

***ARCHIBALD
FORBES***



***CAMPS,
QUARTERS,
AND CASUAL
PLACES***

Archibald Forbes

Camps, Quarters, and Casual Places

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MATRIMONY UNDER FIRE

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The interval between the declaration of the Franco-German war of 1870-71, and the "military promenade," at which the poor Prince Imperial received his "baptism of fire," was a pleasant, lazy time at Saarbrücken; to which pretty frontier town I had early betaken myself, in the anticipation, which proved well founded, that the tide of war would flow that way first. What a pity it is that all war cannot be like this early phase of it, of which I speak! It was playing at warfare, with just enough of the grim reality cropping up occasionally, to give the zest which the reckless Frenchwoman declared was added to a pleasure by its being also a sin. The officers of the Hohenzollerns—our only infantry regiment in garrison—drank their beer placidly under the lime-tree in the market-place, as their men smoked drowsily, lying among the straw behind the stacked arms ready for use at a moment's notice. The infantry patrol skirted the frontier line every morning in the gray dawn, occasionally exchanging with little result a few shots with the French outposts on the Spicheren or down in the valley bounded by the Schönecken wood. The Uhlans, their piebald lance-pennants fluttering in the wind, cantered leisurely round the crests of the little knolls which formed the vedette posts, despising mightily the straggling chassepot bullets which were pitched at them from time to time in a desultory way; but which, desultory as they were, now and then brought lance-pennant and its bearer to the ground—an occurrence invariably followed by a little spurt of lively hostility.

I had my quarters at the Rheinischer Hof, a right comfortable hotel on the St. Johann side of the Saar, where most of the Hohenzollern officers frequented the *table d'hôte* and where quaint little Max, the drollest imp of a waiter imaginable, and pretty Fraülein Sophie the landlord's niece, did all that in them lay to contribute to the pleasantness and comfort of the house. Not a few pleasant evenings did I spend at the table of the long dining-room, with the close-cropped red head of silent and genial Hauptmann von Krehl looming large over the great ice-pail, with its *chevaux de frise* of long-necked Niersteiner bottles—the worthy Hauptmann supported by blithe Lieutenant von Klipphausen, ever ready with the *Wacht am Rhein*; quaint Dr. Diestelkamp, brimful of recollections of "six-and-sixty" and as ready to amputate your leg as to crack a joke or clink a glass; gay young Adjutant von Zülow—he who one day brought in a prisoner from the foreposts a red-legged Frenchman across the pommel of his saddle; and many other good fellows, over most of whom the turf of the Spicheren, or the brown earth of the Gravelotte plain, now lies lightly.

But although the Rheinischer Hof associates itself in my mind with many memories, half-pleasant, half-sad, it was not the most accustomed haunt of the casuals in Saarbrücken, including myself. Of the waifs and strays which the war had drifted down to the pretty frontier town the great rendezvous was the Hôtel Hagen, at the bend of the turn leading from the bridge up to the railway station. The Hagen was a free-and-easy place compared with the Rheinischer, and among its inmates there was no one who could sing a better song than manly George—type of the Briton at whom foreigners stare—who, ignorant of a word of their language, wholly unprovided with any authorisation save the passport signed "Salisbury," and having not quite so much business at the seat of war as he might have at the

bottom of a coal-mine, gravitates into danger with inevitable certainty, and stumbles through all manner of difficulties and bothers by reason of a serene good-humour that nothing can ruffle and a cool resolution before which every obstacle fades away. Was there ever a more compositely polyglot cosmopolitan than poor young de Liefde—half Dutchman, half German by birth, an Englishman by adoption, a Frenchman in temperament, speaking with equal fluency the language of all four countries, and an unconsidered trifle of some half-dozen European languages besides? Then there was the English student from Bonn, who had come down to the front accompanied by a terrible brute of a dog, vast, shaggy, self-willed, and dirty; an animal which, so to speak, owned his owner, and was so much the horror and disgust of everybody that on account of him the company of his master—one of the pleasantest fellows alive—was the source of general apprehension. There was young Silberer the many-sided and eccentric, an Austrian nobleman, a Vienna feuilletonist and correspondent, a rowing man, a gourmet, ever thinking of his stomach and yet prepared for all the roughness of the campaign—warm-hearted, passionate, narrow-minded, capable of sleeping for twenty-three out of the twenty-four hours, and the wearer of a Scotch cap. There was Küster, a German journalist with an address somewhere in the Downham Road; and Duff, a Fellow of— College, the strangest mixture of nervousness and cool courage I ever met.

