



BOOK III. Chittagong and Dacca, asserting an indefeasible right to
CHAP. I. Shahpuri, and enjoining the Governor-General to state his
1824. case by petition to Maha Bandoola, who was vested with
full powers to decide the dispute.

As soon as it was determined to have recourse to hostile measures, the attention of the government of India was directed to the consideration of the most efficacious mode of carrying on the war. The extended line of frontier to the east had afforded to the armies of Ava practicable routes for crossing the confines; and the same openings, it was to be inferred, were available for penetrating into the Burma dominions. Nothing of them was known, however, beyond their general direction through difficult and unhealthy tracts, thinly peopled and partially cultivated, and destitute of all the supplies and facilities which were indispensable for the march and subsistence of disciplined armies. A horde of barbarians, unencumbered with baggage, lightly equipped, carrying with them the coarse and scanty provisions which sufficed for their sustenance, familiar with the country, and inured to the climate, might make their way over a long succession of forests and hills and swamps; but a force moving with all the appurtenances of modern warfare, could only hope to effect a passage along the rivers, and through the thickets of Asam, over the miry and forest-covered hills of Kachar, and across the wide estuaries of Arakan, by an immense expenditure of time and treasure, and by an equal prodigality of both animal and human life. A more ready access to the Burma dominions was presented by the Irawadi river flowing past the capital, and falling into the sea a few miles only below the chief maritime city of the empire, Rangoon. The occupation of this emporium would, it was urged, be of itself a main blow against the resources of the enemy, whilst it offered to an invading army abundance of cattle for carriage and food, and ample means of equipping a flotilla sufficient to convey the troops up the river, even to the capital. An expedition arriving at Rangoon shortly before the setting in of the south-west monsoon would, it was affirmed, enjoy favourable opportunities for such a navigation, as there would be a sufficient depth of water for boats of heavy burthen; and strong breezes from the south-west, which would carry the boats upwards against the stream. Such was



the practice pursued by boats employed in the internal traffic of Ava; and, under such circumstances, a British force might be conveyed to Amarapura, a distance of five hundred miles, in the course of a month or five weeks.¹ These considerations, founded upon information of an authentic character, induced the government of Bengal to limit their military movements on the frontier, to the expulsion of the Burmas from the territories they had overrun in Asam and Kachar, to remain on the defensive in the direction of Chittagong, and employ the conjoint resources of the Presidencies of Bengal and Madras, in an invasion of Ava, by the line of the Irawadi.²

BOOK III.

CHAP. I.

1824.

The repugnance of the native troops of Bengal to embark on board ship, rendered it impossible to employ their services to any adequate extent: and the main force despatched from that Presidency consisted of Europeans, being formed of His Majesty's 13th and 38th Regiments and two Companies of Artillery, with one Regiment of Native Infantry, the 40th, forming the marine battalion. The same objection did not prevail at Madras; and the native regiments there vied with each other, in an honourable competition, to be selected for foreign service. Their emulation was seconded and encouraged by the activity of

¹ These views were in part founded upon statements in Symes's Embassy, as:—"In the months of June, July, and August, the navigation of the Irawadi would be impracticable, were it not counteracted by the strength of the south-west monsoon: assisted by this wind, and cautiously keeping within the eddies of the banks, the Burmans use their sails, and frequently make a more expeditious passage at this than at any other season." p. 55. The Government of Bengal was chiefly influenced by the opinions of Captain Canning, which his repeated missions to Rangoon entitled to consideration. He strongly asserted the practicability of the river navigation, as well as the certainty of procuring supplies. That his information proved fallacious, was in a great measure owing to the precautionary measures of the Burmas; for the counteraction of which no preparation had been made.

² The plan was adopted by Lord Amherst and his council, in the absence of the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Paget, who was in the Upper Provinces; but it had his concurrence. On the 24th Nov. 1823, the Adjutant-General thus writes to the Government: "The Commander-in-Chief can hardly persuade himself, that if we place our frontier in even a tolerable state of defence, any very serious attempt will be made by the Burmas to pass it; but should he be mistaken in this opinion, he is inclined to hope that our military operations on the eastern frontier will be confined to their expulsion from our territories, and to the re-establishment of those states along our line of frontier which have been overrun and conquered by the Burmese. Any military attempt beyond this, upon the internal dominions of the King of Ava, he is inclined to deprecate; as instead of armies, fortresses, and cities, he is led to believe we should find nothing but jungle, pestilence and famine. It appears to the Commander-in-Chief, that the only effectual mode of punishing the insolence of this power, is, by maritime means; and the question then arises, how troops are to be created for the purpose of attacking the vulnerable parts of his coast."—Documents, Burmese War, 21.



HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA.

BOOK III. the local government, under the direction of Sir Thomas
CHAP. I. Munro; and a formidable force, both European and
1824. Native, was assembled at Madras, in the course of February, consisting of two King's Regiments, the 41st and 89th, the Madras European Regiment, and seven Native Regiments, with detachments of Pioneers and Artillery. The Bengal and Madras divisions, comprising collectively above eleven thousand men, of whom one-half were Europeans, were placed under the chief command of Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell: the Madras force was commanded by Colonel Macbean, and the Bengal by Colonel M'Creagh: all three officers had served with distinction in the Spanish campaign, under the Duke of Wellington. The transports were convoyed by His Majesty's sloops of war, the *Larne* and *Sophia*, with several of the Company's cruisers: a flotilla of twenty gun-brigs, and as many war-boats, each carrying a piece of heavy ordnance, accompanied the expedition; and the *Diana*, a small steam-vessel, first presented to the barbarous races on the east of the Bay of Bengal, the mysterious working of a navigable power making head against winds and waves, without sails or oars, and impelled by an unseen and incomprehensible agency, which the superstition of the natives ascribed to something more than human art. Captain Canning was appointed to accompany the force as Political Agent and Joint Commissioner with the Commander-in-chief.

The Bengal expedition, and the first division of the Madras force, met at the end of April, at the appointed place of rendezvous, the spacious and picturesque harbour of Port Cornwallis, situated in the largest of the Andaman islands, a little to the south of the mouth of the Irawadi. The fleet was here joined by the *Liffey* frigate, with Commodore Grant on board, who, as chief naval officer in the Indian seas, took the command. On the 5th of May, the fleet resumed its progress, and arrived on the 9th off the Rangoon river. On the following day, the ships crossed the bar, and working up the stream with the flood-tide, anchored opposite to Rangoon on the morning of the 11th. No opposition was experienced on the passage. No preparations for defence had been made. No attack in this quarter had been anticipated; and the appearance of the hostile squadron filled the Burmas with equal astonishment and alarm.



The Irawadi, after a course of about nine hundred miles from its source on the southern face of the mountains forming the south-eastern boundary of Asam, divides, like the Ganges, as it approaches the sea, into a number of anastomosing branches, forming an intricate net-work of channels of varying breadth and depth, and constituting a delta, of which the Bassein river, or branch, may be regarded as the western limit, and the Rangoon river, communicating with the river of Pegu, as the eastern boundary. The town of Rangoon stands near the apex of a fork, between two branches of the Irawadi, one running for a short distance to the west, before it turns off to the north, the other to the east. The former is considered to be more especially the river of Rangoon, which is here about eight hundred yards wide. The other, which is smaller, is the river of Syriam, a city of Pegu, formerly a place of commercial activity, and the site of a Portuguese factory: Rangoon had risen to prosperity upon its decline. Opposite to Rangoon, on the right bank of the river, was situated Dalla, a town of some extent. Rangoon itself stood upon the left, or northern bank. Its defences were contemptible. A quadrangular stockade of teak timbers, about twelve feet high, enclosed the whole of the town, protected on one face by the river, and on the other three sides by a shallow creek leading from the river, and expanding at the north-western angle, into a morass, which was crossed by a bridge. Each face of the stockade was provided with gates; and, exteriorly to the river-gate, was a landing place or wharf, on which the principal battery of twelve guns of different calibres was mounted. As soon as the Liffey, leading the fleet, had cast anchor off the wharf, the Burmas opened a fire, which a few shots from the frigate effectually silenced, dismounting the whole of the guns, and putting the gunners to flight. The troops were immediately disembarked: their landing was unopposed, and they took possession of Rangoon without seeing an enemy. A message had been received from the Rewoon or Governor, demanding to know what the English wanted, and threatening to put to death such Europeans as were in his hands, unless the firing ceased. It was brought by an American missionary; but before the messenger could return, the Rewoon with his subordinates had disappeared,

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BOOK III. carrying along with him his European and American
CHAP. I. captives, individuals who had settled at Rangoon for
1824. religious or commercial objects.¹ They were kept in confinement, and repeatedly menaced with instant death ; but in the alarm and hurry which prevailed, were finally left behind, and were found and set at liberty by their countrymen. They constituted the sole population of Rangoon as the general panic and the rigorous measures of the authorities had completely cleared the town of its native inhabitants.

As soon as intelligence was received at Rangoon of the appearance of the British vessels off the mouth of the river, the Burma functionaries, aware of their inability to attempt resistance, adopted at once the policy most fitting in their condition, and admirably calculated to baffle, if not ultimately to foil, the objects of the invasion. The whole population of Rangoon were commanded to abandon their homes, and seek refuge in the adjacent forests. The command was strictly enforced ; but it was obeyed without reluctance. The people had little to lose in abandoning their bamboo huts ; and they entertained an excessive dread of the ferocity of Europeans. They felt also implicit confidence in the irresistible power of their Government, and looked forward to the speedy expulsion of the intruders, and their triumphant return to their habitations. That they were influenced by such feelings and that their expatriation was not wholly compulsory, was evident from the prolongation of their absence, and the tardiness and hesitation with which they re-peopled the place when it was in the occupation of the British, and when there was no native authority on the spot to punish them for submission to an enemy. The British were thus the masters of a deserted town ; and all the advantages expected from a productive country, and numerous population, abundance of supplies, and means of ascending the river, were wholly deficient. The hopelessness of an advance into the interior was at once apparent ; and it was obvious, that, in the approaching rainy season, when the country would become impassable, the operations of the campaign must be limited to the immediate

¹ Lieutenant Havelock specifies them as eight British traders and pilots, two missionaries, and an Armenian and a Greek.



DETENTION AT RANGOON.

vicinity of Rangoon. It was discovered, in short, that a serious error had been committed; and that, however judicious might be the plan of attacking the empire of Ava by the sea, the time had been ill-chosen, and the scheme of operations injudiciously devised. The exposure of so large a body of troops to the tropical rains in incommodious and imperfectly covered boats, through a navigation of five hundred miles, with both banks of the river in the possession of the enemy, could only have ended in the disorganisation and destruction of the force, even if such a mode of attempting an offensive movement had been possible. Its practicability under any circumstances might well be doubted; but as events had turned out, there was no room for uncertainty. As neither boats nor boatmen were to be procured, an advance by water was impracticable, and in the like want of land carriage, as well as in the inundated state of the country, the army was incapable of undertaking any protracted march by land. It was evident, therefore, that all that could be done, was to place the troops under cover until the ensuing cold season, and to collect with the least possible delay, the provisions and supplies, of which Rangoon was totally destitute, and which were only to be obtained from the distant settlements of Calcutta and Madras.

