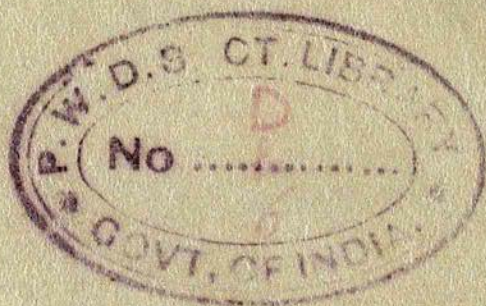




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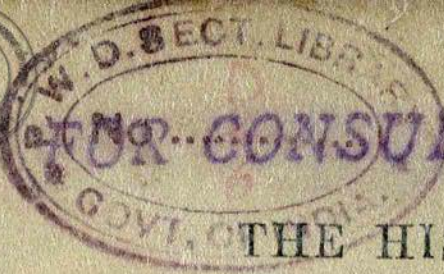
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THE HISTORY  
OF BRITISH INDIA,  
BY  
MILL & WILSON.

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IN TEN VOLUMES.  
VOL. IX.



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THE HISTORY OF  
BRITISH INDIA.

FROM 1805 TO 1835.

BY HORACE HAYMAN WILSON, M.A., F.R.S.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETIES OF PARIS, BOSTON AND CALCUTTA,  
AND OF THE ORIENTAL SOCIETY OF GERMANY; OF THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE OF FRANCE, AND THE  
IMPERIAL ACADEMIES OF VIENNA AND ST. PETERSBURGH; OF THE ROYAL ACADEMIES  
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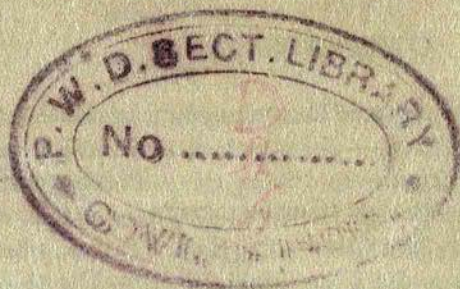
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# HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA.

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## BOOK III.

FROM THE CLOSE OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MARQUIS  
OF HASTINGS, 1823, TO THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LORD  
W. BENTINCK, 1835.

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## HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA.

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## BOOK III.

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1822.

AS soon as the intention of the Marquis of Hastings to retire from the Government of India was made known to the Court of Directors, they proceeded to nominate a successor in the person of George Canning. This distinguished statesman and orator had held the office of President of the Board of Control from June 1816 to December, 1820, and by his general concurrence with the commercial and political measures of the Court, had secured their good will and that of the proprietary body.<sup>1</sup> The embarrassing position in which he stood towards his colleagues in the administration, and his consequent separ-

<sup>1</sup> See Correspondence between the Court of Directors and the Right Honourable George Canning, President of the Board of Commissioners for the affairs of India, and Proceedings of the Court of Proprietors.—*Asiatic Journal*, April and May, 1821.



ation from them, disposed them to contemplate with satisfaction his removal to a distant region; and his nomination was readily confirmed. It may be doubted, if Mr. Canning accepted the appointment without reluctance. The field most congenial to his talents was the House of Commons, where his display of wit and eloquence ensured him the admiration of even his bitterest opponents. In India, as he well knew from his experience at the Board, oratory was of no value: he would there have to act, not to talk — to reason, not to debate — and, instead of pouring out a torrent of words fitter to bewilder than to convince, admitting no pause for thought, he would have to vindicate his proceedings by principles carefully weighed and cautiously advocated, and subject to the calm and deliberate scrutiny of superior authority. That some such hesitation influenced his purposes, may be inferred from the scant alacrity of his preparations for his departure. The delay was productive of a change of destiny; and before he had embarked for India, the death of Lord Castlereagh and the exigencies of the government placed him in the position of which he had long been ambitious, and for which he was eminently qualified, that of the leading representative of the ministry in the House of Commons.

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CHAP. I.

1823.

The elevation of Mr. Canning to a principal place in the Home Administration, again left the office of Governor-General vacant. The vacancy was filled up by the nomination of Lord Amherst, a nobleman who had taken no share in the party animosities of the period; but who, a few years before, had discharged with credit the embarrassing office of Envoy to China, and had resisted with dignity and firmness the attempts of the Court of Peking to extort from him those confessions of humiliation, which it was its policy to demand from all states so abject or unwise as to solicit the admittance of their representatives to the Imperial presence. Untaught by the repeated failures of both the Dutch and English governments to negotiate with the cabinet of Peking upon a footing of equality, the despatch of an Embassy by the Crown had been urged by the Company's servants in China upon the home authorities, consequently upon disputes with the vice-regal government of Canton, and the recommenda-



BOOK III. tion had been inconsiderately adopted. The disagreements  
CHAP. I. had in the mean time been adjusted on the spot ; and the  
1823. only results of the mission were the subjection of the  
ambassador to gross personal indignity, and the precipitate dismissal of the Embassy without any communication with the emperor. The conduct of Lord Amherst under these trying circumstances had afforded entire satisfaction to his own government and to the Court of Directors ; and his elevation to the high office of Governor-General of India was a compensation for the ordeal he had gone through at Peking.<sup>1</sup>

In the interval that elapsed between the departure of the Marquis of Hastings in January, 1823, and the arrival of Lord Amherst in the August following, the Government devolved upon the senior Member of Council, Mr. John Adam. During the brief period of his administration, tranquillity prevailed throughout Hindustan ; and the prosperous condition of the finances enabled him to address his principal attention to the relief of the public burthens, and the adoption of measures of internal improvement. The interest of the public debt was finally reduced from six to five per cent., and a proportionate annual diminution of expense consequently effected.<sup>2</sup> The accession to the revenue thus realised, was considered by the local government to be applicable to objects of public advantage ; and, consistently with this impression, it was determined to give effect to the provision of the last Charter, sanctioning the yearly outlay of one lakh of rupees on account of native education, and to adopt measures for the systematic promotion of so important an object. Other projects of a like beneficent tendency were in contemplation, when they were suspended by prohibitory instructions from home,<sup>3</sup> and finally frustrated by the financial difficulties consequent upon an expensive war.

<sup>1</sup> Journal of the Proceedings of the late Embassy to China, by Henry Ellis. —Notes of Proceedings and Occurrences during the British Embassy to Peking, in 1816, by Sir G. Thomas Staunton,

<sup>2</sup> The annual amount of interest in Bengal, in 1821-2, was Rupees 1,60,00,000 ; in 1822-3, it was reduced to Rupees 1,30,00,000, being a diminution of thirty Lakhs, or £300,000. —Bengal and Agra Gazetteer, 1842, vol. i, part 2, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from the Court to the Bengal Government, 24th Feb. 1824 —Report Commons Committee, Public App. p. 107. "The act of the 53rd George III.," the Court observes, "provides for the appropriation of any surplus, with exception of the provision for literary purposes, shall be restricted to the



The proceedings of Mr. Adam's administration, with respect to the Calcutta press and to the house of Palmer and Co., at Hyderabad, have been already adverted to. Upon these two subjects, he had, while Member of Council, uniformly dissented from the opinions of the Governor-General; and it was to be anticipated, from his known character for firmness and consistency, that, whenever the decision rested with himself, he would not be deterred by any fear of unpopularity, from acting up to the principles he had maintained. The occasion soon occurred. The editor of the *Calcutta Journal* having infringed the regulations to which the press had been subjected by the Government, rendered himself liable to the infliction of the penalty with which he had been previously menaced; and he was, consequently, deprived of his license to reside in Bengal, and compelled to return to England. This proceeding exposed Mr. Adam to much obloquy, both in India and in England; but the sentence was confirmed by repeated decisions of the Court of Proprietors, and by the judgment of the Privy Council, upon a petition for the annulment of the Press regulations, which was refused;<sup>1</sup> and it was no more than the natural and necessary result of the conviction which Mr. Adam had all along avowed of the incompatibility of an unrestricted freedom of the press with the social condition of British India.<sup>2</sup>

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CHAP. I.  
1823.

liquidation of the public debt." And they question the estimate of the Bengal Government as to the amount of the surplus; as it was not apprised of the extent of the home demands on territorial account; the Court having already ordered a remittance from India, of two millions sterling, to provide for the charge, and announcing a further outlay during the current year of nearly a like extent. These remittances must have been provided from some other source, as the surplus was soon absorbed by the expenses of the war with Ava.