We were a kind of happy family at the Hagen; the tone of the coterie was that of the easiest intimacy into which every newcomer slid quite naturally. Thus when on the 31st July there was a somewhat sensational arrival, the stolid landlord had not turned the gas on in the empty saal before everybody knew and sympathised with the errand of the strangers. The party consisted of a plump little girl of about

eighteen with a bonny round face and fine frank eyes; her sister who was some years older; and a brother, the eldest of the three. They had come from Silesia on rather a strange tryst. Little Minna Vogt had for her *Bräutigam* a young Feldwebel of the second battalion of the Hohenzollerns, a native of Saarlouis. The battalion quartered there was under orders to join its first battalion at Saarbrücken, and young Eckenstein had written to his betrothed to come and meet him there, that the marriage-knot might be tied before he should go on a campaign from which he might not return. The arrangement was certainly a charming one; we should have a wedding in the Hagen! There was no nonsense about our young *Braut*. She told me the little story at supper on the night of her arrival in the most matter-of-fact way possible, drank her two glasses of red wine, and went off serenely to bed with a dainty lisp *Schlafen Sie wohl!*

While Minna was between the sheets in the pleasant chamber in the Hagen her lover was lying in bivouac some fifteen miles away. In the afternoon of the next day his battalion approached Saarbrücken and bivouacked about two miles from the town. Of course we all went out to welcome it; some bearing peace-offerings of cigars, others the drink-offering of potent Schnapps. The Vogt family were left the sole inmates of the Hagen, delicacy preventing their accompanying us. The German journalist, however, had a commission to find out young Eckenstein and tell him of the bliss that awaited him two short miles away. Right hearty fellows were the officers of the second battalion—from the grizzled Oberst down to the smooth-faced junior lieutenant; and the men who had been marching and bivouacking for a fortnight looked as fresh as if they had not travelled five miles. Küster soon found the young Feldwebel; and the Hauptmann of his company when he heard the state of the case, smiled a grim but kindly smile,

and gave him leave for two days with the proviso, that if any hostile action should be taken in the interval he should rejoin the colours immediately and without notice. "No fear of that!" was Eckenstein's reply with a significant down glance at his sword; and then, after a cheery "good-night" to the hardy bivouackers, we visitors started in triumph on our return to the Hagen, the young Feldwebel in our midst. It was good to see the unrestraint with which Minna—she of the apple face and frank eyes—threw herself round the neck of her betrothed as she met him on the steps of the Hagen, and his modest manly blush as he returned the embrace. Ye gods! did not we make a night of it! Stolid Hagen came out of his shell for once, and swore, *Donner Wetter* that he would give us a supper we should remember; and he kept his word. The good old pastor of the snow-white hair and withered cheeks—he had been engaged to perform the ceremony of the morrow—we voted into the chair whether he would or not; and on his right sat Minna and Eckenstein, their arms interlacing and whispering soft speeches which were not for our ears. The table was covered with bottles of Blume de Saar, the champagne peculiar of the Hagen; and the speed with which the full bottles were converted into "dead marines" was a caution to teetotallers. Then de Liefde the polyglot gave the health of the happy couple in a felicitous but composite speech, in which half a dozen languages were impartially intermixed so that all might understand at least a portion. George the jolly insisted in leading off the honours with a truly British "three times three;" and that horrible dog of Hyndman's gave the time, like a beast as he was, with stentorian barkings. Then Minna and her sister retired, followed by Herr Pastor; and after a considerable number of more bottles of Blume de Saar had met their fate we formed a procession and escorted the happy Eckenstein to the Rheinischer Hof where he was to sleep.

Next morning by eleven, we had all reassembled in the second saal of the Hagen. In the great room the marriage-breakfast was laid out, and in the kitchen Hagen and his Frau were up to their eyes in mystic culinary operations. Minna looked like a rosebud in her pretty low-necked blue dress, and the pastor in his cassock helped to the diversity of colour. We had done shaking hands with the bride and bridegroom after the ceremony, and were sitting down to the marriage feast, when young Eckenstein started and made three strides to the open window. His accustomed ear had caught a sound which none of us had heard. It was the sharp peremptory note of the drum beating the alarm. As it came nearer and could no longer be mistaken, the bright colour went out from poor Minna's cheek and she clung with a brave touching silence to her sister. In two minutes more Eckenstein had his helmet on his head and his sword buckled on, and then he turned to say farewell to his girl ere he left her for the battle. The parting was silent and brief; but the faces of the two were more eloquent than words. Poor Minna sat down by the window straining her eyes as Eckenstein, running at speed, went his way to the rendezvous.

When I got up to the Bellevue the French were streaming in overwhelming force down the slope of the Spicheren into the intervening valley. It was a beautiful sight; but I am not going to describe it here. Ere an hour was over the shells and chassépôt bullets were sweeping across the Exercise Platz, and it was no longer a safe spot for a non-combatant like myself. Before I got back into the Hagen after paying my bill at the Rheinischer and fetching away my knapsack, the French guns were on the Exercise Platz. I heard for the first time the angry screech of the mitrailleuse and saw the hailstorm of its bullets spattering on the pavement of the bridge. Somehow or other the whole of our little coterie had found their way into the Hagen; by a sort of common