The stockade surrounding Rangoon, however inadequate as a defence against European artillery, was a sufficient protection against any attacks of the Burmas; and the head-quarters and general staff, with the stores and ammunition, were therefore located in the most commodious and secure of the dwellings, which were mostly constructed of mats and timber. At a distance of about two miles to the north of Rangoon, rose the imposing temple of Schwe-da-gon, the Golden Pagoda, a Buddhist shrine of great size, and highly reputed sanctity, constructed on the same plan as the Buddhist temples in other parts of India, but of more than ordinary dimensions and splendour. That part of it, which was in a more especial degree the sacred portion of the edifice, being supposed to enshrine various precious reliques of the Buddhist saints,¹ was a gradually

¹ Underneath this mass are said to be deposited relics of the four last Buddhas, the staff of Krakuchhanda, the water-pot of Gunaguna, the bathing-robe of Kasyapa, and eight hairs from the head of Gautama, or Sakyasinha.—Translation of the Inscription on the Great Bell at Shwe-da-gon, by the Rev. Mr. Hough.—*Asiatic Researches*, xvi. 270.



BOOK III. diminishing cone rising from an octagonal base to the
CHAP. I. height of above 300 feet, and terminating in a spire sur-
1824. mounted by a Tee or umbrella of open iron-work, from
which sprang a slender shaft, with a gilded pennant. The
building was solid and of brick-work, but coated through-
out with gilding, and decorated with ornamented mould-
ings and miniature multiples of itself. It stood upon the
summit of an artificial mound, about thirty feet high,¹
divided into two quadrangular terraces, supported by
walls, and ascended on either front by stone steps. The
upper terrace was nine hundred feet long by six hundred
and eighty-five broad; and both the terraces and the sides
of the steps were covered with a multitude of small struc-
tures, chapels and shrines and cells of the priests, and
sheds for pilgrims, and grotesque figures, and ornamental
columns, and large brass bells: all, except the latter,
made of wood, elaborately carved, and richly painted or
gilt. The priests had departed with their flocks, and the
site of Shwe-da-gon formed an important military out-
work, in which His Majesty's 69th Regiment and the
Madras Artillery were posted. Two roads leading from
the northern gateways connected Rangoon with the
Pagoda: the sides of the roads were lined by a number
of small temples and houses, the residences of Pungis or
Buddhist priests, affording convenient cantonments for
the troops, as they were deserted by their owners. Ac-
cordingly, along the most northerly of the two which
ran over the summit of a line of low elevations, quarters
were found for the Bengal division, their left resting upon
the great Pagoda, their right upon Rangoon. Upon the
more southern road, which was a uniform level, were
ranged the cantonments of the Madras brigade, facing
towards the river; and, consequently, having their right
supported by the Pagoda, their left by the town. In front
of both lines, extended interminable thickets, interrupted
occasionally by swamps, which in the rains were swollen

¹ This is the height given by Colonel Symes. There are some singular discrepancies in this elevation: Captain Snodgrass stating it to be 75 feet above the road; and Lieutenant Trant, 200 above the river; and the lowest number of the steps, according to Mr. Hough, is 80, which cannot give much less than 70 feet: these may, perhaps, be reconcilable. Lieutenant Havelock differs from the rest also as to the height of the central building, which he reduces to 130 feet; but this must be a typographical error, as every other authority makes it above 300.



into deep and unfordable ponds and lakes. A dense forest coming close to the foot of the elevation on which it stood, intervened between the Great Pagoda and the river. Low elevations, covered with thickets and intermixed with morasses, extended round it in other directions. The whole face of the country was most unpropitious to the evolutions of disciplined troops. While these dispositions were in progress, detachments were sent out to explore the neighbourhood, discover and beat up the enemy's posts, and endeavour to bring back the fugitive population. Parties were also sent in the men-of-war's boats up the river, to reconnoitre any defences the Burmas might have constructed, and destroy any armed boats or fire-rafts they might meet with. In one of these latter excursions, the boats of the Liffey, with the Grenadier Company of the 38th, came upon an unfinished stockade at the village of Kemendine, about sixty miles from Rangoon, which they attacked and stormed, notwithstanding it was defended by a greatly superior number of the enemy who behaved with spirit; and success was not attained without loss. A stronger detachment commanded by General Macbean marched on the same day into the interior, and fell in with the Governor of Rangoon. The Burmas fled into the thickets; and no traces of population could be detected. Although no enemy appeared in force, yet indications were manifest of his accumulating numbers and increasing audacity; and it was evident, that the approaching season would not be passed in inactivity, although it would not admit of offensive movements of importance. The rains set in with great violence in the middle of May; and the vicinity of Rangoon was quickly overspread by extensive inundations.

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CHAPTER II.

Operations against the Burmas,—in Asam,—in Kachar,—at Chittagong.—Detachment posted at Ramoo.—Burmas cross the Frontier in great Force.—Inferiority of the British,—attacked by the Enemy.—Misconduct of the Irregulars,—Retreat and Flight of the Sipahis.—Great



Alarm at Chittagong and Calcutta. — Inactivity of the Burmas. — Subsidence of the Panic. — Negrais and Cheduba reduced. — The British Lines at Rangoon harassed by the Burmas, — Detachment sent against them, — unfavourable State of the Country. — Burma Force encountered. — Stockades stormed. — Attack on Stockade at Kemendine. — Repulsed. — Burma Messengers, — Object to gain Time. — Troops sent against Kemendine, — Entrenchment on the Way carried by Storm, — Great Slaughter. — Kemendine evacuated by the Enemy, — occupied permanently by the British. — Sickness of the Troops, — Unhealthiness of the Season, — Deficiency and Unwholesomeness of Food, — Mortality. — Re-appearance of the Burmas, — Defeat of Part of their Force, — Affair at Dalla. — Stockades at the Confluence of the Rangoon and Lyne Rivers, — attacked by the Flotilla with Troops on board, and stormed. — Land Column attack Stockades at Kamrut, — seven Stockades, two principal stormed, the Rest abandoned. — Burma Commander among the killed. — Country inundated, — Expeditions by Water, — against Syriam, — Dalla, — and by Sea against Tavoy, — Mergui Ye, — and Martaban. — Attempt to recover the Shwe-dagon by the "Invulnerables," — War-boats captured. — Stockades on the River Bank destroyed. — Madras Troops sent against Kyklu, — repulsed with Loss. — A second Detachment sent against the Place, — found abandoned. — Entrenchments at Thantabain on the Lyne River, taken and destroyed. — Force enfeebled by Sickness. — Approach of Maha Bandoola with Sixty Thousand Men. — British Force surrounded. — Burmas suffered to advance: their Left attacked and defeated, — repulsed at Kemendine, — their Right attacked and routed. — Grand Army dispersed, — Rally at Kokien. — Attempts to burn Rangoon, — baffled. — Entrenchments at Kokien attacked and stormed. — Successes of the Flotilla. — Bandoola retreats to Donabew, — altered Objects of the Campaign on the Part of the Burmas.



lected in Asam, under Brigadier-General Mc Morine,¹ moved from Goalpara, on the 13th of March; and advanced to Gohati, where the Burmas had thrown up stockades, but abandoned them on the approach of the force. The people of the country, who had been treated by the Burmas with the most unsparing cruelty, cordially welcomed the arrival of their deliverers; but their unwarlike character and miserable condition, rendered their co-operation of little value; and the great difficulty of procuring supplies, as well as the labour of traversing a country devoid of roads, overrun with jungle, and broken up by swamps and water-courses, compelled the Brigadier to suspend his advance, sending forward a detachment of five companies of the 46th Native Infantry, under Lieutenant-Colonel Richards, to meet the Commissioner, who had arrived at Noagong, from Sylhet, across the Jyntia hills. Reinforced by Mr. Scott's escort, Colonel Richards moved on to Kaliabar, and compelled the Burmas to continue their retreat in an easterly direction to Maura Mukh. There the Governor of Asam with a force of not more than a thousand men had stockaded himself; but Colonel Richards, who, in consequence of the death of Brigadier Mc Morine, had succeeded to the chief command, was unable for want of supplies to follow up his advantage. He returned, therefore, to Gohati; and as the rainy season set in, no further movement of any importance, on either side, was practicable. The expulsion of the Burmas from Upper Asam was consequently deferred.

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CHAP. II.
1824.

The Burmas, as we have seen, had withdrawn from Kachar in the beginning of the year; but it was only to return in greater force. In the beginning of June, they repeated their incursions from Manipur, eight thousand strong, and they gave out that they formed only the van of a more formidable armament. They advanced to the heights of Talain, Dudhpatli, and Jatrapur, and stockaded themselves in their former positions. The weak division of native troops, which had been left at Sylhet, under Lieut.-Colonel Innes, advanced on the 27th June against the Burma stockade, at Talain, on the bank of the Barak

¹ It consisted of seven companies of the 46th N. I., and six of the Rungpore Local Corps, the Dinapore Local battalion, a wing of the Champaran Local Corps, three brigades of six pounders, and a small body of Irregular Horse, besides a gun-boat flotilla on the Brahmaputra.



BOOK III. river. An attempt was made to dislodge the enemy ; but
CHAP. II. their superior numbers and the strength of the position
1824. rendered it unsuccessful. The division retreated to Bha-
drapur ; and as the increasing inclemency of the weather
suspended all operations, the Burmas retained their
occupation of Kachar.

The troops assembled for the protection of the south-eastern frontier were concentrated at Chittagong, under Colonel Shapland,¹ and a detachment was thrown forward to Rameo, under the command of Captain Noton, consisting of five Companies of the 45th Native Infantry, with two guns, and details from the Mug levy and Chittagong Provincial battalion. Neither the numerical strength of the detachment, nor the quality of the troops, fitted it for so exposed a position, of the extreme peril of which, the authorities in Bengal seem to have been ill-informed. In like manner, as the Government of Bengal had directed its principal blow against what it deemed the most vulnerable point of the Burma dominions, the Court of Ava had, with great judgment, directed its main effort against the most feebly defended and easily accessible part of the British frontier. A force of more than ten thousand men was ordered to move through Arakan upon Chittagong, and the command was given to Maha Bandoola. The assemblage of this large body under a general who was known to have been a strenuous advocate of the war, and bore a high reputation for courage and enterprise, was well known both in Chittagong and Calcutta : but the strength of the force and the character of the leader were strangely undervalued ; and it was believed, that the weak division at Chittagong was sufficient not only for the defence of the province, but even for the subjugation of Arakan. This misappreciation of the danger which impended over the frontier, could only be explained by a mistaken estimate of the inefficiency of the Burma equipment, and the pre-occupation of the Government by the expedition to Rangoon. Whatever was the cause, the inadequacy of the defensive arrangements in this quarter was signally punished ; and the consequences might have been still

¹ The Chittagong division was formed of the left wing of the 27th N.I., five Companies of the 40th, and the 1st battalion of the 45th, a Provincial battalion, and a Mug levy, a corps of natives of Arakan recently enrolled.



