

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK OF BURMA.¹
SIR GEORGE SCOTT has condensed into a volume of 485 pages, which any tourist can conveniently carry about, a mass of useful information about Burma. The book is described in the preface as of the nature of a skeleton or of a painter's study for a larger work. It is, however, much more than this, and contains all that any ordinary tourist needs to know about Burma, and, indeed, a good deal which is not known even to some who have resided for many years in Burma.

The work is divided into seven parts. Part i., "The Country and Climate," contains, besides an account of the fauna, flora, and geology and minerals of the country, a most interesting account of the races of Burma.

It is doubtful who were the original inhabitants of Burma. The only aboriginal tribe of which there is any trace are the Selungs, who live in the islands of the Mergui archipelago. Their language shows affinities with those of the Tsiang or Cham aborigines of Cambodia and of the Aetas or Negritos, aborigines of the Philippine Islands. In any case, the aboriginal inhabitants have been almost entirely replaced by swarm after swarm of Indo-Chinese invaders who have come down from north-western China, from Tibet, the Pamirs, and Mongolia, following the course of the great rivers. The Indo-Chinese were followed by the Tibeto-Burmans. After the Tibeto-Burmans came the peoples of the Siamese-Chinese sub-family—the Karens and the Tai, or Shans, and the last irruption, that of the Chingpaw, was only stopped by the British occupation of the country. The people of Burma, although they are divided into many tribes and races,

are, with the exception of the Selungs, all of the same original stock. Out of the total population of Burma, which was found at the census of 1901 to be approximately ten and a half millions, about seven millions speak Burmese.

Sir George Scott gives an account of all the various races found in Burma, and illustrates his text by photographs of many of them. We here reproduce the frontispiece photograph of the stiff-necked Padaung belles. These women wear neckbands of solid brass rods. The bands vary in number from five to twenty-five, and the idea with which the bands are worn is to keep the neck always on the stretch. Five coils are all that can be got on to begin with, but fresh coils are added as space is made for them as the girl grows, so that the neck is constantly kept

¹ "Burma: a Handbook of Practical Information." By Sir J. George Scott, K.C.I.E. Pp. x+520. (London: A. Moring, Ltd., 1906.) Price 10s. 6d. net.

at the stretch until the full limit of twenty-five bands is reached. Similar coils are worn on the legs and arms, so that the average woman carries fifty or sixty pounds of brass, and some manage as much as eighty pounds. Thus weighted, they carry water for domestic use, hoe the fields, and go long distances to market.

Part ii. contains an account of the Government of Burma. The first provinces of Burma to be annexed were Arakan and Tenasserim after the first Burmese war in 1826. The province of Pegu was added in 1852, after the second Burmese war, and Burma, as it now stands, was completed by the annexation of Upper Burma after the third Burmese war of 1885-1886.

The three provinces of Arakan, Tenasserim and Pegu were administered each by their own Commissioner under the Governor-General of India until 1862, when they were amalgamated under a Chief Commissioner,



FIG. 1.—Stiff-necked Padaung Belles. The neckbands of these women are of solid brass rod. They vary from five coils to twenty-five. From "Burma: a Handbook of Practical Information."

and it was not until May 1, 1897, that Burma became a Lieutenant-Governorship.

The account given of the duties of officers is generally correct, but since the handbook was written commissioners of divisions and deputy commissioners of districts in divisions and districts where work was heavy have been relieved of judicial duties by the appointment of divisional and district judges, whose time is devoted entirely to judicial work.

In this part Sir George Scott gives an excellent account of the Shan States, with which he is so intimately acquainted. The progress made in the Shan States, which were in a state of complete anarchy when Upper Burma was annexed, is surprising. All that they now require to secure their further development is the Southern Shan States railway, which will, it is anticipated, soon be commenced. Accounts are also given of Karenni, the Kachin Hills, and the Chin Hills. The Northern and Southern Shan

States, Karenni, the Kachin Hills, and the Chin Hills are all administered by special officers under regulations which are suited to the primitive condition of the people.

The subject of education is also dealt with in this part. It is remarked that there is no province in India which can compare with Burma in the number of the population able to read and write. The fact that primary education is so widely diffused is due to the indigenous schools. Every monastery is a school, and there is a monastery in almost every village. Education is free, and there are no caste restrictions in Burma. There every Buddhist boy learns at least to read and write.

Part ii. concludes with a history of Burma from the earliest times. The history is as complete as it is possible to make it in 38 pages. An authentic photograph of the ex-King Thibaw and the ex-Queen Supava-Lat, who are now detained at Ratnagiri, an old Portuguese fort on the west coast of India, is given at p. 200 of the handbook.



FIG. 2.—Wa Suspension Bridge. From "Burma: a Handbook of Practical Information."

Part iii. deals with industries, the forests of Burma, mines, agriculture, trade, transports, currency, weights and measures. All these subjects are dealt with exhaustively, and this part will well repay perusal.

The subjects discussed in part iv. are archæology, architecture, art, and music. Burma is called the land of pagodas, and Sir George Scott points out that there are three distinct types of religious buildings—the solid pagoda enshrining relics, the carved and ornamented wooden monasteries, and the masonry temples. The most celebrated temples are in the ruined town of Pagan. Many pagodas are in ruins because, except where the founders have endowed them, and thus assured their preservation, it is to nobody's interest to preserve a pagoda. The merit of erecting a pagoda is great, but the merit attaches to the original builder, and not to the restorer or repairer.

The Government provides for the maintenance of

some of the most notable pagodas, and for others there are trustees, who administer the endowments and collect the offerings of the faithful, and spend the proceeds on the repair of the buildings, but ruined and deserted temples are to be seen all over the country.

Part v. is taken up with an account of the Buddhist religion which is very complete. As Sir George Scott states, there is no doubt that the original religion of Burma was animism, and that this form of religion still survives amongst the vast body of the people. Buddhism, as many consider, is not a religion at all, but a system of philosophy. What most Burmans really reverence are the spirits of the air, the mountain and the fell. Many of the hill tribes are spirit worshippers pure and simple. Serpent worship, too, still survives.

Part vi. is devoted to language and literature. We are sorry that space does not permit us to give any extracts from this part.

Part vii. concludes the handbook with some useful

hints to residents or new visitors, and the last paragraphs of this part tell the readers something about sport.

There are also three appendices. The illustrations are numerous and good. We reproduce as a sample the photograph of a Wa suspension bridge.

In conclusion, we strongly recommend every intending visitor to Burma to provide himself with a copy of this handbook, in the compilation of which Sir George Scott has shown that he has a thorough knowledge of the country, to which he has added much industry and research.

We think that the handbook, besides being indispensable to the tourist, is also well worth perusal

by members of the non-travelling public who are anxious to know all that can be told about one of the most recent, and at the same time most interesting, possessions of the British Crown.

PROF. MARCEL BERTRAND.

IT was with deep regret that English geologists learned that Prof. Marcel Bertrand, professor of geology at the French National School of Mines, died on Wednesday, February 13. Born in Paris on July 2, 1847, a member of a family of great mathematicians, he inherited a natural gift for the exact sciences, and especially for geometry, which enabled him to enter into l'Ecole Polytechnique in 1867. In 1869, owing to his brilliance as a student, he was selected by the French Government as mining engineer. For three years he attended the courses of Elie de Beaumont and others at the School of