impulse, I imagine. The landlady was already in hysterics; the Vogt girls were pale but plucky. Presently the shells began to fly. The Prussians had a gun or two on the railway esplanade above us, the fire of which the French began to return fiercely. Every shell that fell short tumbled in or about the Hagen; and a company of the Hohenzollerns was drawn up in the street in front of it, in trying to dislodge which the French fire could not well miss the Hagen and the houses opposite. A shell burst in the back-yard and the landlady fainted. Another came crashing in through a first-floor window, and, bursting, knocked several bedrooms into one. Then we thought it time to get the women down into the cellar—rather a risky undertaking since the door of it was in the backyard. However, we got them all down in safety and came up into the second saal to watch the course of events. Hagen gave a fearful groan as a shell broke into the kitchen behind us, and, bursting in the centre of the stove, sent his *chefs-d'oeuvre* of cookery sputtering in all directions. He gave a still deeper groan as another shell crashed into the principal dining-room and knocked the long table, laid out as it was for the marriage-feast, into a chaos of splinters, tablecloth, and knives and forks. The Restauration Küche on the other side was in flames, so was the stable of the hotel to the left rear. In this pleasing situation of affairs George produced a pack of cards and coolly proposed a game of whist. Küster, de Liefde, and Hyndman joined him; and the game proceeded amidst the crashing of the projectiles. Silberer and myself took counsel together and agreed that the occupation of the town by the French was only a question of a few hours at latest. We were both correspondents; and although the French would do us no harm our communications with our journals would inevitably be stopped—a serious contingency to contemplate at the beginning of a campaign. We both agreed that evacuation of the Hagen was imperative; but then, how to get out? The only way was

up the esplanade to the railway station, and upon it the French shells were falling and bursting in numbers very trying to the nerves. However, there was nothing for it but to make a rush through the fire; and saying good-bye to the whist-players we sallied forth. To my disgust I found that Silberer positively refused to make a rush of it. Although an Austrian all his sympathies were Prussian, and he had the utmost contempt for the French. In his broken language his invariable appellation for them was "God-damned Hundsöhne!" and he would not run before them at any price. I would have run right gladly at top-speed; but I did not like to run when another man walked, and so he made me saunter at the rate of two miles an hour till we got under shelter. After a hot walk of several miles, we reached the Hôtel Till in the village of Duttweiler. After all the French, although they might have done so, did not occupy Saarbrücken; and towards evening our friends came dropping into the Hôtel Till, singly or in pairs. Küster and George brought the Vogt sisters out in a waggon—it was surprising to see the coolness and composure of the girls. By nightfall we were all reunited, except one unfortunate fellow who had been slightly wounded and whom a Saarbrücken doctor had kindly received into his house.

On the 6th August came the Prussian repossession of Saarbrücken and the desperate storm of the Spicheren. The 40th was the regiment to which was assigned the place of honour in the preliminary recapture of the Exercise Platz height. Kameke rode up the winding road to the Bellevue; then came the march across the broad valley and after much bloodshed the final storm of the Spicheren, in which the 40th occupied about the left centre of the Prussian advance. Three times did the blue wave surge up the green steep, to be beaten back three times by the terrible blast of fire that crashed down upon it from above. Yet a fourth time it clambered up again, and this time it lipped the brink

and poured over the intrenchment at the top. But I am not describing the battle.

When it was over or at least when it had drifted away across the farther plateau, I followed on in the broad wake of dying and dead which the advance had left. The familiar faces of the Hohenzollerns were all around me; but either still in death or writhing in the torture of wounds. About the centre of the valley lay the genial Hauptmann von Krehl, more silent than ever now, for a bullet had gone right through that red head of his and he would never more quaff of the Niersteiner; neither would Lieutenant von Klipphausen ever again stir the blood of the sons of the Fatherland with the *Wacht am Rhein*; he lay dead close by the first spur of the slope—what of him at least a bursting shell had left. On a little flat half up sat quaint Dr. Diestelkamp, like Mark Tapley jolly under difficulties; by his side lay a man who had just bled to death as the good doctor explained to me. While he had been applying the tourniquet under a hot fire his right arm had been broken; and before he could pull himself up and go to the rear another bullet had found its billet in his thigh. There the little man sat, contentedly smoking till somebody would be good enough to come and take him away. Von Zülow too—he of the gay laugh and sprightly countenance—was on his back a little higher up, with a bullet through the chest. I heard the ominous sound of the escaping air as I raised him to give him a drink from my flask. What needs it to become diffuse as to the terrible sights which that steep and the plateau above it presented on this beautiful summer evening? It was farther to the right, in ground more broken with gullies and ravines, that the second battalion of the Hohenzollerns had gone up; and I wandered along there among the carnage eking out the contents of my flask as far as I could, and when the wounded had exhausted the brandy in it filling it up with water and still toiling on in a

task that seemed endless. At last, in a sitting posture, his back against a hawthorn tree in one of the grassy ravines, I saw one whom I thought I recognised. "Eckenstein!" I cried as I ran forward; for the posture was so natural that I could not but think he was alive. Alas! no answer came; the gallant young Feldwebel was dead, shot through the throat. He had not been killed outright by the fatal bullet; the track was apparent by the blood on the grass along which he had crawled to the hawthorn tree against which I found him. His head had fallen forward on his chest and his right hand was pressed against his left breast. I saw something white in the hollow of the hand and easily moved the arm for he was yet warm; it was the photograph of the little girl he had married but three short days before. The frank eyes looked up at me with a merry unconsciousness; and the face of the photograph was spotted with the life-blood of the young soldier.

I sent the death-token to Saarlouis by post to the young widow. I never knew whether she received it, for all the address I had was Saarlouis. Eckenstein I saw buried with two officers in a soldier's grave under the hawthorn. Any one taking the ascent up the fourth ravine Forbach-ward from the bluff of the Spicheren, may easily find it about halfway up. It may be recognised by the wooden cross bearing the rude inscription: "Hier ruhen in Gott 2 Officiere, 1 Feldwebel, 40ste Hohenzol. Fus. Regt."