DEFEAT AT RAMOO.

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more disastrous, if the Burma general had continued his movements with the spirit with which they were commenced.

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CHAP. II.

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The army of Arakan made its appearance on the Chit-tagong frontier in the beginning of May, nearly simultaneously with the arrival of the British expedition at Rangoon. The Burmas crossed the Naf, and advanced to Retnapalang, within fourteen miles of Ramoo, where the force, actually mustering eight thousand men, was concentrated under the four Rajas of Arakan, Ramri, Sadoway, and Cheduba, acting under the orders of Maha Bandoola, who remained with a reserve at Arakan. On the 13th of May, they advanced to a small river flowing past Ramoo, but were prevented from crossing it by the fire of the two six-pounders of Captain Noton's detachment. On the 15th of May, they effected the passage. To oppose them, Captain Noton had not above three hundred and fifty regular infantry, even after being joined on the 11th by Captain Trueman with three weak Companies of the 40th: he had also with him two hundred and fifty provincials, and four hundred of the Mug levy; but their evident unsteadiness, as the hour of encounter approached, shewed that no reliance could be placed upon any except the regular troops. His force was drawn up by Captain Noton behind a bank surrounding the encampment; his right was flanked by the river. About sixty paces in front was a tank, at which a strong picquet was stationed. At another tank to the rear, upon his left, were posted the Provincials, and the Mug levy: the regular Sipahis with the six-pounders formed his front. The Burmas took possession of a tank to the left of the encampment, surrounded as usual by a high bank which screened them in some degree from the fire of the detachment; and from which they pushed forward in their usual manner, sheltering themselves by burrowing in the ground, until on the morning of the 17th, they were within twelve paces of the picquets, with whom they exchanged a smart fire. The Provincials stationed at the tank on the left could no longer be kept to their post: they fled, and were followed by the levy. The tank was immediately occupied by the Burmas, who had spread into the rear; and the position was untenable. A retreat was ordered, and for a short time



BOOK III. conducted with some degree of regularity, until the party
CHAP. II. arrived at the bank of a small rivulet, when the men,
1824. harassed by the superior numbers and increasing boldness
of the enemy, threw away their arms, and plunged in a
disorderly crowd into the water. In the retreat, Captains
Noton, Trueman, and Pringle, Lieutenant Grigg, Ensign
Bennett, and Assistant-Surgeon Maysmore, were killed.
Lieutenants Scott, Campbell, and Codrington escaped, the
two former being wounded. Many of the Sipahis made
their way in scattered parties to Chittagong, and the whole
number missing were about two hundred and fifty, some
of whom were sent prisoners to Ava, where they confirmed
the Court in their opinion of the irresistible prowess of
their soldiers, and in the confidence of their ultimate
triumph. Nor were these notions wholly unshared by
the inhabitants of the British provinces ; and Chittagong
and Dacca were filled with consternation. The panic
spread even to Calcutta ; and however absurd the sup-
position, it was thought to be not impossible that a Burma
force might penetrate through the Sunderbans to the
metropolis of British India. Weak as was the detachment
at Chittagong, a rapid movement of the Burmas might
have compelled its retreat ; and Chittagong, and perhaps
Dacca, might have been taken and destroyed ; but the
opportunity was lost in idle exultation. Before operations
were resumed, the setting-in of the rains rendered the
roads impassable ; and the reinforcements, which might
have prevented the disaster at Ramoo, reached Chittagong
early in June, and placed it out of danger.¹ The occupa-
tion of Rangoon had now also become a source of anxiety
to the Court of Ava ; and, although they affected to look
upon it as a trap into which the invading armament had
fallen, they found it necessary to recall their general and
the choicest of their troops from Arakan to punish the
intruders. The Arakan force consequently retired from
Chittagong ; and the alarm which the late defeat had
inspired yielded to a sense of security. The disaster at
Ramoo reflected no dishonour on the British officers and
regular troops. The misconduct and flight of the irregu-
lars rendered the conflict hopeless against numbers, whose

¹ His Majesty's 44th, from Calcutta, and 15th, N.I., from Dacca ; two Regi-
ments of N.I. also arrived from Madras, besides cruizers and gun-boats.



superiority required the same steady valour which the regular troops displayed in every individual of the entire division, to have been successfully withstood.

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While the expedition was pursuing its course to the Irawadi, detachments had been sent to reduce Negrais and Cheduba, under the respective commands of Major Wahab and Brigadier McCreagh. They rejoined the army at Rangoon early in June, having effected their objects. At the former, a stockade was stormed, and carried without loss, and some guns were captured: but no advantage appeared likely to result from the permanent possession of the island, which was found to be of inconsiderable extent and covered with impenetrable thicket. It was abandoned. Cheduba proved to be of more importance, and some resistance was experienced from a strong stockade which defended the chief town: it was, however, carried by storm. Of the Burma garrison, a great number, including their commander, were killed, and the rest crossed over to the main land. The Raja was subsequently taken, and sent a prisoner to Fort William. Colonel McCreagh then proceeded to Rangoon with His Majesty's 13th, which had formed part of the detachment, leaving the 20th Native Infantry under Lieutenant-Colonel Hampton, and His Majesty's sloop *Slaney*, to retain the occupation of the island, the inhabitants of which readily submitted to British rule.

The divisions that rejoined the main body found, that, notwithstanding the unpropitious state of the weather, neither the British commander nor the Burma leaders intended to suffer it to be a season of inactivity. The latter had been joined by considerable reinforcements, and had commenced constructing stockades in every direction, so as to cut off the communication with the interior; while by night and day they kept up a harassing succession of attacks upon the picquets, sending parties through the jungle, who approached unperceived close to the sentinels, and killed any stragglers whom they found off their guard. Fire-rafts were also frequently sent down the stream, against whose mischievous effects it required the unceasing vigilance and activity of the seamen to defend the numerous vessels off Rangoon. In order to check these annoyances, and feel the strength of the Burmas, a recon-



BOOK III. neissance was made by General Campbell on the 26th
CHAP. II. May, with four companies of Europeans, two of the 13th,
1824. and two of the 38th, amounting to four hundred men, and
two hundred and fifty Sipahis, and a gun and howitzer,
from the Bengal Artillery. The path led at times through
a close forest, and was obstructed, not only by natural
impediments, but by trees, felled and strewn across it ; and
where it opened, it came upon fields of rice and plains
knee-deep in water. Rain fell heavily, and the fatigue of
dragging the guns became so great, that the cattle and
men were completely exhausted when they had marched
but about five miles from Rangoon. They were conse-
quently sent back under the escort of the native soldiers,
and General Campbell resumed his route with his handful
of Europeans alone. At the distance of about eight miles,
a body of the enemy, estimated at seven thousand strong
was discovered, having their front defended by two in-
trenchments, breast high, with an interior ditch. Dis-
posing one company so as to keep the main force in check,
the other assailed the stockades ; and the men forced their
way in by tearing down the stakes, or clambering over
them, with the assistance of each other. The Burmas
stood their ground for some short time, and a conflict
hand to hand ensued, in which the superior hardihood and
vigour of the European prevailed over barbarian courage ;
and the bayonet in the hands of the latter, proved a
weapon, against which the heavy sword and short spear of
the former were unavailing. A frightful carnage took
place ; the survivors fled into the forest, and the stockades
were set on fire. The troops were then drawn up against
the main body, but no disposition was shewn by them to
revenge the capture of the stockades, and the division
slowly and unmolested returned to its cantonments. The
British loss was comparatively inconsiderable.¹ On the
following morning, Brigadier Macbean, with two regiments
marched towards the post occupied by the Burmas ; but
no traces of them were observable. Another stockade

¹ One officer, Lieutenant Howard of the 13th, was killed, and two Lieutenants, Michel and O'Halloran, of the 38th, were severely wounded ; the former died a few days afterwards. Nine rank and file were killed, and twenty-five wounded. Of the Burmas, above three hundred dead bodies were found in the stockades and adjacent fields.—Despatch, Sir A. Campbell, 1st June. Documents, 55 A.



was discovered, and stormed on the morning of the 30th, not far from the Great Pagoda.

BOOK III.
CHAP. II.

1824.

The capture of their stockades on the 28th and 30th June, had no effect in discouraging the Burmas from their plan of surrounding the British troops in Rangoon, and either destroying them, or compelling them to surrender. Preparations on a large scale were begun, and works of great extent and strength were constructed at Kemendine, against which it was determined to make a joint attack from the shore and from the river. Three columns marched against the position on the northern and eastern faces, while two of the Company's cruizers, and other armed vessels, having three hundred of His Majesty's 41st on board, ascended the Irawadi. General Campbell was on board one of the cruizers. One column of Madras troops under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, soon came into action, but was unable to penetrate through the enemy's outer entrenchments. The second column, the Madras European Regiment, under Colonel Hodgson, although received by a heavy fire, might have succeeded in the attempt, but an unseasonable discharge of grape from some of the armed vessels crossing its line of advance, inflicted more damage than had been suffered from the enemy, and deterred the troops from prosecuting this assault. The third column failed to force its way through the thickets to any point where it could take part in the engagement. The troops were ordered to retreat, and the vessels fell down the river, yielding to the Burmas the honour of the day, and inspiring them to persevere in the contest.

Previously to this failure, two several missions had arrived, which professed to have come from the newly appointed Rewoon, or Governor of Rangoon, and from the Viceroy of Pegu, to demand the cause of attack upon Rangoon, and to propose a conference at Donabew with the British commissioners. This was declined. The messengers of the Viceroy were apprised that the transmission of despatches to Ava would alone meet the wishes of the British officers; and they promised to return with the Viceroy's concurrence: but as they never again made their appearance, it was probable, that their purpose had been to observe the condition of the British force, and to obtain a suspension of hostilities. In this latter respect



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BOOK III. they were disappointed, as arrangements were immediately adopted for repeating the attack on Kemendine.

