer has observed that by some strange influence many people who came from the hills to Saw Durmay's place in Toungoo have turned into prophets or become temporarily insane!

Saw Pah Dwai, A.T.M., Barrister-at-Law

The three men already described were men of the hills, and not highly educated. Saw Pah Dwai, however, is a son of the Delta, well educated and clever. He has held important public positions, and his services have been recognised and rewarded by Government. His student life has been one long continuous struggle against financial difficulties; he found discipline irksome and consequently was not popular with the authorities of the institutions which he attended. He went to England to study law by the help of Karens which was obtained through his own personal exertions. He has been practising mostly in Thaton but being often engaged by Karens of other parts of the Province. Whenever and wherever his services have been and are required by his people he has unstintedly given of his best, and has on many occasions fought tooth and nail to champion their cause.

Saw Pa Dwai has met with so much disappointment in his lifetime that he has become a strong pessimist, a man of unmitigated grievances. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that he cannot realise that "there is more than one way of killing a cat." He has been grievously disappointed in many of his undertakings on behalf of his people,

either owing to the predominating influence on the opposite side or because the mind of the authorities is biased unfavourably by his ways and methods. On one occasion he created a great stir and caused much amusement throughout the province by making a speech in Karen (only Burmese and English being allowed) at a session of the Burma Legislative Council, on the plea that he could not speak English.

Strongly resenting the many ingenious methods of Burmese oppression of his people, in his evidence given before the Whyte Committee at Moulmein when asked if the Karens are still badly treated by the Burmans, he said, "Burmese oppression of the Karens is ten times worse now than in the olden days, for the Burmese have learned to be wiser and infinitely more cunning in their methods of oppression, and Government are none the wiser for their doing so." In a personal statement he has been heard to say that he has given up every hope of ever getting any fair treatment from Government, nor does he expect them to live up to the promises that have been made. So, as far as the writer now knows, he is playing the game of non-co-operator with Government and its doings.

Is Saw Pa Dwai entirely wrong in his opinion of the Government and their attitude towards Karens, or would Government be perfectly right to think that Saw Pa Dwai is wrong in his contention? The writer would suggest that in spite of Saw Pa Dwai's apparent eccentric ways he is perfectly right from his point of view; while Government on the other hand, no doubt, have sound reasons for their actions. The antagonistic points of view recall the story of the two knights of old who came to a statue which one declared was made of gold while the other said it was made of silver. The two fought and bled almost to death, and it was left to a priest to show them that they were both equally wrong and equally right. The statue was actually covered with gold on one side and silver on the other, but the knights never thought of going over to look at it from the other's point of view. So long as Saw Pa Dwai and the Government are in their present position, they will never see the same thing in the same way. With the knights of

old it was pride that made them blind, but with Saw Pa Dwai and the Government it is an impenetrable curtain which hangs between them, and only when this curtain is lifted will both sides be visible to each. And the only way in which the curtain can be lifted or removed the writer will endeavour to show in a subsequent chapter.

Saw Pa Dwai's method of attaining his object perhaps does not appeal to those in authority, but the solid facts are there. The following excerpts from one of a series of resolutions to be sent up by him to Local Government will show the unusual literary style and phraseology he usually adopts. The resolutions resemble more a series of short lectures vigorously propounded by a Professor emphasising every point rather than a petition stating sober facts and grievances to Local Government for redress. There are some beautiful thoughts expressed in the passages, and the unusual phrasing of words and expressions, too, are worthy of notice. Most individuals have little peculiarities of their own, but when the peculiarities in a particular person are marked, he is apt to be regarded as eccentric:

"Burma, like all its neighbours, is in a state of uneasiness and in misery. It murmurs, grumbles, and groans; it struggles, writhes and kicks; it is suffering from some disease or diseases, no doubt. Doctoring committees have been appointed, one after the other, to diagnose and prescribe remedies. . . ."

"It looks as if the committees were welcomed in their respective places and at their birth, as angels of salvation. But lo! They came, made a lot of fuss, passed out and vanished, like big bubbles, struggling out of the throat of mud volcanoes, make a great deal of rumblings that form, glitter awhile and burst. They are mountains in labour that bring forth a handful of vapours. In fact they are more. For neither the labour of the mountain nor the escaping bubbles cost anything. But each of the committees passed out and left the well-known backbone (the Public) a degree or two, at least, paler than ever. Their failures like in one of the other or in all of the following defects:

"Namely, first, they failed to spot the right seat of the disease; second, they failed to exert themselves sufficiently

for removing it, when rightly spotted; third, they failed to make use of the proper means. There is again this trouble: the doctor that diagnoses and prescribes is not he that checks and administers the remedy to the patient."

"When one so often hears cries against the public servants, it is only common sense to start finding out if the cries are false or true. If they are false, they give the "cry-wolves" hard slaps on their lips and tell them to shut up forever and a day; but if they are true, send up the "sheep-wolves" to the gallows at once, one and all, fruits and roots, branches and all, as the Burmese King of old did. The decision and decree appear to us to be those of a guilty weakling who, being exceedingly frightened to make the bold strides, this way or that, of a brave soldier, crawls into a convenient loophole that only suits an energetic lukeworm."

"Once more again, offences are poison, and hence offenders are vipers, and corrupt public servants are immuned domesticated vipers. Vipers breed a hundred at a time and so multiply very quickly. By one corrupt action or practice one hundred evils spring up as the children of the viper and one evil encourages and strengthens another, and so you see the children of the deadly reptiles are gaily dancing, and deaths and sorrows are numerous, and to add oil to the fires, vipers are called upon to administer unto the pains and sores. . . . Then fancy the unthinkable waste of time, of labour, of public money often aptly described as the juice of the life of Back-bone-daily. Fancy the amount of throes involved in the systematic hauling down of the innocent, free, simply happy, rustic's soul whose spirit smiles to the freezing degree at the very mention of "law courts," by legions a day, the soul being made to go through the Ordeals of laws and of the various Procedures, in the hands of the despotic lords of the petty throes, the ordeals distracted and prolonged through wearisome days, months, and years. Also imagine both the passive and the active economic wastes arising from a million and one trips, back and forth, to and from the law courts and from the loss of labour or work, in the field of elsewhere, which might be double or triple the already dreadful waste above referred to. Also listen

to the calls for new beings by the quaint names of Dear Additionals, Sweet Deputies, and Lovely Assistants and all the other similar pet names."

"Justice implies satisfaction that persuades contentment; contentment implies peace; and peace, prosperity; and prosperity, happiness, which is the aim of all life, high or low, here or elsewhere. The people are not happy because they are not prosperous, not contented and not satisfied, and because they are not given justice, one of the three gems of the state, viz., Justice, Freedom and Equality."

CHAPTER VIII

KAREN WOMANHOOD

" Her office there to rear, to teach,
Becoming as is meet and fit
A link among the days, to knit
The generations each with each."
Tennyson.

It has truly been said "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." A country or nation which disregards its womanhood could never be counted truly great; whereas a nation that respects its womanhood has invariably proved itself superior to other nations. It is said that at the height of the glory of Rome, the class of people that wielded great power were the Greek women who had the care of Roman homes as well as that of the children, in their education and up-bringing. The Greek women so unostentatiously did their work that the public at large were not aware of it. Karen women, with their simple ways, their gentle and modest manner, have won the respect and admiration not only of their own people but also of the people of other nationalities who have known and observed them.

Co-education has been a great success among the Karens. It has been proved to be such for the past fifty years or more. At a meeting of a well-educated and talented group of Burmans, a Burmese lady made the following remark: "I have attended a Christian Karen co-educational school as well as a Burmese Girls' school, and my candid opinion is that co-education among the Karens will always be a success, while among the Burmese it always is bound to be a failure. There is something in the nature of the Burmese boys and girls that will never be compatible with co-education. I am Burmese and am fully aware of what I have said."

In educational as well as in religious matters Karen women have taken a prominent part. They love English music, and have the ability to learn, with facility, simple as well as difficult music. On the 10th March, 1927, the Bassein-Myaungmya Karen Women's Association held a meeting at Bassein. The Christian women of Bassein-Myaungmya and other districts were present. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the Association and the number of women present was estimated to be about four thousand. The programme consisted of a musical concert and several addresses of welcome by wives of prominent pastors and elders. Their speeches were thrilling and inspiring. The musical entertainment was very enjoyable, and the catering was efficiently conducted in spite of the large number of guests. One woman proudly declared that they had not in vain striven to show the people that man's aid was not absolutely essential to women. General acquiescence was given to her statement because her boast had been amply justified.