REVERENCING THE GOLDEN FEET

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1879

By Christmas 1878 the winter had brought to a temporary standstill the operations of the British troops engaged in the first Afghan campaign, and I took the opportunity of this inaction to make a journey into Native Burmah, the condition of which seemed thus early to portend the interest which almost immediately after converged upon it, because of King Thebau's wholesale slaughter of his relatives. Reaching Mandalay, the capital of Native Burmah, in the beginning of February 1879, I immediately set about compassing an interview with the young king. Both Mr. Shaw, who was our Resident at Mandalay at the time of my visit, and Dr. Clement Williams whose kindly services I found so useful, are now dead, and many changes have occurred since the episode described below; but no description, so far as I am aware, has appeared of any visit of courtesy and curiosity to the Court of King Thebau of a later date than that made by myself at the date specified. One of my principal objects in visiting Mandalay, or, in Burmese phrase, of "coming to the Golden Feet," was to see the King of Burmah in his royal state in the Presence Chamber of the Palace. Certain difficulties stood in the way of the accomplishment of this object. I had but a few days to spend in Mandalay. With the approval of Mr. Shaw, the British Resident, I determined to pursue an informal course of action, and with this intent I enlisted the good offices of an English gentleman resident in Mandalay, who had intimate relations with the Ministers and the Court.

This gentleman, Dr. Williams, was good enough to help me with zeal and address. The line of strategy to adopt was to interest in my cause one of the principal Ministers. Of these there were four, who constituted the *Hlwot-dau*, or High Court and Council of the Monarchy. These

"Woonghys" or "Menghyis," as they were more commonly called—"Menghyi," meaning "Great Prince"—were of equal rank; but the senior Minister, the Yenangyoung Menghyi, who had precedence, was then in confinement, and, indeed, a decree of degradation had gone forth against him. Obviously he was of no use; but a more influential man than he ever was, and having the additional advantages of being at liberty, in power and in favour, was the "Kingwoon Menghyi." He was in effect the Prime Minister of the King of Burmah. His position was roughly equivalent to that of Bismarck in Germany, or of Gortschakoff in Russia, since, in addition to his internal influence, he had the chief direction of foreign affairs. Now this "Kingwoon Menghyi" had for a day or two been relaxing from the cares of State. Partly for his own pleasure, partly by way of example, he had laid out a beautiful garden on the low ground near the river. Within this garden he had the intention to build himself a suburban residence, which meanwhile was represented by a summer pavilion of teak and bamboo. He was a liberal-minded man, and it was a satisfaction to him that the shady walks and pleasant rose-groves of this garden should be enjoyed by the people of Mandalay. He was a reformer, this "Kingwoon Menghyi," and believed in the humanising effect of free access to the charms of nature. His garden laid out and his pavilion finished, he was celebrating the event by a series of *fêtes*. He was "at home" in his pavilion to everybody; bands of music played all day long and day after day, in the kiosks, among the young palm trees and the rosebushes. Mandalay, high and low, made holiday in the mazy walks of his garden and in an improvised theatre, wherein an interminable *pooey*, or Burmese drama, was being enacted before ever-varying and constantly appreciative audiences. Dr. Williams opined that it would conduce to the success of my object that we should call upon the Minister at his garden-house and request him to use his good offices in my behalf.

It was near noon when we reached the entrance to the garden. Merry but orderly sightseers thronged its alleys, and stared with wondering admiration at a rather attenuated jet of water which rose into the clear air some thirty feet above a rockwork fountain in the centre. Dignitaries strolled about under the stemless umbrellas like huge shields, with which assiduous attendants protected them from the sun; and were followed by posses of retainers, who prostrated themselves whenever their masters halted or looked round. Ladies in white jackets and trailing silk skirts of vivid hue were taking a leisurely airing, each with her demure maid behind her carrying the lacquer-ware box of betel-nut. As often as not the fair ones were blowing copious clouds from huge reed-like cheroots. Sounds of shrill music were heard in the distance. Walking up the central alley between the rows of palms and the hedges of roses, we found in the veranda a mixed crowd of laymen and priests, the latter distinguishable by their shaved heads and yellow robes. The Minister was just finishing his morning's work of distributing offerings to the latter, in commemoration of the opening of his gardens. In response to a message, he at once sent to desire that we should come to him. The great "shoe-question," the *quaestio vexata* between British officialism and Burmah officialism, did not trouble me. I had no official position; I wanted to gain an object. I have a respect for the honour of my country, but I could not bring myself to realise that the national honour centres in my shoes. So I parted with them at the top of the steps leading up into the Minister's pavilion, and walking on what is known as my "stocking-feet," and feeling rather shuffling and shabby accordingly, was ushered through a throng of prostrate dependents into the presence of the Menghyi. He came forward frankly and cordially, shook hands with a hearty smile with Dr. Williams and myself, and beckoned us into an inner alcove, carpeted with rich rugs and panelled with mirrors. Placing himself in