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Accordingly, on the 10th July, a strong force was sent against that post and the stockades which had been erected between it and the Great Pagoda. It consisted of three thousand men, with four 18-pounders and four howitzers, under the Commander-in-Chief; and two divisions of armed vessels were employed to assail the river face. On the march, a strong stockade was found about two miles from the town, of which the front faced a plain covered with water, and the other three-sides were imbedded in the surrounding forest. A strong Burma division occupied the post. After battering the open face for an hour, a gap was effected, by which an opening was made for the storming column of the Madras European Regiment, and His Majesty's 41st. At the same time, a second column of four companies of the 13th and 38th Regiments, clambered over the palisades in the rear of the entrenchment. The Burmas were thus hemmed in between the two parties, and fell in great numbers before the resistless bayonet. At this period of the war, the Burmas, expecting no quarter, fought with desperation when unable to escape, and requited the forbearance of the soldiers by treacherous attempts against their lives, which proved most fatal to themselves. The slaughter was in all cases disproportionate to the numbers engaged, and to the loss of the assailants.

The force then moved on to the attack of the Kemendine stockade; but by the time it had cleared a way through the thickets, and taken up its position opposite to the works, with the left resting on the river, and the right extending inland, night had set in, and the troops had to bivouac in the forest. Batteries were also erected without loss of time, and notwithstanding heavy falls of rain, were ready to open at daybreak. A practicable breach was soon made; but the total silence that prevailed in the entrenchment, rendered it probable, that the Burmas had not awaited the assault. This was the case: they had abandoned their defence during the night, carrying with them their dead and wounded. As the post of Kemendine formed a convenient station for commanding the passage of the river above Rangoon, and could be supported from Shwe-



da-gon hill, it was determined to occupy it permanently; and a hundred Europeans, with a Regiment of Madras Native Infantry were left as its garrison. The Burmas drew back from their proximity to the British lines, and concentrated their forces at Donabew, above fifty miles from Rangoon.

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CHAP. II.

1824.

A short interval of inaction followed the capture of the stockades at Kemendine, and nothing was felt of the enemy until the close of the month. The interruption of active operation on the part of the invaders was unavoidable; partly from the state of the country, but in a still greater degree from the first appearance of that sickness which continued to prevail during the remainder of the rainy season, and was attended with the most extensive mortality. It began with an epidemic fever, which attacked individuals of all ranks, including the Commander-in-chief, and which, although rarely fatal, left the system so much enfeebled as to be peculiarly liable to maladies incidental to exposure to the heavy rains and scorching sun of a tropical climate. To aggravate these causes, the quantity and quality of the supplies provided for the troops proved defective. Relying upon the reported facility of obtaining cattle and vegetable food at Rangoon, it had not been thought necessary to embark any extraordinary stores on board the transports from Calcutta; and the Madras troops landed with a still more limited stock. As soon as the deficiency was ascertained, arrangements were made to remedy it: but the arrival of provisions from Bengal demanded time, and in the interval the troops were dependent for sustenance upon salt meat, much of which was in a state of putrescence, and biscuit originally of an inferior description, and further deteriorated by the influence of the climate in engendering rapid decomposition. The want of sufficient and wholesome food aggravated the evil effects of the super-abundant moisture of the atmosphere, and the evolution of deleterious vapours from the decaying vegetable matter of the surrounding thickets; and the hospitals speedily became crowded with sick, beyond the means at command of remedial treatment. Fever and dysentery were the prevailing maladies, and were ascribable to local causes; but scurvy and hospital gangrene by which they were followed, were



BOOK III, mainly attributable to the want of proper and salutary
CHAP. II. nourishment. Such were the consequences of these combined causes, that towards the end of the monsoon, 1824. scarcely three thousand men were fit for active duty. Their spirit remained, however, unimpaired, and with the intermission of the wet weather, and the arrival of more adequate supplies, the troops, although their numbers were greatly thinned by disease and death, were restored in some degree to health and efficiency.¹

Disease was not, however, the only enemy which the British had to encounter; and after a few weeks of repose, their exertions in the field were again attended with a renewal of their triumphs, as well as by an aggravation of their sufferings. Towards the end of June, the Burmas were observed crossing in considerable numbers from Dalla, on the right bank of the river, to the left above Kemedine; and on the 1st of July, the forests in front of the Bengal lines were occupied by the enemy, while three columns, each estimated at a thousand strong moved to the right, as if intending to interpose between the lines and the town. They were encountered by a company of the 7th, and two of the 22nd Madras Infantry, with a couple of guns, under the personal direction of General Campbell, and were soon driven from their forward position and dispersed. No further attack was made; but the Burmas were evidently pursuing their former plan of hemming in the British, and compelling them to retire, either by force of arms, or by the impossibility of availing themselves of the resources of the country. The check received on the 1st, had no effect on their movements; and on the following, a body marched upon Dalla. They were repulsed, but with the loss of the officer commanding, Captain Isaacs of the Madras Army. As the town which had been deserted by the inhabitants, served only

¹ "During June, July, August, September, and October, the average monthly admissions into the hospital from the Artillery, were sixty-five Europeans and sixty-two Natives, being nearly one-third of the former, and one-fourth of the latter; and large as was this number, I am assured it was considerably less in proportion than that which was exhibited by any (at least) European regiment, in either division of the army. Of the Europeans, those who died were a fraction less than one in twelve; of the Natives, something less than one in twenty. On the setting in of the cold season, the general sickness began to decline, and from January to July, 1825, was comparatively moderate."—Dr. Waddell on the Diseases among the British troops at Rangoon.—Trans. Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta, 3, 249.



to give cover to the enemy's approaches, it was destroyed. BOOK III.

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The appointment of a new commander, the Thamba Wungyi, in place of the Thekia Wungyi, who had failed to fulfil the injunction of the Court to annihilate the invaders, gave an additional impulse to the operations of the Burmas, and rendered them so daring and troublesome, that Sir A. Campbell determined to drive the enemy to a greater distance. They had taken up a very strong position, about seven miles above Rangoon, at a place where another branch of the Irawadi, the Lyne, joins the Rangoon river; and had there constructed three large stockades, which completely commanded the stream. The first of these, stood on the right bank of the Rangoon branch, about eight hundred yards below the junction of the rivers; the second, on the left bank, at a similar distance; and the third, on the point of land at the confluence, which, from its having a small pagoda on it, was denominated Pagoda point. At Kamarut, a mile and a half above this, on the left bank of the Lyne, but at some distance from the bank, was a fourth stockade of still greater extent, connected with the others by subsidiary entrenchments. The works were defended by a force of at least ten thousand men. On the morning of the 8th of July, a flotilla consisting of two of the Company's cruisers, and several smaller vessels, under the command of Lieutenant Frazer, of His Majesty's ship *Larne*, having on board General Campbell, with two hundred and sixty men of the 41st regiment, a company of the Madras European Regiment, and detachments of the 3rd, 10th, and 17th Madras Infantry, ascended the river. The fire from the vessels soon overpowered that of the stockades; and having effected a breach in the entrenchments on the right hand, the troops disembarked, and carried the work by storm. The second stockade, was in like manner taken by escalade; and the third was abandoned.

While these operations were proceeding against the works on the river, a column composed of detachments from the different European regiments, the 13th, 38th, and 89th, the Madras European Regiment, and the 7th Native Infantry, with artillery, under the command of Brigadier General Macbean, marched from the Shwe-da-



BOOK III. gon upon Kamarut. The thickness of the forest com-
CHAP. II. pelled the return of the field-ordnance, with the exception
1824. of some small howitzers; and the march was further
impeded by heavy rain. The column, however, advanced
to the edge of a plain, where they could distinguish a
series of seven different stockades giving mutual support
to each other, and occupied by a numerous body of troops,
who manifested entire confidence in the impregnability of
their defences. After reconnoitring the works, General
Macbean ordered the nearest of the stockades to be at-
tacked; and it was immediately escaladed and taken by
the 13th and 38th. As soon as it was cleared, the troops
were again formed and led against a second stockade,
which they carried in an equally intrepid manner. In this
attack, Major Sale, of His Majesty's 13th, was engaged in
single conflict with a Burma of rank, who fell beneath his
sword. The slaughter was fearful; and those who fled
from it were too much alarmed to think of rallying. The
panic was communicated to their companions; and the
remaining stockades were carried with little resistance.
An attempt of the fugitives to assemble on the skirts of
the forest was frustrated by a few discharges of musquetry;
and the whole of the entrenchments at Kamarut were in
the possession of the British. Eight hundred of the
enemy were found dead in the stockades, and numbers of
the wounded perished in the thickets into which they had
been conveyed; among the latter, was Thamba Wungyi,
the Burma commander. The capture of so many stockades,
and the deliberate valour with which they were stormed
and carried, almost exclusively by the bayonet, first struck
terror into the Burmas; and they learned no longer to
think themselves secure within the entrenchments. A
strong impressaion was also made upon the Court: and
they now began, though reluctantly, to admit some doubt
of their triumph, unless the genius of Maha Bandoola
should redeem the reputation of their arms.

The inundation of the country, and the sickly state of
the troops, precluded the possibility of offensive operations
on an extensive scale. Sir A. Campbell confined his
movements, therefore, to the reduction of the districts
which were accessible by water. Syriam, the ancient
capital of Pegu, near the junction of the Pegu river with



that of Rangoon, was attacked and taken on the 4th of August, by a party of His Majesty's 41st, the Madras European Regiment, and 12th Madras N. I., and a division of seamen from the flotilla. The Burmas had fortified themselves in the old Portuguese factory, but had not courage to face an escalade. After a brisk fire, they fled as the troops advanced to the assault. A detachment was also sent to the opposite district of Dalla, where a stockade was in like manner deserted. Although harassing to the troops, these excursions had the effect of relieving the inhabitants from the military conscription to which they were subject: and some of them now ventured to return to Rangoon. The people of Pegu also began to cherish hopes of being enabled to shake off the yoke which they had borne for the last sixty years, and again becoming an independent kingdom under some descendant of their former kings. All encouragement to this effect was, however, abstained from: as it was thought that it might entail upon the Company the obligation of upholding a government incompetent to defend itself, and involve the British in an embarrassing connection, unlikely to be attended with advantage. It was, therefore, resolved not to countenance any insurrectional movements amongst the Talains, or people of Pegu: and this cautious policy made them backward in identifying their interests with those of the invaders.