Karen girls are homely and motherly, and thus European ladies highly appreciate them as baby nurses and housekeepers. Being patient and gentle, they make efficient sick-nurses and midwives whose services are highly appreciated by the Burmese as well as other nationalities. Those who in their illness have entrusted their lives to the care of these nurses have always thought of them with gratitude. While they are a great asset to the nation, Karen nurses present some really difficult problems. Some of them are mere girls—unsophisticated as to the ways of this world. They are simple and uninitiated in the evils of the world. Some years have elapsed since Karen girls first took up this profession of a nurse. Each succeeding year sees an increase in the number of applications for joining the hospitals—Dufferin and General—and now nursing has become a fashionable rage. Girls hailing from all classes have become nurses, and I am certain that in Burma there are more nurses to be found among the Karen than in any other single race of the country. We cannot stem the tide, but we should see that every provision is made for their protection.

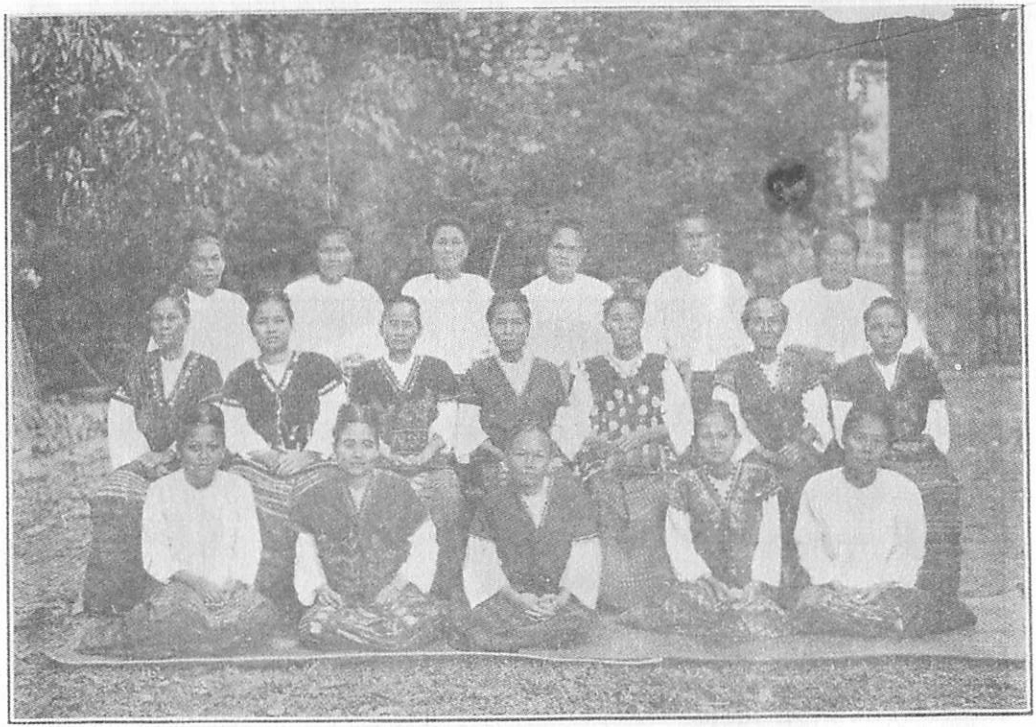
It is gratifying to note that at Rangoon there is a Burmese and Karen branch of the Y.W.C.A. which attempts to bring

the nurses together and provides for their physical and religious needs. It was started and led well on its way by Mrs. Nellie Yaba-Min, and is now in the charge of Tharamu Naw E Kyaing, of Rangoon. A nurse's remuneration is good, but the hardship that she is called upon to endure! A doctor diagnoses his case, writes a prescription and then leaves the patient to the long-suffering nurse, who has to satisfy every little need of the patient—no matter how fastidious such may be. Members of so noble a profession are deserving of respect and kindness to make their hard lot easier both physically and morally. Temptations beset them on all sides, and only the initiated are aware of the nature of the evils.

Westerners have frequently associated Burma with her "delightful women." I do not pretend to include Karen women in this category. They are usually too timid or unobtrusive to attract notice. But, however unostentatious they may appear in a gaily plumaged throng of Burmese women, in their own homes they are the delight of their children. There are at present a number of Karen woman graduates, and the number is steadily increasing. A photograph showing Judson College with its faculty members and Karen college boys and girls appears facing page 54.

Karen women are generally hardy—possessing an enviable physique. In the districts women have been as successful in cultivation as the men. They plough, sow and reap with comparative ease, and a farmer's life is not too strenuous for them. Though timid and shy in society, Karen women have displayed wonderful courage in the face of real danger. At a certain village a Karen woman whose house was raided by a number of dacoits stood behind the door, armed with a dah, and hacked at the intruders one by one as they made their exit. This feat—worthy of an Ali Baba,—was performed single-handed by a Karen woman!

Many Karen girls have chosen teaching as their vocation in life. The life of a school teacher is a very trying one. Our Karen women have contributed a great deal towards educational progress in Karendom. In music they teach the village children the rudiments of the tonic-sol-fa system —preparing them for the larger city schools. Some people



GROUP OF KAREN LADIES OF BASSEIN.

REV. DR. VINTON AND THE VINTON MEMORIAL HALL.

have remarked favourably on the musical tendency of Karens in general. We dare not, as yet, hope for a Patti, a Melba, or a Clara Butt, but then our nation is not yet sufficiently westernised.

In a Karen family the husband and wife are on an equal footing. They strive to aid each other—the husband is not the sole arbiter of domestic disputes. The wife is a partner:

> "Yet child-simple, undefiled,
> Frank, obedient—waiting
> On the turnings of your will."

Our women may not yet have attained the ideal of womanhood as set forth by Ruskin in his book *Sesame and Lilies*, but it is our fervent hope that they are making effective strides towards it. Adam echoes our sentiments when he says:

> "God! I render back
> Strong benediction and perpetual praise
> . . . . . .
> That Thou, in striking my benumbed hands
> . . . . . .
> Has left this well-beloved Eve, this life
> Within life, this best gift between their palms,
> In gracious compensation!"

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL PROGRESS

There is nothing so revolutionary, because there is nothing so unnatural or convulsive to society, as the strain to keep things fixed, when all the world is, by the very nature of its creation, in eternal progress; and the cause of all the evils in the world may be traced to that natural, but most deadly error of human indolence and corruption—that our business is to preserve and not improve. It is the ruin of all alike—individuals, schools, and nations.—*Dr. Arnold.*

THE educational, social and spiritual progress of the Karens has been due, to a very great extent, to the Missionaries who have so faithfully and sympathetically worked among and with them. The Karens are not ashamed or afraid to proclaim to the world publicly or in private that they owe what progress and advancement they have made, to the missionaries whom they affectionately call their "Mother" under the protection of the British Government whom they rightly call their "Father." The latter, as is usually the case with a father, never really knows, or if he does know often forgets, the special or peculiar needs of his individual child at home.

Every Karen must be ever grateful to the missionaries and the people that send them, of whatever nationality, for the sacrifice of time, talent, money, and men on their behalf. There is no need to speak of the past, the self-sacrifice and the great persecutions which the missionaries have undergone, for they have been recorded in history as well as in the Great Book which never leaves out a single act of man. Men like Dr. J. B. Vinton, of loving memory, Dr. D. A. W. Smith, of Karen Seminary fame, the beloved Drs. Harris, Gilmore, Abbot, Beecher, Carpenter, Cross, Thomas, Rev. Dr. C. A. Nichols, K.I.H., and their wives who helped them in their difficult and arduous work,

spent all their lives and the best that they could give for the Karens. Among the younger generation are found men like the Reverends Marshall, L. Levi Lewis, and a large number of lady missionaries and teachers who are devoting their lives for the Karens, and are highly appreciated.

Then again Catholic missionaries like the late revered Father D'Cruz, of Bassein, who gave all his life to the Karens, and the Reverend Father Provost, K.I.H., a counterpart of the Reverend Dr. C. A. Nichols, in his keenness for the progress, spiritual and temporal, of the people among whom he works. The author is not so well acquainted with the work and workers of the Church of England, the activity of which is concentrated principally in Toungoo. With broad-minded, keen and sympathetic workers like the Reverend W. C. B. Purser, M.A., of Kemmendine, it is bound to have a great influence on Karen life.

Can the Karens as a nation ever forget them and their heroic and loving deeds? Those who can forget would indeed be ungrateful creatures. The deeds of some of these men and women would fill pages of noble sacrifice and enterprise. It is to be hoped that some of our capable Karen young men will take up the history and work of the missionaries among the Karens. It will be indeed a most interesting, valuable and stirring subject which will be appreciated by other people as well as by the Karens themselves.