a half-sitting, half-kneeling attitude which did not expose his feet, he beckoned to us to get down also. I own to having experienced extreme difficulty in keeping my feet out of sight, which was a point *de rigueur*; but his Excellency was not censorious. There was with him a secretary who had resided several years in Europe, and who spoke fluently English, French, and Italian. This gentleman knew London thoroughly, and was perfectly familiar both with the name of the *Daily News* and of myself. He introduced me formally to his Excellency, who, I ought to have mentioned, was the head of the Burmese Embassy which had visited Europe a few years previously. That his Excellency had some sort of knowledge of the political character of the *Daily News* was obvious from the circumstance that when its name was mentioned he nodded and exclaimed, "Ah! ah! Gladstone, Bright!" in tones of manifest approval, which was no doubt accounted for by the fact that he himself was a pronounced Liberal. I explained that I had come to Mandalay to learn as much about Burmese manners, customs, and institutions as was possible in four days, with intent to embody my impressions in letters to England; and that as the King was the chief institution of the country, I had a keen anxiety to see him and begged of his Excellency to lend me his aid toward doing so. He gave no direct reply, but certainly did not frown on the request. We were served with tea (without cream or sugar) in pretty china cups, and then the Menghyi, observing that we were looking at some quaint-shaped musical instruments at the foot of the dais, explained that they belonged to a band of rural performers from the Pegu district, and proposed that we should first hear them play and afterwards visit the theatre and witness the *pooey*. We assenting, he led the way from his pavilion through the garden to a pretty kiosk half-embosomed in foliage, and chairs having been brought the party sat down. We had put on our shoes as we quitted the dais. The

Menghyi explained that it was pleasanter for him, as it must be for us, that we should change the manner of our reception from the Burmese to the European custom; and we were quite free to confess that we would sooner sit in chairs than squat on the floor. More tea was brought, and a plateful of cheroots. After we had sat a little while in the kiosk we were joined by the chief Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Baron de Giers of Burmah, a jovial, corpulent, elderly gentleman who had the most wonderful likeness to the late Pio Nono, and who clasped his brown hands over his fat paunch and kicked about his plump bare brown feet in high enjoyment when anything that struck him as humorous was uttered. He wholly differed in appearance from his superior, who was a lean-faced and lean-figured man, grave, and indeed somewhat sad both of eye and of visage when his face was in repose. As we talked, our conversation being through the interpreting secretary, there came to the curtained entrance to the kiosk a very dainty little lady. I had noticed her previously sauntering around the garden under one of the great shield-like shades, with a following of serving-men and serving-women behind her. She greeted the Menghyi very prettily, with the most perfect composure, although strangers were present. She was clearly a great pet with the Menghyi; he took her on his knee and played with her long black hair, as he told her about the visitors. The little lady was in her twelfth year, and was the daughter of a colleague and a relative of the Menghyi. She had an olive oval face, with lovely dark eyes, like the eyes of a deer. She wore a tiara of feathery white blossoms. In her ears were rosettes of chased red gold. Round her throat was a necklace of a double row of large pearls. Her fingers—I regret to say her nails were not very clean—were loaded with rings set with great diamonds of exceptional sparkle and water; one stone in particular must have been worth many thousands of pounds. She wore a jacket of white silk,

and round her loins was girt a gay silken robe that trailed about her bare feet as she walked. She shook hands with us with a pretty shyness and immediately helped herself to a cheroot, affably accepting a light from mine. The Menghyi told us she was a great scholar—could read and write with facility, and had accomplishments to boot.

By this time the provincial band had taken its place under one of the windows of the kiosk, and it presently struck up. Its music was not pretty. There were in the strange weird strain suggestions of gongs, bagpipes, penny whistles, and the humble tom-tom of Bengal. The gentleman who performed on an instrument which seemed a hybrid between a flute and a French horn, occasionally arrested his instrumental music to favour us with vocal strains, but he failed to compete successfully with the cymbals. I do not think the Menghyi was enraptured by the music of the strollers from Pegu, for he presently asked us whether we were ready to go to the *pooy*. He again led the way through a garden, passing in one corner of it a temporary house of which a company of Burmese nuns, short-haired, pallid-faced, unhappy-looking women, were in possession; and passing through a gate in the wicker-work fence ushered us into the "state-box" of the improvised theatre. There is very little labour required to construct a theatre in Burmah. Over a framework of bamboo poles stretch a number of squares of matting as a protection from the sun. Lay some more down in the centre as a flooring for the performers. Tie a few branches round the central bamboo to represent a forest, the perpetual set-scene of a Burmese drama; and the house is ready. The performers act and dance in the central square laid with matting. A little space on one side is reserved as a dressing and green room for the actresses; a similar space on the other side serves the turn of the actors; and then come the spectators crowding in on all four sides of the square. It is an orderly