<sup>1</sup> See Reports of Debates at the India House, 9th and 23rd July, 1824; 22nd December, 1824; 18th January, 1826. After the latter, in which the question of compensation for losses incurred was discussed, a ballot was taken on the 11th April, 1826, when 157 voted for, and 436 against it.—*Asiatic Journal*, *passim*.—For the decision of the Privy Council, *ibid*, November, 1825.

<sup>2</sup> The nature of Mr. Buckingham's offence might have seemed to call for a punishment less severe, as it was merely a paragraph throwing ridicule upon the appointment of a minister of the Scotch church to the office of Clerk to the Committee of Stationery; but the act was a breach of the regulation prohibiting editors of papers from commenting on the measures of the Government; and it was committed in defiance of a previous intimation, that on the first occasion on which such a disregard for the regulations of the Government, as had been formerly evinced, should be repeated, the penalty of a revocation of the licence would be inflicted. The particular occasion was of little moment: it was the reiteration of the offence which incurred the sentence.



BOOK III. The connection of the mercantile house of Palmer and  
CHAP. I. Company with the minister of the Nizam had always been  
1823. strenuously objected to by Mr. Adam, and he had warmly  
supported the similar views entertained by the resident,  
Sir Charles Metcalfe. He was fully prepared, therefore,  
to carry into effect the orders of the Court, received  
shortly before the departure of his predecessor, and to  
put an end to transactions which he considered as unjust  
to the Nizam and discreditable to the British character.  
The advance to the Nizam of a sufficient sum to discharge  
his debt to Palmer and Company, in redemption of the  
tribute, on account of the Northern Circars, was in con-  
sequence concluded; and the house was interdicted from  
any further pecuniary dealings with the Court. The de-  
termination was fatal to the interests of the establish-  
ment; and, as many individuals were involved in its  
failure, the measure contributed to swell the tide of  
unpopularity against the Governor-General: such, how-  
ever, was the solid worth of his character, and such the  
universal impression of his being alone actuated by a  
conscientious consideration for the public good, that his  
retirement from public duty on account of failing health,  
and his subsequent decease, called forth a general expres-  
sion of regret from his contemporaries, and a deserved  
tribute of acknowledgment from those whom he had long,  
faithfully, and ably served.<sup>1</sup>

The new Governor-General assumed the supreme autho-  
rity in August, 1823, and had scarcely had time to cast a  
hasty glance at the novel circumstances around him, when  
indications of a storm, which had been silently gathering  
for a long time past upon the eastern portion of the  
British dominions, became too imminent to be longer  
disregarded, and required to be encountered with all the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Adam died on the 4th June, 1825, on board the *Albion*, bound to England, where she arrived on the 11th September. On the 14th, the following resolution was passed by the Court of Directors:—"Resolved unani-  
mously, That this Court, having received the melancholy intelligence of the  
death of Mr. John Adam in his passage from India to this country, desire to  
record in the strongest terms their deep sense of his exemplary integrity, dis-  
tinguished ability, and indefatigable zeal in the service of the East India  
Company, during a period of nearly thirty years; in the course of which, after  
filling the highest offices under the Bengal Government, he was more than six  
years a member of the Supreme Council, and held, during some months of  
that time, the station of Governor-General. And that the Court most sin-  
cerely participate in the sorrow which must be felt by his relations and friends  
on this lamented event."



## AFFAIRS WITH BURMA.

energies of the state. Hostilities were unavoidable, and the war had to be carried on under circumstances peculiarly unpromising. As in the case of the conflict with Nepal, the enemy was a semi-barbarous power, inflated with an overweening confidence in his own strength, and ignorant of the superior resources of the British Indian empire: but in Nepal, although the surface was rugged, the mountains were not unfriendly to health and life; and their contiguity to the plains brought within easy reach all the means and appliances that were essential to military movements. In Ava, the marsh and the forest, teeming with deleterious vapours, were to be traversed; and the supplies, of which the country was destitute, could be furnished only from a distant region, and for the most part, by a slow, precarious, and costly transport by sea. In Ava also, as in Nepal, but in a still greater degree, the difficulties of a campaign were inordinately enhanced, by the total absence of local knowledge, and ignorance of the inhospitable and impervious tracts through which it was attempted to march with all the array and impediments of civilised war.

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1823.

The countries lying on the east and south-east of the British frontier of Bengal, from Asam to Arakan, a distance from north to south of about four hundred miles, were almost unknown at this period to European geography, having been hitherto closed against the inquiries of the Company's officers by their inherent physical difficulties, the barbarous habits of the people, the jealousy of their chiefs, and the unwillingness of the Indian government to sanction any enterprise of their servants, which might inspire doubts of their designs in the minds of the rulers of the adjacent regions. On the most northern portion of the boundary, the valley of Asam, watered by the converging branches of the Brahmaputra, was immediately contiguous to the province of Rungpore, whence it stretched for three hundred and fifty miles in a north-easterly direction to snow-clad mountains separating it from China. Along its southern limits, a country of hill and forest, tenanted by a number of wild tribes, with whom no intercourse had ever been opened, spread towards the east, and in its central portion under the designation of Kachar, was conterminous on the west with the British district of



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Sylhet, and was bounded on the east by the mountain-girdled valley of Manipur. Similar tracts, inhabited by rude uncivilised races, extended to the south, skirting the provinces of Tipera and Chittagong, until the latter was divided by an inlet of the sea, from the principality of Arakan, recently become a part of the Burma dominions. Beyond Arakan, extending southwards to Tenaserim, and northwards to Asam, the whole of the territory west of the Chinese frontier acknowledged the sovereignty of the King of Ava, who was thus, in Arakan, the immediate neighbour of the British Indian empire, and was separated from it throughout the rest of its eastern limits by petty states, and uncivilised races, too feeble to defend themselves against his power, and rapidly falling a prey to his ambition. It had long been foreseen, that the progressive approximation of the Burma dominion was calculated to lead to a collision; and circumstances early occurred, which could not fail to create mutual dissatisfaction and distrust. The tone of the Government of Ava was always of a tendency to provoke resentment rather than invite forbearance; and although it was no part of the policy of the Government of Bengal to excite the suspicion, or incur the enmity of the Court of Ava, yet some of the transactions in which it was engaged were not unlikely to arouse such feelings in a haughty and ambitious state, and one incapable of appreciating the motives by which the relations of civilised powers with their neighbours are regulated. The position of Chittagong had, in an especial manner, furnished cause for reciprocal offence and irritation.