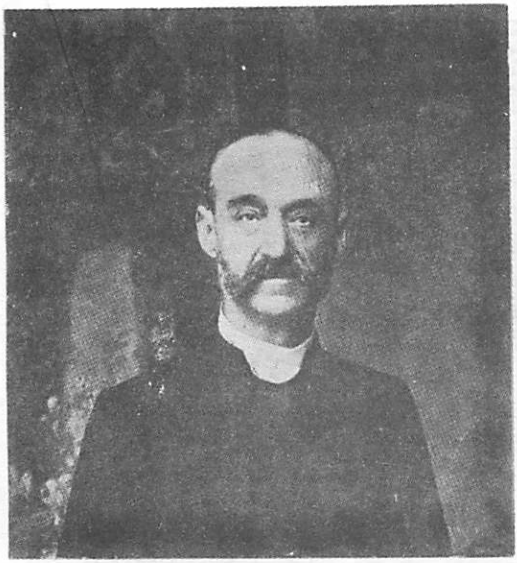
There are missionaries to-day out in the jungles and up in the hills, as well as in the towns of Burma, doing their best to uplift the people and to fight their battles, often difficult battles and all a labour of love. And Karens will be the first to admit that even their own people—their own flesh and blood,—would not do what these men have done and are doing for them. The writer is, and always was, an admirer of the great talent of the late Home Member, the Honourable U May Oung, but certain words which the latter uttered in public were quite uncalled for, and must have been due to ignorance or prejudice. He said, "Karens are under the thumb of the missionaries, and are led by the

nose into anything that the missionaries wish." With which remark the writer disagreed, and added that even if correct it was far better for Karens to be under the thumb of missionaries and led by them than to be led by the Devil who takes so many forms in Burma.

Religion has played a prominent part in the general progress of the Karens, and Christianity "has satisfied a great national religious need, and in doing so has developed a national civilisation. Three processes have ever since been simultaneously in operation: Christianity, Education and Civilisation. 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."

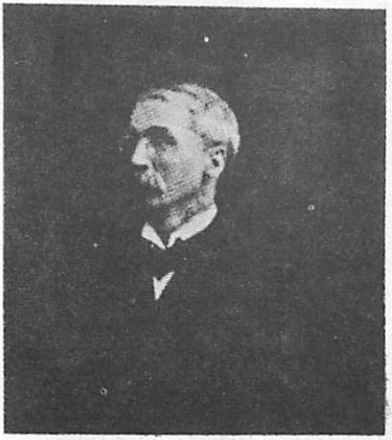
Mr. Donald Smeaton, in his *Loyal Karens of Burma*, narrates the story of how the Karens finally embraced the teachings of Christ:

" . . . 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-tradition 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 his 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 generations, 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. In a minute by the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, dated May 1, 1863, may be found 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 an area



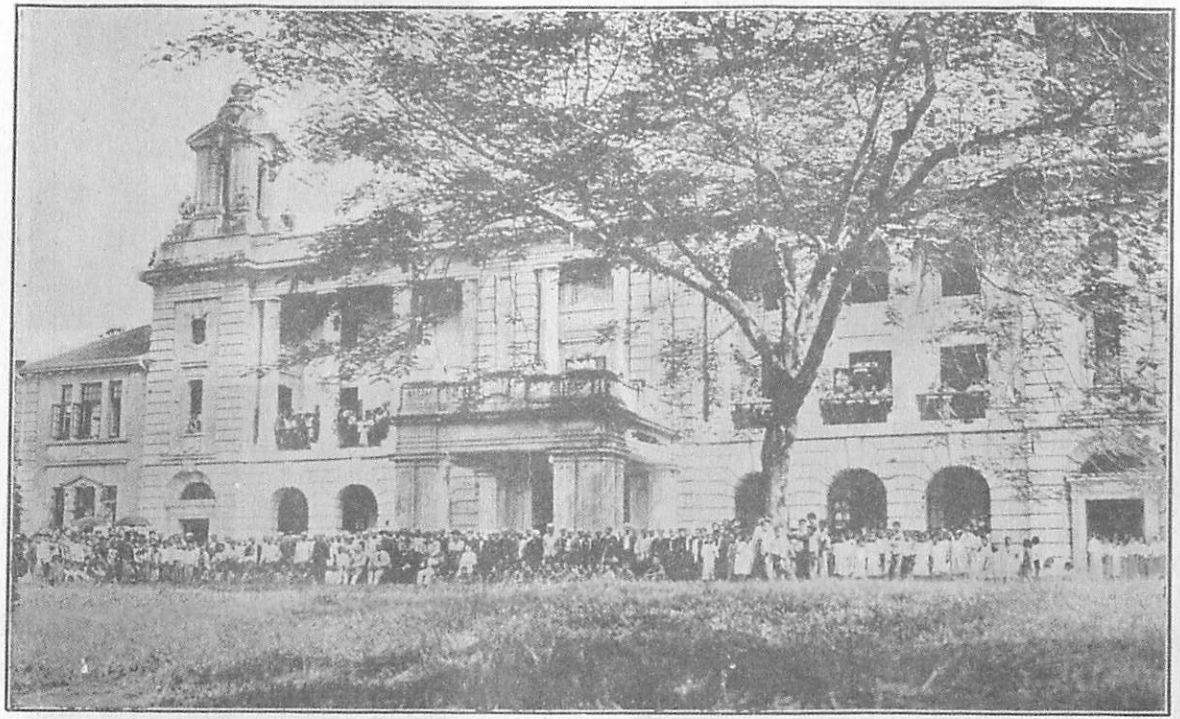
DR. C. A. NICHOLS, K.I.H.

SRA SAN TÉ,—T.P.S.



DR. CRONKHITE.

THAPG'H THA MYAT KYI.



THE NEW KO THA BYU HALL.

of more than 2,000 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 constant labour of the American missionaries, many thousands of 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.'"

The author then comments upon the national spirit of the Karens, and with keen insight prophesies their future:

"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 of 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. Another secret of the great success of the American Mission 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 worked on their own lines, incorporating in the new national structure all that was valuable in the old."

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 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 head and shoulders above its neighbours. . . . 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 hardships 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. The possibility of a separation of 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)—representative 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 the cohesion of the present 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 Christian 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. . . . "

". . . 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 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 eggs, other races are 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. . . . "

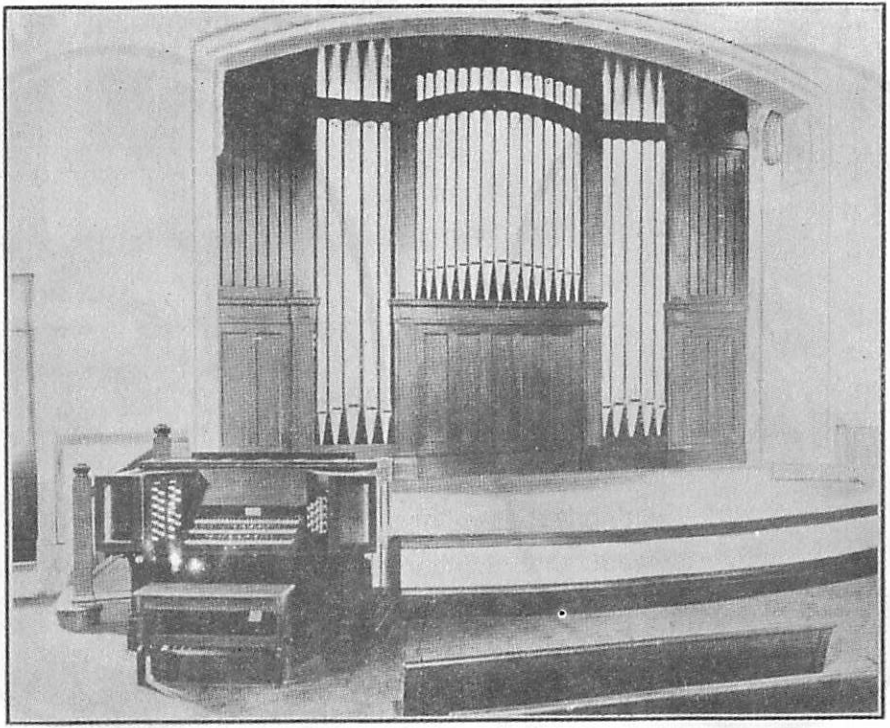
According to the Census of 1911, there were 210,000 Christians, and in the Census of 1921, 257,106; Karens form over sixty per cent of the total Christians of the Province—a fact which speaks well for the efforts of the missionaries amongst the Karens. Sir Charles Morgan Webb, in his Census of Burma for 1911, quoted Mr. C. C. Lowis in describing the Buddhism of the Burmans as follows: "Animism supplies the solid constituents that hold the faith together, Buddhism the superficial polish. Far be it from me to underrate the value of that philosophic veneer. It has done all that a polish can do, to smooth, to beautify, and to brighten, but to the end of time it will never be anything more than

a polish. In the hour of great heart-searchings, it is profitless as the Apostle's sounding brass. It is then that the Burman falls back on his primæval beliefs. Let but the veneer be scratched, the crude animism that lurks must out. Let but his inmost vital depths be touched, the Burman stands forth an animist confessed."

