

ON A BURMESE RIVER.

FROM THE NOTE BOOK OF ALEISTER CROWLEY.

THE next morning we started down the stream, always through the most delightful country and among charming people. Everyone knows, of course, that all the villages in this part of the country are strongly fortified with palisades of sharpened bamboos. The voyage down the river was exceedingly pleasant and the shooting delightful. One could sit on the stern of the boat and pot away all day at everything, from snipe to heron. Our Burmese boys and the kites had great rivalry in retrieving the game. The kites seemed to know that they would not be shot at. I had another slight attack of fever in the afternoon, but nothing to speak of. We tied up at Sakade for the night. There was no dak-bungalow near, and one does not sleep in a Burmese village unless necessity compels. And yet—

By palm and pagoda enchanted, o'ershadowed, I lie in the light

Of stars that are bright beyond suns that all poets have vaunted,

In the deep-breathing amoros bosom of forests of Amazon night

By palm and pagoda enchanted.



ON SHOOTING THOUGHTS INTENT.

By spells that are murmured, and rays of my soul strongly flung, never daunted;

By gesture and tracery traced with a dand dappled white, I summon the spirit of earth from the gloom they for ages have haunted.

O woman of deep red skin! Carved hair like the teak! O delight

Of my soul in the hollows of earth—how my spirit hath taunted—

Away! I am here, I am laid to the breast of the earth in the dusk of the night,

By palm and pagoda enchanted.

The early hours of the morning in the winter are bitterly cold, and the river is covered to a height of several feet with a dense white mist which does not disappear till well after sunrise.

I kept very quiet the next day, for repeated attacks of fever had begun to interfere with my digestive apparatus. Just at nightfall, however, two deer came down to drink at the riverside. It was rather dark for a shot, and the deer could hardly be distinguished from the surrounding foliage, but the men very cleverly and silently held the boat, and I let fly. The result was better than I expected. I hit exactly where I had aimed, and the deer dropped like a stone. Needless to say we had a first-class dinner. We slept at Singoun that night. There were a great many jungle fires during this day and the next. The next morning we started again early, and I resumed my bird shooting. On the first day I had several times missed a Brahman duck and was somewhat anxious to retrieve my reputation. Quite early in the morning I got a very fair

shot at one; it shook its wings in derision and flew off landing about a hundred yards down stream. We floated down, and I had another shot with the same result; for the next shot I went on shore and deliberately stalked the animal from behind the low bank and got a sitting shot at about ten yards. The disgusted bird looked around indignantly, and flew solemnly down stream. I, even more disgusted, got back to the boat, but the bird was a little too clever this time; for he made a wide circle and came flying back right overhead. I let fly from below and it fell with a flop into the river. The fact is that these birds are so well protected that it is quite useless to shoot at them when the breast is not exposed, unless a lucky pellet should find its way to the brain. So on the next occasion, having noticed that when disturbed they always went down stream, I went some distance below them, and sent two boys to frighten them from above. The result was excellent right and left, and I consoled myself for my previous fiascos. We stopped the night at Toum Myong.

After a delightful night, we went off the next morning and got to Kama on the Irrawaddy, whence we signalled the steamboat which took us back to Prome, where we stopped the night. The next day we spent in visiting the Pagoda, Thornton doing some sketching and I writing a couple of Buddhist poems. We went off in the evening for Rangoon. The next day we drove about the town but did little else; and on Monday we paid off Peter. The principle on which I had dealt with this man was to give him money in lump sums as he wanted it, and to call him to give an account of all he had spent. He made out that we owed him 37 rupees by this said account. I made a few trifling corrections; reducing the balance in his favour, and including the wages due to him (which he had not reckoned) to 2 rupees 4 annas. He was very indignant, and was going to complain to everyone from the Lieutenant-Governor to the hotel-keeper, but I think he was rather staggered when I told him that as he had been a very good servant in other respects I would give him as backsheesh the bottle of champagne and the three tins which he had already stolen. He appeared very surprised at my having detected this theft. Whereby hangs a tale. On leaving Rangoon I gave him a list of all the provisions, with the instructions that when he took anything from the store he was to bring the list to me and have that thing crossed off. Needless to say on the second day the list was missing; he, of course, swore that I had not given it back to him. Equally needless to say I had kept a duplicate list, which I took very good care not to show.

That evening I was again down with fever, and found myself unable to take any food whatever. I called in the local medico, who fed me on iceed champagne, and the next day, I was pretty well again. Thornton in the meanwhile had gone off to Mandalay. I was very sorry not to be able to go on there with him, but my time was very short; as I did not know when I might be summoned to join Eckenstein to go off to Kashmir.

On the 12th February I went on board the *Komilla* for Akyab, where Allan was now living. In the course of the day the sea air completely restored me to health. On the 13th we were off Sandaway, which did not appear fascinating. On the next day we put in at Khyoukpyu, which I had so vainly hoped to reach overland. It has a most delightful bay and beach, its general appearance recalling the South Sea Islands; but the place is a den of malaria. We had not time to land as the captain was anxious to get into Akyab the same night. We raced through the Straits, and cast anchor there about 8 o'clock—just in time.

I went ashore with the second officer and proceeded in my usual casual manner to try and find Allan in the dark. The job was easier than I anticipated. The first man I spoke to greeted me as if I had been his long-lost brother, and took me off in his own carriage to the Monastery (whose name is Lamma Sayadaw Kyoung) where I found Allan, whom I now saw for the first time as a Buddhist monk. The effect was to make him appear of gigantic height, as compared to the diminutive Burmese, but otherwise there was very little change. The old gentleness was still there.

(To be continued.)