In the year 1784, the Burmas invaded the principality of Arakan, long an independent kingdom, and when first visited by Europeans, abounding in population and affluence. The people of Arakan, although identical in origin with the Burmas, speaking the same language, and following similar institutions, had, until the period specified, formed a distinct political society, the rulers of which tracing their descent from remote periods, had at various times extended their sway over countries lying to their north-west, including Chittagong, Tipera, Dacca, and other parts of Bengal. Engaged repeatedly in hostilities with the Burmas, the affinity of race had only exacerbated



mutual antipathy, and an implacable animosity separated the two nations more effectually than the mountain barriers which interposed between them. Civil dissension at length undermined the independence of Arakan. At the invitation of a disloyal chieftain, the forces of Minderagi Prahū, the king of Ava, crossed the Yumadong mountains, defeated the troops opposed to them, took prisoner the king of Arakan, Samada, with his family, and condemned them to perpetual captivity.<sup>1</sup> The king shortly afterwards died; his relations were suffered to sink into obscurity, and Arakan became an integral part of the kingdom of Ava, under the authority of a viceroy.<sup>2</sup> The oppressive system of the Burma government, and the heavy exactions which they levied, soon reduced the people to extreme misery, and drove them into repeated insurrections: the severity with which these were repressed, and despair of effective resistance, were followed by the flight of vast numbers of the natives to the borders of Chittagong, where they were permitted to settle upon extensive tracts of waste land hitherto untenanted. Many became industrious and peaceable cultivators; but others, lurking in the border forests, emboldened by the certainty of a safe refuge, and instigated by proximity to their native country, to which the people of Arakan have a strong attachment availed themselves of the opportunity to harass the intrusive government, and by constant predatory incursions disturb its repose and impair its resources. As these marauders issued from the direction of the British districts, and fell back upon them on any reverse of fortune;

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<sup>1</sup> Sketch of Arakan, by Charles Paton, Esq. — Asiatic Researches, vol. xvi. — On the History of Arakan, by Captain Phayre, Senior Assistant Commissioner. — Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vols. x, 679, and xiii. 23. According to Captain Phayre, the people of Arakan call themselves Myammas, which, in Burma pronunciation, is the same as Brammas, or Burmas. Their language and written characters are the same, with some varieties of articulation. The country they term Rakhain, and refer it to the Sanscrit word Rakshas, a malignant spirit. Besides the Myammas, the population consists of various hill and forest tribes, apparently of kindred origin; also of a considerable proportion of Mohammedans and Bengalis, and of a mixed race from Myamma fathers and Bengali mothers to whom the term "Mugs" is properly restricted, although it is indiscriminately applied by the English in Bengal to the people of Arakan. The Mugs follow the faith of their fathers, a corrupt Buddhism, but their language is Bengali. Symes says, Mogo is a term of religious import, applied to the priesthood and the King, whence the inhabitants are improperly termed Mughs. — Embassy to Ava, 104. Lieut. Phayre is a better authority, but he leaves the etymology of the term "Mug" unexplained.

<sup>2</sup> Symes' Embassy to Ava, 110.



BOOK III. and as they experienced the treatment which humanity  
CHAP. I. dictated, and were encouraged to become peaceable sub-  
1823. jects of the Company, the court of Ava, not very unreason-  
ably, suspected that they were abetted in their incursions  
by the British authorities, who were thus carrying on a  
covert war against the Burmas, which it became necessary  
to oppose by open force.

In the year 1793, three insurgent chiefs of some note, who had been defeated in one of their enterprises, fled as usual to the Company's territory of Chittagong.<sup>1</sup> Without any communication of his purposes to the British functionaries, the Burma monarch commanded that the fugitives should be pursued whithersoever they had fled, and brought back dead or alive. A force of five thousand men was sent across the Naf on this duty, and an army, twenty thousand strong, was to be assembled at Arakan for their support if necessary. The general of the Burma force, after crossing the river, addressed the judge and magistrate of Chittagong, explaining the occasion of his inroad, but disclaiming hostile intentions, if the fugitives were secured and delivered into his hands. At the same time, he declared that he should not quit the Company's territories until they were given up; and, in confirmation of his menace, he fortified his camp with a stockade. To submit patiently to so unjustifiable a violation of the British boundary, surpassed even the pacific forbearance of Sir John Shore; and a detachment was sent from Calcutta and Chittagong under General Erskine, to compel the Burmas to withdraw into their own confines, it being intimated to them that, after their retreat, the delinquent whom they were in quest of, and who had been secured by the magistrates, should be given up, if the British government was satisfied of the justice of the charges against them. After receiving this assurance, the Burma commander retired, having carefully restrained his men during their encampment in the Company's territory from any act of violence or spoliation. The three insurgent chiefs, after undergoing the form of a judicial investigation, were pronounced guilty, and delivered to their enemies. Two

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Symes speaks of these men as robbers—leaders of banditti—being either uninformed of their political character, or not choosing to acknowledge it. p. 117.



of them were shut up in closed cells and starved to death; the third contrived to escape, and found a more permanent asylum than on his first flight, in Chittagong. The cession of the fugitives was ascribed by the Burmas to no principle of international equity, but to dread of their resentment, and contributed to confirm them in a belief, which they had begun to entertain, of their own superiority to the foreign conquerors of Hindustan; an impression which was strengthened by the efforts made to conciliate the court of Ava, and the despatch of a friendly mission under the conduct of Captain Symes.<sup>1</sup>

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A very few years witnessed the recurrence of similar transactions; and in the years 1797 and 1798, a body of people, amounting, it is said, to between thirty and forty thousand, emigrated from Arakan into the Chittagong district.<sup>2</sup> The viceroy sent after them a military force across the frontier, and wrote a threatening letter to the magistrate announcing the occurrence of war between the two states, unless the emigrants were forced to return to Arakan. The magistrate insisted on the immediate retreat of the Burmas; but they stockaded themselves, and repulsed an attack upon their intrenchments. They shortly afterwards withdrew; and as the court was then occupied with schemes of conquest in Asam, it was judged expedient to have recourse to moderate counsels, and an envoy was despatched to Calcutta, to negotiate for the restoration of the fugitives. In the meantime, the government of Bengal had resolved to admit the emigrants to the advantages of permanent colonisation, and assigned them unoccupied lands in the southern portion of the district, engaging that they should not be suffered to

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Buchanan, who accompanied Captain Symes in the Embassy sent by Sir J. Shore, in 1795, observes: "The opinion that prevailed, both at Chittagong and Ava, was, that the refugees were given up from fear; and this opinion has, no doubt, continued to operate on the ill-informed Court of Ava, and has occasioned a frequent repetition of violence and insolence, ending in war. These evils might possibly have been avoided by a vigorous repulse of the invasion in 1794; and a positive refusal to hearken to any proposal for giving up the insurgents, after the Court of Ava had adopted hostile measures in place of negotiation."—*Account of the Frontier between Bengal and Ava*. Edinburgh Journal of Science. October, 1825.

<sup>2</sup> An officer, Captain Cox, was employed to superintend their location. According to his report, he had a register of 13,000 settlers; and he had reason to believe, that between 40,000 and 50,000 would come forward as soon as he could assign them lands sufficient for their maintenance. Above 10,000 were located in the situation subsequently known as Cox's Bazar.—*Malcolm, Pol. India*, i. 556.