Fortunately, the above cannot be said of a Karen who has confessed Christianity. He is sincere, and faithfully follows the doctrine to the best of his ability. There are, of course, some who "fall on the wayside," so to speak. But the wonder is that more have not fallen on the way when one considers their surroundings, the great temptation "to do as others do" all about him, and that even the climate of the country itself is against him. However, in spite of uphill work, in spite of the demoralising influence and discouraging events which have to be contended with every day of their life, the Karens have made good in educational and material progress as well as in religious matters.

Forty years ago in the town of Bassein, with a population of 30,000, there were only two Karen houses outside of the Mission Compound, but now there are hundreds of houses in various quarters of the town. The same may be said of Rangoon and of all the large towns of the Province. There are schools and institutions with fine, commodious buildings for the Karen youths in most of the larger towns. Where there were hardly five score pupils in a school there are to-day several hundred, and undoubtedly the largest is the Nichols' Sgaw Karen High School, in Bassein, with its roll of 1,400 pupils. Karen High Schools have been established in Bassein, Henzada, Tharawaddy, Toungoo, Moulmein and Rangoon, and of the number of annual graduates from High Schools a good proportion go up to the University to complete their education, and take their degrees in arts or science.

It has often been asked by Government officials and people interested in the Karens what becomes of the large number of Karen boys and girls going out from the schools and colleges every year? There are not many of them in Government Service, in the mercantile firms, or in the clerical profession. Well, it is a question interested persons may



THE PIPE ORGAN AT THE NEW KO THA BYU HALL

U. LOO-NEE and MRS. LOO-NEE.

well ask. The answer is, a few join Government Service where they can get in, the same number in mercantile firms a large number become teachers in Government and Mission schools, and the rest to cultivation. Given equal qualification, a Karen lad will seldom get a post for which a Burman is applying. There is something about a Burman that preference will always be given to him over a Karen.

CHAPTER X

KARENS AND HOME RULE FOR BURMA

"Looking at the progress made by the peoples of Burma in all points, we, the Karens of Burma, are sensible that the country is not yet in a fit state for self-government. Burma is inhabited by many different races, differing in states of civilisation, differing in religion and social development; hence Burma will have still to undergo many years of strenuous training under British governance before this boon can be conferred on it with security and success. . . . From what has transpired in the past, when injustice and despotism reigned supreme, the Karens of Burma do not clamour and agitate for the fruition of questionable political privileges and the ushering in of dubious political eras. The history of our Province indicates that it is in a state of transition still, and as yet the benefits of free government are not quite fully appreciated."

—Karen Memorial presented in 1917 *to Lord Chelmsford and the Right Hon. Edwin S. Montagu, M.P.*

It is the unanimous opinion of the Karens that Burma is not yet fit for Home Rule. They themselves humbly acknowledge their unfitness and feel that British help, British protection, and the steadying influence of British control are still most essential. Perhaps the people of the country would be able to govern themselves in some sort of fashion, but the Karens have a strong misgiving that the experiment will not prove a success. A prominent Indian gentleman of the Swarajist Party once asked: "Don't you think bad self-government is better than good foreign Government? Do you not prefer being master in your own home to taking a back seat in your family affairs?" No doubt, it was an argument which would appeal to a man in whom there is the slightest vestige of patriotism. But surely, taking into consideration the existing conditions, Home Rule to-day would be a curse rather than a blessing, just as the affairs in a family could not be safely entrusted to a *pater familias* who is apparently incompetent!

The question has often been asked "Why and how could the Cubans be taught to govern themselves within a few years of their being taken over by the United States of America, while India and Burma could not do so after a hundred years of British régime." The reason is obvious when consideration is made of the marked difference in religion and race and the divergent interests existing in India and Burma at the present day. Furthermore, the object of the people of the United States was to train and actually push the Cubans to look after themselves after exactly so many years. It was their policy, as proclaimed on the day war was declared on Spain, to *free* the Cubans, and the latter in turn worked strenuously to that end. Such was not the intention of the British with regard to India, nor have they ever made any pretence of the desire to restore the countries to the people themselves. On the contrary, Lord Clive declared, "England will leave India alone only when the sun and the moon rise in the West and set in the East." Of course, now that times have changed, the outlook of nations has altered, and with the spirit of freedom and independence stalking about the world, Great Britain, like other nations, is beginning to realise her position, and, in fact, has conceded very important administrative privileges. She realises that her policy must be altered, or else she may fail to accomplish the great mission that she has been destined to fulfil. Satisfaction can only come when every country and every nation has its own Government, and the greatest responsibility rests upon Great Britain as the greatest of all nations, and one which has the keeping of the welfare and destinies of the largest number of nations in the world—the responsibility of assuring their fitness for the time when she can say "I have done everything to make you fit to look after yourselves and I am perfectly satisfied that you are ready for self-government."

Can it be honestly claimed that India is to-day fit to look after herself? And is Burma anywhere in a position to shoulder that great responsibility called self-determination? If not, it is the duty of India and Burma to retain the help and co-operation of their life-long friend and benefactor, and the responsibility of the British Government does not

cease until the child for which she is responsible can stand, walk, and run without help. Doubtless, the day will come when "Japheth shall no longer dwell in the tents of Shem."

In an issue of April 2nd, 1927, of the London *Morning Post* Sirdar Ikbalalisha declared, "Indian Self-Government is impossible because India is torn by conflicting forces of caste, creed, religion and traditions. It is futile to attempt the impossible by a make-believe re-approachment between Hindus and Moslems because both the political and educational evolution of India has not reached a stage at which the right of minorities is respected," which in the writer's opinion may take a couple of centuries yet. Meantime, however, he suggests the formation of a Federated Government of India with a strong Central organisation very much after the style of the United States of America, but with the whole country divided according to racial, religious and traditional affinit

"Self-Government" in India and Burma may be possible, but it must be a modified form of self-government. And the only feasible and satisfactory form would be as suggested by the Sirdar himself and strongly advocated by Sir Frederick Whyte in his pamphlet *India, a Federation?* "The Make-believes" of Burma would make us think that Burma would have nothing in the way to prevent it from getting self-government for one united people. It is true there is hardly any caste or creed, but there are strong racial traditions which can only be gradually eliminated by tactful management politically.

But great as the responsibility and sacrifice made by Great Britain were in taking over the country, greater will be the responsibility of determining the day when the country may safely be left to govern itself. The task of Great Britain is arduous, unpleasant and thankless, but she must stick to her guns until such a day as every country and every nation which has looked up to her as its saviour and protector is made happy with every prospect of a future of contentment.

In the words of a Viceroy embodied in a speech to a British Association in India . . . "remember that the Almighty has placed your hand on the greatest of His

ploughs in whose furrows the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape to drive and to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment or a stirring of duty where it did not before exist. That is enough. That is the Englishman's justification in India. It is good enough for his watchword while he is here, for his epitaph when he is gone. Our hand is in sober earnest on the plough to-day; it will need a strong hand, a willing team to drive the furrow straight. It is up-hill work and there are roots and rocks in plenty to turn the blade aside. Each and all of us need a firm faith and sane enthusiasm if we wish to carry through successfully the task to which we have set our hand. . . . "

CHAPTER XI

THE REFORMS SCHEME AND THE KARENS

Is there one whom difficulties dishearten—who bends to the storm? He will do little. Is there one who *will* conquer? That kind of man never fails.—*Hunter.*

To conquer by the moral manifestation of the will is to conquer like a God.
To conquer by the manifestation of brute force, is to conquer like a beast.—*Burritt.*

IN the years that the Reforms Scheme has been is existence the lot of the Karens has been more and more unenviable each year, in spite of the five representatives on the Legislative Council allowed by the constitution. The First General Election to the Legislative Council resulted in the Karens having seven seats, five as communal representatives and two from General Constituencies. The success of the two elected members was used as an argument that the Burmans were broad-minded and free from racial prejudice; consequently, there need be no fear of suitable Karen candidates not being elected on their merits. The truth of the matter, however, was that the two Karens got in because there were no Burmese candidates, the Burmans still being busy with boycotting at the first election. Therefore, it was only to be expecte that at the Second General Election, when Burman candidates entered the political field in large numbers, the Karen contestants who stood for election were defeated by overwhelming majorities. Even the candidates of the Karen constituencies were tampered with in so many ways by interested Burmans that some were actually elected, not as the choice of the Karens, but as the Burmans wished. In District Councils, District School Boards, or any other boards or committees no Karen could gain membership if

the Burmans seriously opposed them. Consequently, Karen interests suffer everywhere.

What hits the Karens hardest is the matter of education in the districts. Hundreds of Karen village schools in many districts which have for many years been thriving under Government help and protection and under missionary supervision were suddenly thrown out without help, and educational progress among the Karens within a few years will be seriously affected if matters are allowed to go on in this way. Many Karen Associations, and Boards of Trustees of Karen Schools, have sent in their protest to Government, but so far the matter is still unsettled.

