THREE UNPUBLISHED PAPERS BY HARVEY

INTRODUCED, EXPLAINED AND

COMMENTED UPON

by

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G.E. Harvey: Imperialist or Historian?

Introduction

Since the publication of my two books, The stricken Peacock (1965) and *A History of Burma (1967)*, I have been accused, not only by some European historians of Burma, but also by a few younger Burmese scholars, of attempting to revise Burmese history so as to white-wash King Theebaw and his people. However more tolerant of my critics have described me as the founder-leader of the Nationalist School of Burmese historians, in opposition to the Imperialist School, founded by Harvey and later followed by Professors D.G.E. Hall and John F. Cady.

A few British scholars have placed me side by side with Harvey perhaps because they think me worthy, or perhaps merely because Harvey's *Outline of Burmese History* (1924) and *my History* (1967) are the only books in English which deal with the history of Burma as a whole. A British diplomat, who studied under Harvey at Oxford and later served in Burma as a member of the Indian Civil Service stated at a meeting (1959), "Harvey and Htin Aung are poles apart, yet both are sincere historians. Therefore, the truth lies half-way between the two." Professor O.N.K. Spate, who was a lecturer in geography at the University of Rangoon before the war, and who now heads a Research Institute at the Australian National University comments on us: -

> The country's future lay on the seacoast' (Harvey, 1924, p.193): whose country's future? That of the Burmese, or of the Bombay Burma Trading Company and the other great British mercantile houses? If Burmese historians such as Htin Aung Sometimes wear rose-coloured spectacles, Harvey usually wear dark glasses of the deepest dye: reading his book, with all its scholarship, it is impossible not to feel that its subconscious in that was to teach the Burmese that the best of all worlds was a British-ruled world. "Who could say that the Burmese empire would have lasted longer had the capital been moved to Syriam? It doubtless would have become a centre of international commerce, but equally doubtless it would have become also a centre of international intrigue" (Htin Aung, 1967, p.145). If Bangkok was closer to the sea, it was also a lot farther from the bases of British power in India; and had the Burmese capital been at Rangoon or Syriam, there might have been no Kingdom of Ava to survive the second war with the British (1852) or even the first (1824), in both of which Rangoon was taken-from the sea."
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> (Institute of British Geographers Transactions and Papers, 1968, Publication No. 44, p.163.)

Harvey died in 1965, and his papers, all torn, jumbled and thrown into cardboard boxes by his landlady, were rescued by his daughter, who gave them to St. Antony's College, Oxford. In 1968, the late Guy Wint, the great historian of British Rule in India, and other Fellows graciously chose me to take charge of the Harvey papers. G.E. Harvey served in Burma form 1912 to 1932, and was Lecturer in Burmese Histyory and Burmese Law to Civil Service Probationers at Oxford from 1936 to 1942. After the war, he lived in retirement at Oxford, but continuing his

researches and giving occasional lectures. The purpose of this introduction is to contrast Harvey the Imperialist before the war with Harvey the Historian after the war, and therefor is not meant to be a biography. However, it will be necessary to notice some special aspects of his life. Both by birth and education, he was a liberal. His father's relations had taken active parts in the Irish movement for freedom and his mother was closely connected with the suffragette movement for women's rights in England. Although he could not take a University degree because of a lung ailment, he became proficient in Greek and French, and obtained a high position in the results of his Indian Civil Service competitive examination. After arrival in Burma, like Professor Luce, and unlike Professors Hall and Cady, he became proficient in Burmese and could therefore read the Burmese sources of history. Although, as he wrote to a friend in 1932, every day of his life in Burma was a day of physical suffering for him because of his lung ailment, he was an efficient administrator and a keen student of Burmese institutions. In 1920, he combined a sick leave with study leave, went back to Oxford, and wrote a history of Burma for which he received a B.Litt. degree in 1922. The thesis was well worth a Ph.D., but he could not spend a third year at Oxford as required by the regulations. His thesis was later published by Longman's in 1925. Soon after getting his degree, he had to go Switzerland and spend some time at a Sanatorium there to cure, or at least check, his lung ailment. He returned to Burma in 1923.

The History of Burma published by Longman's in 1925 stopped at the point where, in 1824, the British frigates stormed into Rangoon harbour, thus ushering in the British period of Burmese history. Apparently he submitted as his thesis only half of his manuscript, for towards the end of 1924, there suddenly appeared in Burma a text book of Burmese history for use by Burmese students by G.E. Harvey, and published by the Indian Branch of Longman's, and it contained not only that portion to be published in London a few months later, but also a history of the entire British period from 1824 to 1920. Just as John Milton in Paradise Lost justified the ways of God to man, in the text book Harvey attempted to justify both the British conquest and British rule over Burma. Even in the 1925 history, the general impression given was that Burmese Kings were stupid, and the Burmese people, wayward. The book portrayed Bodawpaya as a cowardly and cruel buffoon, and asserted that the Burmese as a nation in 1824 were arrogant, boastful and ignorant, forcing Bagyidaw to go to war against the British. Admittedly Bodawpaya's treatment of the Arakanese will remain forever a blot on the page of the history of his region, and in some ways, the First Anglo-Burmese War represented a clash of two imperialism British and Burmese, but both Bodawpaya and Bagyidaw wanted to avoid war if there could be a peace with honour.

Harvey used the Burmese Chronicles as his main source and had some words of praise for them, but he did untold harm to the prestige of the Chronicles by quoting a passage from the Report of Crawfurd, British envoy to the defeated Burmese King, which gave an amusing account of how the court historian distorted the true facts of the war by noting in the Chronicle that "White strangers came into the country and reached Yandabo, but as they were in great distress, the Burmese King, out of piety, paid them large sums of money, and asked them to leave the country".[1] This envoy hated and despised the Burmese and their King; the story was a deliberate and malicious lie, and his successor as envoy,

1 history of Burma, p. xx

Burney, definitely wrote that this story was absolutely untrue, but Harvey ignored Burney's rebuttal. [1]

In about 1934 or 1935, Harvey contributed the chapters on Burma to the Cambridge History of Modern India, Which was published in 1937, and in those chapters Harvey became an absolute imperialist and ceased to be a historian. He sounded angry and bitter, and even described Theebaw as a " gin-sodden" King, whose massacres, bad government and extravagant ways brought chaos to the country and whose alliance with France threatened British interests; all these factors forced the British to annex the country.

Harvey never mentioned two important facts: first, the British authorities misled the Burmese people into thinking that the purpose of the expeditionary force was merely to replace King Theebaw by Prince Nyaungyan, or Prince Nyaung Ok, who were refugees in British territory, or even by Prince Myingun, a refugee in French territory (unknown to the Burmese, Nyaungyan had died only a few weeks before); and second, when the Burmese discovered that the British had duped them and took to arms, acts of terror and violence were perpetrated by the British on the Burmese patriots, describing them as rebels and dacoits. Harvey knew of these facts but suppressed them deliberately, drawing a veil over the dark doings of this so-called *Pacification of Burma*, and Hall and Cady followed suit. But I took the opportunity of tearing apart and ripping as under this heavy veil of secrecy by giving full details in *The Stricken Peacock* and *A History of Burma*. In the same book, I described how as the British ships in November 1885 stood poised at Thayetmyo for the assault on Mandalay, my father discovered that the prince surrounded by countries on the prow of the leading ship was a bogus one, being merely one of his schoolmates at the Rangoon High School, and how on learning of this, my maternal grandfather went up-stream to warn the Burmese troops of the deception, only to die in the desperate defense of the Minhla fort. My critics had described this account as an " old wives' tale". As there were so many ships following the first, it could be that there were two or three bogus princes. I came across copies of correspondence exchanged between Harvey and Professor John Moonie of Mandalay University in 1953. Apparently, Professor Moonie's father had with him a manuscript giving an account of the British expedition to Mandalay, written by an Indian sepoy, in which was mentioned that a wooden figure of a prince dressed in full regalia was put on the prow of the sepoy's particular ship. Harvey wrote the U May Oung had told him about a bogus prince standing on the prow of the leading ship as the British flotilla sailed into Burmese territory. Although the letter was written only in 1953, Harvey must have heard the story earlier, for U May Oung died in 1926.

Rudyard Kipling wrote a number of poems dealing with some incidents which happened during the so-called *pacification*, and his details were usually authentic, because his informants were British tommies, who had actually taken part in the " pacification". In the poem entitled " The Grave of the Hundred Heads", Kipling narrated:

> There's a widow in sleepy Chester Who weeps for her only son; There's a grave on the Pabeng River,
>
> A grave that the Burmans shun; And there's Subadar Prag Tewarri Who tells how the work was done.
>
> A Snider squibbed in the jungle Somebody laughed and fled, And the men of the First Shikaris Picked up their Subaltern dead, With a big blue mark in his fore-head.

1 Maung Htin Aung: Burmese History before 1287. A Defense of the Chronicles. pp. 1-2.

And the back blown out of his head.
Subabar Prag Tewarri,
Jemadar Hira Lal,
Took command of the party,
Twenty rifles in all,
Marched them down to the river
As the day was beginning to fall.
.....
Sutader Prag Tewarri,
Bidding them load with ball,
Halted a dozen rifles
Under the village wall;
Sent out a flanking party
With Jemadar Hira Lal.
The men of the First Shikaris
Shouted and smote and slew,
Turning the grinning *jingal*
On to the howling crew.
The Jemadar's flanking-Party
Butchered the folk who flew.
Long was the morn of slaughter,
Long was the list of slain,
Five score heads were taken,
Five score heads and twain;
And the men of the First Shikaris
Went back to their grave again,
Each man bearing a basket
Red as his palms that day,
Red as the blazing village-
The village of Pabengmay.
And the "drip-drip-drip" from the baskets
Reddened the grass by the way.
They made a pile of their trophies
High as a tall man's chin,
Head upon head distorted,
Set in a sightless grin,
Anger and pain and terror
Stamped on the smoke-scorched skin.
Subadar Prag Tewarri
Put the head of the *Boh*
On the top of the mound of triumph,
The head of his son below-
With the sword and the peacock-banner
That the world might behold and know.

1 I was one of them.

I am sorry I have to quote this fearful poem, but I have to prove that Harvey deliberately refrained from giving details of that darkest period in Anglo-Burmese history 1886 to 1890. In the letter written to the Deputy Commissioner of Bassein, dated 7th. November 1926, Harvey revealed that with the help of one Captain Lennox of the survey of India, he had identified the unfortunate village as Pebinmaw village at the confluence of Pebin Chaung with Ngawun river and obtained a sworn statement from an old man:

"There was a village there once among those trees and old pagodas. When the English conquered the country the Burmese fought them there. The English attacked the village and an English officer was killed while rallying his sepoys in the attack. The sepoys there-upon saw red. The English had some cannons which played on the village. As the villagers ran away down a nulla, sepoys waiting there fell on them and killed them to a man, sparing only women and children. They piled the heads of the dead on their officer's grave."

Harvey's text book of Burmese History was highly successful in its purpose of " spreading the Imperial Idea" (a phrase used in educational reports of the period 1920-1934). It replaced the text book previously in use, which was by an Inspector of Schools, S. W. Cocks, and which contained such crude imperialist propaganda that even an eighth standard boy could see through it. But Harvey's text book, which, like a wolf on the fold, came down on the matriculation students of 1923-24[1] was well-written, scholarly and contained attractive illustrations. It was in use in all the schools of Burma for full twenty five years, and it moulded the minds of generation after generation of Burmese students so far as the history of their country was concerned. Although U Po Kyar and U Ba Than made valiant efforts to correct the picture by publishing their own text books of Burmese

history, but as the books were written in Burmese and used only in National Schools and as the two authors themselves could not quit escape from Harvey's sway, in the minds of the Burmese intelligentsia, there developed a guilt- complex. As for Hall and Cady, they made a field day out of it all, and lashed King Theebaw and poor Monsieur Haas with their bitter words of disdain.

Hall published his *Burma* in 1950; his chapters on Burma in his *A History of South-east Asia* first published in 1955 merely incorporated his account of Burmese history given in this earlier book; and Cady published his *Modern Burma* in 1958. By that time, unknown to them their master Harvey was abandoning his theories regarding the British annexation of 1885. In fact, although from 1934 when he was appointed Lecturer to the Indian Civil Service probationers until about 1936, he was fiercely upholding those theories before his students, from 1936 onwards he began to mellow and was obviously reconsidering his previous findings .[1]

In 1946 Harvey published another book, *British Rule in Burma 1824-42*. The British empire by then had started to disintegrate, but Harvey's aim was still to justify the British annexation. In the book he did criticise certain short-comings of the British authorities, but his criticism was always mild. His brief chapter on the history of the country clearly showed that notwithstanding the quiet years as an Oxford don, Harvey, like the leopard, had not changed his spots, and he still put the blame on Theebaw's misgovernment and intrigues with France. At page 13 the liberal in him came to the surface and he gave this generous assessment of the Burmese character:

> There is, in Burmese life, not only a beauty that delights the eye but also a dignity that makes one proud of the human race. The praise was so sincere that the reader could forgive the unfair remarks that immediately followed. All in all the book was obviously the swan song of and old imperialist.

With the passing of empire and mellowness of age the liberal Harvey was now swiftly emerging. His presidential address to the Oxford University Anthropological Society, given on November 23, 1949 contained the following remarks which at one stroke disposed many of his earlier contentions regarding the Third Anglo-Burmese War:

> You are often told we intervened because of the Burmese King's misgovernment. But *that* had nothing to do with it. It is true some years previously the king, Thibaw, had massacred several dozen of his blood relations in order to safeguard his position on the throne; people over here were naturally shocked. But the British Government refused to do anything saying it was an internal affair, a matter for the Burmese themselves, and in any case it and been exaggerated by the newspapers.
>
> The real reason we intervened several years later in 1885 was ..... the progress the French were making alarmed us and then, just when they drew back temporarily, for reasons of domestic politics, king Thibaw foolishly presented us with a first class grievance. He set about extorting a quarter million pounds from a British timber firm imprisoning its employees.
>
> So we marched in, deposed him, and annexed the country..... It seemed a pity to annex the one surviving Buddhist kingdom in India, it was not only pictures but contented. The sort of palace

1 I obtained this information from some of his students, who were formerly in my classes at Rangoon University; e.g. U San Lin, The late Mr. J. Van Wyck.

> massacre Thibaw perpetrated only happened once in a generation, they did not affect the people at large and they were mild compared with some of the things going on in the world even then, let alone the things we ourselves have lived to witness, However, it was a fashion to annex colonies just then, just as nowadays it is a fashion to grant independence all around. And in any case the decision was taken on international grounds as I have said, rather than on the merits of the case.

It will be noticed that Harvey still maintained that it was the fear of the French that prompted the annexation. But he buried the French bogy in a letter of confession and restitution addressed to Professor Jean Joseph Seznec, Professor of French Literature at Oxford, dated 9th March 1954: Harvey wrote:

> I think I may be able to demolish the hitherto accepted idea that it was French intervention in Burma that forced us to annex the country in 1885.
>
> The idea is aptly supported by our archives (Government) and I helped to establish it further in my contribution to the Cambridge History of India Vol. VI ..... It over- looks the fact ..... that the one thing the French desired, in their own interest, was to avoid antagonizing us; they regarded Burma as entirely within the English sphere of interest.....Moreover..... I have recently found indications that Hass:
>
> (a) repeatedly warned the Burmese not to provoke annexation by confiscating the forest firm's property;
>
> (b) neither sought nor obtained any concessions whatever .....

Harvey brooded over Monsieur Haas, and continued his research about him. In the meantime Dr. Maung Maung's book came out and Harvey wrote a charming letter of congratulations for presenting the Burmese side of the picture. Finally in 1957 he went to France on a fellowship to work in the library of the French Foreign Office. And in 1963 he gave at St. Antony's College a lecture entitled "Monsieur Hass and the Annexation of Upper Burma, 1885" in which he demolished completely the story of French intrigues at Theebaw's [1] Court which he himself had helped to build some forty years before.

Whether Harvey was a historian or imperialist must always remain a subject of controversy. But no one can question his greatness as a pioneer of Burmese historical research. The scholarship behind his *History of Burma* was immense and its list of sources enabled other scholars to check its findings and continue its research. Under the red cloak of imperial pride, there lurked a true scholar-historian. With his Promethean fire of learning and intellectual curiosity, he lit a torch which still burns brightly and guides all historians of Burma through the dim corridors of time.

1 Harvey spelt Thibaw whereas the author prefers Theebaw for the same king. Ed.

G.E. Harvey: Burma 1885

[This lecture was given as a Presidential address before the Oxford University Anthropological Society at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 23 November, 1949 at the University Museum. The manuscript was written in a bold and clear hand, and it would seem that Harvey read it out as a paper; I find it unnecessary to edit it.

As was noticed in the Introduction, in the lecture Harvey concedes that it was a pity to annex such "a picturesque and contented Buddhist Kingdom" and the decision to annex it "was based not on the merits of the case but on international grounds;" the French had withdrawn, but, Harvey maintains, only temporarily and the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation case gave the British the grievance and the pretext to intervene.

Harvey retired and left Burma in 1933, in an atmosphere of bitterness and suspicion between the Burmese and the British as a result of the Peasant's Rebellion (Saya San's Rebellion) of 1931-1933, and naturally, in the lecture he takes the imperialist view that it was not a rebellion by peasants, but a mere insurrection led by charlatans and bogus monks.

Unlike in this earlier published writings, criticism, although mild, of the ignorance of the British rulers of Burma is expressed in this lecture.]

When annexing Upper Burma in 1885 we abolished the monarchy, regarding it as effect. In 1931 we needed a division of troops to cope with a rebellion which lasted eighteen months. Royalist symbols were openly used in preparing the rebellion but we had forgotten their meaning, and the leaders were disreputable Buddhist clergy who should have been unfrocked but when destroying the monarchy we had destroyed the one authority with power to unfrock.

As you've just heard, this is the 467th meeting of the society. It was founded in January 1909. We must be one of the oldest societies in Oxford. I wonder what our founders, our beloved founders, Henry Balfour and Dr. Marett, if they could return to earth, would think of Anthropology to-day. They'd be glad at one thing, the appointments the Colonial Office if creating, the recognition Colonial Governments are giving the subject. I can't say what it will do out there, *that's* in the future. I can only give an instance of what it might have saved us in the past.

Not that a pure science ought to *do* anything: as the toast says "Here's to the health of Pure Sciences: may they flourish forever and never be the slightest use to anybody." And Anthropology is pure than most: whereas Theology, an enquiry into the nature of God, also wishes to show men the way of salvation: and whereas Medicine, an enquiry into the mysteries of the human body, also wishes to heal it: Anthropology, on the other hand, is simply all about Man, and even Social Anthropology, merely observes his behaviour in society, it doesn't want to do anything about it. But unless you know how and why the human herd behaves as it does, you'll never be able to help the poor thing. So I'll give an instance where a little knowledge would have done no harm. My instance is Burma: I hope you won't find it all too historical.