and easily managed audience; it may be added an easily amused audience. The youngsters are put or put themselves in front and squat down; the grown people kneel or stand behind. Our "state-box" was merely a raised platform laid with carpets and cushions, from which as we sat we looked over the heads of the throng squatting under and in front of us. Of the drama I cannot say that I carried away with me particularly clear impressions. True, I only saw a part of it—it was to last till the following morning; but long before I left the plot to me had become bewilderingly involved. The opening was a ballet; of that at least I am certain. There were six lady dancers and six gentlemen ditto. The ladies were arrayed in splendour, with tinsel tiaras, necklaces, and bracelets, gauzy jackets and waving scarfs; and with long, light clinging silken robes, of which there was at least a couple of yards on the "boards" about their feet. They were old, they were ugly, they leered fiendishly; their faces were plastered with powder in a ghastly fashion, and their coquetry behind their fans was the acme of caricature. But my pen halts when I would describe the gentlemen dancers. I believe that in reality they were not meant to represent fallen humanity at all; but were intended to personify *nats*, the spirits or princes of the air of Burmese mythology. They carried on their heads pagodas of tinsel and coloured glass that towered imposingly aloft. They were arrayed in tight-bodied coats with aprons before and behind of fantastic outline, resembling the wings of dragons and griffins, and these coats were an incrustated mass of spangles and pieces of coloured glass. Underneath a skirt of tartan silk was fitfully visible. Their brown legs and feet were bare. The expression of their faces was solemn, not to say lugubrious—one performer had a most whimsical resemblance to Mr. Toole when he is sunk in an abyss of dramatic woe. They realised the responsibilities of their position, and there were moments when these seemed too many for

them. The orchestra, taken as a whole, was rather noisy; but it comprised one instrument, the "bamboo harmonicon," which deserves to be known out of Burmah because of its sweetness and range of tone. There were lots of "go" in the music, and every now and then one detected a kind of echo of a tune not unfamiliar in other climes. One's ear seemed to assure one that *Madame Angot* had been laid under contribution to tickle the ears of a Mandalay audience, yet how could this be? The explanation was that the instrumentalists, occasionally visiting Thayetmyo or Rangoon, had listened there to the strains of our military bands, and had adapted these to the Burmese orchestra in some deft inscrutable manner, written music being unknown in the musical world of Burmah.

Next day the Kingwoon Menghyi took the wholly unprecedented step of inviting to dinner the British Resident, his suite, and his visitor—myself. Mr. Shaw accepted the invitation, and I considered myself specially fortunate in being a participator in a species of intercourse at once so novel, and to all seeming so auspicious.

About sundown the Residency party, joined *en route* by Dr. Williams, rode down to the entrance to the gardens. Here we were warmly received by the English-speaking secretary, and by the jovial bow-windowed minister who so much resembled the late Pio Nono. We were escorted to the verandah of the pavilion, where the Menghyi himself stood waiting to greet us, and were ushered up to the broad, raised, carpeted platform which may be styled the drawing-room. Here was a semicircle of chairs. On our way to these, a long row of squatting Burmans was passed. As the Resident approached, the Menghyi gave the word, and they promptly stood erect in line. He explained that they were the superior officers of the army quartered in the capital—generals, he called them—whom he had asked to meet us.

Of these officers one commanded the eastern guard of the Palace, the other the western; two others were aides-de-camp after a fashion. Just as the Menghyi and his subordinate colleagues represented the Ministry, so these military people represented the Court. The former was the moderate constitutional element of the gathering; the latter the "jingo" or personal government element, for the Burmese Court was reactionary, and those military sprigs were of the personal suite of the King and were understood to abet him in his falling away from the constitutional promise with which his reign began. Their presence rendered the occasion all the more significant. That they were deputed from the Palace to attend and watch events was pretty certain, and indeed the two aides went away immediately after dinner, their excuse being that his Majesty was expecting their personal attendance. After a little while of waiting, the *mauvais quart d'heure* having the edge of its awkwardness taken off by a series of introductions, dinner was announced, and the Menghyi, followed by the Resident, led the way into an adjoining dining-room. Good old Pio Nono, who, I ought to have said, had been with the Menghyi a member of the Burmese Embassy to Europe, jauntily offered me his arm, and gave me to understand that he did so in compliance with English fashion. The Resident sat on the right of the Menghyi, I was on his left; the rest of the party, to the number of about fifteen, took their places indiscriminately; Mr. Andrino, an Italian in Burmese employ, being at the head of the table, Dr. Williams at the foot. Our meal was a perfectly English dinner, served and eaten in the English fashion. The Burmese had taken lessons in the nice conduct of a knife and fork, and fed themselves in the most irreproachably conventional manner, carefully avoiding the use of a knife with their fish. Pio Nono, who sat opposite the Menghyi, tucked his napkin over his ample paunch and went in with a will. He was in a most hilarious mood, and taxed his

memory for reminiscences of his visit to England. These were not expressed with useless expenditure of verbiage, nor did they flow in unbroken sequence. It was as if he dug in his memory with a spade, and found every now and then a gem in the shape of a name, which he brandished aloft in triumph. He kept up an intermittent and disconnected fire all through dinner, with an interval between each discharge, "White-bait!" "Lord Mayor!" "Fishmongers!" "Cremorne!" "Crystal Palace!" "Edinburgh!" "Dunrobin!" "Newcastle!" "Windsor!"—each name followed by a chuckle and a succession of nods. The Menghyi divided his talk between the Resident and myself. He told me that of all the men he had met in England his favourite was the late Duke of Sutherland; adding that the Duke was a nobleman of great and striking eloquence, a trait which I had not been in the habit of regarding as markedly characteristic of his Grace. He spoke with much warmth of a pleasant visit he had paid to Dunrobin, and said he should be heartily glad if the Duke would come to Burmah and give him an opportunity of returning his hospitality. Here Pio Nono broke in with one of his periodical exclamations. This time it was "Lady Dudley." Of her, and of her late husband, the Menghyi then recalled his recollections, and if more courtly tributes have been paid to her ladyship's charms and grace, I question if any have been heartier and more enthusiastic than was the appreciation of this Burmese dignitary. The soldier element was at first somewhat stiff, but as the dinner proceeded the generals warmed in conversation with the Resident. But the aides were obstinately supercilious, and only partially thawed in acknowledgment of compliments on the splendour of their jewelry. Functionaries attached to the personal suite of his Majesty wore huge ear-gems as a distinguishing mark. The aides had these in blazing diamonds, and were good enough to take out the ornaments and hand them round. The civil ministers wore no ornaments and their dress was

