

FIELDING HAROLD

THE SOUL OF A
PEOPLE

Harold Fielding

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DEDICATION TO SECOND EDITION

I dedicate this book to you about whom it is written. It has been made a reproach to me by the critics that I have only spoken well of you, that I have forgotten your faults and remembered only your virtues. If it is wrong to have done this, I must admit the wrong. I have written of you as a friend does of a friend. Where I could say kind things of you I have done so, where I could not I have been silent. You will find plenty of people who can see only your faults, and who like to tell you of them. You will find in the inexorable sequence of events a corrector of these faults more potent than any critics can be. But I am not your critic, but your friend. If many of you had not admitted me, a stranger, into your friendship during my many very solitary years, of what sort should I be now? How could I have lived those years alone? You kept alive my sympathies, and so saved me from many things. Do you think I could now turn round and criticise you? No; but this book is my tribute of gratitude for many kindnesses.

PREFACE

In most of the quotations from Burmese books containing the life of the Buddha I am indebted, if not for the exact words, yet for the sense, to Bishop Bigandet's translation.

I do not think I am indebted to anyone else. I have, indeed, purposely avoided quoting from any other book and using material collected by anyone else.

The story of Ma Pa Da has appeared often before, but my version is taken entirely from the Burmese song. It is, as I have said, known to nearly every Burman.

I wanted to write only what the Burmese themselves thought; whether I have succeeded or not, the reader can judge.

I am indebted to Messrs. William Blackwood and Sons for permission to use parts of my article on 'Burmese Women' —*Blackwood's Magazine*, May, 1895 – in the present work.

CHAPTER I

LIVING BELIEFS

'The observance of the law alone entitles to the right of belonging to my religion.' —Saying of the Buddha.

For the first few years of my stay in Burma my life was so full of excitement that I had little care or time for any thought but of to-day. There was, first of all, my few months in Upper Burma in the King's time before the war, months which were full of danger and the exhilaration of danger, when all the surroundings were too new and too curious to leave leisure for examination beneath the surface. Then came the flight from Upper Burma at the time of the war, and then the war itself. And this war lasted four years. Not four years of fighting in Burma proper, for most of the Irrawaddy valley was peaceful enough by the end of 1889; but as the central parts quieted down, I was sent to the frontier, first on the North and then on the East by the Chin mountains; so that it was not until 1890 that a transfer to a more settled part gave me quiet and opportunity for consideration of all I had seen and known. For it was in those years that I gained most of whatever little knowledge I have of the Burmese people.

Months, very many months, I passed with no one to speak to, with no other companions but Burmese. I have been with them in joy and in sorrow, I have fought with them and against them, and sat round the camp-fire after the day's work and talked of it all. I have had many friends amongst them, friends I shall always honour; and I have seen them killed sometimes in our fights, or dead of fever in the marshes of the frontier. I have known them from the labourer to the Prime Minister, from the little neophyte just accepted into the faith to the head of all the Burmese religion. I have known their wives and daughters; have watched many a flirtation in the warm scented evenings; and have seen girls become wives and wives mothers while I have lived amongst them. So that although when the country settled down, and we built houses for ourselves and returned more to English modes of living, I felt that I was drifting away from them into the conventionality and ignorance of our official lives, yet I had in my memory much of what I had seen, much of what I had done, that I shall never forget. I felt that I had been – even if it were only for a time – behind the veil, where it is so hard to come.

In looking over these memories it seemed to me that there were many things I did not understand, acts of theirs and customs, which I had seen and noted, but of which I did not know the reason. We all know how hard it is to see into the heart even of our own people, those of our flesh and blood who are with us always, whose ways are our ways, and whose thoughts are akin to ours. And if this be so with them, it is ten thousand times harder with those whose ways are not our ways, and from whose thoughts we must be far apart. It is true that there are no dark places in the lives of the Burmese as there are in the lives of other Orientals. All is open to the light of day in their homes and in their religion, and their women are the freest in the world. Yet the barriers of a strange tongue and a strange religion, and of ways caused by another climate than ours, is so great that, even to those of us who have every wish and every opportunity to understand, it seems sometimes as if we should never know their hearts. It seems as if we should never learn more of their ways than just the outside – that curiously varied outside which is so deceptive, and which is so apt to prevent our understanding that they are men just as we are, and not strange creations from some far-away planet.