We annexed the Burmese Kingdom in 1885, to prevent the French getting it. The French had an expansionist policy in Indo-China then, and even later. But after establishing their advance agents in Burma in the early months of 1885, they drew back for a time, and we took advantage of the lull to intervene.

You're often told that we intervened because of the Burmese King's misgovernment, But *that* had nothing to do

with it. It's true some years previously the king, Thibaw, had massacred several dozen of his blood relations in order to safeguard his position on the throne; people over here were naturally shocked. But the British Government refused to do anything, saying it was an internal affair, and matter for the Burmese themselves, and in any case it had been exaggerated by the newspapers.

The real reason we intervened several years later, in 1885, was, we didn't particularly want the county, but the progress the French were making alarmed us and then: just when they drew back, temporarily, for reasons of domestic politics: King Thibaw foolishly presented us with a first class grievance; he set about extorting £ ¼ million from a British timber firm, imprisoning it employees. [1]

So we marched in, deposed him and annexed the country, rather against the advice of our own officers who, although they agreed a brief expedition was necessary to bring Thibaw to this senses, were against annexation. It seemed a pity to annex the one surviving Buddhist kingdom in India, which was not only picturesque but contented. The sort of palace massacres Thibaw perpetrated only happened once in a generation, they did not affect the people at large, and they were mild compared with some of the things going on in the world even then, let alone what we our-selves have lived to witness. However, it was the fashion to annex colonies just then, just as nowadays it is the fashion to grant independence all around. And in any case the decision was taken on international grounds, as I've said, rather than one the merits of the case.

So the Burmese throne disappeared, and quite a number of things disappeared along with it: for instance, OATH WATER. The Burmese used to swear allegiance to their King by drinking the oath in holy water, a method found in many parts of the world. In the Old Testament, Book of Numbers, ch. V. v 23, when a woman swears her innocence, the oath is written on paper, washed into the water, and she drinks it; if she isn't innocent, the water causes her body to swell and rot. In the Burmese Oath of Allegiance swords and spears are dipped into the water, causing you to die by sword and spear if you fail in your allegiance. The custom died out after 1885, died out so completely that I never met and English officer who'd even heard of it.

I never heard of it myself, I only read of it in faded manuscripts, some historical research I was doing. Subsequently, to my surprise, I found it still existed, I saw it with my own eyes. But this was not in Burma Proper, the area of the Burmese Kingdom we annexed. It was much deeper in the interior, in the great highland areas we added to the kingdom, nearly doubling its size.[2] The people there aren't Burmese, many of them are tribes the Burmese never saw. Others are little hill Kingdoms, still ruled by their own princes, and it was up there, in the little Shan Kingdoms, that I saw the Oath Water being drunk. But that was only because I had the unusual luck of being posted to duty there. Very few of our officers ever went there.

And it wasn't only English officers in Burma Proper, even the anglicised classes among the Burmese themselves hardly knew these things. The monarchy was a discredited institution, and the younger generation, when they became politically conscious, regarded kingship as quite out of date, their ideal became increasingly parliamentary and republican. Not so the mass to he people: what they loved, you could see on the village stage, the Burmese drama, almost untouched by western influence. In small towns and villages,

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1 The allegation of extortion was mere imperialist propaganda, and there were no imprisonment or even arrests.

2 A Surprising Statement. Those highland " Kingdoms" were tributary states of the Burmese empire.

where most people live, it's a semi-amateur stage, immensely popular; at certain seasons of the year people spend more time seeing plays than our crowds do in cinemas. And the one scene that draws a house is the king on his throne. There's nothing political in it, it's not a historic king, at lest not in dated history, only a semi-legendary king, a variation of some ancient story everyone knows, the eternal drama of joy and sorrow, love and hate, good and evil. The king is seated aloft, clad in shining robes, surrounded by beautiful queens and wise ministers; sometimes he's the central figure throughout, and even when he isn't, he's a wise and noble figure.

Now before turning to the next subject, let's recapitulate the facts about Oath Water; they'll help you towards the end of the lecture. It ceased in 1885; English officers never heard of it; the anglicised classes who were associated with us, first in education and administration, and subsequently in politics, even if they knew about Oath Water, dismissed it as antiquated nonsense, like most other things connected with the monarchy. But the mass of the people remember the monarchy and the palace customs kept alive on the stage; and far away in the hills, at the courts of the Shan princes, Oath Water survived not as a mere nostalgic memory, but as part of the actual mechanism of government.

My next is the Ecclesiastical Commission, another of the palace institutions that disappeared in 1885. The Ecclesiastical Commission was the King's contribution to the national religion. To show what a contribution it was, I must mention the religion.

Burmese Buddhism has a cleaner record than most religious. The clergy have never been a wealthy powerful priesthood. Indeed it might be objected that, though Possessed of great moral influence, they have been too quietest, too other worldly: there occasions when they might well have given more of a lead to public life. Also they have no central organisation: there's no hierarchy with powers to unfrock and unworthy priest. The Burmese say Buddha's own words make all priests equal, it would be unscriptural to have a hierarchy. And the curious thing is, it works well enough as a rule: public sentiment and the influence of the older clergy in the neighborhood usually suffice to make an unworthy priest face his conscience and leave the Church, abandon the yellow robe, the robe of the priesthood. But not it he is tough enough to stand up to them; so it's just the worst cases the real scoundrels, that they cannot deal with. They can only deal with a man who still has a conscience left and admits his guilt. If he denies his guilt, nothing can be done, because, being a priest, bound by his ordination vows to speak the truth, he is presumed to be incapable of lying, and no layman will continue to testify against him, such is the reverence for the robe.

In any country in the world, it doesn't matter what the religion is, Mohammedan, Buddhist, Christian, Catholic or Protestant: if the public are the simple public, ignorant and superstitious, the clergy are regarded as intermediaries between God and man, in touch with the unseen world, mystery men. It doesn't matter that Buddhism repudiates the very idea of mediation, that in theory the Burmese clergy, though celibate, dwelling apart, aloof, are not priests: even princes genuflect, kneel to them: on great occasions men as well as women let down their ling hair - both sexes have long hair lie flat one their faces one each side of the path for the clergy to walk over. All this adulation may not affect the greater minds, the finer spirits among the clergy, they remain singularly unaffected: but it goes to the head of the weaker ones.

And see what it leads to if a priest is inclined to mystery and magic. Here's a typical case, a type you can trace back for centuries.

Ø 2 U.P. - N.75-1,100-9-10-75. B.S.

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An ignorant jungle priest went in for magic. He conjured up visions revealing his destiny, and although the earlier visions only showed he was to be spiritual messiah, later ones, after he had secured a numerous following, showed he was to be an earthly kind: not hat he let the public know. The general public only knew him as such a good man, he was converting many young people, causing them to lead new and godly lives. He was so pure, so holy, it was even said he could work miracles, but he wouldn't talk about it. He only gave demonstrations to his inner circle, really faithful disciples who drank his Oath Water and swore to follow his teaching to the end. Finally, when he'd won a really large following, he revealed his secret and led them in armed rebellion against the throne, with tragic consequences.

Now you see why the king had to do something about it. He was officially styled Defender of the Faith, but he wasn't only the leading layman in the land, the Father of the people: he wasn't concerned only with family morals. He was the government; in self defense he had to control the clergy. He did it through a aboard of control, the Ecclesiastical Commission.

He appointed his private chaplain chairman of the Commission, and the other members are also his own nominees, mostly eminent clergy, but some were senior civil servants who arranged the agenda and saw the clerical members did the work properly. The commission was in touch with senior clergy in every district throughout the country, and together with these local clergy it constituted a hierarchy. For the scriptural reasons I've already given you, the clergy couldn't have set up this hierarchy themselves but they didn't mind the king's doing it, they liked it.

The Commission maintained a clergy list giving every priest's personal history, who was responsible for him, in what monastery he had been educated, who had ordained him, and so forth. If he moved from one district to another, the new district could thus make enquiries about him: if he deserved it, either the governor of the district, or the local clergy, or both, could hand him up to the place, to be unfrocked by the Ecclesiastical Commission. And the one thing they were down on was mystery and magic, not only because it led to rebellion but also it was one of the Cardinal Sins for which a priest must be unfrocked. Every priest at his ordination is told it's a sin for which there is no absolution, even if it isn't discovered he knows in his heart he is no longer a priest, he has cut himself from the body of the Church. Buddha himself was definite on the point: Buddha regarded spiritualism, mystery and magic not as vain superstition but as terrible reality, and he forbade it absolutely. One of the most solemn vows a priest takes at ordination is against having anything to do with magic or claiming supernatural powers.

Well, in 1885 when we annexed the kingdom, the Ecclesiastical Commission died a natural death, it was a palace institution supervised by the King himself. There's been nobody to perform its functions, they've not been performed since 1885. Please don't be bored if I recapitulate them: I shan't be able to mention the Ecclesiastical Commission later on, when, towards the end of the lecture, your attention is keeping pace with the events I describe, and you'll have to remember for ourselves that its two functions were:

1. UNFROCKING THE CLERGY: unfrocking them for magic equally with unchastity; both equally against their ordination vows.
2. MAINTAINING A CLERGY LIST: maintaining a clergy list in a central office to which you could report bogus clergy. [1]

1 A detailed account of the Ecclesiastical Commission is given in Maung Htin Aung: *Burmese Monk's Tales.*

To return to 1885: The Ecclesiastical Commission faded out, we didn't abolish it, we simply extended to Burma the highly developed administrative system that had gown up in India, and there was no room for it in the system. Also it seemed unnecessary, the Burmese were so charming, their Buddhism such a fine religion, the clergy so gentle and well behaved. And our experience of religion in India, the bitter Hindu-Mohammedan controversies, had rather put us off religion. As for rebellions, we knew they were often led by priest magicians, but they were probably bogus priests, decent Burmese wouldn't tolerate them. You had to expect a certain amount of superstition in a country like that, it would die out in time with the spread of education and enlightenment: and with the realisation of our strength: we were so much stronger and more efficient than a native monarchy-mumbo jumbo rebellions would soon be a thing of the past.

And so for a long time, it seemed. The annexation had a hypnotic effect: the Burmese were dazzled by our superiority, they were the easiest people in the world to administer. And by the time the effect wore off, they were becoming politically responsible, getting full parliamentary government under their own ministers, a Burmese cabinet.

But was it really all right, even in those quiet years when nothing even seemed to happen? What about the effect on society, family life? Let me give you a glimpse of what was going on under the surface, a priest I knew when I was a young officer before the First World War. He had and imposing presence, a fine command of language, attractive manners. At first even the local clergy accepted him at his face value. He was all things to all men; to people troubled with dreams, he was a wonderful interpreter of dreams; for old people and invalids mortally afraid of dying, he had, provided they were well off, the very thing, the elixir of life. He was great with ladies, getting money out of wealthy old women and seducing young ones. Actually he had never been ordained: he wasn't a priest at all, he had no right to wear the yellow robe: he was a common swindler and should have been dealt with by the police under the ordinary criminal law. But just as the clergy were powerless, so the police were even more powerless, the laity, even the victims themselves, partly from reverence for the robe, partly from shame, especially the women, simply would not give evidence in open court. So all he had to do, when the neighborhood grew tired of him and he could get no more out of them, was to disappear, leaving no address, and continue his game in a new district where nobody knew him. There was no way of following him up, no hierarchy, no central office with a clergy list to which you could report him. When next I met him, several years later, he had passed through half a dozen districts and was still getting away with it.

Now for the 1931 rebellion, the rebellion lasted 18 months and we had to use 10 or 11 thousand men, troops and armed police battalions. Not that there was much actual fighting: you could hardly bring the rebels to action, they scattered and dispersed as soon as they heard troops were approaching: the only reason we had to use so many troops was to cover so large an area. Our casualties were next to nothing, only 39 killed, 39 in the whole 18 months. The rebels soon gave up attacking *us*, they attacked the general public, their own fellow countrymen, for not supplying them with food and money, or for giving us information against them. It wasn't even a single rebellion: the original rebellion covered only a few districts, but once it got a foothold, the infection spread, all the young hooligans everywhere joining in the fun, and ordinary criminals taking advantage of the general disorder to go in for robbery and dacoity. Altogether it spread to 12 out of the 40 districts in Burma, 12 out of 30 We took no fewer than 9000 prisoners, sending many of

them to trail by the judges who sentenced 1100, 1100 to long imprisonment and hanged 128: we hanged 128: A pretty grim business, to say nothing of the unfortunate general public whom the rebels looted and killed, as our troops couldn't be everywhere to protect them.

It wasn't a political rebellion. There was political discontent, the westernised classed demanding Dominion Status at an early date. But these people, the politically conscious classes had nothing to do with the rebellion. The rebels were country folk, didn't know English, hadn't heard of Dominion Status, weren't interested in politics: they aimed at setting up a king, and in the first few weeks, when they'd overrun half a district, they actually did so, crowning their leader king in a palace, a palace made of bamboo and tinsel paper, in a royal city consisting of huts on a jungle hilltop.

The Burmese parliament was only too glad to use the rebellion as a debating point, to jeer at the government's incompetence in allowing it to happen; they gave us no help whatever, indeed their continual opposition wasted a good deal of our time. Listening to the debates, you'd think the army was incompetent, the police tyrannical, we ourselves were nincompoops, the rebels misguided heroes, misunderstood. But this was mere politics. Actually they hated the rebellion even more than we did: being Burmese themselves, they were much nearer to the horror: we high officials were never in any danger, we had the troops: the politicians were mostly little men, unprotected: like the rest of the public they lived in fear of rebel atrocities, some of their friends and relatives had actually been killed. They might have given us more help during the rebellion. But then they hadn't even warned us it was coming. They didn't know: they knew little more than we did: indeed they knew less than some of our Burmese officers.

Oath Water had been drunk for a whole year before the rebellion broke out, but it was very secret, so even our Burmese police subordinates didn't hear of it for a long time, and then they felt embarrassed: how to tell their English superiors, how to explain a silly superstition, by their own people too, to educated English gentlemen? The English Commissioner of police they told was a friend of mine, not only a finer officer but a good fellow with whom they felt at ease, and he was really interested, it was such a new idea, he'd never heard it before. He understood it easily enough but only intellectually, not emotionally, he hadn't the necessary background, the historical background, the rather dreadful associations of the idea: it didn't link up with anything in his mind: or with anything that was going on just then, it wasn't urgent, just a curious isolated fact: there was evidently something weird going on, but it didn't some within the law, he didn't want to be hard on a lot of silly villagers, harmless little people, So he did nothing till two months later, when things began to happen. By then it was too late. As he says himself, if only he'd seen it from the first, and acted then, he might have nipped the rebellion in the bud, before it started.

Now contrast that with the Shan States. One day the ministers of a Shan Prince came to see me: I was Political Officer in those parts. They were called ministers, and they really were ministers, good ones too; but they lived on 4 or 5 hundred £ a year, and their prince, as decent and dutiful a prince as you could find anywhere, wasn't so very much better off himself. They came suddenly without warning, and I shall never forget the look on their faces. They said "The people, the people are drinking Oath Water: tow whole villages are drinking." I said, "What? to whom?" They said, "We simply don't know, we only heard of it this morning: but we've arrested every man jack of them, everyone who's drunk it." You see the difference? The swift instinctive reaction: they realised at

once, they aced within the hour. And they weren't harsh: the villagers were only ignorant dupes, and they were released in a few days, they went home quite happily, after a fatherly talk from the little prince himself.

And down in Burma Proper, who were the rebel leaders? Who was behind the great rebellion the kept us and our troops on the stretch for 18 months? They were all, everyone of them, priest-magicians.

They had attracted followers, thousands of followers, promising them success, making them invulnerable by means of charms and incantations. Not only did the magic turn our bullets into water, it made some of the rebels invisible, able to leap 50 feet high over the treetops, flying invisibly through the air; and of course all of them were invulnerable, our weapons could never wound them. This was actually proved in practice because, as I told you, often our troops couldn’t close with the rebels, or our marksmanship wasn't very good. But not always: for instance, we once noticed a group of villagers sitting under a tree, watching a skirmish between our men and the rebels; those villagers were on the point of being converted by the priest-magicians when we arrived, so they looked on, and when they saw the rebels falling dead under our bullets, they though better of it.

The leading magician, the man I told you was crowned king in a bamboo place on jungle hilltop, was a priest. Or rather he said he was, he wore the robe: actually he'd never been ordained, you couldn't have found him in the claergy list had there been a clergy list. His deputies, a round dozen of his principal lieutenants, were genuine priests whose behaviour had begun to scandalise respectable people even before the rebellion: they ought to have been unfrocked at once, for practicing magic.[1]

And all this happened in period of progress and enlightenment, 1931, when all of us, public men and officials, Burmese as well as British, were discussing the next step, what proposals were really practicable, Dominion Status and so forth: modern realities, not ancient history. It wasn't an Englishman, but a rising Burmese politician an enlightened person, who told me what happened in 1885 could have no possible bearing on the political and above all the economic problems of to-day: what use had all those old kings been, anyway? When distinguished visitors arrived we showed them the gilded throne, carefully preserved in the great empty palace, a picturesque but rather meaningless relic of a forgotten past. We didn't know one of those great empty room had once been an office, the board-room of a permanent commission, an Ecclesiastical Commission.

I did once hear Anthropology mentioned: "Anthropology why, of course it's about the sexual life of savages."

1 The leader had been a properly ordained monk, but he left the Order voluntarily before he took up politics; only tow or three of his followers, certainly not "a round dozen" had been ordained priests.

G.E. Harvey: Monsieur Haas and the Annexation of Upper Burma 1885

[Harvey gave this lecture to the Far Eastern Seminar of St. Antony's College, Oxford on Tuesday, 12 June 1962 at 5 p.m. with the late Mr. G.F. Hudson in the Chair. Although Mr. Hudson invited Harvey to submit the lecture for publication in the St. Antony's College Papers, Harvey never gave the typescript, although he did submit the typescript of his previous lecture on the We States which was duly published. The manuscript found among his paper was obviously a draft, which he use while giving the lecture. The greater part of the manuscript was hand-written, but in contrast to the manuscript of Burma 1885 it was not very legible in places; two or three pages were type-written.

I have not altered the punctuation, the syntax or even the old fashioned "shew". However, when some words are obviously missing, I have filled in the gap, but my words are given in italics so as to show that they are not Harvey's . Harvey also left some blank spaces after sub-headings, and I have filled up the space with my notes. As to the footnotes, except for one, they are by me.