The naval resources which were available induced Sir A. Campbell to extend his operations against the maritime possessions of Ava; and at the end of August, a division, consisting of His Majesty's 89th and the 7th Madras Infantry under Lieut.-Colonel Miles, with several gun-brigs and cruisers, were sent against the coast of Tenasserim, a narrow but productive strip of land, extending four hundred miles along the bay of Bengal towards the south, in which direction it was bounded by the Malay states dependent on Siam, while, on the east, a range of mountains separated it from that kingdom. The chief towns, Tavoy and Mergui, speedily fell into the hands of the British. At the former, a party friendly to them, headed by the second in authority, seized upon the Governor, and delivered up the town. At Mergui, some resistance was experienced: but after the fire from the defences was



BOOK III. silenced by the cruizers, the troops landed and stormed
CHAP. II. the principal stockade. The people, a mixed race of
Burmas and Peguers, at first fled; but shortly afterwards
1824. returned, and submitted readily to their new masters. At
the same time, the reduction of the whole of the Tena-
serim provinces was completed, by the capture of
Martaban, a considerable town on the Sanlue river; and
the subjugation of the district of Ye, by a detachment of
His Majesty's 41st, and the 3rd N. I., under Lieut.-Colonel
Goodwin. Some resistance was encountered at Martaban,
where the Burmas were in considerable strength, and of
which the defences were formidable: the stockades were,
however, carried by the combined exertions of the naval
and land forces, without any heavy loss. Ye tendered a
voluntary surrender; the Burma troops abandoning the
neighbourhood, and withdrawing to the vicinity of Ran-
goon. Thither, also, the Europeans returned, while the
Native troops were left to garrison the conquered
provinces. In the northern districts, as in the southern,
the people, principally Talains or natives of Pegu, after a
short interval of alarm and flight, returned to their habi-
tations; and the resources of Tenasserim became fully
disposable. They were found to be of importance;
furnishing supplies of vegetables and of cattle to Rangoon
and affording a comparatively healthy station, to which
the convalescents of the army might be sent with ad-
vantage.

On their part the Burmas were not idle; and although
equally prevented from moving in large bodies by the
state of the country, they hovered round the British out-
posts on either bank of the river, and kept up a series of
petty but harassing manœuvres. A body of picked men,
supposed to be protected by charms and amulets against
wounds, attempted a night assault upon the post at the
Great Pagoda, but were easily repulsed, and taught, by the
loss of twenty of their number, the fallacy of their fancied
invulnerability. On the Dalla side of the river, a small
post, which had been established to hold the Burmas in
check, and was supported by several gun-brigs anchored
in an adjacent inlet of the main river, was attacked on the
night of the 5th September, while a number of war-boats
attempted to cut off the gun-brigs. Both attacks were



repulsed ; and the boats of the Larne, which had been manned and rowed up the creek, at the first alarm, put the Burma flotilla to flight, and captured five of their number. On the Rangoon river, above Pagoda Point, the Burmas had erected stockades, and were busy in preparing fire-rafts, when they were disturbed by a detachment of European and native troops, under Brigadier-General Fraser, who had succeeded General Macbean, in the command of the Madras division, and by a naval force under Captain Chads of His Majesty's ship *Arachne*, which had joined the squadron. The combined force ascended the river about twenty miles, and discovered and destroyed several stockades, the Burmas in which, after exchanging their fire with the flotilla, fled as soon as the troops were landed for the assault, evincing the impression which had been made upon their fears by the destruction which had hitherto befallen their entrenchments. A circumstance occurred, however, at this time, which might have been expected to have re-animated their confidence in their system of making war.

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CHAP. II.
1824.

In the beginning of October, information having been received that the Burmas had strengthened themselves at Kyklu, about fourteen miles from Rangoon, Sir A. Campbell determined to dislodge them ; and, in order to gratify the Madras troops, who felt aggrieved that they had not hitherto been allowed to lead the way to victory, but had been employed only to second and support the Europeans, the enterprise was entrusted to them alone ; a brigade of the 3rd and 34th Native Infantry, about eight hundred strong, with two howitzers, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, being sent against the enemy. He marched early on the 4th of October, and, after some delay and fatigue occasioned by the state of the country, arrived towards evening at an entrenchment occupied by the Burmas. An attempt to carry it by escalade was defeated, with the loss of Lieutenant Campbell of the Pioneers, who was mortally wounded. The howitzers were then brought up, and after a few discharges, the work was taken in flank, and the Burmas retreated into the thickets adjacent. From information obtained from the prisoners, it appeared that the Burmas were in greater force at Kyklu than had been anticipated, and Lieutenant-Colonel Smith



BOOK III. applied for a reinforcement of a detachment of European
CHAP. II. troops. The Commander-in-Chief refused to allow any
1824. European soldiers to be sent,¹ but despatched three hundred of the Madras Infantry, with two more field-pieces, and with these Colonel Smith marched upon Kyklu on the morning of the 7th. On his approach to the position, a succession of breastworks arrested his advance. They were stormed, but with unavoidable delay; and it was five in the afternoon before the force arrived at the principal stockade, resting on an eminence on its right, the summit of which was covered by a fortified Pagoda. A column of attack under Major Wahab was directed to advance against the stockade in front, while another under Captain Williamson diverged to the right, to assault it in flank. A third column formed a reserve, while a party of the 28th N. I. was directed to carry the Pagoda. The Burmas permitted the column of attack to approach within sixty yards without firing a shot, when they poured upon them a fire of grape and musquetry, so steadily maintained, that the Sipahis quailed beneath it. Major Wahab and the leading officers and men were killed or wounded, and the remainder, losing their self-command, lay down to screen themselves from the fire. The party sent against the Pagoda had been unable to make any impression upon the post, and had fallen back, pursued by the Burmas. The column that was to have taken the works in flank had not made its appearance. Hopeless of retrieving the day, Colonel Smith ordered a retreat, which began with some degree of order, but soon degenerated into a flight; and the men rushed in a confused mass down the hill, closely followed by the Burmas. The pursuit was checked by the approach of Captain Williamson's division, which, unable to penetrate through the thicket, had retraced its steps, and debouched in time to oppose a steady front to the enemy. The column of reserve also succeeded in rallying the fugitives; and the whole retreated in good order to Todaghee, where they arrived at

¹ See Lieutenant Havelock's account of this transaction: he justly observes: "the catastrophe at Kaikloo is to be attributed to a false partition of force." Native soldiers are most effective when associated with Europeans: the absence of the latter on this occasion evidently originated in feelings incompatible with the real interests and reputation of the army.—*Memoir on the Campaigns of Ava*, p. 124.



eleven at night. Two officers¹ and twenty men were killed, and six officers and sixty men were wounded in this affair. A report was forwarded to Ava, that a great victory had been won ; and the fact was confirmed by the transmission of the arms and accoutrements of the fallen soldiers. Great exultation was manifested, and commendations and rewards conferred upon the Tsada Woon, who commanded the Burma force.

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1821.

Whatever may have been the inducement to incur the hazard of discomfiture at Kyklu, its actual occurrence was too obviously mischievous, and was too intolerable to the spirit of the army to be passed over without retribution. Immediate measures were adopted to remedy the evil consequences of the disaster, and a force of four hundred and twenty Europeans, and three hundred and fifty Native Infantry, with three field-pieces, was detached against Kyklu, on the afternoon of the 17th, under Brigadier M'Creagh. On approaching the position, the division found the mangled bodies of those who fell on the 7th, suspended to the trees by the road-side, after having suffered every mutilation that barbarian cruelty could devise. The sight served to rouse the indignation of the troops, and they pressed on eagerly to revenge their companions in arms. Their vengeance was disappointed : the enemy had not waited for the certain retaliation, but had fallen back to Koghahi, where he was reported to have received reinforcements, and thrown up entrenchments. Brigadier M'Creagh continued his march to the spot indicated, but found no other vestige of the Burmas than an unfinished and abandoned stockade. Having destroyed the works at the different stations, the division returned to Rangoon without the loss of a man.

Nor was the expedition to Kyklu the only action at this period, notwithstanding the physical obstacles to military operation and the crippled condition of the force, which evinced the spirit of both the naval and military services. The brother of the King of Ava, the Prince of Tharawadi, who had been placed at the head of the Burma army, had continued in position with his main body at Donabew, but

¹ Captain Allen and Lieutenant Bond of the 34th Madras N.I. Lieutenant Trant, who was with the columns, and has given a very distinct account of the action, makes the killed amount to forty.—Two Years in Ava, p. 97.



BOOK III. had detached a part of his force under the Kye Wungyi, a
CHAP. II. principal member of the ministry¹, to Thantabain on the
1824. Lyne river. Here he was attacked, on the 8th of October,
by Major Evans, with three hundred of His Majesty's
38th, one hundred of the Madras Light Infantry, with a
detachment of Artillery and a division of gun-boats, the
flotilla being commanded by Captain Chads. The party
proceeded by water. On the 7th they arrived opposite to
Thantabain, which was defended by three breast-works of
timber, and fourteen war-boats, each carrying a gun. After
exchanging a brisk fire, the troops and sailors landed, and
stormed the works. On the following morning they at-
tacked and captured the principal stockade, which was of
great strength, being two hundred yards long by one
hundred and eighty broad, and constructed of solid tim-
bers fifteen feet high, having an interior platform eight
feet from the ground, on which a number of small iron and
wooden guns were arranged, while a battery of seven
pieces of ordnance of larger calibre were placed in bat-
tery along the lower part of the work, through openings
pierced for the muzzles of the guns. The Burmas, after
one or two ineffective discharges, fled from the approach
of the storming party, and the entrenchment was cap-
tured without loss. In it was found a temporary building
for the accommodation of the Kye Wungyi, perforated in
many places by the balls from the flotilla; a circumstance
which, no doubt, contributed to the rapid evacuation of
the stockade. The works were destroyed, and the force
returned to Rangoon.

The rains which had intermitted in October, returned
with great violence in the beginning of November: and as

¹ Although the Burma form of Government is that of an absolute despotism, the King is aided in his administration by two councils, a public and a privy one. The first consists of four members, entitled Wungyees, properly written Wun-kri. "Wun" meaning literally a burthen; but in this case denoting an office of importance. The members of this council are considered competent to the discharge of all responsible duties, whether civil or military: 'so are their deputies, or Wun-doks, of whom also there are four. The council is completed by eight or ten Saradhaugyis, or Secretaries. The Privy Council consists also of four members, styled Atwen-wuns, or inside officers, being the private advisers of the King. They have their Secretaries, or Thandaauthans. The Governor of a province is styled Myo-wun, and his deputy Re-wun, while the head of a township is the Myo-thugyi. All these, and all other public officers, are expected to discharge military, as well as judicial, and fiscal duties; and the whole male adult population of the country is liable to conscription.—Crawford's Embassy to Ava, p. 395.



the transports with fresh stores had not yet reached Rangoon, the continuance of the same causes, an unhealthy climate and unwholesome food, admitted of no material alleviation of the sickness. Scarcely thirteen hundred Europeans, many of whom were enfeebled by recent disease, were fit for duty; and the native regiments were similarly reduced, both in numbers and vigour. The sufferings of the troops were, however, forgotten, in the prospect of new triumphs; and the approach of danger stimulated them to exertions of which they could scarcely have been deemed capable. A final effort to drive the invaders into the sea, or bring them in chains to be subjected to ignominy and torture at Ava, was now to be made; and Maha Bandoola, having added to the troops recalled from Arakan all the reinforcements which the utmost exertions of the Government could levy, was marching at the head of a reputed host of sixty thousand men, to annihilate the British army at Rangoon. He arrived in the vicinity of the British lines in the beginning of December, and was allowed to take up the position he selected without interruption, it being the policy of the Commander-in-Chief to encourage his presumption, and thus bring the enemy completely within reach before striking a decisive blow. The array of the Burma army, which was supported on the right by a numerous flotilla of war-boats and fire-rafts on the river, extended from the Irawadi, opposite to Dalla, in a semi-circular direction, past Kemendine and the Great Pagoda, facing the Bengal lines, and rested its left on the bank of the Puzendoon creek, half a mile from Rangoon on the east. The front was covered in most places by thick jungle, but, where open, was protected by breast-works and stockades, which were constructed with singular rapidity and skill. Of the Burma force, half were armed with musquets, the rest with swords and spears. They had a number of ginjals, or small cannon, carrying balls of from six to twelve ounces, and some pieces of heavier though not very serviceable artillery. A body of five hundred Casay horse, mounted on the small but sturdy ponies of the country, formed their cavalry. The key of the British position was the Great Pagoda, which was armed with twenty pieces of artillery, and occupied by three hundred men of His Majesty's 38th. The 28th

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BOOK III. Madras Infantry was stationed at its base. Along the heights to the town, were posted His Majesty's 13th, with some guns on their right. The remainder of the force was arranged communicating with Rangoon, which was further defended by the shipping. A post in front of the lines, originally a Buddhist convent, was occupied by two hundred of the Madras European Infantry and some Sipahis, with guns; and the stockade of Kemendine, which covered the left rear of the position, was held by the 26th Madras Native Infantry and a few of the Madras European Regiment, under Major Yates. His Majesty's sloop *Sophia*, under Captain Ryves, and the Satellite gun-brig, anchored off Kemendine, materially added to its defensive strength.