On one occasion the writer had to interview a high official on behalf of a Karen village teacher who had been refused his pay for four months, and was eventually told by the chairman of the District School Board that he had already drawn his pay. At the interview, the official remarked, "You people want Home Rule and all that sort of thing, now you are having your Home Rule. What do you want me to do?" Of course, it was pointed out to him that not all parties had been clamouring for Home Rule. Returning to the case in question it was obvious that the Chairman had never paid the teacher. The four months' salary which the teacher claimed that he had not been paid was signed for in Burmese while in all the previous months the signature was in English. Unfortunately for the Chairman and fortunately for the teacher the Chairman did not take the trouble to look at the signatures in the previous months. At any rate, it was a clear case of swindling by the Chairman, and the official agreed that there was strong evidence against the chairman. But the official, a kind old gentleman, said that the whole system was a new venture and he would suggest that the writer should see the President, Secretary and Chairman of the District School Board and settle the matter privately. The suggestion was followed and the matter settled. There have been numerous other instances and many other ways by which school teachers or school managers have been constantly harassed. "Home Rule" or "Popular Government" as it is understood in Burma

has placed good law-abiding people in a very awkward position. There are many *athins* or Associations with varied objects, some against Government, some neutral but hardly any outright pro-Government. Fortunately, the Karens have their own associations in most places, but where they have not, they are intimidated, threatened and have been actually maltreated, and in many instances Government can hardly reach out to help them. In Tharawaddy District, for instance, Karens had occasion to call for advice and help from Government and the National Karen Association as they were seriously threatened if they dared to pay in Capitation Taxes. Sir Harcourt Butler's Government, however, nipped this serious agitation or movement in the bud before very extensive mischief was done.

There is a good deal of talk to the effect that Karens have not tried to take advantage of opportunities offered by the Reforms Scheme. There is some truth in this, but it is equally true that there are so many difficulties in the way that on the whole the efforts would be as futile as if no attempts were made at all. There is a potent factor which is to-day hampering the Karens from taking active part in public matters, and that is the majority are poor and, realising their position, they refrain. There are a few in the jungles or villages who have money, perhaps, but these are an inarticulate lot who will not count in any movement, while those who are in towns and cities have to attend to their business or profession. There are at present among the Karens no leisured class of rich or well-to-do people who can take on whole-time honorary services or afford to make large donations to charitable institutions, and this is a great drawback in a nation.

The splendid group of buildings in the Sgaw Karen School compound at Bassein, the life-long effort of the Rev. Dr. C. A. Nichols, K.I.H., which has elicited the admiration of all visitors, is the result, principally, of the united efforts of poor cultivators, and the "widow's mite." It is about sixty years since the Karens, by the help of their missionaries and under sympathetic Government protection, started their educational institutions, and no one who is acquainted with this department can deny that Karen schools have progressed

and increased beyond expectation, for a so-called "backward race." Karens can boast of a good number of high schools of their own in the Province to-day, and hundreds and thousands of village schools have thrived. But from present appearances the Reforms Scheme, as it affects the districts, may deal a death blow to the district village schools. The Karens have great misgivings as to the fate of their village schools, and they fear that instead of progress and increase there will be retrogression and decrease within a few years' time.

The Karens, therefore, from the very outset, have not appreciated the advantage of the Reforms Scheme at all. In the first place it was with difficulty, even with the sympathetic consideration shown by most members of the Reforms Committee, that Karen interests have been safeguarded by Communal representation. Communal interest should not enter into Democratic institutions, but are the members or communities of the embryo democratic institutions really sufficiently broad-minded to deal fairly with all communities and races? It is very doubtful; in fact it has already been proved within these few short years that selfishness and racial prejudice have predominated as in the past. To reiterate a pertinent portion of an article already quoted: " . . . the strength of Communal feeling certainly justifies the demand that the next instalment of the reforms should continue to safeguard religious and political minorities. Political education in India has not yet sufficiently advanced to dispense with the safeguards . . . "

With regard to Burma, the opinion of the writer, which is shared by all the Karens and outside sympathisers, is that it is absolutely necessary to continue not only to safeguard the interests of the minorities, but in the case of the Karens it is absolutely necessary for the good of all concerned that a division or separation of administration of the Province be established. For neither the historical past nor the present feeling and condition of the people would justify Government action of indiscriminately grouping into one political body communities which have formed incompatible elements in the past, and such a policy would continue to be detrimental both to Government and to the country unless

a change is made. The Karens still prefer to work hand-in-hand with the British, as they fully admit their superior capacity and their magnanimous spirit of "give and take" as now modified by present conditions and manifested the world over. However, since the Reforms have been introduced and since the Karens, in common with all the people of Burma, have to accept it and work it, they can say with Daniel Webster "Live or die, sink or swim, survive or perish, we give our hand and heart to the constitution," unless and until a better scheme is found.

The subject of the Reforms Scheme as it affects the Karens recalls an incident which happened during the sitting of the Whyte Committee at Rangoon. Sir Frederick Whyte, the members of the Committee, and a number of high officials were invited to a Welcome Concert by elders of the Karen Community of Rangoon, Insein and vicinity. The Vinton Memorial Hall was packed to overflowing with Karens. Even the doors and windows were so jammed with people that standing room could not be found. After the concert, as the guests were leaving, a well-known high official was pacing up and down the church portico apparently in deep thought. The writer approached him and asked if he was waiting for his car. "Yes, my car is here, but the thought uppermost in my mind is that I had no idea that there are so many Karens in the town and its vicinity, and the large audience of Karens to-night, and the great talent and wonderful progress they displayed in their concert have made me wonder that during the eighteen years I have been in Burma I have not come more in contact with them or known more of them." The writer then asked him if he knew that the young man who was his bench clerk for some years and with whom he played many a game of football was a Karen. He had to acknowledge that he was not aware of the fact. That official, a man of the best type of I.C.S., was highly intelligent and fair-minded, but, like many other officials, in the course of his daily routine he had not given a thought to the possibility of one particular native of Burma being any different from another. No, the Karens are not known at all, and naturally, if they ever have any grievances, they cannot make themselves heard.

The case of two Karen Military Policemen who were recently accused of murdering a notoriously bad character and his son at Kyawzan and sentenced to transportation for life created a great stir among the Karens of the whole Province. Government cannot realise the situation in spite of protests and repeated complaints by the Karens.

It is usually the case that if only evidence as elicited by witnesses is taken in a case of a Karen against a Burman, ninety-nine times out of a hundred the Karen will lose, in spite of the fact that a Karen may have truth and right on his side. Government or its official should realise that it is not wise, for obvious reasons, to send out a batch of Karen soldiers or Military Police to a Burmese village or town for keeping peace or preventing crimes unless there is a British or an Anglo-Indian Officer in command. The Karens are called out where crime is most prevalent or to prevent a rising, etc., but help and sympathy is at a discount when one of these Karens gets into trouble in the course of his duty. It is this apathy on the part of the officers and officials when a Karen subordinate or soldier gets into trouble through the lack of foresight of those in authority that has made the Karens dissastisfied.

Another case of a similar nature may be cited. On December 5th, 1920, a Karen Thugyi, of Myaungmya District, of twenty years' good service, was brought into the Bassein Jail for twenty years' transportation, simply because he had gone out to arrest a well-known bad character and in the scuffle the bad character, in trying to take possession of the Thugyi's gun, was shot and killed. Government or Government officials must have learned by past history or present events that a Karen will not allow his gun to be taken away from him in a fight. He would give his life before he surrenders his gun. What would Government have said if the Thugyi had left his gun with his adversary and run away?

Is it not possible that had the two Military Policemen been Burmans and the notorious bad character and his son, Karens, that the former would have suffered no

penalty in a court of trial? Had that unfortunate Thugyi been a Burman and the victim a Karen, within a year the Thugyi would be receiving an award from Government for special service and bravery in having killed a fugitive from justice.

CHAPTER XII

A NATION'S DESIRE

"Nationality is that principle, compounded of past tradition, present interests and future aspirations, which gives to people a sense of organic unity, and separates them from the rest of mankind."—*Hearnshaw.*

IN unity there is strength. "Hang together and be strong, or hang separately" is an old and indisputable maxim. Sir Frederick Whyte in his treatise *India—A Federation?* strongly suggests that India can be a strong nation and reach her full stature and unity only by federation, that is, in the union and co-operation of communities. He says "In India, of all lands, there are to be found in her social fabric elements which have disturbed, if they have not actually destroyed, the unity and the sense of common nationality in other peoples and other times."