The lecture begins with a remarkable indictment of the British Chief Commissioner, Fytche and Sladen, the British Resident at Mandalay and equally remarkable defence of King Mindon, betrayed by the British. As has been noted in the Introduction, Harvey here maintains that there was no French intrigue at the Burmese Court, the French were not interested in Burma which they fully recognised as being within the British sphere of influence, and Monsieur Haas far from being the villain, was almost the hero in the tragic drama of the Burmese Kingdom. While lashing the British, he dose not spare the Burmese either, and he does not hide his disapproval of Theebaw and his Court. But he does not repeat his accusations of drunkenness and tyranny which he leveled against the King some forty years before, and he plays down the Bombay Burma Case.

Thus he clearly finds that the charge of misrule against King Theebaw and the accusation of intrigue against the French were mere allegations and therefore could not have been the real causes of the Third Anglo-Burmese War. Then , why did the British annex Burma? Harvey fails to give a satisfactory answer and the last paragraph of his lecture is unsatisfactory and illogical. Had he not died in 1965 I am sure that with his meticulous scholarship and painstaking research, he would have discovered that it was the will and Pleasure of one single official, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill which destroyed the Burmese Kingdom.]

The search for a route to China lasted for decades, a whole generation. Neither the British nor the French Governments were greatly interested, save spasmodically the pressure, especially in England, came from Chambers of Commerce. Our government resisted it on financial and political grounds. Quite early, even before maps existed, we had reasons to believe an overland route impracticable for geographical reasons; in 1863 our officials at Rangoon got the Government of India to allow a survey only by explaining it was the only way of showing the Chambers of Commerce what the country was really like and that there was no route. As for political difficulty: any route lay through the kingdom of Burma's tribal or tributary territories where the mere appearance of our survey party led the chieftains to appeal to us

against the king of Burma - and we didn't want to offend him.[1]

However, national rivalry, Franco-British rivalry, stirred us to action: in 1868 the Government of India, a fortnight after refusing to allow an expedition as too expensive and likely to offend the King of Burma, only a fortnight later made a complete volte face and sanctioned an expedition which cost more and gave greater offence the all other expeditions put together. The reason is, they suddenly heard that the French expedition consisting of

> 1/2 a dozen senior French officers
> 2 dozen French Subordinates
> 100 sepoys,
> magnificently equipped,

travelling in great style, was exploring the Mekong River and about to visit the King of Burma at Mandalay. This is a good example of the wild exaggerations the time news takes to travel in these countries: Siam, Laos, Tonguing, look near to Burma on the map, but even to-day there is little contact with Burma, and in those days, before roads, telegraphs, there was no contact with Burma

The French expedition had already been 13 months, on the march, 13 months when the English at Rangoon first heard of it. It was the famous Doudart de Lagree-Garnier expedition but it didn't travel in style, it hadn't 100 sepoys, it had simply

> 6 French naval officers
> 3 French subordinates
> with whatever number of local native guides, coolies they could get at successive stages in their 6000 mile march, sometimes 30 or 60 men, sometimes only 4 or 5.

The King of Burma wanted them to visit Mandalay but they wouldn't go; their diary gives the reasons-

> "Too far off the line of march and all of it West of the Mekong River Where any surveys must be left to the English, not our affair." "Burma is in the British sphere of interest. Our going there would only encourage the King to go on imagining things-he's already been foolish enough to try and get sympathy from our government at Paris and they are tired of him."

The French ended up in rags, half starving. 2 of the 6 officers died of hardship, one of them the leader: but they succeeded; they were the first to reach the Yangtse from the southern coast, only 1300 direct miles, 1300, 6000 route miles, 6000: their achievement rivalled Livingstone's. Garnier, who became leader after Doudart de Legree's death, was given the Royal Geographical Society's Queen Victoria gold medal, and in 1871 he and Living-stone were bracketed alone in the hors *concouir* award of the First International Congress of Geography. Curiously enough they also died in the same year 1873, Livingstone on the march in Africa, Garnier killed in action at the siege of Hanoi: he was only 34 years old. His expedition proved, what was hitherto unknown, that the Mekong River is unnavigable.

I told you how, earlier, the news of his expedition had led to an English one. It was under Sladen, much larger and better equipped than the French incidentally it included 50 sepoys-but, for reasons I'll give you later in connection with King Mindon, it had to turn back after getting only 70 miles into China up to Tengyueh so it brought back no information. Or rather, it gave misinformation. Sladen had not a critical mind and, even in our then state of ignorance, it was a mistake to insist, in his report , that the first 70 miles were the real obstacle and the rest of the route up to Tail was easy.

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1 Harvey was not quite correct. It was British officers like Colonel Sladen who presented the chieftains with guns and encouraged them to rebel against the king. See Maung Htin Aung The stricken Peacock. P. 62.

1868-75 were crucial years from our geographical knowledge of a route through Yunnan. In 1868 Cooper, sent up the yangtse by British merchants at Shanghai via the upper Yangtse to Calcutta, reached the Tibet border and saw enough of the Himalayas to know there was no route. By 1871 Sir Henry Yule, the leading geography student in England, felt these overland routes must be chimeras. In 1872 the German traveller von Richthofen found in the west part of Yunnan what the Doudart de Lagree-Garnier expedition had found in the eastern. By 1875 the facts were available all over Europe- Yunnan consists of mountain ranges running north to south or NW to SE, running down from Tibet; even when they taper down they're still 8 or 9000 feet ridges, the valleys between them, just where any route must cross. more like crevasses than valleys. As Richthofen side of the very area Sladen thought would be easy, the Mekong and Salween valleys alone would require 3 or 4 St. Gotthard tunnels, railways. It was the railway age; everyone, whatever their political opinions, knew that railways were the panacea for all progress. From the first, the Burma route was to be a railway, and its apostle was Sprye. Poor little Captain Sprye had served in the 1824-26 Burma war and remained there as a military works buildings officer till retiring in 1831. He was down in Moulmein and never went inland but he got the idea from the Chinese mule caravans that came from Szemao through the Burmese tributary, Shan States to Moulmein. Just before retiring to England in 1831 he memorialised Lord Bentinck, the Viceroy of India recommending a tram-way to Szemao. In 1852 he began memorialising the London Government: 1852 was only the beginning: in this first decade, after counting more than 100 memorials or letters over his own signature, I gave up counting, He was still at it a couple of years before his death at the age of 80 in 1878. These are only documents he signed himself: he was also behind the flood of Chamber of Commerce memorials for nearly 3 decades. [1] After the Tientsin and Peking treaties the first seven years alone, 1860-67, there were 46 memorials, 46, from Chambers of Commerce in Britain. Look at Szemao: a wood and thatch village of a few hundred inhabitants swollen in the few weeks of the mule caravan season to 4 or 5000, 5000. In the Chamber of Commerce memorials it became a great emporium, a minor Liverpool or Manchester: and similarly Yunnan was a thickly populated prosperous country, full of great cities connected by high roads and navigable rivers. Why did the bureaucratic government of India stand in the way of all progress, wasting public money on vain-glorious annexations unnecessary armies on the Northwest Frontier, Afghanistan? If only practical business men were put in charge, there'd be a Burma-China railway in less than no time, at no cost: business men wanted no government help, they 'd find the money themselves, they wanted nothing; only a guaranteed interest and just ordinary peaceful conditions along the line. Bureaucrats lacked imagination - they did indeed, but they knew enough to retort; in all Yunnan there are only two places you could call cities, and they're unconnected by road: the country had no roads or navigable rivers, it's poor and thinly populated, only 51 people to the square mile, 51, their mule caravans down through the Burma Shan States don't amount to much, all the real stuff goes down the Yangtse: it won't go by enormously expensive railway through the mountains to Rangoon when it already slips easily down the Yangtse with crowded market towns all along the banks waiting to buy it, and finally Shanghai a much greater port than Rangoon.

1 An account of Kinwun Mingyi's experience and confrontation with the chambers of Commerce is given in First Burmese Mission. PP. 69-89.

As for the annexations you dislike, you can't have a railway through bandit-ridden country without extra-territorial Jurisdiction along the line, indeed experience shows if you begin by building a railway, you only too often end by having to annex the country . Mere facts like these had little effect; man will not believe what they don't want to believe. The stream of memorials continued, dwindling only for a time in the 70s. Sprye's arguments were revived in a new, more unscrupulous form towards the end of my period, in 1883 as I'll tell you later.

One reason why they dwindled in the 70s was not only Sprye's death but the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company extended its steamer service, very large steamers like the Mississippi showboats you see on the films, from Mandalay to Bhamo on the Yunnan frontier, 980 river miles from the sea, 980 miles. The Irrawaddy Flotilla was a Glasgow company, so the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce became converted to this river route and no longer supported Sprye's railway scheme.

Mindon's 4 grievances against us

(1) Pegu

[After the heading "Pegu" Harvey left a blank space in his manuscript, obviously intending to fill in the gap later. The rich province of Pegu was occupied and then annexed by the British in the Second Anglo-Burmese war of 1852 after a display of gunboat diplomacy. Prince Mindon, as the leader of the peace party at the Burmese court, deposed his brother Pagan Min, and as the new king, he opened negotiations with the British for the return of the province to him, but the British were adamant. According to G.F. Hudson, Fellow of the St. Antony's College who, as has been stated above, was the chairman of the seminar. Harvey would not concede that it was a war of aggression on the part of the British, insisting that the Burmese provoked he war, but he expressed sympathy for King Mindon's peaceful efforts to get back the territory; Harvey also gave the opinion that a part of the province should have been returned to the king as a gesture of goodwill.]

(2) ARMS. The treaty of 1867 contained a clause allowing Mindon to import arms subject to English approval At the final meeting the Burmese refused to sing unless this clause was modified, so Fytche gave them a letter promising the approval would never be withheld; when reporting to the Government of India he included the letter, they agreed and it thus became part of the treaty. For the next two years they allowed Mindon's arms imports but in 1870 when he wanted to import 100 Large cannon they refused and confronted with the letter, said it was not binding. Worse still, the Secretary of State in London rejected the draft put up by his distinguished advisor, a draft telling them they bound by the letter, they must honour their promise, and refused to intervene. It was a clear breach of faith, long remembered by Mindon.

The English were not simply " keeping natives in their places." All European governments discouraged the arms traffic: there were terrible instances at this time of uncivilised tribes using cheap firearms literally to exterminate each other: and Asian princes were sometimes careless letting their arms fall into dacoit hands. But Burma, though backward, was civilised; her government might be ineffective in some ways but not as regards arms: her Kings kept them heavily guarded in the palace arsenal and it is unlikely that they ever fell into dacoit hands.

Mindon wanted the latest arms from Europe; these were expensive and experience had shown them to be unserviceable in India but it was his own affair if he wasted money. As the Secretary of State's advisor said, Mindon would never make war and even if

he had a successor foolish enough to do so, such arms could be no danger; the more complicated the arms Burma had the more useless they would by as she had not the men to maintain them. In practice Mindon was probably allowed all the arms he needed and also saved much money, to the relief of his finance minister. But the English were behaving like a nursery governess. [1]

(3) Mindon's third grievance was Sladen. You remember Sladen, in his expedition, got only 70 miles into China and brought back only misinformation. If that was all, it wouldn't have mattered. It was Sladen's Behaviour. I know it's cheap to crab or predecessors: one's made many bloomers oneself. Reading old records, our predecessor's innumerable mistakes, they were generally ordinary decent men, limited but not cads. Sladen's case is different: Mindon had trusted him, accepted him the first British Resident to be received at his Court; overridden hid ministers, made himself unpopular with them by accepting Sladen's advice. He and Sladen were good friends. During an attempted palace revolution when Mindon's beloved brother, virtually a Joint King was killed and Mindon himself escaped by a hair's breadth-assassins cutting down every one within reach, blood all over the palace floors, courtiers panic-stricken, running like rabbits. Mindon handed Sladen his own jewelled sword as a symbol of authority: " I'll see to this lot here. You go out into the courtyard and take charge of that lot there." Sladen did no more than any decent man would have done but Mindon remembered it and didn't mind the rubbish talked, printed in Rangoon newspapers, about Sladen saving the King's life at the risk of his own, the poor oriental King ever thereafter feeding out of his hand, accepting the guidance of the strong silent white man: you know the sort of stuff. Mindon didn't mind that: what stuck in his throat was the expedition, the reasons Sladen gave for it failure.

Mindon was just as keen as Sladen on the expedition: he did a lot of state trade himself with Yannan, he wanted to find the land route on his won account, gave the expedition every possible help, sending it, Sladen and all, on his own royal steamer to Bhamo, shared their expectation of going right through all the 200 miles, 200, to Tali; he was bitterly disappointed when they turned back after only 70 miles; the reason was, all this area was Kachin, Kachin tribes, slave raiders, blackmailers over whom neither Burmese nor Chinese had any control. The Kachins let the Chinese mule caravans through to Bhamo under an old established system of blackmail: naturally they wouldn't let a newcomer like Sladen through: they impeded his every step, night and day, cut off his supplies. Of course he could have pushed trough-he had 50 sepoys and the Kachins would have had the shock of their lives: they'd never experienced rifle fire-but just then, for various reasons, we didn't want bloodshed.

The Burmese Deputy Commissioner at Bhamo had died just before Sladen's expedition, his successor hadn't arrived, and during the interregnum one of his clerks, bribed by the Chinese merchants at Tail who ran the mule caravans, wrote to the Kachin chiefs saying the expedition need not return alive. Naturally, as trade rivals, the Chinese didn't want the English, but it was none the less a stupid letter: even if we'd discovered a route, they 'd have benefited even more than we did -no European business, however efficient, has even been able to compete with

1 A detailed account of the controversy over the arms clause of the treaty is given in Maung Htin Aung, The First Burmese Mission to the Court of St. James's .P. 14.
The Advisor was Sir John Kaye and the Secretary of State, Duke of Argyll, The First Burmese Mission P. 142.
Kay's successor as advisor, Major Burney held the same opinion as Harvey's; First Burmese Mission .P. 193.

Chinese distributors in the interior. An unnecessary letter: the Kachins would have ruined Sladen's expedition in any case; Probably it was only the sight of his 50 sepoys that prevented their killing him; they didn't need any telling.

Any sensible man would have simply left that letter, with rest of the evidence, on the file. Instead, Sladen talked. In Rangoon he went about implying at semipublic meetings, that it had been instigated by Mindon's government -as if Mindon, or the sort of men he selected as ministers, did that sort of things: it wasn't in keeping with their character.

In London Sladen told the Royal Geographical Society, and the British Public, he'd been prevented from discovering an overland route by the obstructive of Mindon's government. Mindon knew of all this at the time from his Press reader, and soon he was to have a whole book, a book issued by Fytche, Sladen's chief, the governor at Rangoon.

Of 18 successive service governors of Burma, 18, Fytche stands out by himself. He printed 1000 copies of the book, containing the entire correspondence, reports, confidential documents on the expedition, to show the business world how unwilling and indifferent the government of India and Home government were to progress, and how he had to insist. Government never heard of this book till Fytche was due to retire in any case, so all they could do was to recall and destroy all the copies they could get. The scandalous breach of the publication rules didn't really matter as all the higher level confidential stuff was harmless; what did matter were documents by Sladen himself and one of his companions, a Rangoon port surveyor hired for the occasion to examine river navigation near Bhamo, no doubt a competent surveyor from some back street in Glasgow, but his report is not confined to technical matters: it says

"Our expedition was only ostensibly allowed by the King of Burma, that arch-miscreant who had plotted to prevent our returning alive .....We should deal with this half-clothed savage, this so-called King, the brutal despot whose only policy is the amassing of riches, he propagation of abominable idolatrous superstitions and the gratification of sensual indulgences..... when will our weak-kneed Home government do its Christian duty and free this tyrant's oppresed people from his grinding taxation, corruption and cruelty-boys of tender years, infirm old mean flogged to death in the streets or publicly crucified with a barbarity that beggars description and from his extortionate monopolies subverting the legitimate channels of trade so that no one can buy or sell in the market place with out official permission..... His people long for our rule, and daily they ask " when, when are the British coming?"

Sladen's report is of course less crude but it calmly considers what trade routes will be rendered possible by the annexation of the Burmese Kingdom and indeed of this part- Bhamo- Tengyueh- of Yunnan.

So now Mindon Knew what Sladen really was: he'd nursed a viper in his bosom. He said , "That man! That man! I won't have him here again. If your government sends him back here on his return from leave, I'll turn my guns on the steamer bringing him up the river." So we didn't send him back.

The two extracts [1] I've read were no worse than what had been appearing in British Indian and Rangoon Press for at Least a dozen years. One governor of Burma privately wished he could hang all Editors; " the harm they do to race relations.

1 Only one extract given in the manuscript.

why can't they leave the king alone?"; and another said of the British in Rangoon, "They've got Annexation on the brain, Sooner than annex nothing, they'd annex Dante's Inferno." Hitherto we'd been able to tell Mindon, quite truthfully, that we didn't control the press, it didn't represent our views. But Sladen's were in Official documents: Mindon now knew we were two-faced.

Mindon's 4th grievance-the "Shihko"

[After the heading "Shihko" Harvey again left a space in the manuscript; "Shihko" meaning to " supplicate" refers to the Burmese Court etiquette which required persons having an audience with the King to remove their shoes and kneel before the throne. According to Mr. G. F. Hudson, Harvey was in full sympathy with Mindon and said that it was vital for the King to maintain his prestige with his people, to require a British envoy to conform to the Court etiquette, pointing out that until late in Mindon's reign, the British had never made an issue of it . King Mindon in the circumstances was in no position to accede to the British request that their envoy be exempted from the customary requirement. As the government of India then instructed the British Resident at Mandalay not to seek any further audience with the king, there was a complete break down of diplomatic communication between the Burmese and the British, which must inevitably lead to war. Harvey felt that the British should have been less rigid, so that a compromise could have been worked out. [1]

I now come to Burma's Foreign relations. She obtained only three treaties besides those with Britain; before dealing with them, here are specimens of her activities

Burma's first treaty was with Italy (March) 1871, an accident- the king of Italy, a newly founded kingdom, waned to put his country on the map; you'll remember how he had advertised his existence by sending a contingent to the Crimea. He now sent a corvette on a 3 1/2 years cruise to Japan, showing the flag over the Far East , and to make a treaty with a Sultan (Brunei) in Borneo. He happened to hear of Burma from a friend of Mindon's , an Italian missionary at Mandalay , so he thought he might as well have a treaty with Burma. It was a simple trade treaty, and Racchia, the corvette commander found it quite easy till towards the end when the Burmese insisted on a clause allowing them to import arms. He explained arms aren't included in ordinary trade treaties, besides, it's unfriendly to your neighbour the English. But that was precisely why the Burmese wanted it; he was struck by their detestation of the English- he uses a stronger term, odio mortale, " undying hatred" - over the loss of Pegu, their determination to reconquer Pegu. They said, it can be a secret clause; he said no, impossible. He held out for three days and finally drafted a clause which satisfied the Burmese: it allowed them to import arms subject to existing friendships: and as Italy was on friendly terms with England, that made it all right. [2]

Mindon's second treaty was wit France 1873, 1873 when at last he seemed successful. His first envoy to Paris in 1854 hadn’t been duly accredited; and a properly constituted embassy in 1856, 56, though courteously received, was unsuccessful, for the following reasons in the French Foreign Office note, more contemptuous than anything I've found in our own files: it says [Extract was not given in the manuscript]

It was their attitude till 1873. He kept on writing to them, Some of his requests were reasonable: he wanted engineers, geologists, surveyors and the French went to considerable trouble, recommending reliable men and

1 Queen Victoria made Kinwun Mingyi grovel on the floor in the audience chamber of Windsor Castle in 1872, some years before the British made an issue of the Burmese court ceremonial, First Burmese Mission. P. 68

2 A detailed account of the treaty is given in First Burmese Mission. PP. 192-193.

sending him estimates of the cost: whereupon they heard no more. Most of his requests were inadvisable he wanted French officers to train his army , and once he asked the French Admiralty for a small battleship, an armourclad.