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Between the 1st and 5th of December, the Burmas displayed incessant activity, in advancing their works close to the British lines, and in repeated attacks upon the stockade of Kemendine, shewing that they accurately estimated its importance. Their efforts were repulsed with distinguished gallantry. They kept up a constant fire also upon the vessels in the river from the opposite bank, but did little execution. Nor were their fire-rafts, although launched with persevering diligence, productive of much detriment. No serious attempt was made to check their progress; although, on the 1st, a division under Major Sale, attacked the left of the enemy, drove them into the forest, and destroyed their entrenchments,¹ and on the following morning, two sorties were made from the Pagoda, which in like manner compelled the Burmas to conceal themselves in the adjoining jungle. As soon as the troops retired, they returned to their position, and resumed their works; and, as by the fifth of the month, they had begun to be troublesome along the front, Sir A. Campbell conceived that the period had arrived for a general attack upon them. A party of gun-boats was accordingly sent up the Puzendoon creek, to take the Burmas in flank, while two columns, one eleven hundred strong under Major Sale, and the other of six hundred under Major Walker, moved upon their left. Both columns forced their way through the Burma entrenchments, and

¹ In this action Captain O'Shea was killed, and five officers of the 13th were wounded.



BURMA ARMY AT RANGOON.

broke and scattered their defenders, until the whole of the left of the enemy was driven from the field, with the loss of their guns, and military and working stores. Their loss was also severe, while that of the British was inconsiderable; except in the death of Major Walker, who was shot at the head of his column.

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CHAP. II.
1824.

Although dislodged from his position on the left, Maha Bandoola did not think it necessary to quit the field, but concentrating his troops on the centre and the right, commanded them to push forward their trenches in the direction of the Great Pagoda, until they were within a hundred yards of the mound. To chase them finally from this vicinity, Sir A. Campbell ordered an attack to be made upon them, on the 7th December, in four columns, commanded severally by Lieuts.-Colonels Mallet, Brodie, and Parlby, and Captain Wilson; Major Sale, with his division acting upon the enemy's left and rear. The advance of the columns was preceded by a heavy cannonade. They were received with a brisk fire from the enemy; but as soon as they neared the trenches, the Burmas fled: and the grand army, which was to have freed Ava from the presence of the invaders, was completely routed and disorganised. The division which had been previously engaged in fruitless attacks upon Kemendine, made a final attempt on the morning after the action at the Pagoda, but was again repulsed, and desisted from the enterprise. A body which continued to occupy the stockades at Dalla, was driven from them on the 10th, by a party of His Majesty's 89th, and some Native troops: and the neighbourhood of Rangoon was considered to be no longer infested by a hostile force. With that perseverance, however, which so remarkably characterised the Burma commanders, and the elasticity with which they recovered from defeat, it soon appeared that they were still in the neighbourhood: and it was ascertained that they had thrown up strong defences at Kokien, about four miles north of the Great Pagoda, where twenty thousand men had rallied, under the command of Maha Thilwa. It was necessary to dislodge them, and compel their removal to a greater distance, not only in completion of the military movements which had hitherto been so successful, but in order to protect Rangoon from the more insidious projects



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BOOK III. of the Burmas, to effect its destruction. On the night of
CHAP. II. the 14th, an extensive conflagration, attributed to incendiaries, broke out at once in different places, by which the
1824. mat huts were speedily consumed ; and a great part of the town was laid in ashes. The flames were fortunately suppressed by the exertions of the garrison and the sailors of the squadron, without having done any injury to the public stores ; and without any attempts of the enemy to take advantage of the temporary confusion and embarrassment which succeeded. Accordingly, on the 15th December, two columns, the right formed of detachments of His Majesty's 13th, and the 17th and 24th N. I. with one field-piece, and sixty men of the Governor-General's Body-Guard, the whole six hundred strong, under Brigadier Cotton, who had recently taken the command of the Bengal division ; and the left, eight hundred strong, composed of detachments of the 38th, 41st, and 89th King's Regiments, and the Madras European Regiment, and of the 9th, 12th, 28th, and 30th, N. I., with five guns, and the rest of the Body-Guard, commanded by General Campbell himself, marched upon the works at Kokien. The latter was intended to assail them in front ; while the former was to make a detour and attack them in the rear. The works were strong and extensive, consisting of two large stockades on either flank, connected by six circular entrenchments, the whole being three miles in circumference. The left column, on reaching the point of attack, was divided into two portions, which were respectively directed against the two principal stockades. The right column, on arriving in the rear of the left stockade, was for some time exposed to a heavy fire, by which the 13th which led the division, and which had signalled itself in every action in which the regiment had been engaged, suffered severely. Three officers were killed,¹ and Major Sale and several others were wounded ; but nothing could arrest the progress of the troops, and the entrenchment was carried at the point of the bayonet. At the same time, the 38th had escalated the front face of the stockade, and the Burmas, hemmed in by the assail-

¹ Lieutenants Darby, Petre, and Jones, two Serjeants, and seven rank and file, were killed : eight officers, including Majors Sale and Dennie, two Serjeants, and forty privates, were wounded.



CAPTURE OF STOCKADE OF KOKIEN.

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ants, fell in great numbers. The other principal stockade was captured with equal celerity by the 89th, and in twenty minutes the whole of the works were in possession of the British.¹ The Burmas sustained a severe loss on this occasion, as the fugitives were intercepted by the Governor-General's Body-Guard, a detachment of which had recently joined from Bengal, and proved of great service in the ensuing operations. Equal success attended the British arms on the river; and the boats of the men-of-war, and gun-boats towed by the Diana steamer, captured and destroyed a number of war-boats and fire-rafts. The dispersion of the grand army was thus completed; and the Burma General, retiring to Donabew, employed himself with the most laudable resolution and activity in rallying and re-organising his army, and placing it under the shelter of entrenchments of more than ordinary strength and extent. The character of the war was in fact changed. The Burmas no longer ventured upon offensive operations, but confined their objects to the defence of the line of the river, and the exclusion of the British from any communication with the upper provinces. The ill-success with which this policy was attended, we shall hereafter describe; and in the mean time, advert to the events which had occurred in other quarters.

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CHAPTER III.

Assam. — Advance of the British Troops. — Retreat of the Burmas to the Fort of Rangpur. — Dissensions of the Garrison, — capitulate. — Burmas evacuate Assam, — renew the Invasion in Concert with the Sing-fos, — their Stockades taken, and they finally retire. — Kachar. — Army assembled for the Invasion of Ava from Kachar. — Nature of the Country, — Impossibility of Advance, — Project abandoned, — the Burmas driven from Manipur by Gambhir Sing. — Arakan. — Large Army and Flotilla assembled for the Invasion of Ava by Way of Arakan, — difficulty of pro-

¹ Besides the loss suffered by the 13th, the casualties of the day, were, six killed, and eighty-five wounded; of the latter, Lieutenant O'Hanton, Bengal Artillery, died of his wounds.



curing Carriage,—Discontent of Bengal Troops.—Insurrection of the Regiments at Barrackpore,—ordered on Service,—Grievances un-redressed.—47th in a state of Mutiny,—Measures for its Suppression.—Troops collected at Barrackpore.—Mutineers fired upon,—Some killed, others taken and sentenced to Death, or to Imprisonment,—Rome executed,—the Rest pardoned.—Difficult Progress of the Army in Arakan.—Road along the Coast crossed by wide Estuaries.—Passage of the Naf,—of the Myoo.—Army collected on the Koladyne.—Repulse of the Flotilla at Kiung-pala.—Advance of the Army towards Arakan,—opposed by the Enemy.—First attempt to cross the Hills unsuccessful,—the Burma Position turned,—Arakan occupied,—Burma Force evacuates the Province.—Sandoway and Ramre reduced.—Attempts to discover Passes over the Mountains to Ava unsuccessful.—Unhealthiness of Arakan,—extreme Sickness and Mortality of the Troops,—the Town abandoned.