So when I settled down and sought to know more of the meaning of what I had seen, I thought that first of all I must learn somewhat of their religion, of that mainspring of many actions, which seemed sometimes admirable, sometimes the reverse, and nearly always foreign to my ideas. It is true that I knew they were Buddhists, that I recognized the yellow-robed monks as followers of the word

of Gaudama the Buddha, and that I had a general acquaintance with the theory of their faith as picked up from a book or two – notably, Rhys Davids' 'Buddhism' and Bishop Bigandet's book – and from many inconsequent talks with the monks and others. But the knowledge was but superficial, and I was painfully aware that it did not explain much that I had seen and that I saw every day.

So I sent for more books, such books as had been published in English, and I studied them, and hoped thereby to attain the explanations I wanted; and as I studied, I watched as I could the doings of the people, that I might see the effects of causes and the results of beliefs. I read in these sacred books of the mystery of Dharma, of how a man has no soul, no consciousness after death; that to the Buddhist 'dead men rise up never,' and that those who go down to the grave are known no more. I read that all that survives is the effect of a man's actions, the evil effect, for good is merely negative, and that this is what causes pain and trouble to the next life. Everything changes, say the sacred books, nothing lasts even for a moment. It will be, and it has been, is the life of man. The life that lives tomorrow in the next incarnation is no more the life that died in the last than the flame we light in the lamp to-day is the same that went out yesternight. It is as if a stone were thrown into a pool – that is the life, the splash of the stone; all that remains, when the stone lies resting in the mud and weeds below the waters of forgetfulness, are the circles ever widening on the surface, and the ripples never dying, but only spreading farther and farther away. All this seemed to me a mystery such as I could not understand. But when I went to the people, I found that it was simple enough to them; for I found that they remembered their former lives often, that children, young children, could tell who they were before they died, and remember details of that former existence. As they grew older the remembrance grew fainter and fainter, and at length almost died away. But in many children it was quite fresh, and was believed in beyond possibility of a doubt by all the people. So I saw that the teachings of their sacred books and the thoughts of the people were not at one in this matter.

Again, I read that there was no God. Nats there were, spirits of great power like angels, and there was the Buddha (the just man made perfect), who had worked out for all men the way to reach surcease from evil; but of God I saw nothing. And because the Buddha had reached heaven (Nirvana), it would be useless to pray to him. For, having entered into his perfect rest, he could not be disturbed by the sharp cry of those suffering below; and if he heard, still he could not help; for each man must through pain and sorrow work out for himself his own salvation. So all prayer is futile.

Then I remembered I had seen the young mother going to the pagoda on the hilltop with a little offering of a few roses or an orchid spray, and pouring out her soul in passionate supplication to Someone – Someone unknown to her sacred books – that her firstborn might recover of his fever, and be to her once more the measureless delight of her life; and it would seem to me that she must believe in a God and in prayer after all.

So though I found much in these books that was believed by the people, and much that was to them the guiding influence of their lives, yet I was unable to trust to them altogether, and I was in doubt where to seek for the real beliefs of these people. If I went to their monks, their holy men, the followers of the great teacher, Gaudama, they referred me to their books as containing all that a Buddhist believed; and when I pointed out the discrepancies, they only shook their heads, and said that the people were an ignorant people and confused their beliefs in that way.

And when I asked what was a Buddhist, I was told that, to be a Buddhist, a man must be accepted into the religion with certain rites, certain ceremonies, he must become for a time a member of the community of the monks of the Buddha, and that a Buddhist was he who was so accepted, and who thereafter held by the teachings of the Buddha.

But when I searched the life of the Buddha, I could not find any such ceremonies necessary at all. So that it seemed that the religion of the Buddha was one religion, and the religion of the Buddhists another; but when I said so to the monks, they were horror-struck, and said that it was because I did not understand.

In my perplexity I fell back, as we all must, to my own thoughts and those of my own people; and I tried to imagine how a Burman would act if he came to England to search into the religion of the English and to know the impulses of our lives.

I saw how he would be sent to the Bible as the source of our religion, how he would be told to study that if he would know what we believed and what we did not – what it was that gave colour to our lives. I followed him in imagination as he took the Bible and studied it, and then went forth and watched our acts, and I could see him puzzled, as I was now puzzled when I studied his people.