However, in 1873 their attitude changed. Stung by their defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, there was a new spirit, for instance a proliferation of geographical societies, soon outnumbering those in Germany hitherto the most numerous in Europe. Neither now nor later were they interested in Burma, but she was in the same part of the word as Tongking, and they were now expanding in Tongking. So when in 1873 the Burmese envoys, disappointed in London, came to Paris asking for treaty, any treaty, a simple trade treaty; the French thought it might be interesting and at any rate could do no harm.

A year after the treaty's signature at Paris, De Rochechouart took it to Mandalay for ratification by Mindon. It had taken a year because whereas in England treaties fall under the prerogative and need not come before Parliament, under the cumberous French procedure they had to pass through Parliament. De Rochechouart was on his way to China to join his appointment as first secretary at the Peking Legation. He took with him several junior officers nominally as attaches, merely to see the world. They stayed with the Viceroy in India, with the Governor of British Burma in Rangoon, and went on to spend a few pleasant days, perhaps a week, at Mandalay: they'd heard of the charm of the Burmese people, the picturesqueness of the Palace, the very real dignity and goodness of King Mindon. And it all came up to expectation -until they got down to business: they spent not one but eleven weeks, and left feeling reduced to pulp.

An office exchanging ratifications has no power to discuss, let alone alter a dot or comma in a treaty: he can only present his credentials, verify the texts and exchange the signatures. De Rochechouart naturally thought, when the Burmese started talking about the treaty, that is was mere conversation. Before he knew where he was, he was in for it: Mindon would not sign without additional clauses making the treaty a defensive alliance, a defensive alliance between France and Burma.

De Rochechouart was struck with the Burmese Court's powers of imagination. He and the British Resident sometimes dined together and exchanged information unofficially. One day one of the ministers told the Resident, that Rochechouart was becoming quite reasonable, he was offering to send 500 French officers to train the Burmese army. The Resident repeated this to De Rochechouart at dinner. Said Rochechouart, "Frenchmen to train these scallywags! How long have you been in this comic country?" "Twenty years" said the Englishman. "Twenty years!" said De Rochechouart, and you still retain your sanity! I am going off my head already. Why, when you English annexed Pegu in 1852, didn't you annex the whole country?"

The Burmese wanted not only a defensive alliance for the future, but here and now a railway to Saigon-not even roads in their own country-didn't seen to know where Saigon was - independent tribes and hill states in between, they didn't know. [1]

De Rochechouart finally induced the Burmese to accept the following blanket clause to cover all their requests:-

1 A surprising observation; Laos and Chiengmai until recently, and Siam earlier, had been under- Burmese rule.

"The French government, having the interest of Burma at hear, will give its friendly offices when ever the Burmese government request them in writing." He showed this to the British Resident, and to the governor at Rangoon, saying "It's harmless enough." "No," said they, " to the Burmese that's an alliance." Of course the French government wouldn't look at it, and the whole treaty was dead. [1]

There was no Anglo-French friction until the 1880s when changes in French trade policy began to make us alarmed at her colonial expansion. Under Napoleon III she had been free trade, (1860 Anglo-French "The Cobden Treaty" denounced in 1872) Cobdenite, but the German war indemnity drove her to Protectionism. Our first warning came in the Scramble for Africa: until 1881 our Colonial Office thought French expansion would help us as we would share the trade in the new French areas. But in 1881 French treaties with the chiefs on the Upper Niger showed us we wouldn't: the treaties gave French traders privileges denied to all others: we now knew our trade would be excluded wherever France went. The French Consul who accompanied or followed the French Explorer became Public Enemy No. I in English eyes.

1881 was also the year when, not unknown to us at the time, the Paris government first saw that their Tongking frontier would have to be the Mekong River. And 1882 saw our final failure to maintain contact with Burma. After Mindon's death in 1878 things went to pieces: his successors reign was discreditable. Mindon was out of his depth in foreign affairs but internally he was an admirable administrator: never for a moment would he have allowed the sort of thins that went on under his successor Thibaw. The British Resident hadn't been much use for the last tow years of his reign, in Thibaw's he was no use at all, ostracised, shunned and in October 1879 we withdrew him. The Burmese probably thought it a good riddance. [2]

But later in 1882, they welcomed our offer to discuss the renewal of relations. But on new terms: they were tired of treaties with the government of India: they nearly had one with France, they actually had one with Italy. Why not with England? They'd be quite reasonable: they'd allow one with the Victory of India, provided they had a treaty with Queen Victoria. So in 1882 the Burmese asked for discussions with the Viceroy; he sent a ship to bring the envoys and gave them warm clothes for Simla. They wanted a treaty with England and Queen Victoria was willing. But when they said that although the Resident could return he must follow former usage and anly Queen Victoria's representative would be allowed modern usage, they were told both must be treated alike. At the end of 3 months they contrived to get a telegram from Mandalay recalling them "for further consultation". By this time even Lord Ripon had had enough; he'd been at some pains to get Queen Victoria's consent for treaty with her and when bidding them au revoir he told them, in words of one syllable, the Queen's offer was no longer open but he hoped to see them back to consider his own treaty. After some months consideration, they sent us their basis for continuing negotiations: the Simla discussions might never have happened, Lord Ripon never have spoken: their basis was simply their two original treaties - one with the Queen, her representative allowed to stand; the other with the Viceroy, his representative kneeling.

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1 A detailed account of the treaty is given in First Burmese Mission. pp. 116, 118, 191 & 193

2 Another strange observation. The Burmese Court, alarmed at the closing down of the Residency at once dispatched a good-will mission to Calcutta, but it was stopped by the British authorities at the frontier town of Thayetmyo and was not permitted to proceed any further. The Stricken Peacock. p. 72.

The failure at Simla didn't worry the Burmese much: they'd given up expecting much from the English. What did worry them was something that happened soon after Simla - a prince and a comet. Long years ago Prince Myingun, Mindon's son, having failed to kill his father, fled into British territory where he was interned and forgotten. But now he was remembered: Thibaw's misgovernment made him so unpopular that some people wanted Myingun to replace him: even at the Mandalay Court there were persons in secret communication with Myingun: he kept on asking the government of India to put him on the throne or at least let him get into Burma and take his chance, but of course they wouldn't. So he escaped to French territory, Pondicherry, he and his followers in Burma imagining they'd had better luck with the French. The Mandalay Palace also imagined it, and as there was a comet which seemed to predict his success, they sent an embassy to Paris asking for his extradition: they thought refusal to extradite political offenders was an English peculiarity.

Myingun was once reported as being on his way, with French help to Siam and the Shan States where he'd march to Mandalay. The interesting thing is the way the British community at Rangoon took this news: they thought the French were helping him because once on the throne he'd exclude British merchants and transfer the kingdom's trade from Rangoon to Saigon; Saigon would then beat Rangoon and become the great port. [1]

As the French Consul at Rangoon noted a the time; "the curious Press out burst misses the whole point; if even we French were to intrigue on behalf of Myingun, it couldn't be for the kingdom or its trade, which are already irrevocably British, but for the influence he claims to have in the Shan States and the use he might be to us in staking out our claim against the English in undefined parts of Mekong frontier."

That's what the French Consul at Rangoon wrote in 1883. By this year 1883 Colquhoun, Holt Hallett, George Scott campaign was in full blast. [2]

So when the French made their final advance into the interior of Tongking in 1883,

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1 So it was the English merchants at Rangoon who were unaware of the existence of geographical, tribal, and political barriers that lay between Burma and Saigon. cf. p. 3 above.

2 Mr. A.R. Colquhoun of the India Public Works Department travelled, with the permission of the Chinese Government but disguised as a Chinese for safety and accompanied only by a Chinese interpreter, overland from Canton to Bhamo. He Left Canton in February 1882 and reached Bhamo in the following July. His journey revived the demand by English merchants to build a railway to Yannan. His campaign for such a railway was supported by Holt Hallett and George Scott (latter Sir George Scott, a supposed expert on Burma.), in their newspaper articles. They voiced the fear that French expansionist policy in Indo-China would result in their establishing a monopoly of the trade with Yunnan. Any talk on a railway to Yunnan of French advances in Indo-China raised the topic of the alleged barbaric attitudes of the Burmese. The following extract from a speech given in Bombay at a reception for Colquhoun reflected the fierceness of the campaign against Burma:-

> "If Burma were governed by a civilised monarch instead of by a savage despot there could not fail to be a repaid development of the country lying between Burma and China, and much of the trade which now flows westward and find an outlet by the Chinese ports would gravitate towards Burma. As matters now stand, however, the short-sighted and ignorant Ruler of Burma is not likely to take advantage of the opening now presented to him. I fear until some radical change takes place there this splendid opportunity will be lost, and the fruits of Mr. Colquhoun's exertions will never be gathered," Dorothy Woodman, pp. 199-200.

Mindon's successor King Thibaw saw his opportunity. A fresh Franco Burman commercial treaty was being negotiated in Paris [1] And the Burmese kept on insisting it should include a clause to import arms. This was the one thing the French had always refused to do, even in Mindon's time, partly because they didn't trust the Burmese, Partly because they didn't want to offend the English. Now that they were getting into the interior of Tongking they had an additional reason for not wanting to supply arms: a government like King Thibaw's government did not maintain sufficient discipline among the troops for the arms to be safe in their hands, the men and even some of their officers were so slack they might allow them to be stolen, occasionally they deserted and took to dacoity. There were quite reasonable grounds for fearing that any arms the French supplied might be used against themselves, having been handed over to the insurgents in Tongkin: Tongkin was far from pacified.

Yet finally the French gave away. When the new commercial treaty was ready for signature at Paris in 1885 at the very last moment when the pen was put into the Burmese Ambassador's hand, he refused point blank to sign unless he was given at least some sort of promise about arms. So Jules Ferry gave him the following letter as the French Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign affairs.

To the Burmese Ambassador

Paris, 15 January 1885

Your Excellency,

With reference to your Excellency's oral request regarding the transport through the province of Tongkin to Burma of arms of various Kinds, ammunition and military stores generally: amicable arrangements will be come to with the Burmese government for the passage of the same, where peace and order prevail in Tongkin, and the officers stationed there are satisfied that it is proper and that there is no danger.

sd. Jules Ferry

There are four points to note about this letter: [2]

(i) it is not part of the public treaty, and though written on the same day is not even an annex to it: it is simply a secret assurance in writing;

(ii) it could be legitimately denied to 3rd parties, because it is what in Burma you would call a Demi-Official Letter. An official letter beginning " Sir" and ending " I have the honour to be Sir, your most obedient servant" can be quoted, at least as between different department, and if a dressed to a member of the public it can be quoted by the public. But a Demi-Official Letter beginning. "Dear Jones" and ending " Yours sincerely" is like a minute on the note string, an internal memorandum which doesn't leave the office save by courtesy to another department, the public cannot demand to see it, even another department cannot quote it against you, let alone the public. It isn't part of the formal record, you are not bound by it to 3rd parties, though of course you are in common decency bound by it to the other party, the addressee;

(iii) Whereas the treaty was formal, bilateral, and entered into for mutual consideration: this letter was informal, unilateral, given by one party in return for no apparent consideration: received from the other party: it could hardly be enforced, it was revocable. Much in the same way as under paragraph

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1 i.e. by the embassy sent originally to request extradition of the Myingun Prince, as mentioned above

2 Obviously Harvey wished to emphasise that there was a fundamental difference between Fytche's letter and Ferry's letter.

92 Evidence Act [1], an oral variation to the plain terms of any formal written contract cannot even be proved, let alone enforced.

(iv) in any case this particular letter promised little or nothing, only sympathetic consideration to a Burmese request for arms if and when French District officers at Tongkin should certify there was no risk to law and order, a certificate they were not likely to grant for many a long year seeing the state of brigandage and insurgency there.

Two months after the letter Ferry was turned out of office and an anti-imperialist government came in. The way it happened was this.

The advance into Tongkin was dragging on, costing much more than it seemed to be worth in men and money. For a time the Central Government in China sent troops to help their vassal the Emperor of Annam; SBB 400-01[2] says they inflicted several defeats on the French, quite severe defeats; this is nonsense: the whole affair was very second rate. The Chinese were only halfhearted and they soon signed away their suzerainty to the French. But just before they did so, a local Chinese commander cut up some French troops.

The news of this defeat (Virginia Thompson p.68) telegraphed to Paris, produced a terrific explosion of public opinion. Half France had always rather disliked Ferry's colonial ambitions, and this put the lid on it. Ferry's jealous rivals saw their chance, they had a full debate in Parliament immediately after the telegram, and Ferry was throws out in one of the stormiest sessions in the history of the Chamber on 30 March 1885.

Next day came the news that the Central Chinese Government had signed the peace and also that French hadn't been half as badly cut up as was thought, it had advanced the morning after the defeat and found the Chinese had fled during the night. But that made no difference in Paris. The new French Government had already taken over. This new ministry under Freycinet was anti-colonial, they would never had gone into Tongkin at all, but of course now they were in, they had to go on with it, and in point of fact things, were going quite well now.

However, they did no more than they could help, especially in Burma. The only real commitment they had in Burma was the commercial treaty, and they didn't mind that, it was harmless enough; as for Demi- Official Letter about importing arms, it was only a conditional Promise and committed them to little or nothing even it they troubled to read it.

Now we've finished with France and turn to Burma.

As I said only in 1885 did France take the initiative. She was now approaching the Mekong and might soon have a common frontier with Burma. She had to stake out a claim but even here it was a claim against England rather than Burma. [3]

When, in 1885, Jules Ferry posted Haas as Consul *de carriere*, to Mandalay, he had no interest in Burma per se, no desire to meddle in her internal affairs, his sole object being to secure as his frontier the east bank of the Mekong at Keng Hung over which Burma shares, with China, a vague suzerainty.

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1 i.e. The Indian Evidence Act. The same rule of course applied in English Common Law, as the English rules of evidence were embodied in the Act. Harvey referred to the Act, probably because it was more precise and clear to the non-lawyers as it was a statute.

2 I have not been able to identify " SBB"

3 Because France expected that Upper Burma would be annexed by the British very soon.

Ø 4 U.P. - N. 75-1,100-16-10-75. B.S.

Haas had a wretched time. The first thing the ministers did after presenting him to Thibaw was to enquire what help France would give them against England. He said, "None Whatever, under any circumstances, and if you go on behaving as you do, you'll be annexed before long, the most I can suggest..... and I am speaking unofficially, I have no instructions ..... is a joint guarantee of your independence (as in the case of Belgium) by the Great Powers, and even then the execution of that guarantee will be left mainly to England: you'll still have to deal with the English."

From that day on he was dropped, treated with social courtesy but boycotted on official matters. Unable to get any information on trade or geography, or even to hear what was going on, he began to wonder whether the Burmese had not a secret treaty with the English. He knew so little about the Bombay Burma case that weeks after the Hluttaw had passed judgement against them he was wondering what was happening to the case; and merely for mentioning this he was snubbed by the Quai d' Orsay Wich told him it was no concern of his but a matter entirely between the Burmese and the English.

As to the famous concession granted to French financiers at Haas's instance (sic), neither he, his chiefs, nor any French financier had any knowledge of them till they saw our blue book a year later. Of the three alleged concessionaires, company chairmen, managing directors and etc, one was doubtless a qualified engineer (more or less solvent) wandering about in South East Asia, but the other two were mere hangers on of the Mandalay Palace, not worth £500 between them; one was so hard up that Sir Charles Bernard, the Chief Commissioner [1] gave him Rs. 100 , and both were overjoyed at being appointed Head Constables at Rs. 120 a month in the Burma Police.

A few years ago, before deciding to get onto the Quai d' Orsay files, I began to doubt the concession documents; when placed said by side, considered as a whole, they overlap and are so mutually inconsistent as to seem improbable. But in 1885 they drifted in only at intervals and were never considered as a whole, HMG (Lord Salibury) took immediate action on the first to arrive, showing them to the French Ambassador, Waddington (incidentally a Cambridge rowing blue), and on obtaining his emphatic disavowal we lost interest, never troubling to examine the documents that arrived subsequently: the French disavowal had given us the green light, and the case had gone through.

If we had still had a Resident at Mandalay things might have been different. our withdrawing him goes back ultimately to the shoewear question; our insistence that he must no longer unshoe or kneel in the King's presence was a sop to our unofficial community's feeling that it was degrading (none of our Residents under Mindon felt it in the least degrading, their only complaint being that kneeling for hours on a hard floor during private audience, alone with the King, was uncomfortable.) Had we still had a Resident in 1885, Haas would have exchanged guarded confidences with him, and we would not have been misled. As it was, our only information came from Andreino, the BBTC Agent and part-time Italian Consul, a man of little education who in turn, had to rely on palace talk, bazaar gup, Burmese boastings of all that they were about to get out of the French against us. (Tennyson Jesse's Lacquer Lady shews what our information amounted to; it is

1 Harvey on previous pages of this lecture referred to the Chief Commission of British Burma as the "Governor" In ordinary conversation Chief Commissioners, Lieutenant Governors and Governors were referred to as " Governor" as they were directly under the Viceroy as Heads of provinces, the difference in term merely denoting the size of the particular provinces.

more than a more movel as it follows our files closely, often incorporating their very words.)[1]

Haas's well meant words to the Burmese about guarantee of their independence by the Great Powers were distorted by wishful thinking; they underly the Burmese demand (in their reply to our 1885 ultimatum) that we refer our dispute to France, Italy and other Powers [2].....France, whose attitude Haas had explained to them in words of one syllable; Italy, whom they had not even sounded on the point, whose consul was our principal or almost sole informant (or misinforming) and who hastened to congratulate us on the very day we notified the annexation.