BOOK III. molest the Burma settlers in Arakan, and that no more  
CHAP. I. should be permitted to cross over into the Company's  
1823. possessions. Lord Wellesley flattered himself that these promises, and the assurances given to the envoy, would satisfy the court of Ava of the friendly disposition of the British government; but so far was this expectation from being realised, that in 1800, the demand for the restoration of the emigrants was renewed, accompanied by the threat of invasion, if not complied with. It did not suit the convenience of the Bengal government to take serious notice of the menace; and it was treated as the unauthorised impertinence of the viceroy of Arakan. A force was, however, posted on the frontier, and Colonel Symes was again sent as an envoy to Ava, to appease the indignation of the monarch. No particulars of this second mission have ever been given to the public; but it is known to have failed in effecting any of its objects. The envoy was detained three months at Mengwon, the temporary residence of the court. During this period, he was admitted to a single and disdainful audience of the king, and at the end was allowed to leave the place without any notice. No public answer was vouchsafed to a letter addressed by the Governor-General to the king; and a reply which was privately furnished, and was of questionable authenticity, took no notice of the subject of the letter which it professed to answer. The only effect of this mission was to lower the Indian government in the estimation of the Burma Court.<sup>1</sup>

The suspicions of the Court of Ava were again aroused and invigorated by the events which took place in the same quarter in 1811: when a formidable rising of the people occurred under the guidance of Khyen-bran,<sup>2</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> The official despatch, announcing the result of the mission, states, that Colonel Symes received assurances of the friendly disposition of the Burma Court, on which he had succeeded in impressing the fullest confidence in the good faith and amicable views of the British Government.—*Pol. History of India*, i. 557. It is rather incompatible with this impression, that, in 1809, it was ascertained that the Burmas had for years meditated seriously the conquest of Chittagong and Dacca. The disgraceful treatment of the Embassy, we now learn, however, from another source.—*Historical Review of the Political Relations between the British Government in India and the Empire of Ava*. By G. J. Bayfield, Acting Assistant to the British Resident in Ava. Revised by the Resident Lieut.-Col. Burney. Calcutta, 1835.

<sup>2</sup> This is the Chief, usually denominated by English inaccuracy, King-bering. The name is, properly, Khyen-hyan; the latter pronounced by the Burmas "bran," meaning, according to Lieutenant Phayre, Khyen-return: the boy having been born after his father's return from a visit to the mountain tribe, called Khyens.



son of the district officer, by whom the Burmas had been invited into Arakan, and who had been rewarded for his treason with the contempt and neglect which it deserved. The resentment which he consequently cherished against the Burmas was bequeathed to his son, who had been one of the emigrants to Chittagong. After a tranquil residence of some years, Khyen-bran collected a numerous band of his countrymen, and at their head burst into Arakan, the whole of which, with the exception of the capital, he speedily reduced to his authority. Arakan itself capitulated; but the terms were violated, and great disorders were committed by the victors. It was the firm conviction of the viceroy of Arakan, that this formidable aggression originated with, and was supported by, the government of Bengal; and such was the view, undoubtedly, entertained by the king and his ministers.<sup>1</sup> In the hope of effacing so mistaken an impression, Captain Canning, who had twice before been employed on a similar duty,<sup>2</sup> was sent to Ava to disavow all connection with the insurgents, and to assure the court of the desire of the government of Bengal to maintain undisturbed the existing amicable intercourse. He found the court, as he expected, so strongly impressed with the belief that the British government was implicated in the late revolt, that, in anticipation of hostilities, an embargo had been laid upon the British vessels at Rangoon. This was taken off by the Viceroy of Pegu, in compliance with the assurances and remonstrances of the Envoy: but the temper of the Court was less placable; and before Captain Canning had quitted Rangoon for the capital, he was apprized that the Viceroy of Arakan had entered into the Company's confines with a hostile force, and was instructed to return immediately to Bengal. On the other hand, peremptory orders were received from the Court to send

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<sup>1</sup> Papers, Burmese War. Printed for Parliament.—Despatch of Governor-General, 23rd Jan, 1812, par. 9.

<sup>2</sup> His first mission was in 1803, when he was deputed as British Agent at Rangoon; but the inimical conduct of the Viceroy curtailed his residence there to less than a twelvemonth. He was sent a second time in 1809, to explain the nature of the blockade imposed upon the trade with the Isles of France. He was treated with rather more civility than on his first visit, and was allowed to proceed to Amarapura, where he had an audience of the King. No reply was given by His Majesty to the letter from the Governor-General, with which the Envoy was charged; but one from the ministers hinted at the pretensions of Ava to Chittagong and Dacca. Nothing more satisfactory could be obtained.



BOOK III. Captain Canning to the capital, by force, if requisite, it being the obvious intention of the Burma cabinet to detain him as a hostage for the delivery of Khyen-bran. The commands of his own government, and the firmness of the Envoy, disappointed the project of the Court; and the presence of two of the Company's armed vessels at Rangoon deterred the Viceroy from recourse to violence. Captain Canning returned to Calcutta, and no further missions were ventured to Ava, until the events of the war had secured greater respect for the person of a British Envoy.

The triumph of Khyen-bran was of brief duration. As soon as the rainy season had ended, a large Burma force marched into Arakan, recaptured the town, and defeated and dispersed the insurgents. They fled to their former haunts, and were followed by a division of the victorious army to the British frontier. The delivery of the rebel leaders was demanded by the Viceroy of Arakan, with a threat, that in the event of non-compliance, he would invade the Company's territories with a force of sixty thousand men, and would annex Chittagong and Dacca to the dominions of his sovereign. In consequence of these proceedings, the troops on the frontier were reinforced, and intimation was conveyed to the Viceroy, that any violation of the boundary would be at once resented. This show of firmness had the effect of checking the military demonstrations of Ava, and the delivery of the rebel leaders was made the subject of negotiation. Envoys were sent to Bengal on the part, nominally, of the viceroys of Arakan and Pegu to urge compliance. The tone of the communications was ill calculated to attain their object.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as they had recovered from the effects of their discomfiture, Khyen-bran and his followers renewed their incursions with varying but generally unfavourable results; and as their ravages served only to keep alive the irritation of the Ava government, and perpetuate the distracted state of the districts on either bank of the Naf, it

<sup>1</sup> In a letter from the Viceroy of Pegu, the Governor-General was informed, that, by surrendering the Mug fugitives and sending them to Ava, he might obtain the royal pardon for the numerous falsehoods he had written. His Majesty would take patience, and many human beings would enjoy peace and tranquillity.—Bayfield's Historical Review, p. 36.



became necessary to take some active measures for their suppression. A proclamation was accordingly issued, prohibiting any of the subjects of the Company from aiding and abetting the insurgents in any manner whatever, directly or indirectly; and rewards were offered for the apprehension of their chiefs — detachments of troops were also sent to disperse any armed assemblages of the people, and to secure the leaders. Several were arrested, and some check was given to the aggressions on the Burma province: but the attachment of his countrymen effectually screened Khyen-bran from seizure; and as long as he was at large, it was not in the power of either the British or the Burma government to prevent him from collecting adherents, and harassing at their head the oppressors of his country.