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AS soon as the British troops in Asam found it necessary to fall back to Gohati, the Burmas returned to the stations whence they had been expelled, and renewed their work of spoliation in the adjacent districts. It was, therefore, determined to effect their final expulsion; and Lieut.-Colonel Richards, having been placed in command of a Native force, about three thousand strong, was instructed to perform the duty.¹ Although the state of the country delayed the movement of his entire division; yet, towards the end of October, two detachments were sent in advance by water, to check the predatory incursions of the enemy. Major Waters, with part of the Dinapore battalion, proceeded to Raha Chowki and Noagong; and Major Cooper, with a wing of the Champaran Light Infantry, to Kaliabar. The first division, on arriving at Raha Chowki, found the Burmas unprepared for an attack, and dispersed among the villages. In their flight many were killed and taken. They were followed to Noagong, where the Boora Raja, the Burma Governor of Asam was

¹ This division was formed of the 46th and 57th Regiments of Native Infantry, the Rungpore and Dinagapore Local Battalions, Champaran Light Infantry, details of artillery and a body of Irregular Horse, with a flotilla of gun-boats.



entrenched with thirteen hundred men. He did not await the arrival of the detachments, but retreated with so much precipitation as to render it impossible to overtake him. The division under Major Cooper, having on its route dispersed a body of the enemy, found Kaliabar abandoned. These advanced positions being secured, Colonel Richards moved the remainder of his force; but, as his march lay along the river, the stores and baggage were transported in boats that had to be tracked against the current, and his progress was, therefore, somewhat tedious. It was not until the 6th January, that the whole were concentrated at Maura Mukh, on the Brahmaputra, one hundred and twenty miles from Gohati, clearing the country, as they advanced, of several detached parties of the Burmas on their flanks, and compelling them to retire further to the east; at first to Jorhath, and then to Rangpur, the capital of Upper Asam, situated on the Dikho river, a feeder of the Brahmaputra. Colonel Richards arrived at Rangpur on the 29th, and having carried by escalade a strong stockade erected across the road, invested the south face of the fort, a square building of masonry, on the walls of which two hundred pieces of ordnance of various calibre were mounted, and the approach to which was defended by deep swamps and a ditch. Arrangements were made to batter the walls, and effect a breach, when proposals for surrender were received. The garrison consisted of Burmas and Asamese; the latter being the followers of the chiefs who had been opposed to the Raja, Chandra Kanta, and had called in the aid of the Burmas. The presence of danger had disposed many of them to desert their allies; and violent dissensions had for some time prevailed among them, in the course of which, the head of the party, the Boora Raja, had recently been murdered at Jorhath. Two of the surviving chiefs now in Rangpur, the Sham Phokan and Bagli Phokan, were desirous of making terms with the English; and they succeeded in persuading the opposing party to permit the despatch of an embassy to Lieut.-Colonel Richards, to learn the conditions which they might expect. As the season was advanced, and difficulties and delays in bringing up supplies might be anticipated, it was thought prudent to permit such of the garrison as continued hostile,

BOOK III.
CHAP. III.
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BOOK III. to withdraw into the Burma territory, on condition of
CHAP. III. their abstaining from any act of aggression on their
1825. retreat. Those, who were willing to submit, were allowed
to remain in Asam. The terms were accepted. Sham
Phokan with seven hundred followers surrendered. There
were about nine thousand of both sexes and all ages, in-
cluding two thousand fighting men, who marched towards
the frontier; but many fell off by the way, and established
themselves in Asam. The occupation of Rangpur and the
retreat of the Burmas successfully terminated the opera-
tions of the campaign, and rendered Asam a British pro-
vince. There still continued, however, a demand for
the exertions of the British officers to restrain the
lawless habits of the Sing-fos, and other barbarous
border tribes; who, taking advantage of the disorders
consequent on the Burma invasion, overran and laid
waste the adjacent districts, and carried off great num-
bers of the inhabitants as slaves. The determination
which was shewn to prevent and punish the outrages of
these tribes, induced them to make common cause with
the Burmas; and in May, a joint force of Burmas and
Sing-fos entrenched themselves at Dafa Gam and Bisa
Gam, villages on the Nao-dihing river. These were suc-
cessively attacked on the 9th and 11th June, by a detach-
ment of the 57th Native Infantry, under Lieutenants
Neufville and Ker. Little resistance was made at the
former. At the latter the Burmas drew up in front of
their stockades, as if with an intention of giving battle;
but a corresponding move being made by the Sipahis,
their courage failed, and they retired into their entrench-
ments. Being closely followed, they attempted no stand,
but evacuated the whole of the stockades, five in number,
as the troops advanced to the charge, without firing a shot.
On the following morning, the enemy was pursued to the
passes in the mountains, by a party under Ensign Boyle,
less with the expectation of overtaking them, than that
of rescuing the captives they were carrying into slavery.
The hope was not disappointed; and, although the enemy
were seen from the top of the first pass, making their way
across the second, at a distance which precluded the
chance of coming up with them, they had quickened their
advance only by abandoning much of their spoil and leav-



ing their prisoners behind. Many hundreds of Asamese were redeemed from certain bondage, and restored to their native villages. Arrangements were subsequently made with the barbarian tribes of Upper Asam, by which they were converted into dependents and allies, and detached from all connection with Ava.

The operations in Asam had been regulated by the principles originally laid down, and had been confined to the expulsion of the Burmas from the province. Adherence to a similar prudent policy in Kachar would have obviated much embarrassment and disappointment, and avoided an enormous and fruitless expense. When, however, the difficulties in which the expedition to Rangoon was involved were made known to the Government, and it appeared doubtful whether the British force under General Campbell would be able to penetrate into the interior of the country, the views originally entertained were departed from, and plans were suggested which received the earnest support of the Commander-in-Chief, for an invasion of Ava, by two considerable armaments, one of which was to penetrate from Kachar, through Manipur, into the valley of the Ningti river, falling into the Irawadi; the other from Chittagong through Arakan, and across the mountains into Ava, where it was to effect a junction with the army of Rangoon. The Burmas had shewn that such routes existed; and it was rather hastily concluded that they would be equally practicable to disciplined troops encumbered with heavy baggage, stores, and artillery. The consequences were such as might have been anticipated from so inaccurate an estimate of the difficulties to be overcome.

The force that was assembled on the Sylhet frontier for the Kachar campaign, in the cold weather of 1824-5, consisted of above seven thousand men, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Shuldhama.¹ No opposition was to be apprehended from the enemy, for the Burmas had abandoned all their posts in Kachar; and the exertions of the Court of Ava on the side of Rangoon, prevented the

¹ It was formed of six Regiments of N.I.: the 7th, 44th, and 45th, brigaded as the 3rd Brigade; and the 14th, 39th, and 52nd, as the 4th Brigade: two Companies of Artillery, four of Pioneers, the Sylhet Local Corps, a Corps of Cavalry, Blair's Irregular Horse, and a body of Kacharis and Manipuris, about five hundred strong, under Raja Gambhir Sing.



BOOK III. possibility of their reinforcing to any extent their parties
CHAP. III. in Manipur. The army had, however, much more formidable
1825. foes to contend with in the character of the country that was to be traversed, and very soon experienced the utter impossibility of triumphing over the physical obstacles opposed to its progress.

The first move of the Kachar force brought Colonel Shuldham, with the artillery and the 3rd Brigade to Dudhpatli, by a road which had been made with infinite labour by the Pioneers, from Bhadrapur to Banskandy. From the latter to Manipur, a distance of nearly ninety miles, the whole tract presented an uninterrupted succession of ascents and descents, abrupt hills stretching across the road from north to south, and separated at their bases by narrow streams, with precipitous banks, running in a deep miry bottom, and liable, like all mountain rivulets to a sudden and rapid rise after every shower. For the first thirty miles, the hills were clothed from their bases to their summits with thick forests; the spaces between the trees of which were filled up with an intricate net-work of intertwining reeds and brushwood, effectually screening the alluvial soil underneath from the rays of the sun, and converting it into a deep and plashy mire after every slight fall of rain. To aggravate these difficulties, the season proved unusually wet; and frequent and heavy rains commencing early in February, and continuing through the month with little intermission, soon evinced that all expectation of reaching Manipur across the hills and thickets of Kachar, must terminate in disappointment. The Pioneers, by extraordinary exertions, cleared about forty miles of footway, to the banks of the Jiri rivulet, but their labours were of little avail, as the road was impassable for artillery and loaded cattle. In the attempts that were made to move onward, and in the conveyance of supplies to the working parties in advance, hundreds of bullocks, and a great number of camels and elephants, died of fatigue, or were either inextricably plunged in the mud, or had their limbs dislocated in the efforts made for their extrication. After struggling against these natural obstacles in vain, through February and March, the impracticability of the project was recognised, and the prosecution of the design was abandoned. The



object was nevertheless accomplished ; but by much simpler and less costly means. The expelled Raja of Manipur, Gambhir Sing, accompanied by a British officer, Captain Pemberton, at the head of five hundred Manipuris and Kacharis, provided with arms and ammunition by the British Government, set out from Sylhet in the middle of May, and, after undergoing severe fatigue and privation, arrived on the confines of Manipur, on the 10th of June. The main body of the Burmas had quitted the valley ; and the detachments left in occupation, did not venture to oppose the Raja. Gambhir Sing, having cleared his country of the enemy, returned to Sylhet, to prepare for further aggressive enterprises when the season should permit.

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The armament directed against Arakan was on a scale still more extensive than that against Kachar, and it was confidently expected, that after wresting the province from the Burmas, it would be able to act effectively in concert with Sir Archibald Campbell, by joining him on his way towards the capital. A force of about eleven thousand men¹ was assembled at Chittagong towards the end of September, of which the command was taken by Brigadier-General Morrison, of his Majesty's service : a flotilla of sloops and gun-brigs was attached to it, under the orders of Commodore Hayes,² for the conveyance of the troops and supplies along the shore, and to co-operate with the force in reducing those portions of the coast, which are formed into small islands by the numerous channels, through which the river of Arakan flows into the Bay of Bengal. Impediments of a similar character with those which had presented themselves in Asam and Kachar, arising from the nature of the country, and the insufficiency of its resources, retarded the opening of the campaign ; and the year had closed before the troops were in a condition to move. The want of cattle for the con-

¹ It was formed of His Majesty's 44th and 54th Regiments, the 26th, 42nd, 49th and 62nd, Bengal N.I., and 2nd L.I. Battalion ; the 10th and 16th Regiments, Madras N.I., the Mug levy, a body of Local Horse, with details of Artillery and Pioneers.

² The flotilla comprised the Vestal, Bombay craizer, the Company's surveying ships, Research and Investigator, five gun brigs, with the ketch bomb-vessel, and Pluto, steam gun-vessel, four gun-pinnaces, and eighty gun-boats, each carrying a 12-pounder carronade, besides transports, and Mag and country boats. In addition to their crews, the vessels had on board a flotilla-marine, six hundred strong.



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BOOK III. conveyance of stores and baggage was one of the most serious
CHAP. III. obstacles of the march of the army, and the difficulty of
1825. procuring an adequate supply even in Bengal, was mainly
productive of a feeling of discontent among the native
troops, which, in one unfortunate instance, led to an unusual and fatal display of insubordination.

In the ordinary movements of the Bengal army, the Sipahis are expected to provide the means of conveyance for their own baggage. This is not in general very cumbersome, but it includes articles for individual use, such as culinary utensils, which the Hindu soldier cannot, consistently with distinctions of caste, share with his comrade, and which form an inconvenient addition to the burthen to be laid upon the bullock that he has hired,¹ especially in the lower provinces of Bengal, where the cattle are small and feeble, and wholly incapable of carrying heavy loads, or undergoing long-continued fatigue. Such as they were, however, they were not to be had; the demands of the Commissariat for the supplies to Chittagong and Rangoon, had nearly swept Bengal of its entire stock, and no means existed of procuring cattle for the wants of the native soldiers. Even for the few that were procurable, drivers were not to be engaged, as they shrunk from the perils and privations of a long and laborious march, and either kept aloof altogether, or, if engaged, almost immediately deserted. The objections of the Bengal Sipahis to go on board ship, precluded recourse to the most ready and available mode of conveyance to the coast; and as the Arakan force was composed in great part of native regiments from Bengal, it was consequently necessary that they should be marched by land to Chittagong as soon as the route was practicable. Three of the regiments which had been cantoned at Barrackpore, the 26th, 47th, and 62nd, were accordingly ordered to move in the course of October; but they received the orders with murmurs, and exhibited a strong reluctance to obey, complaining, not without justice, that they could not hire cattle for the carriage of such of their baggage as could not be

¹ The principal articles were thus specified before the Committee of Inquiry, a plate, a water-pot, a boiler and frying-pan, and a cup; these were all of brass, and weighed about 22lbs. To these were to be added, a light carpet, and a quilt. The Sipahi carried his linen, and various small articles, in his knapsack, and sixty rounds of ammunition.