One reason why Burma offered so little resistance to our advance on Mandalay was, they had persuaded themselves that the Great powers were about to intervene. [3] Only when our troops had reached Yandabo, almost within sight of the palace, and a place of ill men since 1824, did the truth dawn on them; seeing is believing And then they simply crawled: Thibaw's letter to General Predergast at Yandabo is a child's cry for mercy, one of the most abject letters even written by a government. [4]

Chief Commissioner, Viceroy's Council, India Office and Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury) were unanimously against intervention in Burma; their attitude to the yelps of humanitarians and Chambers of Commerce was on of thinly veiled contempt; but the facts were too strong for them. we no more wanted Upper Burma than we wanted Afghanistan. But Burma was on the periphery between two empires, and her behaviour was in glaring contrast with that of Afghanistan, the other peripheral country. The Indian Empire was being encircled on the west by Russia, on the east by France.

Even before the Pended incident the Amir of Afghanistan had started out to meet the Viceroy face to faces, like a man, telling him his people disliked the English almost as much as the Russians, and it was more than his throne was worth to accept a single English officer even as adviser or troop trainer, but he'd accept with both hands any other help, provided

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1 Miss Tennyson Jesse, and India office records shew that Andreino was the chief British spy at Mandalay. The Stricken Peacock. P.82.

2 It was not a ' demand' but a suggestion, an appeal.

3 Yet another surprising observation. The Burmese did not resist because they believed that the British were merely replacing King Theebaw with another Prince. The Stricken Peacock. P.90

4 The letter was drafted by Haas, who accompanied the British ultimatum from Rangoon to Mandalay, with the tacit consent of the Chief Commissioner, at whose residence he had been staying. The information that he had been staying with the Chief Commissioner was given in the India Office records and that he accompanied the ultimatum was given in the contemporary pass reports. The information that the drafted the letter was given in a book written by Haas himself under the pseudonym of Lehault, entitled La France et L'angleterre an Asia. Both Haas and the Burmese court must have honestly believed the tone and the contents of the letter would save the kingdom.

Harvey was obviously familiar with the book, because information regarding the conversation the Haas had with the ministers was found only in the book and in the Quia d' Orsay records. However, he probably overlooked Haas's account of the drafting of the letter by him.

Harvey's own footnote:

What then were those documents, contracts and concessions? I can only point to the fact, of which we have evidence on other occasions about this time. that Burmese ministers, or at least their secretaries used to turn a dishonest panny by dangling draft concessions (which seldom came to anything) before the eyes of gullible white men hanging around the Court. (Maung Htin Aung's note. Surely they were Anderson's forgeries?).

no strings were attached. Lord Dufferin the Viceroy, the officials, at Simla and White Hall who dealt with his case were the very men who, six months later had the to deal with Theebaw; the contrasting facts passed through the very same minds. [1]

1. One official, none other then the Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill listened to the Chambers of Commerce, and he alone among the authorities wanted to annex Upper Burma as the golden gateway to Yunnan.

   The question of Afghanistan was handled by Lord Salisbury, not as Prime Minister, but as Foreign Minister, whereas the question of Burma was handled by Lord Randolph Churchill. Russia was interested in Afghanistan; and France was not interested in Burma, which was Harvey's theme throughout the lecture. yet Burma was annexed; it would have been logical to have the Burmese kingdom as a buffer state as in the case of Afghanistan.

G.E. Harvey: A Letter to an I.C.S. Colleague

[Harvey wrote the following letter in December 1922 soon after his stay at a sanitarium in Switzerland, and on the eve of his return to Burma. Apparently, Harvey and a discussion with some I.C.S. colleagues who like himself were on leave in London, of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms which had been recently introduced in India, and were in the process of being introduced in Burma. The identity of the addressee of the letter is not known. One arrival back in Burma, Harvey sent cyclostyled copies of the letter to some I.C.S. colleagues and to one single Burmese official, the late U May Oung, then a judge of the Rangoon High Court and Harvey's close associate in the Burma Research Society and who later became the Home Minister.

The letter contains Harvey's reflections on the Irish settlement, General Dyer's action in shooting down an unarmed crowd of Indian demonstrators without warning at Amritsar, and on the reforms. More significant to the student of Burmese History, the letter contains an uncompromising criticism of British rule and British officials in Burma, and a generous appreciation of the Burmese character and Burmese institutions.

If the letter were written any time after 1936, it would have been merely an example of Harvey's growing mellowness in his later days as an Oxford Don. But it was written towards the end of 1922 when his two books history of Burma and Outline of Burmese History were already in manuscript, an it throws a new light on Harvey's personality and attitudes.

As with the two previous manuscripts, it has not been found necessary to edit, except to substitute X,Y,Z, and X1, X2 for the names of the senior officials who Harvey violently criticises; this been done because although they are no longer living, their children survive. The notes are by me, except two by Harvey himself.]

16 South Parade, Bedford Park
London W 4
13 xii 22

Dear

I don't altogether agree with your idea that people a home don't realise what is happening in India. In England you meet more people in a week with experience of various quarters of the globe than you meet in a year in India.

In addition, the War has poured into India thousands of men of the untravelled classes, & they now realise quite a number of things.

When in a Devon village I met an ostler who had been a corporal in Bombay. He said "Fancy a caste people talking to us about the rights of man, & claiming citizenship in the colonies."

Another man, who had been a terrier in the Panjab, which prides itself on being the home of the strong silent man, said "We used to think India a wild country, & ruling it must be a fine life. But it is just like Hammersmith, & it isn't a man's life, your job."

A third, who spent five years in Upper India, including the terrible 1919 outbreak, & served in Mespot, that culminating point of our efficiency [1] (he has quite a lot to say about it), shewed me with huge glee The following

1 Harvey's sarcasm. He meant "inefficiency."

gem, in a book by a CIE [1], written in 1890

> "Here we are untrammeled by demagogues, &, instead of talking, we act. The House of Commons is a debating shop, but, in India, men who have risen to power not by appeals to passion, but by proved merit in a hard school run their divisions with the touch of a master's hand. For years they have lived with their people, mixing with the poorest of the poor, protecting the oppressed, gaining an intimate knowledge of their habits, & speaking two or three vernaculars with perfect fluency. And now, holding some coveted distinction, they sit unseen, unheard, controlling the spring of action, committing to paper their lucid instructions, undeterred by party cries, for none exist. Instead of a column of partisan oratory, there is some masterly minute, containing the pith of the matter, & fifty miles away the work is put in hand. The administration of India moves with an efficiency hardly realisable in a parliament-ridden country, & it is a pity that politicians at home cannot see it with their own eyes, for their criticisms would at once be silenced."

The visit of the Prince of Wales has done worlds of good. It was admirably reported. There were no fiasco headlines (there could not be, with royalty), but one need not have been East to appreciate the fact that in one city he was greeted with bloodshed, in another the municipality refused to great him, in a third there were, along so many miles of processional route, 40 armoured cars but only 4,000 spectators. Quite a number of people who do not know India were nervous whether he would return unscathed.

His visit also shews up the man on the spot, whom we so admire. People say "You asked him out. Either you knew what would happen or you did not. If you did, you deliberately exposed the Crown to insult. If you did not, where is that local knowledge with which you always choke off mere politicians?"

So long as we were responsible for Southern Ireland, so long were numbers of people inclined to sympathise with the Irish; none do so now, & the feeling is "It is no longer our affairs. You can settle your own troubles now, & we onlookers are beginning to wonder whether they were not of your own making all along." In exactly the same way felling hardens already against India. A decade ago quite a number of people, who listened to platform statements of India's woes, kept an open mind & put a shilling in the propaganda plate; if there are such meetings now, they are hard to find, & the attitude is "You have the Reforms. Your remedy is in your own hands. Judging by the mess you are making, what you will work out will be not your own salvation but your own damnation. We have no use for die hands but we begin to see how die hardism is created." The India Group in the House of Commons, the curious little pro-Indian periodicals, are dead or dying. A Labor MP said to me "Your new Indian councils are not up to the level of a parish meeting." I know little about Labour but have a decide impression that Labour has no real use for its Aryan brother (& competitor).

It is incorrect to attribute the cessation of recruiting [2] entirely to the Reforms. It was becoming apparent before the War. I have just spent tow years in Oxford [3] & know three men of about my own age in Burma alone whose entry into the ICS was greeted with dismay, senior people doing everything possible to

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1 Companion of the Order of the British Empire.

2 i.e. to the Indian Civil Service.

3 Harvey was on "study leave" from Burma, writing his History of Burma.

stop them "wasting their lives," as they put it. When anyone a Oxford asked my advice about going to India, I gave him the Central Association's "Don't Join" pamphlet * & said I agreed with most of it, but if he wanted a safe well paid dull job he could come out, if, on the other hand, he wanted to be some use in the world, he had better be a curate in the Mile End Road. A career in the Burma commission is seldom any test of character or capacity, & few Commrs [1], looking back on their lives, can point to having accomplished anything in the world. If recruiting does not revive at the older universities & public schools, we can go to the new universities & town school, & if they fail we can go to the board schools. Any decent man a board school education could run a district at any rate as well as it is usually run. Many of the early great men, such as Sir Thomas Munro, one of the father of settlement, came of the grocer's assistant class- the result of open competition has been to get men from a higher social stratum than under the old patronage system. Just now the India Office is hesitating where to send the recruiting parties of ex L.G.s [2] it has been sending to Oxford without result; when it has decided, we shall get all the men we want, so far as we want them at all. There are 11/2 million unemployed in England, & will be for several years; I have met better men than myself driving tramcars.

I write this in a Chelsea flat overlooking the river. On the other bank there is a factory, the annual outturn of which is probably worth as mush as that of the whole Meiktila division, while its staff is a finer one- the very hands are better men than the Meiktila Commr's clerks, & the senior foremen could wipe the floor with most EACs[3]. The manager speaks four languages, in an authority on mediaeval Spanish churches, & his technical qualifications put us in the shade. Yet he does not draw Rs 3,000 a month, or write CSI [4] after his name, or consider it necessary that everyone in some dreary club should today to him.

A Meiktila I was examined in Burmese by a Commr who could not pronounce three words. The DSP [5] was a bartender who got into the Imperial Police because his regiment wanted to get rid of him. A DSP is supposed to know his villages but this gentleman never entered one; kept to the metalled road, living on a motor bike which earned him twice or thrice a Burman magistrate's pay; none of his TA [6] bills were ever cut [7], he used to sit the full ten days limit at Thazi hogging in bed most of the day over the News of the World, Reynolds Weekly, & the Winning Post, & having the coolly women at night, three at a time; he was of seven years standing yet he had to call in an Asst. Commr, who was fresh from home & had not passed Lower Standard Burmese, to interpret for

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* The Burma Commission Assn. sent me enough copies to give to every college in Oxford. I solemnly went round distributing it, to find most had it already.....our propaganda is being well done. (Note by Harvey)

1 Commissioners of Divisions.
2 Lieutenant Governors.
3 Extra Assistant Commissioners.
4 Companion of the Order of the Star of India.
5 District Superintendent of Police.
6 Travelling Allowance; paid per mile travelled.
7 i.e. by the Audit Department of the Government.

him to his won men during a two days enquiry. He now holds a selection post & you fear the Reforms will lead to inefficiency.

The news of the Battle of Juthland interrupted the Commr of Magwe so that it was nearly five minutes before he got back to complaining of his grievances over pay. He was drawing twice as much as Admiral Beatty for work which in intelligence & responsibility was inferior to that of a Chief Petty Officer.

Our pay is not excessive for white men; they are paid the same in Siam & native states; but it is excessive for most of the work done by Indian Civilian, [1] which does not need men drawn from the English professional classes. The only men in Burma who need brains are the farmer of the budget, the heads of great departments & specialists (whose work is probably harder than in Europe because there is no atmosphere & no support). Even a heavy district can be run on five hours a day by a man who has any sense & lest his offices [2] sign their own orders instead of pretending to make them his own & signing them himself …….. Maubin & Bassein have recently been run, & well run, on six horse a day. Few men in the Burma Commission have had to earn a living in England or realise that a DC [3] has about the softest job on earth. At strategic points, at places where there are tough races or communal tension, white DCs will always be necessary, but there are not half a dozen such places in Burma, & our DCs could be Burmans tomorrow. They doubtless will be, as we drop off, leaving at most one in four an Englishman, partly to provide a stiffening, partly to provide us with a training ground.

A mining engineer on 6,000 a year, the head of a great corporation, with whom I was in a sanatorium, said that when, two decades ago, he was working in Burma, he was struck with our ignorance & apathy. He named Mr. X & Mr. X2, then both DCs, saying "In Africa or even south America you feel in talking to an official that he has a stake in the country, that he is a citizen who wishes it well. But none of these man had any interest in anything that I could discover. They had been nowhere & done nothing. They could not tell a stranger even by way of general interest the simplest things about the people & the country. They might have lived all their lives in a mental isolation ward."

A E English who succeeded to the Irrawaddy division used the same word, "ignorant," adding "Mr. X2 had run the division all these years without knowing the first thing about it."

Yet what overwhelmed me, when sent to the Meiktila Menagerie [4] for training. was their insufferable self sufficiency. You told me there that what one gained by coming East was a sense of proportion; it is the very thing we lose.

There are few bodies of men so out of touch with our surroundings, & surely there can be few great services whose judgment is so habitually at fault.

Take the School Strike. Mark Hunter, a real leader, took a man's view; he said "It is our duty to fight. There will probably be no strike, but if there is, we will brake it." The strike came & is broken; it will not recur, for there are hundreds of youths whose education

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1 Members of Indian Civil Service.
2 Native officers under him.
3 Deputy Commissioner; in charge of a district.
4 Civil Service Training School.

is ruined, & though they will talk they will not repeat the experiment. But that maiden aunt, Matthew Hunter, whose face is enough to show what he is, whose lifelong silliness has done untold harm to education in Burma, swore there could be no strike (& when there was, he wanted to compromise). We said "He is the grand old man who mad the college. He knows the Burman in & out & through & through" etc etc etc. He was simply ignorant of what went on under his ones & it stands to reason that although the oriental has not the mental or moral qualities to run a constructive campaign, a short destructive campaign is just after his heart when he is in the tantrums. When Matthew Hunter wen down among his lads to bring them to reason, & they stoned him, he stood there in the road & literally wept. But a man who had lived all those years with those pups, (the wretchedest material I have ever had to teach), & did not see through them, deserves all he got. [1]

One night when my Commr was dining with me, we commented on the glare & din of a pwe which was being held just outside the hospital, & that distinguished officer, out of the depths of his lifelong knowledge of the Burma, informed me that they were not like us, even when ill they did not mind glaring lights or the pandemonium of a pwe [2] He went home & after midnight I was woken up with a message that the HQM [3] was ill, the SDO [4] TO[5] on tour, would I take a dying deposition. I went. The woman was dying in some pain, & felling an intruder, I asked if I could do anything for her. She said "I would like the light screened, it hurts my eyes, & as for the noise of that pwe outside..."

As late as August 1917, the very month of the Secy. of State's pronouncement, a Commr assured me no Reforms would apply to Burma & political agitation could never come..."We are different form India" etc. Another of the same rank said "All this talk of promoting Burmans ..how can it be done? Have you ever met a Burman fit to be a Commr? And as to having Burman ministers, why, just try to visualise it... can you see a Burman minister attending office & dealing with the files, & being called 'Sir'? It is all newspaper talk & will come to nothing." When someone foolishly said " But they had their own kings, their won lords, who commanded in the field & we were often up against it", the answer was "They could do it according to their standards. They cannot according to our". As if our standards were wanted in Burma or could endure there for long.

Once I was caught in the act of reading the "New Statesman" & told "Clever, but not honest, you know". Lewisohn & Morgan Webb were "unsound", Dunn & Furnivall [6] "dangerous cranks". No man can go on fighting his environment forever, & by the end of my time in Burma I gave up trying to think, I began to waver & to accept what was said all round me. It was only when I got on board & met the ships officers that I began to return to a same atmosphere & to realise what curious people I had been living with all those years.

I may be the heat, it may be that we live in a silly country, but whatever it is, even the nicest men become nasty after they have been out a few years, & there are few senior officers about whom there is not something repellent.

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1 Cf. Orwell, Burmese Days (Detailed reference in Commentary, below.)
2 Music. song, and dance.
3 Headquarters Magistrate.
4 Subdivisional Officer.
5 Township Officer; native officials under Harvey, as District Commissioner.
6 These four senior official, all members of the Indian Civil Service, were considered by their colleagues to be "too liberal" in their attitude towards the Burmese.

In 1920 just before coming home I met no fewer than four men freshly recruited who had been ticked off by their seniors for bad manners, & in fully three causes it was their seniors who were under bred, it was they who were in the right. One of them said "I held a battery in France & saw more life in those four years than this old snob will seen in a lifetime out here. What is it that goes to the head of these people in Burma?"

One night in my house at Maymyo you, (Y1,Y2,Y3) & myself, talked about Amritsar, & you were full of contempt for the home politicians who were downing Dyer, I remember you saying "People at home don't realise that the safety of every one of us is at stake." And you all agreed it was ridiculous to judge the man on the spot, the man who saved India.

But there were 36 other mobs fired on in that rebellious week, 36 other good men doing their duty; to say that Dyer saved India is unfair to them. And since you have such confidence in the man on the spot, here are Dyer's own words, from the "Rangoon Gazette" which was the basis of our conversation---

> "I think I could have dispersed them without firing but I did not want to be laughed at..... If only I could have got my machine guns up, the effect would have been proportionately greater... I do not think the mob knew I was there.... they had their backs turned towards me, listening to their mob orators.... I gave no warning before opening rapid-fire... My object was to create a moral effect all over India, to shoot so thoroughly that nobody would have to shoot again."

Four hundred live are nothing in a crisis, & they were noting to England which hand just lost a million dead. But a man who says he needn't have shot a single one, only he didn't [1] want to be laughed at...[2]

He not only disobeyed the King's Regulations, which lay down that military officers called out in support of civil authority shall use the minimum of force necessary, & when in doubt shall err on the side of humanity; he not only usurped the functions of Govt. in creating moral effects over all India instead of dealing with the mob before him; he also lied --- for a year Govt. had been denying the opposition press statements that there were over 400 casualties in dead alone, retorting report that his total casualties were 200." Yet in the witness box next year he says "I must have killed about 500, and as for wounded..."