The above statement is perfectly applicable to Burma. The Burmese nation (by which is meant all the indigenous races of Burma) can never be strong or regarded by other nations as such, unless and until the principal races of the country are satisfied and contented by having a fair share of the country and its administration. The Arakanese can preserve their country which is separated from the rest by a natural barrier. The Shans have their own states in which to do the same, and the strength of their nationality and self-Government has been strengthened by the recent grant of Federation. The Burmans have the whole country to themselves. Where have the Karens a place they can call their own?

Mr. Smeaton, even when the Karen nation was in its infancy, strongly advocated a scheme, which, had it been followed, would have met with great success. He said, "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 which it has been granted. We have dealt with all alike, neglecting distinctive natural characteristics. We have failed to seize the true spirit of self-government in the East. Both in method and in scope we are wrong. . . . 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 material 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 and 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." Yes, why not? Surely, those British officials who have given the subject a thought and have carefully looked into the matter, could not help but be convinced of the reasonableness and potential significance of Mr. Smeaton's comments."

Will Government or its officials redeem past neglect by lending an ear to a national request? The Karens have not proclaimed it from the house-tops, but they have time and time again, through their representatives, called the

attention of Government to this earnest wish of theirs. If Government is convinced that the Karens are deserving of a fair trial, have they not the courage of their convictions before it is too late to do the Karens a good turn, and in turn get the full benefit of the co-operation of a loyal people of proven worth?

And what is this request which the Karens submit for consideration? They ask for a fair share of the administration of the country which they have on several occasions helped to save from insurrection and rebellion. It has been estimated that there are seven Burmans to one Karen, and the Karens have tried unsuccessfully to obtain this ratio in the results of competition with the Burmans. The reasons have been fully stated in the preceding pages of this book. The obstacles are insurmountable, and the only practical solution is to allot the Karens one-seventh of the province for administration. There are seven divisions in the province, excluding Rangoon, one-seventh of it means one division. In this division the entire administration should be by Karens directly under British supervision. Tenasserim Division would be the division of choice, as it is mostly inhabited by Karens, and one in which administration is not so well developed as in other parts of the province. The administrators can therefore exercise or adopt any scheme or plan that will suit the peculiar needs of the country and its intended administration. The inhabitants of that part of the country, like any other part, will not be in any way disturbed. The Karens in other parts of the province can remain where they are if they wish it just as people of other nationalities domiciled in Tenasserim can remain there, as long as it is recognised that Tenasserim is a Karen country. Such a policy will result in the creation of a strong nationality full of life, patriotism and love of King and country. The division will advance and progress independently under the able guiding hands of sympathetic and efficient British officers.

The present-day ideal is self-determination; but the Karens, in their desire for self-determination, realise that self-determination in their case must be determined according to the method and mode mapped out by experienced British

officers with whom they have fought, with whom they have worked, and with whom they would ever co-operate. If the Karen nation, like all other nationalities of Burma, is left as it is, and not given their legitimate aspirations in a proper direction as inspired by its feeling of patriotism and loyalty to the government and law and order, it is greatly to be feared that a new group or generation of Karen extremists or obstructionists will arise.

The Reforms Scheme has not been a benefit to them nor will it be for generations to come. Their wish is to work with and be under the direct supervision of the British in a section of the country to which they feel they have a right by their number and the solid work that they have put in ever since the British Government annexed the country. The Burmans have claimed the right of self-determination and so far they have been allowed a good share of it. Surely, they cannot object to the Karens having a proportionate share?

Like the powerful British nation formed of four mighty nations in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, a great Burmese nation may be formed of the four principal races of the country, the Burmese, the Karens, the Arakanese, and the Shans; each nation with its own country and its own distinctive national characteristics, ready to unite for the good of the whole country. "Gallant little Wales" occupies a position, in many respects in relation to its more powerful neighbour England not dissimilar to that of the Karens in relation to the Burmese. The distinct nationality and language of Wales is being more and more recognised. This enables her the better to develop her peculiar genius, and contribute her special gifts to the common stock. The Karens of Burma are more numerous in proportion, and fully as distinct. It is their plea that this distinction as between Burmese and Karens be fully recognised, and acted on—to the benefit of Government and the contentment of the people; at present officials and Government servants in strong Karen communities are largely ignorant even of the language of the people. Let a condition be made that for service in the "Karen country," the candidate, whatever his nationality, should pass an examination in Karen.

The educational qualification required in the service of the Karen country should be lower than those required for Burma as a whole. The Karens are still classified as a backward race, and it would only be fair to allow them lower qualifications for service. There will then be no dearth of candidates for the different services. For clerkships and ordinary posts in all departments an Anglo-Vernacular Seventh Standard qualification, and for posts like the Deputy Myookship a High School Final qualification only should be required. It might be mentioned that in Sir Reginald Craddock's original scheme for the Deputy Myookship the qualification specified was the High School Final Examination, although at present candidates from the ranks of University graduates have received preference over those with the High School Final qualification. Higher services such as the Burma Civil Service, Judicial Service, and so on alone should claim university-graduates under such a scheme.

If the above suggestion is accepted there will be no dearth of candidates for all the services for the whole Division as is feared by some officials with whom the writer has discussed the matter. If it is found that Karens cannot supply the requisite number of men in addition to the British officials, candidates of Burmese or any other nationality may be temporarily accepted until Karen candidates with the necessary qualifications are available. Of course, the above is only a bare outline of the scheme, but the matter can be left in the hands of the highly-experienced British officers who will be in direct charge of the administration of the Karen country.

"Karen Country," how inspiring it sounds! What thoughts, what manly feeling, what wonderful visions of the future the words conjure forth in the mind of a Karen. It was a highly-placed official to whom may be credited the origin of the name. A young Karen subordinate civilian officer had been recommended by his Deputy Commissioner and his Commissioner for dismissal from the service. The young officer went personally to the Chief Secretary and related the whole story of how it happened that he incurred the displeasure of his superior officer. A Burmese Sub-Divisional

officer had found fault with him for something which, in the ordinary course of events, would have been overlooked and for which at most some chastisement would have sufficed; but the Sub-Divisional officer enlarged upon the fault or neglect and made such a strong report to the Deputy Commissioner that the Deputy Commissioner, without hesitation, recommended the young man's dismissal. It so happened that this high official was in the Chief Secretary's office at the time, and after hearing the story he said, "You Karens should all go to a 'Karen Country' since you cannot get along in other parts of the Province."

In support of my contention for a "Karen Country" some lines may be quoted from the book *India—a Federation?* by Sir Frederick Whyte—whose name has more than once been quoted—First President of the Imperial Assembly of India, well-known to Burma as chairman of the Whyte Committee on the Reforms Scheme. "Love of country or patriotism is compounded of many things—sentiment, historic associations, community of economic interest, attachment to the soil itself, trials and triumphs shared in common —which when wielded together make nationality. Love of country is an affection, nationality the intellectual conception in which it is cast by political science. It has been defined many times, but never to the complete satisfaction of those who know what it is and how it can sway the hearts of men and move mountains. A nation has been defined as "a body of people united by a corporate sentiment of peculiar intensity, intimacy and dignity, related to a definite home country." That is a comprehensive definition in which the essentials are the unity, the corporate sentiment and the definite home country. These factors may be present in a Scotsman, for instance, both in relation to his nearer and dearer homeland of Scotland and in relation to the larger patria of Britain. Here two patriotisms happily interwoven in a manner far more complete than that in which a Bengali can say that he belongs to the whole of India and the whole of India belongs to him. It is because of the fusion of the two patriotisms that Great Britain is truly a United Kingdom; and it is because that fusion is far from perfect in India that Indian Nationality is as yet *no more than adolescent.*

The absence of nationality, or its decay, or even its adolescence, is a condition in which it is not proper or even possible to create enduring political institutions, whether Federal or unitary, if those institutions are to depend for any of their vitality on the popular will. The life is not there, or is but awaking. 'Only those,' says Mr. Alfred Zimmern, in his *Nationality and Government*, 'who have seen at close quarters what a moral degradation the loss of nationality involves, or sampled the drab cosmopolitanism of Levantine seaports or American industrial centres can realise what a vast reservoir of spiritual power is lying ready, in the form of national feeling, to the hands of teachers and statesmen, if only they can learn to direct it to wise and liberal ends. The strongest federal unions are those in which the local patriotism finds a comfortable place within the embrace of the larger national patriotism.' . . . The Thirteen Colonies of the Atlantic Coast of America, for instance, grew up in independence, the one from the others, separated by great distance and peopled by citizens of very different origins. The climate fo Boston differed from the climate of Savannah no more than the Bostonian himself differed from the gentleman of South Carolina; and if the Rhode Islander was a Puritan and democratic individualist, the Virginian was a patrician and a Cavalier to his very marrow. When some form of union was forced upon the colonies, these differences in habit and outlook made a unitary Government impossible, and exerted a determining influence upon the character of the federal constitution. So in Switzerland, each canton grew in sturdy independence in its home of mountain and valley, and only when compelled by the instinct of self-preservation to join forces with its neighbours did it yield even the meagre federal rights of the Swiss Constitution to a National Government. It has been held by the apologists of Swiss local autonomy that, after the Reformation, the Swiss Confederation only survived the strife between Catholic and Protestant because its loose bonds lay lightly on both. The Catholic canton indeed long withstood the growth of federal power, but eventually, it tardily, in 1874, consented to pay the small price required for the establishment of National Government."