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This condition of the frontier continued with little amelioration during the three succeeding years. The same aggressions were repeated, and provoked the like demonstrations and menaces on the part of the Burmas, which were met by the same disclaimers, and preparations for resistance, on that of the British. All attempts to put a stop to the source of these distractions were unavailing. Many of the principal followers of Khyen-bran were apprehended; and, although humanity prevented their being given up to the Burmas, they were removed from the scene of action, and kept in strict confinement. His parties were repeatedly scattered by British or Burma detachments; his haunts were broken up, and his principal fortress, a strong stockade at Tyne, in the heart of the thickets, was taken and destroyed. He still continued in arms; and it was not until the beginning of 1815, that his death put an end to the border troubles of Chittagong and Arakan, and removed all occasion for discord between the neighbouring states. It did not, however, extinguish the feelings which the suspected connivance of the British government in the outrages of the insurgents had inspired, and the resentment which was thus excited, and the jealousy which was ever afterwards entertained, were among the principal causes of the ensuing war.

Although some disturbances, springing from the irruption of parties of the expatriated Arakaners into the Burma dependencies, survived Khyen-bran, yet they were



BOOK III. not of sufficient importance to interrupt the good understanding which it was endeavoured to preserve, with the  
CHAP. I. Burma authorities of Arakan. It was evident, however,  
1823. that their government was not to be satisfied, except by the surrender of the captured chiefs; the demand for which was, from time to time reiterated, notwithstanding the firm, but temperate, refusal of the Governor-General to comply with the application. In 1817, a letter from the Raja of Ramri, or, as he styled himself, the Governor of the Four Provinces, Arakan, Chynda, Cheduba, and Ramri, having called upon the magistrate of Chittagong to restore the fugitives from Arakan, to their dependence upon Ava, the opportunity was taken of explaining to his superior, the Viceroy of Pegu, the principles by which the conduct of the governments of India was actuated. In the reply of the Marquis of Hastings, it was stated, that the British government could not, with a due regard to the dictates of justice, deliver up those who had sought its protection, some of whom had resided within its boundary for thirty years: no restraint was imposed upon their voluntary return, but no authority could be employed to enforce it: the necessity of such a measure was now less manifest than ever, as the troubles which had existed, had, through the vigilance and perseverance of the British officers, been suppressed, and the tranquil habits of the settlers had rendered their recurrence extremely improbable. No notice was taken of this letter, but that it had failed to appease the haughty spirit of the Court, was soon evidenced by the receipt of a second despatch from the same functionary, in which he insisted upon the restitution of Ramoo, Chittagong, Murshedabad, and Dacca. This claim was seriously put forth. It has been mentioned, that some of the kings of Arakan had, at remote periods, exercised temporary dominion over portions of Bengal; and the monarch of Ava, having succeeded to their sovereignty, considered himself entitled to the whole of the territories which had acknowledged their sway. To give the weight of intimidation to these pretensions, the recent conquests of Ava, in Asam, Manipur, and Kachar, were pompously exaggerated. The letter was sent back to the Viceroy of Pegu, with an expression of the belief of the Governor-General, that it was an unau-



thorised act of the Raja of Ramri, and of his conviction, that if it could be supposed to emanate from the King of Ava, it would justify the Bengal government in regarding it as a declaration of war. The Marquis of Hastings was, however, too much occupied in Central India, at this time, to bestow any serious attention upon the arrogant pretensions of a barbarous court; and the brilliant successes of the Pindari campaign, which were known, although imperfectly, at Amarapura, contributed to deter the Burma ministers from repeating their demands. The accession of a new sovereign in the place of Minderaji Prahu in 1819, and the active interposition of his successor in the affairs of the countries to the northward, and especially in Manipur and Asam, deterred the Burmas apparently from reiterating their claims, although they rather favoured than discountenanced their project of eventual collision with the government of Bengal.

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The rich valley of Asam had long been the scene of internal dissension, the inevitable consequence of the partition of authority among a number of petty chiefs, each of whom claimed, as his hereditary right, a voice in the nomination of the Raja, and a share in the administration. Originally a Hindu principality, Asam had been subjugated in the 13th century by princes of the Shan race, and they had requited the services of their chief adherents, by dividing with them the functions of the government. Three principal ministers, termed Gohains, formed a council, without whose concurrence the Raja could issue no commands, nor was he legally enthroned until they had assented to his elevation. The Raja had the power of dismissing either of these individuals, but only in favour of some person of the same family. Officers of inferior rank, but equally claiming by title of inheritance, termed Phokans and Barwas, exercised various degrees of authority. The most important of them, styled the Bor Phokan, was the governor of an extensive portion of Central Asam. The encroachments of these dignitaries on the ill-defined authority of the Raja, and his endeavours to free himself from their control, generated a perpetual succession of domestic intrigues, which were not unfrequently fatal to all who were concerned in them.

In 1809, a conspiracy was set on foot by the Raja,



BOOK III. Chandra Kanta, to get rid of the Boora Gohain, an able  
CHAP. I. but imperious minister, who had for some time engrossed  
1823. all the authority of the state, removing all who stood in  
his way or thwarted his views, by putting them to death,  
either publicly or by assassination. The Gohain detected  
the plot, and the Bor Phokan, being one of the chief conspirators, was obliged to fly. He repaired to Calcutta, and solicited the government to rescue his master from his humiliating and dangerous position. As all interference was declined, he next had recourse to the Burmas, and met with better success, as they sent him back to Asam with a force of six thousand men. The Boora Gohain had died before their arrival, and Chandra Kanta, no longer in need of foreign support against his too-powerful minister, dismissed his allies, with valuable presents; amongst which was a princess of the royal family for his majesty of Ava. The zeal of the Bor Phokan met with an ungrateful return: the Raja was induced, by the intrigues of another member of the supreme council, the Bor Gohain, and the chief secretary or Bor Barwa, to put him to death. His relations fled to Ava. In the meantime, the son of the late Boora Gohain, inheriting his father's ambition and enmity to the Raja, drew from obscurity a prince of the ruling dynasty, Purandhar Sing, and had influence enough to raise him to the throne. Chandra Kanta was deposed and taken prisoner; but Purandhar Sing was contented with ordering his right ear to be slit, any mutilation being regarded as a flaw in the title of the sovereign of Asam, who had long arrogated the designation of Swarga Raja, or King of Heaven; and was, consequently, supposed to be exempt from any terrestrial imperfections. Chandra Kanta made his escape, and fled to the confines of Bhutan.

Upon receiving intelligence of the murder of the Bor Phokan, a Burma army was again despatched to Asam. They were encountered by Purandhar Sing, but defeated him; and, ascribing the death of the Phokan less to Chandra Kanta than to his advisers, they put to death the Bor Barwa, whom they had captured, and reinstated the Raja. They then departed, leaving a detachment under a general of celebrity, Mengyee Maha Thilwa, for the defence of Asam. Purandhar Sing, and the Boora Gohain, fled



into Bhutan, where they busied themselves in collecting BOOK III.  
men and arms, and harassing by frequent incursions the CHAP. I.  
Burma invaders.

1823.