I can only say that the conversation at Maymyo was amazing. You yourself said we were getting soft & in the XVIIIth cent we would have upheld & rewarded Dyer. My reading of the XVIIIth cent is different. You will find instances of colonels who were executed then for shooting a single man wrongly, & although Dyer might have got off as lightly as he did with us (a juster & less hysterical generation than any in the XVIIIth cent), it is quite as likely that he would have been executed or impeached.

He was not an English gentlemen (but a country born, with a touch of the tarbrush.)[3]

At Maymyo three of the only men who knew what bloodshed meant, Lewisohn, Borrett & Sir Vere Fane. said Dyer was wrong, Fane adding "He will be lucky to escape being tried for his life. He has let us all down."

When last in England Sir Harcourt Butler [4] said that the Reforms would have to be let rip for a few years after which they would end I a does of machine guns; but of Dyer he said "Everyone at home thinks the fellow a hero & they have subscribed a small fortune for him. The harm he has done..."

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1 didn't; there are many words like this in Harvey's papers, Ed.
2 Cf. Orwell: "Shooting An Elephant" '(Details in Commentary, below.)
3 Cf. Orwell: Burmese Days. (Details in Commentary, below.)
4 Governor of an Indian province, and later Governor of Burma.

Rice said the most painful experience in his life was listening to Dyer. "We had all agreed there was to be no cross-examination of officers who were unaccustomed to the witness box, & Hunter reserved Dyer for himself, helping him out with leading questions & doing everything possible to save the man from himself. But it was no use. It was like a galloping major bragging after too many short drinks. There was everyone listening, there were the stenographers taking it down, it would be in print all over the world tomorrow, & yet one had no power to step down from one's seat & put one's hand over the fool's mouth".

A young DC of my year, now on leave, who shot over 50 people, told me "All Hunter said to me was 'You can stand down, we have heard enough. We think you might have fired sooner.' They were not out to break you. But that dago Dyer....."

You say England doesn't know. But I have never heard Dyer's case stated as well as by men who had never been East. It is the men who were in India who tend. to be hardest one him. The home press reported it admirably, & the back files are a study ..... Dyer could not have been better defended by the finest lawyers I the world than he was in the columns of the "Morning Post". It failed, because the more a bad case is stated, the more it must fail.

In that same conversation at Maymyo, you & Y1 complained that the Burmese have no sense of gratitude. JE Bridges, a man of few emotions & fewer illusions, though otherwise. You also said there is no word for gratitude in the land gauge, which is simply incorrect. In any case it is not easy to be grateful to one with whom one has nothing in common. Just as we, in moments of depression, look at them round us & wonder whether they are not simian rather than human; so they, looking at us, so remote from their social life, so free from their vices & passions, so preoccupied with duties beyond their mental grasp, must regard us as scarcely human.

Were you ever grateful to policemen & magistrates at home, those useful & honoured member of the community who would be insulted if you dared to be grateful? We came out here to earn a living, & being white men, we earn it, full measure: the debt is quit. How many of us do more than the bare bargain or lift a finger beyond our duties? Looking back one my decade in Burma, I cannot, at least for the moment, recall a single thing for the which a Burman should be grateful to me. Are we not talking in rather nursery governess style, which is indeed the style of senior officers who have lived too long surrounded by their inferiors?

As a matter of face, Burmans are grateful, several men have described incidents like the following, & seemed to be flattered; I disbelieved, until it happened to me also.... One day, returning to a former district, I saw a man weep at the sight of me; it was not drink, it was merely the easily disturbed emotional level of a weak-minded race! I asked about him & learnt that he had been a municipal employee in an out subdivision I had not visit, so I had never seen him, or even read his name save for five minutes on the file; that the file had wanted to dismiss him, but that I, out of humanity (it must have been to save myself trouble), had held the charge not proven.

We are surprised at the campaign of gutter snipe abuse to which we are now subjected, but its only newness is that it gets into print [1] & we read it... it has been said about us every day since the Annexation but we did not hear it. And it is not unprovoked. We have no point of contact with our people; we can not discuss our reading with them,

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1 Orwell: Burmese. Days. (Details in Commentary, below.)

for even when not illiterate they read stuff which only a professed student among us can be expected to read; we cannot discuss religion with them, for few of us at this time of day understand religion as they do, & such of us as do rarely possess the vocabulary necessary to talk to the better sort of monk (who can be really interesting); we cannot entertain or be entertained, because our ways are so different; we cannot talk politics to people who have no polis, therefore no politeia, no politic; in only few cases can we share sports & game. Thus we live apart from them & only side of us they see is the official. But the official is a superior person who spends his time correcting the mistakes of silly people, & it is inevitable that the silly people should regard him as a prig. I wonder they don't dislike us more.

I see there is a proposal before the Burma Commission Assn. to ask that our pension be guaranteed by the British Govt. If petulance of this type goes through, we shall lose much of the sympathy that is now given us, sympathy which makes it certain that all our demands in reason will be granted by whatever Govts. are in power during the next few years....the most satisfactory answer to the recent questionnaire of the combined services was that of the Labour Party, Ramsay Macdonald saying we are not adequately paid. Our pensions are already guaranteed by the British Govt., for although they are debatable to Indian revenues, our covenant is with Secy. of State. That covenant must be read with the advertised terms but even If it be read alone & thus stand forth in its naked meaninglessness, no other service has even as much. You do not need a covenant to get your dues out of His Majesty the Kind, least of all when he can get the money out of some- one else. In Egypt the services have no contract yet they are getting not only proportionate pensions but damages as well; similar awards are being granted to the Royal Irish Constabulary, which has nothing to sue on, men entering it by simply talking the oath of allegiance; two men, one from Egypt, the other from Ireland, have both told me the same thing ... .that they are doing better under these awards than if they had served their full time. We are the safest & nearly the best paid service in the world; whoever else goes under, we are not going under. There is another service, called the British Navy, compared with which no Indian service matters a straw; it is being cruelly axed, & down at Plymouth there are some hard cases; our need is nothing to theirs, yet they do not shriek as we do. Is there not such as thing crying out before you are hit?

To think that there is a connection between the Reforms & our pension is to betray confusion of thought. The insurance companies may no longer insure our pensions; in countries like India where they never did much business of this type & are not in close touch, they naturally suspect any change, especially when it is described in the Conservative press as a radical change; but they will realise the situation in time, & will probably start taking our pensions again before many years are out. There is no prospect of there being anything like the Irish debacle in a disarmed & dud country like India, but even if there were, our pensions would be unaffected. You need not rule a country to get your dues out of it, nor need it be solvent. Witness Turkey, the Irish Free State, various South American state, & China; China is anarchic & likely to remain so for decades, but her pensionaries in England are paid to the day; India would soon learn what China learnt generations ago, that ports are subject to blockade.

Sometimes one hears a superior parson say with an air of finality "There is no half way house between complete British rule & complete native rule. We should tell India In ten years we leave. You can settle among yourselves on what lines you run the country, but you must be ready to take over by the fixed date.' " Logic-chop-ping of this type is divorced from reality; as if life were not full of half way houses — it is full of little else.

People who talk thus should define their terms: who are the "we" that hand over, who are they "they" that over, by precisely what method is the melodrama to take place? We are likely to remain as many more centuries as we have been generations in India. The forms under which we remain change with the political fashion of the age, but plus ca change plus c'est la meme chose. We have sunk millions of capital in the country, & the great engineering firm of Camel Laird is booking bigger orders than ever before in India. The legions are to the Owner of the Millions, & the world is to the Master of the Legions. It is idle to say that whoever rules India, whatever anarchy she sinks to, we will continue to do the trade; anarchy kills trade, & had not India been anarchic we would have been content to continue trading without burdening ourselves with administration. What had happened before can happen again, & if the Reforms lead to anarchy, India will find that the then Labour Govt. has a little finger thicker than Conservatism's loins, for no Govt., least of all one dependent one unemployed votes, can watch the home mills close down while orientals amuse themselves at throat-slitting. The dictum of the yellow press leader writer, that Democracy is incompatible with Empire, disregards the fact that from Athens to Amsterdam, from the dregs of Rome to the French Republic, every democracy on record had been callously imperialist.

The Anglo-Indian is fond of decrying the home politician as ignorant, as inferior to himself. But the home politician is at least a man of the world, which is more than some of our senior officers are. The Reforms would have gone through on much the same lines had Montague never lived. Even the phrases we now gleeful quote at Montauge wee not his "we must stand by & see them suffer," "we must stir the East from its pathetic contentment," are both Marris' drafting; Marris prides himself on his gift of coining phrases & has for years held these views. Montague has a nasty temper & lashes out, but his decisions were usually sound. In the orders one the Hunter Commission he described the action of a man of my year, who flogged some schoolboys (for bludgeoning to death a stray English Tommy)[1], as "sheer Prussiansim," but he did nothing more, & as the man himself, whom I met on leave, said "Hard words break no bones. I can't see what people have to shriek about over Montague. He's not as bad as our appellate courts." It is the same in Burma. Nothing that Montague that said is so diametrically opposite to reality or such an outrage to one's moral sense as dozens of Mr. XI[2] judgments, & whereas home politicians' utterances for the most part end in mere talk, Mr. XI's utterances are orders which tae effect.

You are perturbed because Ben Spoor has informed an Upper India audience that how long we stay in India depends on how long they want us to. But this has been taught in the Pol. Sci. classes of every Indian university for two generations-- it is only another way of saying that government is with the consent of the governed, or, in the current jargon, self-determination. If India had a mind to make up or a self to determine she could have us out in a month; but she has neither, & meanwhile peripatetic politicians can continue to utter truisms. It they do harm in their brief stay, they do less harm than we who stay permanently & turn India upside down.

The silliness they talk at one extreme is no sillier than what we talk at the other

1 The incident happened in India, and not in Burma.
2 Mr. XI, mentioned earlier.

extreme. Never have I heard such nonsense as is talked by senior officers n the Burma clubs. Even gubernatorial utterances of the Craddock type would be hard to beat. One would imagine from Sir Reginald [1] that we are in India for India's good.

There is no abler, juster, more god fearing man than Sir Reginald; he communicates weekly; he kneels nightly by his bedside to pray over his big cases & the wickedness of Mr. Montague; he is the lineal descendant of the great mid-Victorians who built up the Indian Empire; they had something of the crusader's spirit, & we would have it too had we seen the things they saw; he eats duty, drinks duty, sleeps duty, thinks duty, talks duty, lives duty; can see nothing else in life, & the nobler & better he is, the more harm he does.

Perhaps the best rule India ever had was the cynical rule of John Company. It was only when the orgy of protestant pietism broke loose in the mid XIXth cent that the harm began. Then did we feel the greatness & sacredness of our trust; then did officers teach their sepoys to pray; they read the bible on parade, they paid for their subahdars' children to go to anglo-vernacular schools where Eurasian teachers could instill into their growing minds the principles of true morality; & for a whole year Queen Victoria hesitated whether she should head that great movement, already headed by a Lieutenant Governor, which, viewing the Mutiny as a judgment on our failure to bring India to the feet of the Saviour, aimed at official proselytism.

We do indeed hold a great & sacred trust, but it is to England. Our duty is to her, & to her alone, keeping her Indian market, maintaining such minimum administration as is necessary for trade to go through; beyond that, we have no duty; a civilised race, we cannot stand by & watch barbarity, but there we must stop, unless the people of the country shew an effective desire for guidance.

I write this in the very room where I first heard of our surrender to Sinn Fein. I have seldom been so moved as by the "Irish Peace". I was brought up on the "Spectator," & that ineffable pecksniff, St. Loe Strachey, was welcome in our house. For a generation he had been assuring us that the Southern Irish had no real demand for Home Rule, & that it would be Rome Rule as if it were not the English who have bolstered up the priest in Ireland, as if it was not English money that founded that source of evil, Maynooth Seminary, as if experience does not teach that the first thing a responsible government does is to break the priests. For a generation South Ireland had returned nothing but Home Rulers, & you are estopped from getting behind elected representatives. Recent experience may make even the silliest Tory doubt whether they were so very unrepresentative after all. And now this terrible surrender, by a predominantly conservative government, teaches, not for the first time in history, that conservatism will surrender to violence ten times more than it will grant to reason. Forty years ago you could have had a Home Rule scheme on a tenth of the present terms, & now you have taught India that the way to get her will is to commit murder.

I am not so sure that the public would not have sanctioned the use of collective punishment which was unavoidable in the Irish operations, seeing that this public had just come though the fires of the Great War. But we denied that we were using it. An MP said to me "The Chief Secy. for Ireland knows he is lying, he knows that we his hearers know he is lying, & still he goes on doing it & the 'Spectator' lot support him." In Switzerland I read the "Times" with its verbatim report of the Chief Secy.'s parliamentary statement that when a certain creamery was burnt & the

1 Sir Reginald Craddock, I.C.S., Governor of Burma.

village sacked, "this barbarous act" must have been done by Sinn Fernier, who had put on captured British uniforms, & acted thus to throw discredit on the Crown forces; but there was, sitting at my breakfast table, a fellow patient, a Royal Irish Constabulary officer, who was actually in command of the party of our men who burnt that village & creamery. It was the growing uneasiness of the public over Govt. lying that led to the surrender when we were within three months of breaking Sinn Fein. It may cost some of us in India our lives.

Most men in Burma, especially a generation ago, if asked to what party they belonged at home, would have answered "Why, as if there were more than one party to which a gentleman could possibly belong". Yet in Burma these men played the part of liberals, who think you can alter human nature by Act & Resolution; they were radicals who uprooted every ancient institution the use of which was not immediately obvious.

Mr. X2 used to say the Burmese were a nation of peasants, one dead level with out class distinctions, & in all his service he had never met a Burman whom you could not address as *maungmin*. [1] I pass over the detail that they are a tribe, not a nation, & go on to the outstanding fact that their social system was honeycombed with class distinctions, a more than mediaeval maze of sumptuary laws & niceties of address; we younger men must look for it, but in his day it was in full swing; he saw, what we can never see, that stupendous survival of the XIXth cent BC into the XIXth cent AD, the Mandalay Palace with all its denizens, it serrated tires of inequality & privilege; he had met the eunuchs, the ministers, the Kinwun Mingyi himself, each with their separate coke of manners & style of address, & he tells you maungmin would do for any of them, they were on dead level, a nation of peasants. As RCS Keith said of him (Mr. X2), one did not know which was the more monumental ... the nastiness of the animal or its impenetrability.

It was he & the likes of him who annexed Upper Burma & introduced the system you & I have to run, sowing the wind for us to reap the whirlwind. There is no hope for Burma till his generation are gone & his evil tradition is dead.

Sir Harvey Adamson called Sir Charles Crosthwaiter's Minute on Village Administration "masterly", but A E English said there was hardly a line in it which was not the reverse of true, & even a beginner like C H Davies, who at his death had been only four years in the country, had discovered the same for himself. I have spent the last two years wading through old documents trying to find evidence in support of that Minute & can find none. There have been few finer leaders & administrators than Crosthwaiter, but he was a stranger to Burma & had to take what his staff told him; that staff had grown to maturity in Lower Burma & when they came north at the Annexation they came with preconceived ideas. When we took Arakan & Tenasserim, & even Pegu, they were almost uninhabited, thanks to the systematic extermination which, among tribal races, constitutes a war of conquest. Our stable govt. led to the return of refugees & the growth of population, but it was a new population, one might almost say a hybrid population, for we systematically encouraged Indian immigration (actually indenting for it at times), & it grew up with few native traditions & without the natural hereditary institutions. Add to this that, when we annexed Upper Burma, half the old families were in the field against us, & had to be uprooted in favour of our supporters who said that hereditary claims had never weighed much (a denial which facilitated our task & could hardly be verified in that time of turmoil), & it becomes natural for Crosthwaiter & the new administration of Upper Burma to imagine that there was no

1 A term of address to an inferior.

hereditary system in Burma & we had a tabula rasa on which to erect our system.

Some of the families in the older districts of Upper Burma had documentary evidence of their continuous tenure in the thugyiship since 1650, & at that date, where the documents cease, they were already old. Yet they & their like were uprooted, & are uprooted still on the report of some young town bred SDO fresh from England & full of zeal --- I have played my part in this folly. In order words we have shattered a social system. God forbid that I, reading the old documents I read daily, should defend that system any more I would defend the system of the Anglo-Saxon tribes. But it was the only system the country had, it was the growth of centuries, & we English, blessed among races for our organic growth, our freedom from revolutionary amputation, should be the last to put axes to the root of ancient trees.

The enormity of what we have done should be apparent to anyone who has served in the Shan States. For the Shan States are Burma as she was under the kings, with the cruelty & oppression left out. The myothugyi of Upper Burma was no pettier than the ngwegunhmu of the Myelat &, though few of us realise it, he had no less security of tenure; he is but a shadow of his former self (he was something between an S O & a DC), & he is the sole survivor of a whole class whose very designations are now known only to students. We left the ngwegunhmu, & he never has less than IInd class powers (the customary law would have been better); why could we not leave the myothugyi? There were several difficulties, but only one reason: lack of intention. Harcourt Butler [1] in 1917 started an attempt to receive the myothugyi; it will fail, for an alien govt. can break down but cannot build up. One has few illusions about the Myelat chiefs, what they are, what they would be if left to themselves; but they are no worse than many Township Officers & are much better than most Additional Magistrates[2], the wickedest men in Burma not baring even dacoits. For the myook is just as much an alien to his people as we are, but whereas we have a tradition of duty & honesty (in which the weakest of us could not fail if he tried. even among a strange people whose good opinion is nothing to us), the myook has none; he need not earn the respect of his people, for he will be transferred before long, & he has our overwhelming power at his back to render him immune; so he treats his township as a province to loot quickly. The ngwegunhmu has to earn at least some respect from the people among whom he is born & lives & dies, the people at whose mercy his lesser children will be after his death. Few things struck me more than the way an order simply ran in the Shan States if the chief was really behind it; in Burma I never met with the slightest response to inoculation, whereas in the Myelat I repeatedly had chiefs' horsemen at my door within a few hours of the suspicion of an epidemic, & in the succeeding days more serum being used than I could supply. A chief is an old obstructionist, but once let an idea penetrate his skull, & the things done, for the social system is intact, there is sap in the branches, there are connecting links all down the line, he is the head of the family & his people will take from him what they will take from no hireling myook whose very name is unknown to them. Yet most men regard the Shan States as an inefficient backwater in comparison with the well-run districts over which they preside with such driving power --- so immersed are we in the machine, so unable to see the wood for the trees.