studiously plain. We were during dinner entertained by music, instrumental and vocal, sedulously modulated to prevent conversation from being drowned. The meal lasted quite two hours, and when it was finished the Menghyi led the way to coffee in one of the kiosks of the garden. I should have said that no wine was on the table at dinner. The Burmese by religion are total abstainers, and their guests were willing to follow their example for the time and to fall in with their prejudices. After coffee we were ushered into the drawing-room, and listened to a concert. The only solo-vocalist was the prima donna *par excellence*, Mdlle. Yeendun Male. The burden of her songs was love, but I could not succeed in having the specific terms translated. Then she sang an ode in praise of the Resident, and gracefully accepted his pecuniary appreciation of her performance. Pio Nono then beckoned to her to flatter me at close quarters; but, mistaking the index, she addressed herself to the Residency chaplain in strains of hyperbolical encomium. The mistake having been set right, much to the reverend gentleman's relief, the songstress overpowered my sensitive modesty by impassioned requests in verse that I should delay my departure; that, if I could not do so, I should take her away with me; and that, if this were beyond my power, I should at least remember her when I was far away. The which was an allegory and cost me twenty rupees.

When the good-nights were being said, the Menghyi gratified me by the information that the King had given his consent to my presentation, and that I was to have the opportunity next morning of "Reverencing the Golden Feet."

The Royal Palace occupied the central space of the city of Mandalay. It was almost entirely of woodwork, and was not only the counterpart of the palace which Major Phayre

saw at Amarapoora, but the identical palace itself, conveyed piecemeal from its previous site and re-erected here. Its outermost enclosure consisted of a massive teak palisading, beyond which all round was a wide clear space laid out as an esplanade, the farther margin of which was edged by the houses of ministers and court officials. The Palace enclosure was a perfect square, each face about 370 yards. The main entrance, the only one in general use, was in the centre of the eastern face, almost opposite to which, across the esplanade, was the *Yoom-daù*, or High Court. This gate was called the *Yive-daù-yoo-Taga*, or the Royal Gate of the Chosen, because the charge of it was entrusted to chosen troops. As I passed through it on my way to be presented to his Majesty, the aspect of the "chosen" troops was not imposing. They wore no uniform, and differed in no perceptible item from the common coolies of the outside streets. They were lying about on charpoys and on the ground, chewing betel or smoking cheroots, and there was not even the pretence of there being sentries under arms. Some rows of old flintlock guns stood in racks in the gateway, rusty, dusty, and untended; they might have been untouched since the last insurrection. Crossing an intermediate space overgrown with shrubbery, we passed through a high gateway cut in the inner brick wall of the enclosure; and there confronted us the great Myenan of Mandalay—the Palace of the "Sun-descended Monarch." The first impression was disappointing, for the whole front was covered with gold-leaf and tawdry tinsel-work which had become weather-worn and dingy. But there was no time now to halt, inspect details, and rectify perchance first impressions. A message came that the Kingwoon Menghyi, my host of the previous evening—substantially the Prime Minister of Burmah, desired that we—that was to say, Dr. Williams, my guide, philosopher, and friend, and myself—should wait upon him in the *Hlwot-daù*, or Hall of the Supreme Council, before entering the Palace itself. The

Hlwot-daù was a detached structure on the right front of the Palace as one entered by the eastern gate. It was the Downing Street of Mandalay. Its sides were quite open, and its fantastic roof of grotesquely carved teak plastered with gilding, painting, and tinsel, was supported on massive teak pillars painted a deep red. Taking off our shoes we ascended to the platform of the *Hlwot-daù*, where we found the Menghyi surrounded by a crowd of minor officials and suitors squatting on their stomachs and elbows, with their legs under them and their hands clasped in front of their bent heads. The Menghyi came forward several paces to meet us, conducted us to his mat, and sitting down himself and bidding us do the same, explained that as it was with him a busy day, he would not be able personally to present me to the King as he had hoped to have done, but that he had made all arrangements and had delegated the charge of us to our old friend whom I have ventured to call "Pio Nono." That corpulent and jovial worthy made his appearance at this moment along with his English-speaking subordinate, and with cordial acknowledgments and farewells to the Menghyi we left the *Hlwot-daù* under their guidance. They led us along the front of the Palace, passing the huge gilded cannon that flanked on either side the central steps leading up into the throne-room; and turning round the northern angle of the Palace front, conducted us to the Hall of the *Bya-dyt*, or Household Council. We had to leave our shoes at the foot of the steps leading up to it. The *Bya-dyt* was a mere open shed; its lofty roof borne up by massive teak timbers. What splendour had once been its in the matter of gilding and tinsel was greatly faded. The gold-leaf had been worn off the pillars by constant friction, and the place appeared to be used as a lumber-room as well as a council-chamber. On the front of one of a pile of empty cases was visible, in big black letters, the legend, "Peek, Frean, and Co., London." State documents reposed in the receptacle once occupied by biscuits. Clerks lay all