The union between Chandra Kanta and his allies was of short continuance: alarmed for his life, he withdrew to the western extremity of the valley contiguous to the Company's territories, and assembled around him a considerable body of retainers. In 1821, he had obtained some advantages over the Burmas, and recovered part of his dominions, when a general, afterwards also well-known to the English, Mengyee Maha Bandoola, arrived with reinforcements. Chandra Kanta, unable to make head against him, was forced to fly, and the Burmas took possession of Asam, declaredly as a future dependency of Ava. Their proximity in this quarter was by no means desirable, although they refrained from any act of avowed hostility. The defenceless state of the frontier exposed the inhabitants of Rungpore to the unauthorised depredations of straggling parties, who plundered and burnt the villages, and carried off the villagers as slaves. Strong remonstrances were addressed to the Burma authorities, by whom the intention of permitting such outrages was disclaimed; but little pains were taken to prevent their repetition—the perpetrators were unpunished, and no compensation was made to the sufferers. On their part, the Burma officers warned the British functionaries against giving shelter or assistance to any of the fugitives from Asam, and declared their determination to pursue them, if necessary, into the Company's districts. Measures were taken to counteract the threatened pursuit: and a sufficient force was placed at the disposal of the Commissioner on the north-east frontier, Mr. Scott, to protect the boundary from invasion.<sup>1</sup>

The mountainous regions, extending southwards from Asam to the British district of Sylhet, were occupied in a successive series from the west by the Garos, a barbarous race, subject to no paramount authority; by the Kasiyas, also a wild and uncivilised race, but acknowledging the authority of their chiefs; and by a petty principality, that of Jyntia, governed by a Raja. From the latter, an exten-

<sup>1</sup> Buchanan's (Hamilton) Account of Asam.—Annals of Oriental Literature  
—Robinson's Asam.—Documents, Burmese War, 5.



BOOK III. sive though thinly peopled country, of the same character  
CHAP. I. as the preceding, consisting of hill and forest intersected  
1823. by numerous small rivers, feeders of the Brahmaputra, and  
occupied by races more mixed and rather more civilised  
than their neighbours, constituted the principality of  
Kachar, spreading round Sylhet, on its northern and east-  
ern confines. Beyond Kachar, and further to the north  
and north-east, lay wild tracts of uncultivated wilderness,  
tenanted by a number of barbarous tribes known collec-  
tively as Nagas; while on the east, the petty chiefship of  
Manipur separated Kachar from the Burma dominions.  
In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Manipur was  
a state holding a prominent place among these semi-  
civilised communities, and was able to send into the field  
an army of twenty thousand men. Under a prince, who  
rather unaccountably bore the Mohammedan designation  
of Gharib-nawaz, Manipur engaged in a successful war with  
Ava, overran the Burma territory and planted its victorious  
standards on the walls of the capital. The murder of the  
Raja by his son, and the family dissensions which followed,  
exhausted the energies of Manipur; and the country was  
shortly afterwards invaded by the Burmas, under one of  
their most celebrated sovereigns, Alompra, by whom that  
career of conquest was commenced, which ended in the  
annexation of Pegu, Arakan, the Shan districts, Manipur,  
and Asam, to the dominions of Ava. In their distress,  
the Manipur chiefs had recourse for protection to the  
government of Bengal; and their application was favour-  
ably listened to. In 1762, a treaty of alliance offensive  
and defensive was concluded between the Raja of Manipur  
and Mr. Verelst, then Governor of Bengal, in virtue of  
which a small detachment marched from Chittagong, with  
the declared design not only of enabling the Raja to expel  
the Burmas from his principality, but of subduing the  
whole of the Burma country. Six companies of Sipahis  
were then thought sufficient for so ambitious an enter-  
prise. The advance of the division was retarded by heavy  
rains; and, when it reached Kaspur, the capital of Kachar,  
was enfeebled by sickness induced by the unhealthiness  
of the climate. It was recalled. An attempt was made in  
the following year to renew the negotiation; but the  
government of Bengal, now better informed regarding the



difficulties of the undertaking, and the little benefit to be derived even from success, declined the alliance. No further intercourse took place. The last Raja, Jay Sing, who retained any power in Manipur, after many disastrous conflicts with his enemies, was suffered to rule in peace over a country almost depopulated and laid waste. Upon his death, in 1799, Manipur was torn to pieces by the contentions of his numerous sons, of whom the greater part, perished in their struggle for the ascendancy, leaving three only alive, Chorjit, Marjit, and Gambhir Sing. The first of these made himself Raja in 1806, but was expelled in 1812 by the second, with the assistance of a Burma force. Chorjit fled into Kachar, where he was hospitably received by the Raja, Govind Chandra, and, in requital of his hospitality, succeeded with the aid of Gambhir Sing, in wresting from his host the greater portion of Kachar. Marjit, after ruling over Manipur for six years, incurred the displeasure of the King of Ava, and was obliged to retire into Kachar, where he found an asylum with his brothers. Consistently with the treacherous character of his race, he soon conspired against Chorjit, and being joined by Gambhir Sing, the two younger brothers dispossessed the elder of his ill-gotten territory, and compelled him once more to become a fugitive. He retired to Sylhet, whither the legitimate ruler of Kachar, Govind Chandra, had previously sought protection and assistance, engaging, if replaced in his principality, to hold it of the British government, under the tenure of allegiance. The offer was refused; and Govind Chandra, through the Raja of Asam, applied to Ava for that succour which the government of India refused to afford him. After some time, the Court of Ava acceded to his propositions; and an army was ordered to move from Manipur into Kachar, to expel or make captives the Manipuri brothers, and replace Govind Chandra in possession of Kachar, on condition of fealty to the Burma monarch. The Government of India now conceived alarm, and deemed it expedient to prevent the near proximity of the Burmas to the Sylhet frontier, by taking Kachar under its own protection. Overtures were addressed in the first instance to the Manipuri chiefs, the two elder of whom were ready to accede to any stipulations; but Gambhir Sing, under a mistaken estimate of

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BOOK III. his ability to resist the Burmas, hesitated to accept the  
CHAP. I. proffered assistance upon the terms proposed. It was  
1823. consequently resolved to recur to the legitimate Raja; and Govind Chandra, notwithstanding his pending negotiations with the Burmas and his having an agent in their camp readily broke off the treaty, and concluded an engagement with the government of Bengal. The Manipuri chiefs were conciliated by pensions; and Marjit and Gambhir Sing, the latter of whom had discovered his error, were placed in command of detachments of irregular troops, formed principally of their followers and fugitives from Manipur. When the Burma force entered the province, under the impression that they were the allies of its ruler, they were informed that Kachar was already restored to its rightful possessor, and that he was under the protection of the British power. The Burma leaders felt that they had been anticipated; but they expressed no disappointment, as they had only come, they declared, for the same purpose, of restoring Govind Chandra to his authority; but they demanded that the Manipuri brothers should be given up to them; and they called upon the Raja of Jyntia, to acknowledge the supremacy of the king of Ava. As this chief was regarded as a feudatory of Bengal, the call was repudiated; and the Burma officers were informed, that if they attempted to advance into Kachar they would be forcibly opposed. The threat was disregarded, and towards the close of 1823, a Burma force having taken up a position threatening the Sylhet frontier, it was attacked, and actual hostilities were begun, as we shall have further occasion to describe.<sup>1</sup> In the mean time, it will be convenient to revert to the more recent occurrences on the confines of Chittagong.

The vigilance of the local authorities, and the want of any popular leader, had deterred the emigrants from Arakan, who were settled in the Company's territories, from offering any molestation to their neighbours. Their forbearance had not inspired a similar spirit; and a series of petty and irritating outrages were committed by the

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, by Capt. R. Boileau Pemberton.—History of Manipur and Kachar.—Documents, Burmese War, App.—Memoir of the Countries on and near the Eastern Frontier of Sylhet, by Lieut. Fisher.