In Ireland the result of the Penal Laws was that the gentry, & indeed all men of spirit, left the country in the periodic Flight of the Wild Geese, so that the true achievement of the Irish race is to be found in the camps & courts of the Continent. For two centuries the Irish have bred from inferior stock, the

1 Sir Harcourt Butler, I.C.S., Governor of Burma.

2 Cf. Orwell: Burmese Days. (Details in Commentary below.)

spiritless, the weak, the old, who stayed at home. My father, a minor House of Commons official, came of Southern Unionist stock some of whom had, in past generations, been on the other side -- one, in charge of a body of loyalists, defeated & captured his own brother, who thereupon went before a firing party; another my granduncle, led the rebellion of 1798, & his head was exposed on a pike over the gate of Limerick. So these used to come to our house, when I was a boy, not only Ulster but also Nationalist MPs. I have never met a more hopeless crowed than the Nationalist members, & their mental out-look was curiously akin to that of the GCBA [1]. With few exceptions they h ad been boardschool teachers, post office sorters, draper's assistants, & so forth. Yet they were the only leaders Southern Ireland had, for we had broken up the social system & proscribed their gentry; & today Southern Ireland is governed by persons of the errand boy & publican class. We have done, in effect, the same in Burma; the paddy plain of the Delta, the abode of criminals & leaderless men, is our creation & is symbolical of British Burma -- one dead level of mediocrity, a tabular rasa which leaves the tiller of the fields alone face to face with the DC.

If history be any clue, Siamese Buddhism should be on a lower level than Burmese. Yet men from Siam say the Siamese are genuinely scandalized at the lives of our clergy & their tub-thumping. This may be partly due to conceit, for every stay at home race thinks itself unique, but it is also due to the reality, for in the orthodox parts of Siam a wanton monk is handed up at once by the village, nor, if a monk ever tub-thumped, would there be any need for the village to hand him up -- the king is the incarnation of watchful jealousy in such mattes. Today many of our clergy are a menace to society, & although evil must end by falling on its own weight, it can do untold harm in he meantime. But whose fault it? Even if there were a real public opinion in Burma it could do little without disciplinary machinery, & we destroyed the only disciplinary machinery that there was.

When we annexed Upper Burma there was a Primate with a Board of Ecclesiastical Commissioners; these names are not strictly accurate but they represent a reality, for the one thing that really did work under a Burmese king was his control of the clergy --- his existence depended on it. Mindon was so nervous that he would not trust a Primate but put the Primacy in commission & held the reins himself. [2] There was a regular procedure for unfrocking clergy & handing them over to the secular arm; concrete instances shew that even the Primate was not immune from decapitation. When we took over, nobody wanted us to keep our hands off; it would have been the simplest thing imaginable for the Chief Commissioner's representative, say some senior *sitke* [3] from Lower Burma, to replace the king's representative on the board. There was no question of interfering in religion; it was simply a matter of giving religious discipline the support of the secular arm, just as the army is given the support of the secular arm in dealing with its criminals.

Now there are a dozen rival primates, there is no discipline whatever, the people are sheep without a shepherd, & we incur odium as persecutors. I once had a monk with four previous convictions & three bastards; the father of one of the girls he had ruined died of

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1 General Council of Burmese Associations, which led the national movement for freedom in 1920-24.

2 Cf. Burma, 1885 above.

3 A Burmese term, which was later officially translated as "Extra Assistant Commissioner", below the Assistant Commissioner, a junior member of the I.C.S. i.e. who had not yet been appointed Deputy Commissioner.

a broken heat; the leading men & clergy of our district came to me with proof that he had never been ordained, & he himself finally admitted it; I said I could not help; they said "Then what are you here for? There he is, at the back of beyond, amid a backwoods people who believe him. If we have him stone, you will have us jailed." If I got him a year later, it was for claiming to be Thibaw's heir & collecting guns; even then it was not under the ordinary law, but under the emergency powers of wartime, & as soon as the war ended & the powers lapsed, he returned to his old game.

Our religious neutrality at Mandalay in 1886 was an act of abdication. In countries which have developed up to secularism you can have a secularist govt.; but in countries which are still in the religious stage, govt. can no more ignore religion than in criminal countries it can ignore crime. Sir Reginal Craddock has recently revived some sort of Ecclesiastical Commission; in two years nothing more will be heard of them; we can maintain but we cannot restore. If the new Burmese parliament is any use it may do so.

We are now terrified at the Frankenstein we have raised &, being human, we blame others, i.e. the home politician. But if England ever loses India, it will be because she left things to the man on the spot, who are sterile. They sit, each one his isolated dunghill of district, never meeting anybody never seeing anything to occupy the mind & nothing to do save screw up a vicious machine.

Every great service ought to let its officers at their option retire after say a decade with a pension which should be something like the full proportion. But I can see no justification for a proportionate pension in consequence of the Reforms. Any man of our generation who came East must have known very well that some sort of Reform was near. Ever since circ 1830, ever since the classic utterances of Sir Thomas Munro & Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, we have been proclaiming that our object is to train India to govern herself; in the earlier days we said it would come in two generations -- it is all there, on the record, if you care to read it. You cannot go on merely saying it for ever, & when you have said it or a century you make yourself a laughing stock by being hurt at being called on to make good your word.

Clayton says the Reforms are all wrong because they build from above, not from below, & ignore the realities of the district. But the world has waited long, we of the district have had our chance, & since we have not taken it, others have taken it. Forty years ago we could have had a Reform Scheme on our own lines, but we said "It is not practicable. They are not ready for it" -- as if they were any less ready then than they are now. Forty years ago we could have had native ministers, superbly clad & looking profoundly wise; our royal court, or council, or parliament if you prefer the word, would have consisted of representatives from every district, but they would have been hereditary office bearers as is the way of the East, which never dreamt of an electorate until the idea was dinned into its ears.* (As Lecky points out, hereditary chambers are often more truly representative than elected chambers; in any case it remains to be seen whether a real electorate is possible in a tribal country.) Such a scheme would have had untold power for good, both in compelling us to go slow with "efficiency," & in its spectacular & sentimental appeal to a public which has an unrivalled capacity for self-deception. Above all, we would have reformed in advance, we would have retained the lead in our own hands, we would have still been trusted; whereas we are distrusted & people imagine we yielded the Reforms because we had to.

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* It was put into their heads by Indian Civilians, notably Hume, the founder of the National Congress. (Note by Mr. Harvey)

The Reforms make British rule firmen than ever. Much of this talk of the spiritual renascence of the East, of the surge towards democracy, will pass, together with present race hatred, when people really see that they are to have pride of place in their own country & that at least half the superior posts are given them. The man thus appointed may seem anti-English to us, but they will be pro English to their own countrymen, & they will be last ditchers on our side; we will never have had so many supports. Within little more than a decade the reformed councils will have sunk to their natural level & the outstanding result of the Reforms will have been a cadre reorganization, giving most of the dreary work to native gentlemen & leaving those of us who remain a courted minority. Even as it stands, in all its promise, the Reforms give away nothing worth having. Men who fear are cowards, for we still have absolute control over all necessary revenue & the standing army, i.e. we have the powers of the Tudor monarchy & of Frederick the Great.

If one is to serve with men of the unless type I usually served with in the district, they may as well be brown as white. I came to the East to see the East, not to live in that most suburban of suburbias, a district headquarters under some old buffer from Brighton. There are several Burmans I would sooner serve under than most of the commissioners I had; they would at least be amusing. It is drivel to say we cannot serve under orientals, seeing that we did it for generations, & still do it in many parts of the tropics. It is high brow to say that one must take a proportionate pension because one can not carry out a policy of which one disapproves -- as if one approved of half the orders one carried out, or did not feel, under commrs of the sort I had, that in carrying them out one was doing positive harm.

It is hard to play second string when one has so long played first. In Siam & the native states one can tolerate inefficiency while helping to build up efficiency; but when you come to the reverse process -- why, even those of us who have little love for the machine will find it hard to stand by & watch our handiwork slowly being wrecked; for the machine is English, & needs Englishmen to run it. These are difficulties, but English has overcome far greater, & she will overcome these. We won India not by the sword but by mental & moral qualities expressed in the sword. Those qualities endure, they are finer than ever; the closer one's acquaintance with the native character, the more they stand out. The fight is now transferred to the council chamber, & they will win there as they won in the field.

It is sometimes said that the Reforms will result in our coming down to the level of the Home Civil Service, merely executing policy & not shaping it. I do not understand how the officers of a second rate administration like the Indian Empire can be said to come "down" to the level of the premier civil service in the world; nor do people, who say that the Home Civil Service has no share in shaping policy, realise how England is governed. As to the idea that we have hitherto been shapers of policy, may I ask what share even senior officers had under the pre-R form scheme in shaping policy? Not that we ever had any policy that I could discover, other than hand to mouth. Whenever one tried to get a lead out of the Development Commr in 1920 one failed, for he did not know himself what he was driving at. Nolan complained that he could never get a lead out of anyone save Lewisohn (Lewisohn, who was damned by Rice & several others as "unsound"). Two senior DCs have told me they had never in all their service known a Commr with a policy until they served under Clayton. Read the files of the British administration in Burma from 1825 onwards, & you will see the extraordinary way things drifted from start to finish, the amazing lack of continuity, the "it will serve my time, I retire in three years" spirit which runs throughout.

The Reforms will force Govt. to define polices in the Legislature, & gives us opportunities of leadership such as we have never had before.

We talk of the inefficiency which the Reforms will entail, as if the present system were efficient. It is impossible to travel on the roads without being robbed, & not a fraction of such cases are reported. Most of the orders which go out, even under the DC's own signature, are corrupt. District officers who are proud of their achievement must be either ignorant of their surroundings or deficient in elementary imagination. We have built up imposing cadres, with printed annual reports & statistics, producing the paper effect of efficiency. But our administration is a whited sepulchre, all uncleanness within. It will be worse in the early stage of the Reforms, but not worse in the long run; it may even be better, for the present system, run by white men, contains no hope of improvement --you do not make people better by taking things out of their hands. the moral effect of high office will tell, as it often tells in Siam, & a Burmese minister who is himself honest will give short shrift to the corrupt officials was hand up, whereas under Rice & Sir Harvey Adamson it was almost impossible to break a man for corruption.

In Siam not only the subordinate offices, but also, almost as often as not, the district & provincial governors are corrupt; in recent years there has even been a Chief Justice who took money & told the lower courts what findings to bring in. Generally speaking however the Princes, whether at headquarters or in the provinces, tend to be straight, & the better men, especially in advancing years, are absolutely straight. Americans who have served on the Siamese railways & do not speak the language told me, when touring Burma to see e.g. Pagan, they thought the Siamese people as happy as ours though somewhat less prosperous. Forest officer who had previous service in India & speak Siamese say the are less happy because of petty oppression, force labour, corruption & family influence, so that in Malaya, on the English border, governors, fearing the royal displeasure at emigration, do everything possible to check it by conniving a tax remission, lightening forced labour, & so forth. Against these disadvantages must be set certain imponderables. It is nothing that although everyone who knows both countries seems to regard the Burman as a higher type than the Siamese, you never hear anyone say of a Burman "The governor was a great character, a fine old man. He put me up for a week & was a charming host. He got me an aeroplane & issued the necessary letters, so that it was roses all the way for me wherever I went. I saw him in full durbar-- you never saw such pageantry, & there was no mistaking the way his people liked him. Two days a week he sat in public disposing of cases & heard them well -- he went through the record of one case with me, & it was most interesting to see how they do things." And even if this does not make it cancel out on balance, is the somewhat higher level of prosperity & contentment we give our people equal to the enormous amount of machinery we put into it? Is not he result incommensurate with the effort? In short, have we so very much to brag about, & need the Reforms, which will approximate Burma to Siam, make us quite so hysterical?

When we talk of efficiency we should define our terms. What we mean by efficiency may not be what other races mean, especially when they are so different from ourselves. Who made thee thy brother's keeper?

Cannot we see that the only help is self help, that in imposing on another race a standard of efficiency it does not want, in forcing it upwards towards a standard of morality too far in advance of its own, a standard which it shews no effective desire to

attain, we are not merely doing no good, we are doing positive harm?

If when you were a boy of 14, fit for the Lower Third, you had been put into the Sixth, you would have shrunk into yourself, feeling that it was no use trying, that even your best efforts were not worth doing because they had to be done all over again for you. That is what I felt with Keith --- he was so far above me that it was no use offering anything, for even one's best work he promptly did all over again. That is what the Burman feels with us. We are so far above him that it is no use his trying.

Some of the French officers in Africa have a theory that a superior race cannot without ill consequences undertake the guidance of a race situated several degrees below it in the scale. Thus, when the Berbers conquered the equatorial Negro, the result was disastrous because they were too far above them to link up with their social system. But when those same Berbers conquered the peoples of the Niger, they achieved better results than the French, for they were not too far above them, whereas the French are. Rule can be most beneficial only when the disparity between the rulers & the ruled is not too great.

I once rode along with a young PWD [1] officer, a charming fellow with the highest technical qualifications. We halted at a culvert his contractors were building under the road. It was all wrong & he said "I am not a mason, nor, even if I were, have I enough of the vernacular to explain how it should be done". He ought to have been at Armstrong Whitworth's & in his place we should have had an English master mason on a quarter of his pay. The disparity between the rules & the ruled, the unbridgeable gulf.

If ever a race provoked annexation, the Burmese did, & our forbearance fills me with admiration-- the way we stuck it. And apart from that, no race lived unto itself: the parable of the Unprofitable Servant, who hid his Talent in the Earth, applies to races as to individuals. The world could not wait for ever while the Burmese would neither exploit their oil, rice, & teak, nor let others do so. We had to set up a reasonable administration, & places such as Rangoon & Yenangyaung must be on practically a European footing. Yet that was no justification for imposing direct administration on the rest of the country.

The supreme advantage of indirect administration is that, while preventing the worst abuses, it leaves the social structure intact & lets a race bide on its own lines.

What does British Burma produce that can compare with the Shwedagon, with Shinsawbu's deathbed, with the temples of Pagan, with the woodwork of Tibaw's monasteries? The men who did these things had a reverse side, perhaps a predominant side, of cruelty & lust; but they were at least true to type, they were not the bastard intelligentsia we have created.

By imposing direct administration & at the same time debarring men from high office you exclude them from the secret of government, which is, after all, simply experience of affairs; you enable them to blame it all on you, for you deprive them of that share of responsibility which would make them understand. You say that before you can admit them to high office they must be educated, forgetting that William the Conqueror could hardly read or write, & that the daily life of the ruler is in itself one of the greatest of education.

In Nigeria, New Guinea, & Algeria, direct administration is imposed only in the ports & coastal belt. In the interior no native appears before a white judge, of hangs for murder--he gets at most six months jail or is enslaved to the bereaved family, working for

1 Public Works Department.

their support till he has paid off the blood debt. It is not only New Guinea which is barely in the stage of the Anglo-Saxon tribes, who punished murder with *weregild*, the blood fine; the Burmese were in the same stage, nay as often as not they still are. Yet we inflict the CPC [1], the Evidence Act, & the Appellate Court upon them.

In Nigeria anthropology is fashionable & the young officer is started on the Golden Bough, but is though little of until he gets beyond it & does original work of his won. When I was in the Shan States five years ago, the Golden Bough was all round one, in every way-side village, in half the cases one examined; yet few of one's colleagues would have recognised the word anthropology, & none had so much as heard of the Golden Bough.

If you wanted to have a career of efficiency you should have stayed in an efficiency country, which does not exist east of Suez. Tiresome person like Reynolds, Grant & Thornton have not sufficient discrimination to see that most of their so-called efficiency is eye-wash & not worth dong. You cannot find in a country what doesn't exist or put into it what it is incapable of receiving.

What then did we come East for, to draw our pay & do nothing? My friend, we came here to do one of the noblest tasks a man can have: to ensure that little lives shall live without undue cruelty & oppression, that reasonable justice is done by the leaders of the people after their fashion & not according to a system of jurisprudence which a very different race eight thousand miles away took twenty centuries to evolve; to enter into human relations with a simple & affectionate people who are quick to respond to the slightest show of interest; to see the beauty of elementary things, the things that are eternal & draw us still to the Book of Job & the story of Hagar & the cradle at Bethlehem. All around us is the pageant of the immemorial past, that was, & is, & will be long after our Age of Iron has gone its way. But we have eyes that see not, ears that hear not, we are lost in our files, we prescribe new forms. There are better men in Clapham who would give their souls for half our opportunities. If we had wanted files we could have stared in Clapham, if we had wanted to prescribe new forms we could have taken a post under the London County Council.

1 Criminal Procedure Code.

Commentary: Harvey as an Older Orwell

I once showed a copy of Harvey's letter to an I.C.S. colleague, to a Fellow of St. Antony's College who had made some special study of Orwell's writings. I did not tell him at the time that it was by Harvey. After he had gone through it carefully, he said, "I know it is not Orwell's but it could well have been." There is no doubt that Harvey and Orwell were kindred spirits, and there was an affinity, even if not too close, between the two. When Burmese Days was first published, Harvey wrote a warm-hearted and enthusiastic letter to Orwell, congratulating him on the novel, agreeing with his opinions and enclosing a copy of the review of the book which he had written for some periodical. The letter is preserved in the Orwell Archives at University College, London, but the copy of the review is not traceable; it was perhaps never published. In the rather bitter controversy between Harvey's friend Mrs. Tennyson Jesse and Orwell over his review of her book The Story of Burma, Harvey probably acted as the mediator and obviously advised Mr. Jesse to stop the exchange of arc monious letters. Jesse's letters have not been found among the Orwell papers, but copies of Orwell's replies were found among the Harvey papers and have now been published. [1]

When Eric Blair, who was later to become George. Orwell reported for duty at Rangoon in 1922[2], Harvey was at Oxford, writing his History of Burma. Harvey returned to Burma in 1924 and Blair left in 1925. So they were in Burma together only for about a year, and as they belonged to different services and were at different places, they never met, as Harvey noted in his letter to Orwell.

Harvey was already a mature person when he reported for duty at Rangoon in 1913. Belonging to a family whose members had been involved on both sides of the Anglo-Irish conflicts, and also in the suffergrett movement, he knew the defects and limitations of Empire, and the two years he spent at Oxford as an I.C.S. probationer had taught him the theory and methods of colonial rule. He was 25 years of age. Therefore he did not possess any illusion f grandeur regarding the Empire. Above all Burma of 1913 was still a demi-paradise to its British administrators. The people seemed to be prosperous and contented, notwithstanding the stray rebellion that regularly occurred in the remoter parts of the country. Harvey took up the study of Burmese History and as a result he learnt to appreciate the past glory and realize the limitations of the Burmese monarchy. Becoming proficient in the Burmese language he began to understand the attitudes and aspirations of the Burmese people. So when nationalist fever gripped the Burmese nations as an aftermath of he was and he Indian reforms, Harvey, unlike the average Englishman in Burma was neither surprised nor shaken. He did not lose his illusions regarding the Empire, for he had none. However, in spite of his awareness of the prevalence of black sheep among his colleagues, he remained steadfastly loyal to his service and to the end of his life he proudly wrote Indian Civil Service after his name. Thus he was always G.E. Harvey of the Indian Civil Service.

