

LECTURE ON BURMAH.

BY THE REV. HOWARD MALCOLM, AT PHILADELPHIA.

Burmah, as is well known, lies on the east side of the Bay of Bengal, and extends as far as China. The population of Burmah is about six millions. It is seven hundred miles long, and four hundred wide. Burmah is decidedly the most influential portion of India. The government is an absolute monarchy; but the laws are good, and generally well executed. As you approach the seat of government, the country is in a good state of cultivation, while the more remote parts are much neglected. In fact, everything pertaining to the country, whether in the cultivation of land, or in the administration of laws, receives better attention in the immediate neighborhood of the seat of government, than in the remoter parts. In this respect, the conduct of the people is much like that of our slaves at the South. At the extremities of the country, every extortion is practiced. For example—if the King sends out a chief to get up a company of soldiers, that chief will draft those whom he thinks will be the least likely to go, and then lets them off only on condition that they pay a large sum, which the chief puts in his own coffers. Their arms are brave and well disciplined—so much so, that the British feared them more than any other army of India. Their navy is very poor, and is a mere apology for one. They are a highly civilized people. They have good roads, canals, and commerce. A foreigner is very apt to judge of things by the rules to which he has been accustomed, and, in this way, forms a wrong estimate of their real condition.

Their is a peculiar feature in the division of their property. Occupation is possession. So long as a man keeps a good fence around his land, it is his, and he loses it as soon as he neglects this. Their land is not taxed; but the inhabitants are. They are not destitute of a literature. Books are numerous, and some of them very ancient. They are said to extend back many thousands of years; but we may be safe in saying that they date back as far as 600 years before Christ. They have a good system of common school education, and it may be safely said that there is not a man in the kingdom who cannot read and write.—The priests are compelled to teach the boys of an early age. The girls are neglected, and those only are educated, whose parents are able to defray the expenses of their education. There appear to be no restrictions imposed on the intercourse between the men and the women, as there is in many of the eastern countries, by degrading the women. There is a peculiarity, however, which would seem to place the women even higher than in this country—that is, that they always carry the purse. It would be considered a disgrace for a man to carry it. The result is, that, in that country, there are no bankrupts.

Their timber is of a very durable nature. The speaker had sailed in a vessel upwards of 90 years old. They export a great quantity of lumber. Their ivory is also of an excellent quality, and is an important article in their commerce. They raise the finest cotton in the world. Bird's nests are here used for making soup. The birds build them much in the same manner as the swallows in this country—attached to the side of some support. They make these nests out of their own bosoms; and so great is the demand for this savory dish, that these nests bring their weight in gold. Sharks' fins are also used for the same purpose. Both of these articles are the sources of great revenue to the King. The Chinese, being great epicures, create a demand for both dishes. In commerce, they charge their

taxes in kind, so that this prevents any discussion in regard to tariff. Every tenth is taken as a tax. Silver and lead constitute the principal part of their currency. The silver is run into cakes, and change is made by cutting off small portions. After it has been run over a few times, it becomes deteriorated—and, when the price of an article is asked the venders will request that the silver be shown; and so good judges are they, that they will immediately tell the amount of alloy, and will raise the price on their merchandise.

The buildings of this country are very slight, and poorly fitted to keep out the thief; but stealing is not very common here. Bamboos and mats are their building materials. The buildings for worship are the most substantial they have. These are pagodas, and are constructed of solid stone or brick.

The Pyramids of Egypt are pagodas, in my opinion. Nothing but religion could ever have influenced man to have erected such huge buildings. When a man makes a vow, he erects as large a pagoda as his means will allow. His son after him, perhaps, builds a larger one over his, and thus one succeeds another, until it becomes an immense building. This appears to be the way the Egyptian pyramids attained such a size.

Their pagodas and monasteries all are gilded over, and present a splendid appearance when the sun shines upon them. The people are very strict in regard to rank. This is indicated by the number of roofs on their houses, covers on their umbrellas, and followers that attend them. These attendants are all engaged in carrying something. One has the tobacco box, another the pen, a third the ink, and a fourth an umbrella.

The lecturer found a great deal of refinement among the ladies. They make holes in their ears and the size is in proportion to their rank. He had seen some as large as a silver dollar piece. The dress of both men and women is very becoming. They have neither seamstress nor tailors; but use the cloth as it comes from the loom. They wrap it about them and let it hang in large festoons.

They consider it a great disgrace to have white teeth, and they have a preparation for the purpose of coloring them black. The great aim among the ladies is to be fat, and to be lean they think is sure evidence that they are not well fed. They weave silk very beautifully and ingeniously. The Burmans have the power of smelting metals. They even transcend the Russians in the making of bells. He saw one that weighed eighty-five thousand pounds. It was twenty feet in diameter and one foot thick. He was told that there was in another part, two bells that weighed three hundred and thirty thousand pounds. They have very fine jewelry. Their music is poor and chiefly set in the minor key. They make their canoes even better than our Indians, and some of them are seven by sixty feet long. A great deal of their commerce is carried on by caravans. They have regularly educated doctors, which, with their free schools ought to give them in a great deal of notoriety. They have two schools of medicine, and they are respectively termed the diet and medicine schools. English walnut shells ground up fine, enters very extensively into the prescriptions of the latter. One of these doctors told the speaker that there were sixty-five diseases in the human body, and he had a remedy for all. Just acquaint him with the disease, and then he could cure it. Sometimes it was very difficult to ascertain which it was, and in such cases he compounded all these cures and gave a dose of the mixture. They cure rheumatism by kneading their patients like women do bread. They do first with the soft palm of their hands, and then with their knuckles,