

Impressions of Burmah.

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HE approach to a new country and the termination of a sea voyage can seldom be without interest, except to those who find no enjoyment in life. Happily there are few of such, and certainly there were none on board as we neared Rangoon, after a few days' sail from the sweltering heat of the equator. While still far out at sea the water assumed a muddy appearance, which gradually became more turbid, till, on reaching the lightship, the water had all the appearance of a river in flood. But we were two months behind the rains, and the Irrawaddy River was at its normal state, after its journey of one thousand miles to the sea.

Away on either side the low rich swamps began to show themselves, and in a short time we were steaming between the mud-banks. A few natives fishing at intervals, a scurry and a splash indicated where a crocodile had disappeared, an outgoing steamer or a rice mill served to attract attention for a moment. But all eyes were turned to thick haze, which indicated the site of Rangoon; and, as we turned a bend in the river the huge Shive Dagone Pagoda was revealed, glistening in the sun. All other sights in Burmah sink into insignificance when compared with this, the finest and most sacred place of Buddhist worship in further India.

The date of its commencement is uncertain, but about 588 B. C. the Pagoda was only twenty-seven feet high. In 1768

A.D. it had reached its present dimensions. With a base whose circumference is 1,350 feet, the structure rises to a height of 321 feet, and is of solid brickwork. Surmounting this is a peculiar network or Ti, in the shape of a cone, covered with solid gold plate, studded with jewels and hung with gold and silver bells, the whole weighing some one and one-quarter tons. From base to Ti the pile is covered with stucco and gilded with gold leaf, enhancing the effect of this marvelous structure. Surrounding it are hundreds of smaller pagodas or shrines, where the Burmese come to worship and offer alms to the scores of beggars and penitents who practically live there. These shrines are decorated with magnificent carvings in teak, and paintings from scenes in the life of Buddha.

The religious mendicants are worth a moment's notice. Here is one, who, for seventeen years has come to the same spot and sits there from dawn to dark, turning over between his fingers a string of beads and uttering prayers that he may gain favor from Buddha. Another squats with head, hands and feet on the ground, his knees higher than the rest of his body, and has done so for twelve years, that he, too, may be counted worthy of favor. Deformed beings, children with hydrocephalic heads and adults suffering from elephantiasis are met with in this strange place, while beside them, chattering and laughing gleefully, are the dainty Burmese women in their picturesque garb