I thought of him reading the New Testament, and how he would come to these verses:

'27. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

'28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

'29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid him not to take thy coat also.

'30. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.'

He would read them again and again, these wonderful verses, that he was told the people and Church believed, and then he would go forth to observe the result of this belief. And what would he see? He would see this: A nation proud and revengeful, glorying in her victories, always at war, a conqueror of other peoples, a mighty hater of her enemies. He would find that in the public life of the nation with other nations there was no thought of this command. He would find, too, in her inner life, that the man who took a cloak was not forgiven, but was terribly punished – he used to be hanged. He would find – But need I say what he would find? Those who will read this are those very people – they know. And the Burman would say at length to himself, Can this be the belief of this people at all? Whatever their Book may say, they do not think that it is good to humble yourself to your enemies – nay, but to strike hard back. It is not good to let the wrong-doer go free. They think the best way to stop crime is to punish severely. Those are their acts; the Book, they say, is their belief. Could they act one thing and believe another? Truly, *are* these their beliefs?

And, again, he would read how that riches are an offence to righteousness: hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God. He would read how the Teacher lived the life of the poorest among us, and taught always that riches were to be avoided.

And then he would go forth and observe a people daily fighting and struggling to add field to field, coin to coin, till death comes and ends the fight. He would see everywhere wealth held in great estimation; he would see the very children urged to do well, to make money, to struggle, to rise in the world. He would see the lives of men who have become rich held up as examples to be followed. He would see the ministers who taught the Book with fair incomes ranking themselves, not with the poor, but with the middle classes; he would see the dignitaries of the Church – the men who lead the way to heaven – among the wealthy of the land. And he would wonder. Is it true, he would say to himself, that these people believe that riches are an evil thing? Whence, then, come their acts, for their acts seem to show that they hold riches to be a good thing? What is to be accepted as their belief: the Book they say they believe, which condemns riches, or their acts, by which they show that they hold that wealth is a good thing – ay, and if used according to their ideas of right, a very good thing indeed?

So, it seemed to me, would a Burman be puzzled if he came to us to find out our belief; and as the Burman's difficulty in England was, *mutatis mutandis*, mine in Burma, I set to work to think the matter out. How were the beliefs of a people to be known, and why should there be such difficulties in the way? If I could understand how it was with us, it might help me to know how it was with them.

And I have thought that the difficulty arises from the fact that there are two ways of seeing a religion – from within and from without – and that these are as different as can possibly be. It is because we forget there are the two standpoints that we fall into error.

In every religion, to the believers in it, the crown and glory of their creed is that it is a revelation of truth, a lifting of the veil, behind which every man born into this mystery desires to look.

They are sure, these believers, that they have the truth, that they alone have the truth, and that it has come direct from where alone truth can live. They believe that in their religion alone lies safety for man from the troubles of this world and from the terrors and threats of the next, and that those alone who follow its teaching will reach happiness hereafter, if not here. They believe, too, that this truth only requires to be known to be understood and accepted of all men; that as the sun requires no witness of its warmth, so the truth requires no evidence of its truth.

It is to them so eternally true, so matchless in beauty, so convincing in itself, that adherents of all other creeds have but to hear it pronounced and they must believe. So, then, the question, How do you know that your faith is true? is as vain and foolish as the cry of the wind in an empty house. And if they be asked wherein lies their religion, they will produce their sacred books, and declare that in them is contained the whole matter. Here is the very word of truth, herein is told the meaning of all things, herein alone lies righteousness. This, they say, is their faith: that they believe in every line of it, this truth from everlasting to everlasting, and that its precepts, and none other, can be held by him who seeks to be a sincere believer. And to these believers the manifestation of their faith is that its believers attain salvation hereafter. But as that is in the next world, if the unbeliever ask what is the manifestation in this, the believers will answer him that the true mark and sign whereby a man may be known to hold the truth is the observance of certain forms, the performance of certain ceremonies, more or less mystical, more or less symbolical, of some esoteric meaning. That a man should be baptized, should wear certain marks on his forehead, should be accepted with certain rites, is generally the outward and visible sign of a believer, and the badge whereby others of the same faith have known their fellows.