The case of Eric Blair was totally different. His father was a second class Anglo-Indian [3] official in the never achieved an

1 The Collected Essays, etc. of George Orwell Vol 4. pp.139-142.

2 Accounts of Orwell's life in Burma and of the political and social background of Burmese Days are given (1) Maung Htin Aung. "George Orwell in Burma" in Miriam Gross (Editor) The World of George Orwell and (2) in Maung Htin Aung, "George Orwell of the Burma Police" Asian Affairs, June 1973

3 The term is used in its Harvian and Orwellian sense, meaning an Englishman who had served in India for a long time. In the late ninety-thirties the term through official usage came to mean a person of mixed English and Indian Parentage, who was known in Harvey's days as Eurasian.

Imperial service. Therefore, to attain such an imperial status and thus have a share in the glories of the British empire must have been the common dream of all members of the family. Eric Blair achieved the Imperial Police Service straight from Eton, and unfortunately without having to spend probationary years at Oxford which would have toughened him. He reported for duty at Rangoon in 1922, a mere youth barely 19 years of age. Brought up on Kipling's "On the Road to Mandalay" and on stories of "beautiful Burma" which were current in the family circles, through his grandmother, a long resident of Moulmein, he chose Burma as hi Indian province (Burma was an administrative province of the Indian empire until 1937). He arrived in the midst of a nationalist upheaval and the city of a Mandalay to which he had to proceed was the scene of violent riots in which young monks from the monastic colleges fought pitched battles with the police. It must have been a shock to young Blair and it definitely warped his attitude towards the empire, and towards the Burmese. Finally, he was so exasperated with the empire, the Imperial Police and himself that he discarded the name of Eric Blair together with his membership of the Imperial Police.

Blair became proficient in the Burmese language, [1] but because of the shortness of time that he spent in Burma and because he was not yet mature, he never quite understood either the Burmese or their religion. He could never appreciate either the Burmese or their Buddhism as Harvey did:

> But the role (of Kings of Pagan) was aesthetic and religious rather than political. To them the world owes in great measure the preservation of Theravada Buddhism one of the purest faiths mankind has ever known. Vainglorious tyrants built themselves lasting sepulchres, but none of these men has a tomb. ..... These men's magnificence went to glorify their religions, not to deck the tent wherein they camped during this transitory life. [2]

Blair was a typical young British official in his ignorance of Buddhism; this ignorance was displayed in Burmese Days. Even when he had grown much older and was an established writer in a England, he confessed in a letter to a friend that he could not make head or tale of Buddhism. [3]

Although Harvey and Blair lived in the same social and political environment during the stormy nineteen-twenties, and in spite of similarity in their temperaments, their reaction and response to the incidents and events of the time were dissimilar. That was because of the difference in age experience and the degree of maturity, Blair became an angry young man, furious with both the natives and their British rulers; Harvey in contrast showed the detachment of a scholar and historian, and after reflection, found that the imposition of an alien rule was in most cases the root of the trouble.

It is interesting to compare General Dyer's explanation of his action in shooting down and unarmed crowd of Indians with George Orwell's explanation why he shot and

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1 In the letter Harvey showed his contempt for those English officials who did not deign to learn Burmese. Orwell had the same opinion and thus a letter to Mrs. Tennyson Jessie said, "My Grandmother lived forty years in Burma, and at the end could not speak a word of Burmese-typical of the ordinary Englishman's attitude." (Collected Essays. etc. Vol. 4. p. 143).

2 History of Burma. p. 70.

3 The Collected Essays etc. of George Orwell. Volume I.

killed a must elephant after it had recovered from its frenzy and was docilely eating some leaves. [1] Both said that they did not want to be laughed at. [2] Orwell definitely stated that he did not want to be laughed at by the crowd, maintaining that a ruler was a mere puppet controlled by the masses over whom he ruled. In the case of Dyer, he did not say who was going to laugh if he did not shoot. In fact both were afraid of being laughed at not only by the masses, but by their own colleagues. As mentioned in the letter, some of Harvey's contemporaries expressed approval of Dyer's action, and although they might not have acted as Dyer did, they would have shot the elephant at Orwell's Moulmein. But Harvey would not have shot down either the crowd or the docile elephant. In his attitude towards the nationalist school boys, Harvey was as imperialistic as Orwell was. In Shooting an Elephant and Burmese Days Orwell openly expressed his hatred of the nationalist school boys, and Harvey in his letter violently criticized not only the striking school and college boys, but the Principal of Rangoon College, Matthew Hunter and praised the Director of Education, Mark Hunter (The two Hunters were not related. Harvey's view was in direct contrast to the contemporary Burmese view that the Principal was the Hero and the Director was the Villain of the University strike of 1920.[3] In their contempt of “Eurasians” Harvey and Orwell were merely reflecting the attitude of their Anglo-Indian society. To be a Eurasian was to have a touch of the tar brush, a phrase used by Harvey in relation to Dyer, and used by the other English characters in relation to the hero in Burmese Days. In the same novel and in A Hanging Eurasian characters were depicted by Orwell as silly and pretentious people, always flaunting their English parentage. To the contemporaries of both Harvey and Orwell, when a white man behaved in a stupid way as Dyer did, or mixed with the natives as Orwell's here did, the explanation was that he had some native blood in him.

In Burmese Days and Shooting an Elephant, Orwell displayed and expressed his intense hatred of the Burmese Buddhist monks. The vows of the Buddhist Order Prohibited Buddhist monks from meddling in politics: none the less in times of great national disaster or distress Burmese monks often took part in nationalist movements, determined to sacrifice not only their lives but also their "souls" for their nation or their religion. In the rebellion that immediately followed the British annexation of Burma in 1885, and in the nationalist movements of the nineteen-twenties, many monks took part; admittedly some of them were bogus or pseudo-monks, but not al. Orwell could never make the distinction between ordinary monks, and bad monks, but Harvey, acquainted with many learned and revered monks of his time and having a great respect for the Buddhist faith, would argue that all political monks were pseudo-monks, who would have been unfrocked under Burmese Kings. In the ninety-twenties, there appeared the first English language newspaper owned by Burmese, and as its name New Burma implied, its aim was to give expression to the new political ideas of the Burmese people. Because of the fervour of nationalism, it soon abandoned its restrained criticism of the British administration and British officials and resorted to scurrilous abuse. A Succession of young editors, most of them participants of the recent strike, went cheerfully to prison for sedition or criminal libel. Admittedly it

1 Collected Essays etc. Vol. 1.

2 "My whole life, every white man's life in the East is one long struggle not be laughed at." shooting an Elephant.

3 Neither Harvey not Orwell nor for that matter, any Englishman in Burma at that time realised the intensity of Burmese feeling behind this University strike. Since the Independence of 1948, the anniversary of the strike is celebrated annually as "Burmese National Day."

journalistic standards were low, hut it did mould and also reflect Burmese opinion against the British officials. In Burmese days, Orwell showed that he was as painfully surprised by the abuse in the newspaper as other English officials were, and he depicted it as an instrument of evil in the hands of the villain of the novel. Harvey in his letter pointed out that the Burmese had been abusing the English since the annexation and the average English official did not know of it until it got into print in the New Burma, simply because they did not trouble to make themselves acquainted with the Burmese language or the Burmese people. Harvey admitted that it was "gutter snipe abuse", but held that the British official provoked the people by their anti-socials behaviour. Orwell himself in his later years came to the same conclusion. In his letter to Tennyson Jesse quoted in a footnote above, which was dated 14 March 1946, he blamed her for not mentioning in her recent book The Story of Burma, "the disgusting social behaviour of the British". In Burmese Days the villain was a corrupt Burmese magistrate and through his portrayal of this character Orwell voiced the English officials' contempt for their corrupt Burmese colleagues. Harvey in his letter admitted that there were some corrupt Burmese official's, but maintained that the corrupt Burmese official was in effect the creation of an alien administration.

In Shooting an Elephant, Orwell wrote of his contempt and impatience with the Burmese masses for lacking the courage to start a real riot, but in Burmese Days, he narrated the events that provoked a local rebellions, bringing out the pathos and tragedy of the rebels, who armed only with sticks and kitchen knives were doomed to defeat and death at the hands of the British administrators. When Saya San's rebellion broke out in 1931 Harvey was still in service, and he retired from Burma in 1933 just after the rebellion had been surely suppressed. Harvey was in no way involved because he was then serving in the Shan States. [1] Unlike the stray rebellion of previous years, Saya San's rebellions, although centered in Tharawaddy district in Lower Burma, was nation-wide in that it inspired smaller rising all over the country. It was a Peasants' Rebellion, more desperate and more violent than Wat Tyler's in 14th century England because there was no great disparity of arms between Wat Tyler's peasants and Richard II's army and they were rebelling against their own king, and not against an alien government as was the case in Burma. Harvey was too near the scene to have the right perspective and as late as 1949 when he gave his Anthropological Society lecture, he saw only the trees and not the wood and insisted that Saya San's rebellion was merely a rising by superstitions and ignorant peasants, misled by pseudo-monks practicing magic and witchcraft. When I described Saya San's rebellion as a Peasants' Rebellion in a paper read before a conference at Johns Hopkins University in 1955,[2] I foolishly thought that I was the first writer to point out the true significance and nature of Saya San's rebellion. In fact, Orwell had preceded me by some nine years. Having left Burma in 1925, living 8000 miles away and with his new maturity he had the advantage of perspective. Thus in another letter to Tennyson Jesse dated 4th March 1946[3] he asserted that Saya San's rebellion had never been fully surpressed, and "ever since 1931 sporadic guerrilla fighting had been happening

1 Some location and stray rebellions did take place in the Shan States, but Harvey war not involved.

2 The paper was later published in Phillip W. Thayer (editor) Nationalism and Progress in Free Asia.

3 Collected Essays etc. Vol. 4. p.141.

in Burma involving much larger numbers of people", and he claimed that "it had been possible to foresee years beforehand that the whole administration would simply fold up in the face of a serious threat."

In the letter, Harvey expressed his admiration and regard for the Burmese people. Even in his History of Burma, notwithstanding its imperialistic overtones, he paid tribute in poetic language to the achievements of the Kings of Pagan, and of King Alaungpaya. His tribute to Alaungpaya stands in contrast to D.G.E. Hall's portrayal of the Burmese King as a buffoon and tyrant in his Early English Intercourse with Burma; for that matter, neither Hall nor Cady ever had a good word to say of the Burmese. I may quote again the following passage from Harvey's British Rule in Burma which so clearly illustrates Harvey's regard for the Burmese people.

> "There is in Burmese life a beautly that delights the eye and a dignity that makes one feel proud of the human race."

In his two Burmese pieces A Hanging and Shooting an Elephant and in Burmese Days, Orwell showed contempt mixed with hatred for the Burmese people. In the novel especially, he seemed determined not to see the beautiful side of the county and the people, like a handsome young prince who closed his eyes and plugged his ears so as not to fall under the spell of a siren. On two or three occasions, however, he opened his eyes and unplugged his ears, so that he was able to give an idyllic account of the sights and sounds of a north-Burmese forest and its plumed denizens, and to give sympathetic sketches of Burmese village life, with its wise and wizened headmen, stolid bullock-cart drivers, and courteous canoe-women. [1] In his next book The Road to Wigan Pier, he gave tribute to Burmese life and society, in language much less poetical than Harvey's but not less sincere. He described the "easy intimacy" he could have with the Burmese, even with Burmese servants, because their society being " classless" they were not "class conscious " as the English people were; how the " smell of the Burmese made his teeth tingle" but was by no means "repulsive" as the smell of the English lower classes; and how the Burmese grew physically old with grace, unlike English people. [2] In the closing years of the Second World War there was much wild talk in England about the benefits the Burmese people had through British rule, and about the fitness; or otherwise of the Burmese for Dominion Status, Orwell, however, bluntly reminded Tennyson Jesse "of the economic milching of the country via such concerns as the Burma Oil Company" [3] and boldly gave to British public the following warning, which proved later to be a prophecy also:

> "Whether these people remain inside the British Commonwealth or outside it, what matters in the long run is that we should have their friendship and we can have it if we do not play them false at the moment of crisis. [4]

If George Orwell had been older when he wrote Burmese Days, the novel would have been not only anti-empire but openly pro-Burmese. If Harvey had been younger when he wrote his History of Burma, it would have been openly pro-Burmese, and there could have been no controversy as to whether he was an imperialist or a historian. As it is, one has to read the above three hitherto unpublished papers side by side with the History of Burma, so as to solve the enigma of G. E. Harvey.

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1 Burmese Days. PP. 53-57, 150-151 (First Published 1934)
2 The Road to Wigan Pier. PP. 124-125 (First Published 1937)
3 Letter to Tennyson Jesse, date 14th March 1946. op. cit.
4 Article in The Tribune, 16th February 1945. Collected Essays etc.

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From G.E.Harvey I.C.S.
S.D.O. Maymyo

7 xi 1926

Dear McDowall

Captain Lennox of the Survey of India tells me he mentioned the following to you, so you may have spotted the locality.

He was touring in your district when he came to a deserted village site at the fork where two streams meet. An old man or monk of the modern village nearby said

> "There was a village there once, among those trees & old pagodas. When the English conquered the country the Burmese fought them there. The English attacked the village, & a young English officer was killed while rallying his sepoys in the attack. The sepoys thereupon saw red. The English had some cannon, which played on the village. As the villagers ran away down a nullah, sepoys waiting there fell on them & killed them to a man, sparing only women & children. They piled the heads of the Burmese dead on their officer's grave. I was told this by the elders & by my mother. I was a child in my mother's womb as she ran, carrying me inside her, with the rest of the villagers down the nullah."

Lennox thinks this is the origin of Kipling's

> "There's a widow in sleepy Chester
> Who weeps for her only son;
> There's a grave on the PABENG RIVER,
> A grave that the Burmans shun,
> And there's Subadar Prag Tewarri
> Who tells how the work was done....
>
> They made a pile of their trophies
> High as a tall man's chin,
> Head upon head distorted,
> Clinched in a sightless grin,
> Anger & pain & terror
> Writ on the smoke-scorched skin....
>
> Then a silence came over the river,
> A hush fell over the shore,
> And Bohs that were brave departed,
> And Sniders squibbed no more,
> For the Burman said
> That a kullah's head
> Must be paid for with heads five score.

Could you send this to an SDO or TO & ask him to search out the old man &

(i) take his name & age

(ii) record his statement (the more detail the better)

(iii) give the name of the present village, of the deserted village, describe the locality (names of streams, lie of land, whether there is a clump of deserted pagodas in a woodland etc).

It can be done in Burmese if necessary, & the examination should be along the lines of the statement on the preceding page, verifying it & departing from it where necessary.

Yours sincerely,

C S Harvey

Was the village deserted as a result of the fight, & a new village built? Lennox spoke as if the old man claimed it was a flourishing place, a trade centre, before the fight.

The real reason we intervened several years later, in 1885, was, we didn't particularly want the country, but the progress the French were making alarmed us & then: just when they drew back, temporarily, for reasons of domestic politics: King Thibaw foolishly presented us with a first class grievance: he set about extorting £¼ m. from a British timber firm, imprisoning its employees.

So we marched in, deposed him & annexed the country, rather against the advice of our own officers who, although they agreed a brief expedition was necessary to bring Thibaw to his senses, were against annexation. It seemed a pity to annex the one surviving Buddhist Kingdom in India, which was not only picturesque but contented. The sort of palace massacres Thibaw perpetrated only happened once in a generation, they did not affect

Jean Joseph SEZNEC
Maréchal Foch Prof Fr Lit
Fellow of All Souls

G Harvey Esq
15 St Margaret's Rd
Oxford tel 57079
9 March 1954

Dear Professor Seznec

G Hudson tells me you may be able to suggest something for me. I think I may be able to demolish the hitherto accepted idea that it was French intervention in Burma that forced us to annex the country in 1885.

The idea is amply supported by our archives (Government of Burma, Government of India, India Office, Foreign Office) & I helped to establish it further in my contribution to the Cambridge History of India vol. VI. It is as follows --

> The French, advancing in Tonquin, began to prepare for intervention in Burma. In 1885 they stationed Haas, a consul de carrière, at the Burmese capital. We soon had reports that Haas was (a) encouraging the Burmese to confiscate the property of a great English forest firm, (b) obtaining for French concessionaires contracts the Burmese Government had always refused to ourselves. These reports were confirmed: the property of the forest firm was confiscated, & copies of the contracts to French concessionaires fell into our hands.

Such is the standard version. But it overlooks the fact (not obvious at the time) that the one thing the French desired, in their own interests, was to avoid antagonising us; they regarded Burma as entirely within the English sphere of interest, & their only object in sending Haas was to secure from the King of Burma a recognition of their rights on the east bank of the Upper Mekong which they were now approaching from Tonquin. Moreover -- & this is where I need help -- I have recently found indications that Haas

(a) repeatedly warned the Burmese not to provoke annexation by confiscating the forest firm's property;
(b) neither sought nor obtained any concessions whatever; the contracts that fell into our hands were forgeries, faked by some palace underling in the vain hope of raising money from French speculators.

I must now find someone acquainted with the French evidence, some of it perhaps in print but most, I expect, in Quai d'Orsay archives.

Our own Foreign Office archives are open to anyone after c 1900 but I doubt whether the Quai d'Orsay welcome foreigners. The only French scholar of eminence I know is a pure orientalist,

at semi-public meetings. That it had been instigated by Mindon's govt — as if Mindon, or the sort of men he selected as Ministers, did that sort of thing; it wasn't in keeping with their character.

In London Sladen told the Royal Geographical Society, & the British Public, he'd been prevented from discovering an overland route by the obstructiveness of Mindon's govt.

Mindon knew of all this at the time from his Press readers; & soon he was to have a whole book, a book issued by Fytche, Sladen's chief, the governor at Rangoon.

Of 18 successive sovereigns of Burma 18, Fytche stands out by himself. He printed 1000 copies of the book containing the entire correspondence, reports, & confidential documents on the expedition, & drew the business world's conclusions & indifferent the Govt of India & Home Govt were to progress, & how he had had to insist. Govt never heard of this book till Fytche was due to retire in any case, so all they did do was to recall & destroy all the copies they did get. The scandalous breach of the publication rules didn't really matter as all the higher level confidential stuff was harmless: what did matter were documents by Sladen himself & one of his companions, a Rangoon port surveyor hired for the occasion to