DISCONTENT OF NATIVE TROOPS.

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dispensed with; and that they were required to pay an extravagant price for those few which might be purchased.

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1825.

There no doubt prevailed among the Sipahis a deep-seated dislike to the service on which they were about to be despatched. They had conceived an absurd dread of the Burmas, as magicians, who had the faculty of rendering themselves invulnerable; and the destruction of the detachment at Ramoo, of which they had heard vague and exaggerated reports, aggravated their superstitious fears. They entertained a better-grounded apprehension of the unhealthiness of the climate; and they were fully persuaded that it was intended to entice or force them to embark on board ship, as they believed it to be impossible to reach Arakan, except by sea. Various minor causes of dissatisfaction also prevailed, especially the inferiority of the pay of the Sipahis to that which was given to camp-followers, and to men of low caste, employed with the army, or in the flotilla, whose services it was difficult to procure, at this time, upon any terms; but a preference of whom, in a pecuniary respect, was felt by the native soldiery, to be unjust to their superior claims. These different motives of repugnance were brought to a crisis, by the real difficulty of procuring conveyance; and it would have been equitable, as well as politic, to have adopted liberal measures for the removal of this latter grievance, before the discontent had grown to an unmanageable height. Unfortunately, the chief military authorities, educated in the rigid discipline of the British army, exhibited no disposition to soothe the excited feelings of the native troops.¹ Imperfectly acquainted with the character of the Sipahi, or disdaining to humour his peculiarities, instant and unhesitating obedience was insisted

¹ The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Paget, has recorded his impression of the state of discipline in the Native Indian army, in the Evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons; and, no doubt, acted under this influence on various occasions during his command. He observes:—"It is impossible for me to conceal from the Committee, that there is a great spirit of insubordination in the army, at least that I had the opportunity of more particularly seeing, which is the Bengal army. A sort of spirit of independence prevails amongst the officers, which is totally inconsistent with our ideas of military discipline. I had abundant opportunities of seeing it myself, and had the proofs before me of that spirit; and I have reason to think, from what I have subsequently heard, that it is by no means subsiding."—Comm. House of Commons, Military Evidence. The latter part of this testimony applies to the officers, the first part to the army in general; but, notwithstanding the high character of the witness, its justice in regard to either may be disputed.



BOOK III. on. The probable consequences of a persevering disregard of the reasonable complaints of the troops were either overlooked or defied.

1825.

Upon a representation to head-quarters, towards the end of October, of the great difficulty experienced by the 47th Regiment, which was the first that was to march, in procuring conveyance, the corps was officially apprised that the Government could not provide them with cattle, and that they must purchase them for themselves. The communication was formally repeated on the 28th, by General Dalzell, commanding the station at Barrackpore, to the native officers of the regiment on parade, and from that moment the dissatisfaction was not to be appeased. It was in vain that an advance of money was offered to the men, or that their officers collected a partial supply of cattle at their own expense. They held private meetings in the lines, and bound themselves by oath not to march, unless their pay was augmented, and carriage supplied. It happened also, unfortunately, that the recent remodelling of the army had, in most instances, separated the European officers from the corps in which they had previously held command, and had placed over the men persons in whom they were not yet accustomed to confide, thus annihilating that salutary influence which a continuance of kindly intercourse most usually secures to the European officer over the native soldiery.¹ Scarcely any of the officers of the 47th Regiment had been attached to it for more than a few months; and they were consequently imperfectly acquainted with the proceedings of their men, and incompetent to contend with the spirit which had been engendered, whilst it was yet capable of being allayed. It had

¹ In the beginning of 1824, orders were sent to the several presidencies to make some alterations in the constitution of their respective armies: the principal of which was, the conversion of the two battalions, of which each regiment in Bengal had hitherto consisted, into as many regiments, giving a Colonel-commandant to each. The promotion consequent on this multiplication of Colonels, led necessarily to a fresh disposition of the whole army list; and in most cases officers were transferred from the battalions in which they had long served, to regiments in which they were strangers. Besides the loss of personal influence thus occasioned, a great moral injury was inflicted on the composition of the army. All the proud recollections of past triumphs were obliterated; the new regiment had no share in the honours of the old Pultun, or battalion, and felt no interest in maintaining its reputation. The evil was, no doubt, temporary; but it was at this moment in active operation.—The General Orders, breaking up the old organisation, are dated the 6th May, 1824.



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now burst forth with irrepressible violence, and extenuated, if it did not wholly justify, the extreme measures pursued for its extinction. On the first of November, the 47th Regiment was ordered to parade in marching order. Not more than one-third of the corps obeyed. The rest of the men assembled tumultuously in the adjacent lines, and threatened to fire upon their comrades if they stirred. To their officers, and to General Dalzell, who attempted to recall them to a sense of their duty, they opposed vociferation and vehemence and menacing gestures, which compelled them to withdraw, and leave the mutineers to their uncontrolled will. They committed no outrage, but continued during the following day and night, in the same state of excitement and stubborn determination not to quit their cantonments. During the day and ensuing night, arrangements were made for the forcible suppression of the mutiny. Two of His Majesty's Regiments, the Royals and 47th, with a detachment of Horse Artillery, and a troop of the Governor-General's Body-Guard, were assembled at Barrackpore; and early on the 2nd of November were drawn up perpendicularly to the Sipahi lines, the artillery being posted something in the rear. The 47th N. Regiment was formed in front of the lines; and on their left, but in rear of them, the 26th and 62nd, the other corps which were also under orders to march, were stationed. Above a hundred of the latter, and about twenty of the former, fell in with the 47th. The rest stood firm, although participating in the feelings which agitated the devoted regiment. The native officers of the 47th separated themselves from the men. The Commander-in-Chief, with his staff, was on the ground. During the night, a petition had been addressed to him by the mutineers, in which they declared, that they had been told they were to be embarked on board ship for Rangoon, and that, as they could not obey the order without loss of caste, they would not comply with it. They prayed, therefore, to be dismissed, and allowed every man to return to his home. They were informed, that no intention of sending them on board ship had been entertained; but that regard could not be paid to soldiers in a state of rebellion, and that they must lay down their arms without stipulating for conditions. Whether this reply was made

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BOOK III. intelligible to them, or in what manner it may have been
CHAP. III. received, there are no means of ascertaining. At day-
break, the regiment was paraded. Officers, to whom it
1825. was thought they might be disposed to listen, were sent to
the Sipahis, with orders either to agree to march imme-
diately or to ground their arms: but their commands and
remonstrances were repelled with an insane vehemence,
which, there was reason to fear, might have ended in the
perpetration of some atrocious crime. They were left,
therefore, to themselves; and they stood with ordered
arms in a state of stupid desperation, resolved not to
yield, but making no preparation to resist.¹ When it
appeared that their stubbornness was not to be overcome
by expostulation, a discharge from the artillery guns was
opened upon them. They instantly broke and fled. As
they crossed the parade, they were fired upon by the
Infantry, and charged by the Body-Guard, and many paid
with their lives the penalty of their disobedience. A
number made for the river, which skirts the plain of Bar-
rackpore to the north, and several perished in attempting
to cross it.² A number were made prisoners on the spot,
and others were apprehended by the country-people and
police. These were tried by native court-martials, and by
their sentence some of the ringleaders were hanged, and
others condemned to hard labour in irons.³ The number
of the 47th Regiment was effaced from the list of the
army, and the native officers were dismissed from the
service; as it was argued, that the mutiny could not have
been planned and executed without their knowledge, if
not with their participation. That these judgments were

¹ It appeared, upon the evidence, before the Court of Inquiry, appointed to investigate the causes of the mutiny, that of the many muskets which were left on the field, scarcely one was loaded, although the men had each forty rounds of ammunition; yet it was deliberately asserted in the House of Commons by the President of the Board of Control, if his speech is accurately reported, that when the Royals were advancing the mutineers fired upon them. The same authority has been made to say, that there was no ground of complaint as to any want of proper accommodation.—Debates on Mr. Munro's Motion for Papers, 22nd of March, 1827.

² In the reports at first prevailing, it was said, that one hundred and eighty or two hundred were killed. In an account by Major Pogson, Brigade-Major at Barrackpore at the time of the mutiny, he observes, that the report was greatly exaggerated, and that only eleven bodies were found in the lines and on parade, although more were, very probably, killed in the pursuit, or drowned in attempting to cross the river.—British Friend of India Magazine, October, 1842.

³ General Orders, November 4th.



in some respects more severe than the occasion demanded was evidently felt, both by the Government of Bengal and the authorities in England. In the following April, the former remitted the punishment of the individuals detained in custody, in consideration of the good conduct of the 26th Regiment in Arakan, and thus anticipated orders of a like tenor, which were received from the Court of Directors at the end of the year. Whether any measures of a more deliberate and lenient description were advisable, on the morning of the 2nd of November, may perhaps admit of question, although it seems possible, that, if a short delay had been granted to the mutineers, they might have become conscious of the folly and danger of persisting in their disobedience. However this might have been, little doubt can be entertained, that an early and conciliatory acknowledgment of the wants of the troops in the articles of conveyance for their baggage, and a liberal consideration of the difficulties under which they undeniably laboured, might have mitigated the irritation which had been excited, and extinguished the flame of discontent before it had been rendered ungovernable by the accessories on which it had fed.¹

BOOK III
CHAP. III.

1825.

The strength of the Burmas in Arakan had been greatly reduced by the departure of their best troops to reinforce the army of the Irawadi; and those who remained were withdrawn from the frontier stations, and concentrated in the capital, under the command of the Atwen-wun Maunza, an officer of distinguished intelligence and courage. The force at his disposal was, however, utterly unequal to contend with that by which he was about to be assailed; and the province must have speedily submitted, if its conquest had not been retarded by physical obstacles. Of no great breadth in its widest parts, Arakan becomes narrower, as it runs southward, until the mountains forming its eastern boundary terminate in a point, at the headland of Cape Negrais. The capital and the chief towns are situated in the southern and narrowest portion, and to them the march of the army was directed; but the whole country was covered by impervious and pestilential forests, through which roads were to be opened, and it

¹ This was the opinion of several officers of rank and experience, given in evidence before the Court of Inquiry.