The above is a true sentiment. The Karen Elders, who have all along co-operated with the Government and are continuing to do so, have met with many obstructions and obstructionists, while engaged in finding recruits and other necessary requirements. If Government would carefully look into the reasons for the antagonism shown by these men, the Government would only blame themselves for not seeing into their grievances which have been real and heartrending. There are so many causes that have led to the adverse feeling of the Karen people. One *great and most damaging* cause is that the Karens have to work, communicate and co-operate with and through the "Middleman," so to speak, who has not the necessary sympathy and kindly regard. Remove that cause and the result will be a true co-operation in any movement for the good of the Government and the people.

May God hasten the day when we can lift up our voices and sing with our whole heart and soul:

"My country 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where our fathers died!
Land of our Ancestors' pride!
From every mountain side,
Let freedom ring!

"God save our gracious King,
Long live our Noble King!
God save the King!
For Britain and her King,
Have made our nation free!
Now let our voices ring
God save our King!"

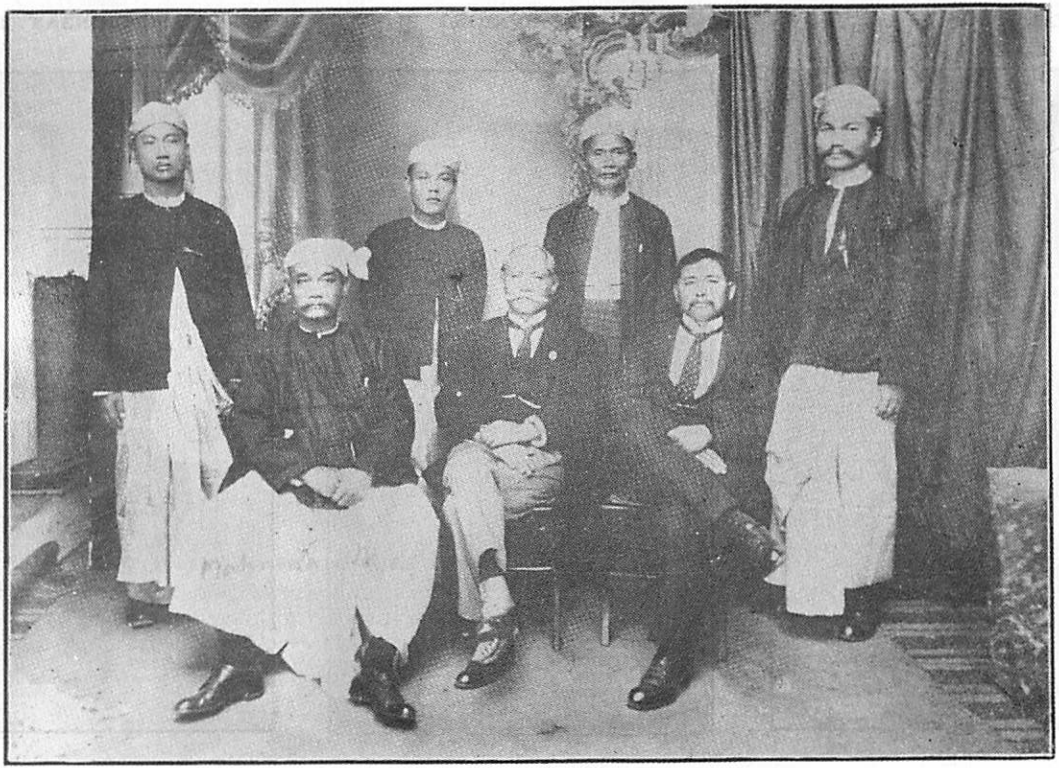
APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A CHAPTER CONTAINING PRINCIPALLY SUGGESTIONS AND ADVICE TO ALL KARENS AND THEREFORE PUT IN AS AN APPENDIX

THERE is no doubt that, like all oriental nations and races, the Karens have observed that form of low-bowing as a token of respect on meeting an elder or a person of high position. As a nation they have loathed that form of obeisance called *shiko*, in performing which one has to kneel down with his two hands pressed together and lay his face on the floor or on the ground. The tenets of Christianity and the ways of the Western people have no doubt influenced them to detest this Burmese custom. They have, from time to time, tried to adopt a national costume which would distinguish them from the Burmese simply to avoid having to *shiko*, for they know that as long as they wear Burmese dress they are expected to do as the Burmese do even by British officials. The writer is aware that confidential instructions have been issued by the Local Government that Karens should not be made to *shiko* or be expected to do so, but what is a British official to do when all the other people are doing it, and only the Karens should be exempted. Very often an official does not know nor can be expected to be able to distinguish a Karen from a Burman.

Here, again, there may be excuse for repeating the words of Mr. Smeaton who hits the nail right on the head, so to speak. He says "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 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



FIRST KAREN M.L.Cs. AFTER THE REFORMS SCHEME.

No. I. EVENING DRESS.

No. II. ORDINARY COSTUME.

No. III. READY FOR ROUGHING IT.

superiors, he despises you. Treat a Karen firmly and kindly, and he behaves like a 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."

So it has been a serious question with the Karen Elders as to what form of costume or dress to adopt which would be most suitable from the æsthetic and hygienic point of view. The old form of dress would be awkward and unsuitable, to say the least. The writer has seen many forms modified by enthusiasts, but he cannot conscientiously say that he approves of them. The adoption of the European style of dress by some of the Karens is a great improvement; but such a course is not practicable for all, nor would it be suitable. The majority have now agreed upon and have adopted the costume for men as illustrated on the opposite page.

On state and special occasions the Karen cloak, *Hsay Plo* should be worn over the whole. As for women, their characteristic frock *Hsay Sah Kyi* will be worn on similar occasions.

The advantages in the costume illustrated are as follows: In the first place trousers of sorts have always been worn by the majority of the tribes of the Karens, so no radical change would be involved in adopting this and, therefore, would not clash with the inherent dislike of Karens to adopt a new garb in exchange for dresses of national tradition. Then again, in the minds of many, including the writer himself, a skirt (like *longyis*) is associated more or less with women, while trousers impart a manly appearance.

In the illustration No. III we have a costume for ordinary outdoor wear with a felt hat which looks well with the dress. Illustration No. I shows a young man in evening dress. The ordinary dinner jacket with low cut vest or white vest looks well. In fact, for coat, vest, tie, shirt, collar, cuff, etc., the European fashion or style can be made use of, with the exception of tail-coats which would look rather awkward. In Illustration No. II a Burmese jacket may be preferred to a European coat. It looks quite well, and even a turban may be worn on the head to advantage, as many are doing.

The trousers are neither in the Chinese nor the Shan fashion, with fairly broad legs and no bagginess at the seat. We have a pattern now in use which is sold almost anywhere. In case of wading in water or traversing muddy ground the legs of the pants can be rolled or tucked up, or hooked on to the hips with some catch or hook devised for the purpose.

We can see, therefore, from the description, that we shall not be taking up the costume of any particular nation, but one which will be distinctive, suitable and at the same time be neat, and capable of being gradually improved if required. We shall set a day apart (preferably the 12th of May, from a historical point of view) in which all the Karens of Burma would assume the costume in one single day, like the Chinese when they had their "pigtails" cut off.

Regarding the form of greeting, "Good Morning" and "Good Evening" have become almost universal. On the street or in public a slight graceful bow of the head or the Indian method of salutation is to be commended from all points of view.

For paying respects to a superior officer or to a high dignitary a quiet, respectful low bow on first meeting or on entering the office should be observed as it is now done by many. The hands may be placed in front or on the sides while the act of obeisance is performed. In the olden days, when the Karens were mostly on the hills and more or less uncivilised, a stranger who entered a house must run to the kitchen and eat a good pinch of salt to show that he is a friend and not a foe. The house owner, seeing that this is done, takes him into his confidence, saying that the stranger "has eaten my salt and must be treated as a friend." As for the act of shaking hands, a Christian Karen considers it a very important manifestation of friendliness and sympathy. Of course, a Karen would not or could not expect such a manifestation from a high official or a stranger of position, except at some social functions or presentation at a durbar or on similar occasions.