Burmas upon the subjects of the British Government, which could have been perpetrated only with the cognisance of the officers of Ava, and the sole apparent object of which was to provoke reciprocity of violence. Repeated attacks were made upon the elephant hunters in the public service; and the people were killed, or carried off and sold as slaves, although following their avocation within the British boundaries. A claim was set up to the possession of a small island at the mouth of the Naf, which had for many years been in the undisputed occupation of the British: tolls were levied upon boats belonging to Chittagong, and, on one occasion, the demand being resisted, the Burmas fired upon the party, and killed the steersman. This act of violence was followed by the assemblage of armed men on the eastern side of the Naf; and universal consternation pervaded the villages in this, the most remote and unprotected portion of the Chittagong district.

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The Naf, which constituted the boundary between Chittagong and Arakan, presents, like other rivers on this coast, the character of an inlet of the sea, rather than of a river, rising but a short distance inland, and being an inconsiderable stream, until it approaches the coast, when it expands into an estuary, a mile broad, at the place where it is usually crossed. Lying off this expanse, close to the Chittagong side, and separated from it only by a narrow channel which was fordable at low water, was situated the island of Shahpuri, a spot of limited extent and little value, but which, by its local position and the prescription of many years, was undoubtedly an integral part of the British province of Chittagong. Upon this islet, and at Tek Naf, on the adjacent main land, a guard of irregulars was posted, to protect the boats of the Company's subjects from a repetition of the aggression which had been perpetrated. This guard gave great offence to the Burma functionaries; and the head man of Mangdoo, on the Arakan side of the Naf, insisted on its immediate removal, as, if its presence should be made known to the king, it would inevitably occasion a war. Reference was made to his superior, the Viceroy of Arakan, who reiterated the claim to the island as part of the Burma territory, and declared, that if not at once admitted, he should esta-



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BOOK III. blish it by force. It was proposed to him to investigate  
CHAP. I. the question of right, by commissioners on either side :  
1823. but before a reply to this proposition was returned, the  
Raja had carried his threat into execution, carefully promul-  
gating that he acted under orders from the Court. A  
body of a thousand Burmas landed on Shahpuri, on the  
night of the 24th September, 1823, easily overpowered the  
small guard stationed there, killed and wounded several of  
the party, and drove the rest off the island. As soon as  
the transaction was known at Calcutta, a detachment of  
regular troops was sent to re-occupy the island, and dis-  
lodge the Burmas ; who, however, had previously retired.  
A letter was, at the same time, addressed to the king,  
informing him of what had occurred, ascribing it to the  
unsanctioned presumption of the local officers, and ex-  
pressing an earnest desire to preserve inviolate the  
amicable relations which had hitherto subsisted ; but  
announcing, that a perseverance in the system of petty  
insults and encroachments, which had been so long prac-  
tised, would exceed the limits of forbearance and modera-  
tion heretofore observed, and would provoke retaliation.  
This expostulation was regarded as an additional proof of  
the backwardness of the British government to engage in  
hostilities ; which was attributed to its dread of the  
superior power and valour of the Burmas.

The government of Ava was, in fact, resolutely bent  
upon war. The protection and encouragement given to  
the emigrants from Arakan, the refusal to deliver them to  
its vengeance, the asylum afforded to the refugees from  
Asam and Manipur, and the frustration of its projects on  
the side of Kachar, had disappointed the revenge and  
mortified the pride of the Court, and inspired its councils  
with inveterate animosity towards the government of  
Bengal. It entertained no doubt of triumph : the repeated  
efforts of the British, in spite of every discouragement, to  
maintain a friendly intercourse ; and the successive mis-  
sions which were despatched, notwithstanding the studied  
indignity with which the envoys were treated, confirmed  
the king and his ministers in the belief, that the govern-  
ment of Bengal was conscious of its inability to withstand  
the superior force and energies of Ava. The success which  
had long attended the arms of the latter—the annihilation



of Pegu, which at one time threatened the extinction of its rival; the easy conquest of Arakan, and the subjugation of Manipur and Asam, had inflated the arrogance of the whole nation, and had persuaded them that they were irresistible. The ministers of the state were entirely ignorant of the power and incredulous of the resources of British India; and, although they could not be unaware of the extent of the British possessions, yet, looking upon the natives of India with extreme contempt, they inferred that their subjugation by the English merely proved that the latter were superior to a dastardly and effeminate race, not that they were equal to cope with Burma strength and courage. In fine, they felt assured, that it was reserved for them to rescue Asia from the disgrace of a stranger-yoke, and to drive back the foreigners to the remote island, from which it was understood that they had come.<sup>1</sup>

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The occupation of Shahpuri by a military force, had the effect of arresting for a time the hostile demonstrations of the Burmas on the Chittagong frontier; but an actual contest had commenced, as above noticed, on the borders

<sup>1</sup> The pretensions of Ava to the territories claimed in Bengal were of old date, and were repeatedly urged on Capt. Cox, when at Amarapura, in 1797. At the same time, the Burma ministers expressed their opinion of the facility of recovering them, asserting that 3000 men would be sufficient for the purpose.—Cox's Burman Empire, pp. 300, 302, 304. Of the sentiments latterly entertained, authentic information was obtained not only from the official declarations of the public officers, but from the evidence of various Europeans, merchants, and missionaries, settled at Amarapura, and, before the war, admitted to the intimacy of the leading persons of the Court. Thus, it is stated by Mr. Laird: "From the King to the beggar, the Burmans were hot for a war with the English." And he mentions having been present at a levee after Maha Bandoola's return from Asam, when he reported his having refrained from following the fugitive Asamese into the British territory, only because they were on terms of amity with his Government, and paid a revenue by their trade with Rangoon; but that if his sovereign wished for Bengal, he would engage to conquer it for him with no other troops than the strangers dependent upon Ava. Dr. Judson, an American missionary, who had resided ten years in the country, and was well acquainted with the language, states, that on his first visit to the capital, he heard the desire to go to war with the English, universally expressed by the principal persons of the administration and especially by the members of the royal family. Their language is thus repeated by him: "The English are the inhabitants of a small and remote island. What business have they to come in ships from so great a distance, to dethrone kings, and take possession of countries they have no right to? They contrive to conquer and govern the black foreigners, the people of castes, who have puny frames, and no courage. They have never yet fought with so strong and brave a people as the Burmas, skilled in the use of the sword and spear. If they once fight with us, and we have an opportunity of manifesting our bravery, it will be an example to the black nations, which are now slaves to the English, and will encourage them to throw off the yoke." A prediction was also current, that the heir apparent, a boy of about eleven years of age, when arrived at manhood, should rule over the country of the strangers.—Documents, Burmese War, 223, 229.