around on the rough dusty boards, writing with agate stylets on tablets of black papier-mâche; and there was a constant flux and reflux of people of all sorts, who appeared to have nothing to do and who were doing it with a sedulously lounging deliberation that seemed to imply a gratifying absence of arrears of official work. We sat down here for a while along with Pio Nono and his assistant, who busied himself in dictating to a secretary a description of myself and a catalogue of my presents to be read by the herald to his Majesty when I should be presented. Then Pio Nono went away and presently came back, saying that it was intended to bestow upon me some souvenirs of Mandalay, and that to admit of the preparation of these the audience would not take place for an hour or so. He invited us in the meantime to inspect the public apartments of the Palace itself and the objects of interest in the Palace enclosure. So we got up, and still without our shoes walked through the suite leading to the principal throne-room or great hall of audience.

These were simply a series of minor throne-rooms. The first one in order from the private apartments was close to the *Bya-dyt*. It must be borne in mind that the whole suite, including the great audience hall, were not rooms at all in our sense of the word. They were simply open-roofed spaces, the roofs gabled, spiked, and carved into fantastic shapes, laden with dingy gold-leaf garishly picked out with glaring colours and studded with bits of stained glass; the roofs, or rather I should say, the one continuous roof, supported on massive deep red pillars of teak-wood. The whole palace was raised from the ground on a brick platform some 10 feet high. The partitions between the several walls were simply skirtings of planking covered with gold-leaf. The whole palace seemed an armoury. Some ten or twelve thousand stand of obsolete muskets were ranged along these partitions and crammed into the

anteroom of the throne-room proper. The whole suite was dingy, dirty, and uncared-for; but on a great day, with the gilding renewed, carpets spread on the rugged boards, banners waving, and the courtiers in full dress, no doubt the effect would have been materially improved. The vista from the throne of the great hall of audience looked right through the columned arcade to the "Gate of the Chosen"; and that we might imagine the scene more vividly, we considered ourselves as on our way to Court on one of the great days, and going back to the gate again began our pilgrimage anew. The pillared front of the Palace stretched before us raised on the terrace, its total length 260 feet. Looking between the two gilded cannon, we saw at the foot of the central steps a low gate of carved and gilded wood. That gate, it seemed, was never opened except to the King—none save he might use those central steps. Raising our eyes we looked right up the vista of the hall to the lofty throne raised against the gilded partition that closed at once the vista and the hall. We had been looking down the great central nave, as it were, toward the west gate, in the place of which was the throne. But along the eastern front of the terrace ran a long colonnade, whose wings formed transepts at right angles to the nave. The throne-room was shaped like the letter T, the throne being at the base of the letter and the cross-bar representing the colonnade. Entering at the extremity of one of these, we traversed it to the centre and then faced the nave. The throne was exactly before us, at the end of the pillared vista. Five steps led up to the dais. Its form was peculiar, contracting by a gradation of steps from the base upwards to mid-height, and again expanding to the top, on which was a cushioned ledge such as is seen in the box of a theatre. On the platform, which now was bare planks, the King and Queen on a great reception day would sit on gorgeous carpets. The entrance was through gilded doors from a staircase in the ante-room beyond. There was a rack of muskets round

the foot of the throne, and just outside the rails a half-naked soldier lay snoring. Our Burman companion assured us that seeing the throne-room now in its condition of dismantled tawdriness, I could form no idea of the fine effect when King and Court in all their splendour were gathered in it on a ceremonial day. I tried to accept his assurances, but it was not easy to imagine such forlorn dinginess changed into dazzling splendour. Just over the throne, and in the centre of the Palace and of the city, rose in gracefully diminishing stages of fantastic woodcarving a tapering *phya-sath* or spire similar to those surmounting sacred buildings, and crowned with the gilded *Htee*, an honour which royalty alone shared with ecclesiastical sanctity. The spire, like everything else, had been gilt, but it was now sadly tarnished and had lost much of its brilliancy of effect.

Having looked at the hall of audience we strolled through the Palace esplanade. A wall parted this off from the private apartments and the pleasure grounds occupying the western section of the Palace enclosure. A series of carved and gilded gables roofed with glittering zinc plates was visible over the wall. The grounds were said to be well planted with flowering shrubs and fruit trees and to contain lakelets and rockeries. Built against the outer wall and facing the enclosed space were barracks for soldiers and gun sheds. The accommodation was as primitive as are the weapons, and that was saying a good deal. Pio Nono led us across to a big wooden house, scarcely at all ornamented, which was the everyday abode of the "Lord White Elephant." His "Palace," or state apartment, was not pointed out to us. His lordship, in so far as his literal claim to be styled a white elephant, was an impostor of the deepest dye and a very grim and ugly impostor to boot. He was a great, lean, brown, flat-sided brute, his ears, forehead, and trunk mottled with a dingy cream colour. But