Several other important suggestions and advice are embodied in a presidential speech delivered on the 29th October, 1925, by the writer, and from it the following extracts are quoted: " . . . I urge upon all the elders

and leaders of our little nation to make the best use of what has already been given to us and not to clamour for more things before we are sure that we are in full possession and enjoyment of the privileges already gained, some of which we had to fight for for many years to obtain. For instance, among other things, with regard to the privilege of being allowed to take up our own language as a compulsory subject up to the tenth standard, it is up to the committee and to our elders to make intelligent selection of the books already in existence, and if the books are not good enough, or if the supply is not sufficient, to write new ones for the purpose. I am sure we have men with the necessary education and talent to manage this. Furthermore, those who are in a position to push the study of the language in all Karen schools, should see that it is done, and done properly. It is time that timidity and backwardness is pushed aside for the good of the nation. For I fully believe in the saying that if you wish to kill a nation kill its language, and you don't have to do more."

"Then again, as regards service in different branches of the Army. Formerly, we were given only a proportionately small number to fill up. How hard we fought for—and failed to get—equal rights. Only now, after some years, we are given equal privilege with the other indigenous races to fill up the different branches of the army. I am sure there are now some in this meeting who would like to get up and contradict me or call my attention to the fact that when we wanted to 'do or die,' the Government would not let us, and that only now, when we do not care for it, they give us the privilege. Even now, it is a singular fact that we cannot show a single Karen officer with a King's Commission, while there are already three or four Burmans. The question arises, 'Are our youths unfit for it, or is it a deliberate slight on the part of the Government?' Well, friends, it is a question which you may well ask, and one which I have often asked myself. You may be sure that I, like the rest of you, have felt pretty sore, but what could not and cannot yet be cured, must be endured. Let me remind you, however, that for many generations our fathers have suffered under previous *régimes* up to the present

Government, under whose rule the Karens have emerged from persecution and cruel treatment of which the present generation has but a very faint idea. I do not wish to recall past history, but sometimes it is necessary to do so. For present conditions and even future events have to be judged by past history. I know that some of my Karen friends, particularly one I have in mind now, has constantly called our attention to the fact that from the day the British Government entered Burma, the Karens have been called upon to help and have voluntarily offered their services, taking a prominent part in helping to subdue and pacify the country. The Government appeared greatly appreciative of the service rendered, but, once peace reigned and things assumed their normal aspect, the Karens were forgotten, just as Joseph was forgotten by the Pharaoh of olden days. It does not seem proper that such shortcomings on the part of our benevolent Government should be dwelt upon, but human nature is human nature everywhere and at all times. One well-known writer—a retired British official—goes so far as to say that the Karens sided with the British authorities not for any particular love of the British, but because they cordially detested the Burmese. The author, I consider, is very much in the wrong, for a Karen by nature and tradition has all along considered an Englishman a brother and a protector. We can assure the Government at this moment that the Karens are, if anything, more loyal than ever. But the Karens often have occasion to wonder if only a crying child gets more milk; at least, it would appear so, judging by all that we see and know. However, friends and countrymen, do not be discouraged, do not falter, but keep on being loyal, co-operate with the Government, lay yourself out for peace and good government, for the day is bound to come, and I see it already coming, when the Karen's loyalty, his unswerving faith and unalloyed love for the British Government and for his King will amply be rewarded. We want to show the British Government and those in power that in spite of their apparent neglect (from our point of view) we mean to stick to them and to co-operate with them till they are forced to realise that they cannot get along without us."

"Another suggestion, which to some of you may seem insignificant or trivial, is to make use of the prefixes Saw and Naw with our names; but I tell you, it will be worth your while to observe it. My idea is, and it is the opinion of every patriotic Karen, that as MONSIEUR is to a Frenchman, MISTER to an Englishman, MA and MAUNG to a Burmese lady and gentleman, NAW and SAW are absolutely essential to identify ourselves as a nation. I, therefore, urge that everyone of our people will take it up in earnest. I know that some individuals, schools and institutions have already taken it up, but we should not rest contented until everyone who considers himself a Karen observes this request. I do not wish to take up any Western custom in which there is any doubt concerning its benefit to you. But the custom of having a family name, I am fully convinced, is one that will greatly benefit us in helping us to know who is who at first sight, and there is satisfaction in being able to trace the 'family tree' which is so much valued in Western countries."

"Furthermore, a very deplorable characteristic in our people is lack of punctuality and discipline. It has been said that many a great battle has been lost and many a valuable life sacrificed because the expected help did not turn up in time, or some one had not strictly obeyed orders. I have often heard it said by people of the West that, 'out East here, people are so easy going that to them 'to-day and to-morrow are all the same.' I remember well some years ago in Bassein, there was a Deputy-Commissioner who was a great football player and was very keen on getting the Karen boys to play. He always used to ask me to tell the boys to turn up at three p.m., so that they would be sure to turn up at four p.m. Sad to say, he was pretty near right every time. Friends, this is a great slur on our people. Can we not mend our ways, young and old, in this matter? With regard to discipline, why can we not assimilate the ways of our officials and business men of the West? It is the deviation from, the frequent and glaring neglect of, discipline which brings us ruin or disgrace. Why are there no large and successful business firms owned by the people of the country? Because of lack of discipline,

principally. Why are we not on the top rung of the ladder in the many walks of life? Why, because in spite of all the examples we see about us and the lessons taught and dinned into our ears, discipline is still a comparative stranger to us. There is a standing joke in a society I belong to; when members are late to a meeting they are asked whether their time is the 'Karen Time' or the correct time. Let us try and get over this fault, which is common to all the nations of the East, particularly those of Burma. . . . We have at present many educational institutions, but not more than one or two institutions where a young man can be trained up for industrial purposes. However, the need for industrial and vocational schools is so much felt that, I'm glad to say, in some of our schools, the Government has started vocational instruction which will supply a long felt want."

"But, as a matter of fact, I have noticed with some discouragement that our young people are not taking full advantage of this in the Government schools and other institutions open to us. We, as a people essentially cultivators, should make use of experimental farms which are opened out in different places. We cannot all expect to get into the service of the Government or of the firms, nor, even if that were possible, would it be good for the nation. We should take up professions in which a man can make an honourable livelihood. You know that it is a standing joke among the Karens themselves that they cannot even make a mortar to pound their chillies. Now, let us encourage our young people to take up any honest work that is going, so that we may be a self-contained little nation. There is one exception to all I have said with regard to our young people taking the advantage of the vocational schools and institutions, and that is training for midwifery and sick-nursing. I am sure there is a very large number of trained Karen nurses and midwives. At least, there are more of them among the Karens than in any other single race of Burma. No doubt, midwifery and sick-nursing are noble professions, but every one who is in the know must admit that the temptations on all sides are very great, and we elders and parents of these women have found it a most difficult problem to improve the existing conditions."

KAREN COSTUME AS IT IS NOW WORN ON THE BORDERS OF BURMA AND SIAM.

"Some of you might say that most of what I have said is trifling and elementary. I tell you, friends, I believe in a sound foundation, so that the rest of our undertaking will be sound. There is nothing too small to take into serious consideration for the advancement of the race. After all, from what I can see of our people at present, the bulk of them are still primitive and simple, and we cannot boast of any past great achievement or civilisation. That is why I could not and would not discuss certain subjects which would be better for us to leave alone, and let those discuss them who are able and in a better position to do so,"

"There are many difficulties confronting us, which we, as a nation, wish the Government to understand so as to be able to help us. For instance, in the selection of candidates for Government service of any importance, the Government wish to know if the candidate has or had any relative in Government service, and, I understand, they attach great importance to it. How can we possibly have any relative in high Government positions when we are as yet only a little nation of to-day having had no previous record or position of any kind. So, in fairness to ourselves, this particular requirement should be eliminated, at least, so far as the Karens are concerned. There are many things with which we should acquaint the Government as to our needs, our wishes and aspirations, at the same time letting them know the shortcomings of the people. We are so apt to keep too quiet and let things pass. Please remember, 'ASK and it shall be given unto you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' Then again, the old saying 'Out of sight, out of mind,' is very true, especially in dealings with Government servants. I, personally, owe a great deal to a high official of the Government who serve many years in Burma. I remember having gone to him two or three times for special consideration on behalf of our people. He showed much sympathy, and, noting my keen disappointment at the result of my request, said to me, 'When you ask for a thing and you do not get it, ask again, and keep on asking till you do get it, for just as there are times when you get what you deserve by asking, there will also be times when an official will grant your request because he is tired of your persistent demands and wishes to get rid of you,' So this is another illustration of a crying child

getting the most milk, and there- fore it pays to cry.

"In conclusion, wish to impress upon you one further point, and that is, in your own town or locality please make it a point to see and visit your officials, whether they be Englishmen, Burmese or of any other nationalty. Do not wait till you get into trouble or need their help, because then it does not look well nor is it right to go to a man, only in time of trouble. I assure you, it pays to be intouch with them. Bear in mind the truth of the saying, 'Out of sight, out of mind.'"