BOOK III. of Sylhet. Undeterred by the remonstrances of the  
CHAP. I. British authorities, a body of four thousand Burmas and  
1824. Asamese entered the northern frontier of Kachar from  
Asam, by the Bharteka Pass, and entrenched themselves  
at Bikrampur, about forty-five miles east of Sylhet, while  
a more considerable force advanced from Manipur on the  
east, and defeated Gambhir Sing, who had attempted to  
stop their march. In order to prevent the junction of these  
two divisions, a detachment of the 14th and 46th Regi-  
ments of Native Infantry, with four companies of the  
Rungpore Local Corps and a few guns, which had been  
previously posted so as to cover the Sylhet frontier, was  
concentrated under Major Newton, at Jatrapur, a village  
about five miles beyond the boundary, and marched against  
the Burma force at Bikrampur. At daybreak, on the 17th  
January, 1824, the troops came in sight of the stockade,  
which was yet unfinished, and were led immediately to  
the attack. After some resistance, the entrenchment was  
carried, and the Burmas were put to the route; but as the  
strength of the detachment did not permit of an active  
pursuit, they speedily rallied and effected their junction  
with the force from Manipur. Major Newton, having fallen  
back within the British boundary, the Burmas advanced  
to Jatrapur, and constructed stockades on either bank of  
the Surma river, connecting them by a bridge. Their  
united force amounted to about six thousand, of whom  
two thousand were Burmas, the rest Kacharis and Asamese.  
Being undisturbed in their position, they pushed their  
works on the north bank of the Surma to within a thousand  
yards of a British post, at Bhadrapur, where Captain  
Johnstone was stationed with a wing of the 14th, one  
company of the 23rd, and a small party of the Rungpore  
Militia. This audacity was not suffered to pass with im-  
punity; and on the 13th of February, Captain Johnstone  
attacked and carried the stockades at the point of the  
bayonet. The Asamese division retreated to their original  
position, at the foot of the Bharteka Pass; the Manipur,  
to a strong entrenchment at Dudhpatli. The former were  
followed by Lieut.-Colonel Bowen, in command of the  
Sylhet frontier, and were driven in disorder into Asam:  
the latter were then attacked but with a different result.  
The Burma stockade was situated on the north bank of the



Surma, the rear resting on hills covered with thickets, and a deep ditch was dug on either flank, the exterior bank of which was defended by strong bamboo spikes. The Burmas permitted the troops to advance unmolested to the edge of the ditch, but while they were there detained by the bamboo fence, poured upon them a well-maintained fire of matchlocks and musquets, by which one officer, Lieut. Armstrong, 10th Native Infantry, was killed, four others were wounded, and a hundred and fifty Sipahis were killed and wounded. The attack was relinquished, and the force was withdrawn to Jatrapur, where Lieut.-Colonel Innes arrived on the 27th of February, with an additional regiment, the 28th, and assumed the command. The Burmas, satisfied with the laurels they had won, abandoned the stockade at Dudhpatli, and returned to Manipur. Kacharwas, therefore, freed from their presence; but the events of this partial struggle had been more creditable to their prowess, than that of their opponents. The British force was, in fact, too weak to contend with the superior numbers and the confidence of the invaders.

When the Prince of Tharawadi, the brother of the King of Ava, was assured that the Burma soldiers would be unable to face the British in the field, he replied "We are skilled in making trenches and stockades, which the English do not understand;" and he was satisfied that the national mode of fighting would be more than a match for European discipline. He was not altogether mistaken: and the singular quickness and dexterity with which the Burmas constructed entrenchments and stockades, although unavailing against the steady intrepidity of British troops and the resources of military science, materially retarded the operations of the war, and occasioned serious embarrassment and loss. To such an extent did this practice prevail, that a hoe or spade was as essential a part of the equipment of a Burma soldier, as his musquet and sabre, and each man, as the line advanced, dug a hole in the ground deep enough to give him shelter, and from which he fired in fancied security. This manœuvre stood him in little stead against the resolute forward movement of the British troops; and he was speedily unearthed before he was allowed an opportunity of doing mischief. It was different with the stockades. These were generally square



BOOK III. of oblong enclosures, varying in area according to the force  
CHAP. I. which held them, and were sometimes of very spacious  
1824. extent. The defences also varied according to the means  
at hand, and the time allowed for their construction ; and  
sometimes consisted of solid beams of teak timber pre-  
viously prepared, or sometimes of green bamboos and  
young trees cut down from the forest, which was every-  
where at hand. They were planted close together in the  
ground, and bound together at the top by transverse  
beams, leaving embrasures and loop-holes through which  
the defenders might fire on the assailants without being  
exposed. The height varied from ten or twelve to seven-  
teen and twenty feet ; and platforms were fixed in the  
interior, or the earth was thrown up into an embankment,  
from which the garrison might overtop the paling, and on  
which gingals or guns of small calibre, carrying a ball of  
six or twelve ounces, might be planted. Occasionally, an  
outer and an inner ditch added to the defences, and out-  
works of minor stockades, or abattis of the trunks of trees  
and bamboo spikes, enhanced the difficulty of access to  
the main body of the structure. The nature of the  
materials, especially when consisting of green timber or  
trees recently lopped, enabled them to resist the effects of  
a cannonade better than more solid substances, although  
the balls did pass between them, and sometimes tear them  
asunder. Shells and rockets were the most effective  
means of annoyance : but they were not used at first to  
an adequate extent, and reliance was principally placed on  
the physical strength and resolute daring of the soldier,  
who, with or without the aid of ladders, was expected to  
force an entrance. The European seldom disappointed  
this expectation : the Sipahi, unsupported, never realised  
it ; and the former was, on more than one occasion, re-  
pulsed with very serious loss of life. Once within the  
palisade, the stockade was carried, for the Burma garrison  
then thought only of flight ; in effecting which, through  
the one or two gateways left in the enclosure, they  
generally suffered severely. Their courage also some-  
times failed them before waiting for an assault, especially  
as the war was prolonged, and the repeated destruction of  
their entrenchments diminished their confidence in their  
efficacy. Stockades which could not have been forced



without difficulty were found abandoned, and their inade- BOOK III.  
quacy to arrest the march of a European army, was CHAP. I.  
recognised by those to whom they had originally afforded  
assurance of security. 1824.

While actual hostilities were thus commenced in the north, indications of their near occurrence were manifested in the south. The Raja of Arakan was ordered to expel the English at any cost from Shahpuri; and the most renowned of the Burma generals, Maha Bandoola, was sent to take the command of the forces assembled in the province. A body of troops was assembled at Mangdoo, from whence commissioners, who had been deputed from Ava, proceeded to take formal possession of the disputed island, which had been abandoned for a time by the British, on account of the unhealthiness of the post. The Burma Commissioners also contrived, under pretext of negotiation, to seize the person of the commander of a pilot schooner which had been stationed off Shahpuri, who somewhat incautiously trusted himself among the Burmas. No personal injury was inflicted; and, after a detention of some weeks, he was set at liberty, with such of his crew as had attended him on shore; his apprehension being intended to compel the removal of his vessel. The spirit of these measures, and the certain knowledge that hostile armies were preparing to assail various parts of the frontier, left the Governor-General no alternative: war was inevitable: and, agreeably to the usage of civilised nations, the grounds on which it was declared by the British Government were made known in a proclamation addressed to the different states and powers of India.<sup>1</sup> Its promulgation was followed by a letter from the Viceroy of Pegu, replying to the declaration addressed to the Court of Ava, in the previous November, repeating the claim to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix No. 1. For the following narrative of the occurrences of the war, the principal authorities are the official despatches, and other public papers, collected and published under the authority of the Government of Bengal by the author.—Documents illustrative of the Burmese War. Calcutta, 1827. For the operations in Ava, we have also the relations of different officers who were present, and employed in stations which gave them the means of obtaining accurate information; namely—Two Years in Ava, by Lieutenant Trant, of the Quarter-Master General's Department.—Narrative of the Burmese War, by Major Snodgrass, Military Secretary to the Commander of the Expedition; and Memoir of the three Campaigns in Ava, by Lieutenant Havelock, Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General. For the operations in other quarters, we have incidental notices in Crawford's Mission to Ava, and in Lieutenant Pemberton's Memoir of the Frontier, and various papers in the Monthly Asiatic Journal.