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978-1-108-04469-1 - Reminiscences of the Burmese War in 1824-5-6

F.B. Doveton

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Reminiscences of the Burmese War in 1824-5-6

This first-hand account of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–6) was written by Captain Frederick Doveton of the Royal Madras Fusiliers and published in 1852. Intending to feed the contemporary British fascination with tales of Burma and its people, Doveton gives a brief history of the conflict, placing it into the context of the events leading up to the outbreak of the Second War (1852–3). He then offers a ‘personal narrative’ of his experiences, aimed at a popular rather than professional readership. His descriptions of Burmese life, landscape, and customs are full of anecdotes. These include his surprise at the natives playing chess, and his experience of having a tattoo; but he also shows respect for a people with an ancient history and culture, and conveys vividly the complexities and hardships of warfare and army life in an inhospitable terrain.

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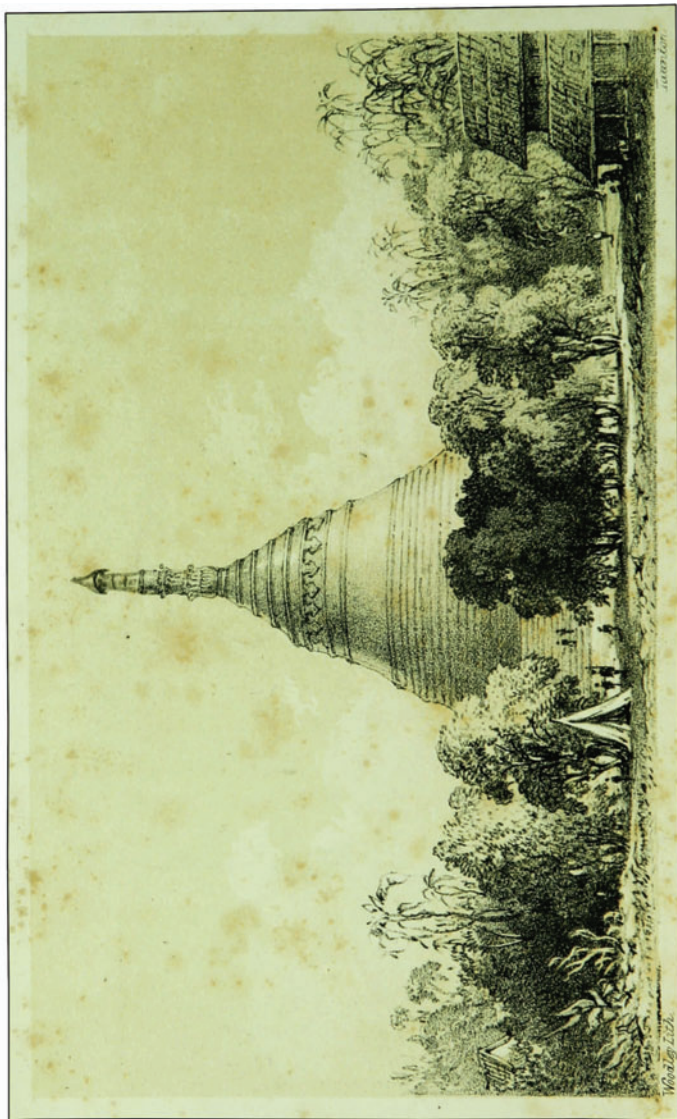
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THE SHWEMADAW OR GREAT PAGODA OF PEGU.

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REMINISCENCES
OF THE
BURMESE WAR,
In 1824-5-6.

(Originally published in the Asiatic Journal.)

BY

CAPT. F. B. DOVETON,

LATE FIRST MADRAS EUROPEAN FUSILIERS,

AN EYE-WITNESS.

*With Illustrations, from Original Sketches by the
Author.*

LONDON:

ALLEN AND CO., LEADENHALL STREET.

1852.

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**WOODLEY, PRINTER, TAUNTON.**  
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DEDICATION.

TO THE SURVIVING OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS
OF THE AVA WAR, THIS NARRATIVE OF
THAT STIRRING EVENT IS SUBSCRIBED BY
THEIR FRIEND AND COMRADE,

THE AUTHOR.

HAINES HILL, TAUNTON, AUGUST, 1852.

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PREFACE:

A FRESH Burmese War has broken out, and a fresh interest is excited through the length and breadth of the land in all that relates to that brave and arrogant people. As the war proceeds, abundance of material will be supplied for writers, and, doubtless, in due course the Press will teem with new works on Ava. In the interim the official despatches, arriving at long intervals, and giving only outlines of the operations, will barely satisfy public curiosity, however interesting they may be to the professional reader.

The operations of the last war were, for the most part, faithfully recorded in one or two able works that appeared at the time; but soldiers were not so much addicted to the “cacoëthes

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scribendi" then as they are now, which will account for so little personal narrative of those stirring events being extant.

Under these circumstances I am encouraged to introduce the following sketches to the public. They do not pretend to give a connected account of the war, but are simply a personal narrative, —the enlargement of a Subaltern's Journal,— wherein were hastily dotted down dates, places, and persons in all sorts of circumstances and under all sorts of difficulties. The sketches are, nevertheless, sufficiently linked together to form a consecutive series, and they have the advantage of including in their descriptions some interesting military operations, overlooked, it is believed, by former writers.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS is not the place for any details of the present war, but a few words will be necessary in order to connect one period with another.

From the treaty of Yandaboo, in 1826, until our Cabool disasters in 1841, the little intercourse that subsisted between ourselves and the Burmese remained without any serious interruption. They experienced a change of dynasty, and enjoyed their fair share of those internal commotions peculiar to Asiatic Governments; but that did not concern us. As soon, however, as they heard of a British army having been destroyed at Cabool they began to get impertinent again, and to cast a longing eye towards the provinces they had ceded to us; and very hostile demonstrations were made in the vicinity of Moulmein. But we had no sooner

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recovered our lost ground and re-established our *prestige* in India than the Burmese drew in their horns and adopted a more conciliatory tone. This, however, did not last long: they mistook forbearance for fear. Our envoys were repeated insulted; our subjects at Rangoon persecuted, till matters came to such a climax that Commodore Lambert, with a couple of war-steamer, was dispatched to Rangoon to demand full reparation from the Court of Ava. The rest is soon told; attempts at negotiation utterly failed; insult succeeded insult; and a collision ensued between the vessels and the shore, with severe loss to the Burmese.

On the Commodore's return from his fruitless mission, an expedition was forthwith organized, consisting of 6,000 men, under Gen. Godwin, and a powerful flotilla of war-steamer; and on the 5th and 14th of April respectively, Martaban and Rangoon, with 130 pieces of cannon, were captured, the loss on our side being about 150 men and officers killed and wounded.