It has never been possible for any religion to make the acts and deeds of its followers the test of their belief. And for these reasons: that it is a test no one could apply, and that if anyone were to attempt to apply it, there would soon be no Church at all. For to no one is it given to be able to observe in their entirety all the precepts of their prophet, whoever that prophet may be. All must fail, some more and some less, but generally more, and thus all would fall from the faith at some time or another, and there would be no Church left. And so another test has been made necessary. If from his weakness a man cannot keep these precepts, yet he can declare his belief in and his desire to keep them, and here is a test that can be applied. Certain rites have been instituted, and it has been laid down that those who by their submission to these rites show their belief in the truth and their desire to follow that truth as far as in them lies, shall be called the followers of the faith. So in time it has come about that these ceremonial rites have been held to be the true and only sign of the believer, and the fact that they were but to be the earnest of the beginning and living of a new life has become less and less remembered, till it has faded into nothingness. Instead of the life being the main thing, and being absolutely necessary to give value and emphasis to the belief, it has come to pass that it is the belief, and the acceptance of the belief, that has been held to hallow the life and excuse and palliate its errors.

Thus of every religion is this true, that its essence is a belief that certain doctrines are revelations of eternal truth, and that the fruit of this truth is the observance of certain forms. Morality and works may or may not follow, but they are immaterial compared with the other. This, put shortly, is the view of every believer.

But to him who does not believe in a faith, who views it from without, from the standpoint of another faith, the whole view is changed, the whole perspective altered. Those landmarks which to one within the circle seem to stand out and overtop the world are to the eyes of him without dwarfed often into insignificance, and other points rise into importance.

For the outsider judges a religion as he judges everything else in this world. He cannot begin by accepting it as the only revelation of truth; he cannot proceed from the unknown to the known, but the reverse. First of all, he tries to learn what the beliefs of the people really are, and then he judges from their lives what value this religion has to them. He looks to acts as proofs of beliefs, to lives as the ultimate effects of thoughts. And he finds out very quickly that the sacred books of a

people can never be taken as showing more than approximately their real beliefs. Always through the embroidery of the new creed he will find the foundation of an older faith, of older faiths, perhaps, and below these, again, other beliefs that seem to be part of no system, but to be the outcome of the great fear that is in the world.

The more he searches, the more he will be sure that there is only one guide to a man's faith, to his soul, and that is not any book or system he may profess to believe, but the real system that he follows – that is to say, that a man's beliefs can be known even to himself from his acts only. For it is futile to say that a man believes in one thing and does another. That is not a belief at all. A man may cheat himself, and say it is, but in his heart he knows that it is not. A belief is not a proposition to be assented to, and then put away and forgotten. It is always in our minds, and for ever in our thoughts. It guides our every action, it colours our whole life. It is not for a day, but for ever. When we have learnt that a cobra's bite is death, we do not put the belief away in a pigeon-hole of our minds, there to rust for ever unused, nor do we go straightway and pick up the first deadly snake that we see. We remember it always; we keep it as a guiding principle of our daily lives.

A belief is a strand in the cord of our lives, that runs through every fathom of it, from the time that it is first twisted among the others till the time when that life shall end. And as it is thus impossible for the onlooker to accept from adherents of a creed a definition of what they really believe, so it is impossible for him to acknowledge the forms and ceremonies of which they speak as the real manifestations of their creed.

It seems to the onlooker indifferent that men should be dipped in water or not, that they should have their heads shaved or wear long hair. Any belief that is worth considering at all must have results more important to its believers, more valuable to mankind, than such signs as these. It is true that of the great sign of all, that the followers of a creed attain heaven hereafter, he cannot judge. He can only tell of what he sees. This may or may not be true; but surely, if it be true, there must be some sign of it here on earth beyond forms. A religion that fits a soul for the hereafter will surely begin by fitting it for the present, he will think. And it will show that it does so otherwise than by ceremonies.

For forms and ceremonies that have no fruit in action are not marks of a living truth, but of a dead dogma. There is but little thought of forms to him whose heart is full of the teaching of his Master, who has His words within his heart, and whose soul is full of His love. It is when beliefs die, and love has faded into indifference, that forms are necessary, for to the living no monument is needed, but to the dead. Forms and ceremonies are but the tombs of dead truths, put up to their memory to recall to those who have never known them that they lived – and died – long ago.

And because men do not seek for signs of the living among the graveyards of the dead, so it is not among the ceremonies of religions that we shall find the manifestations of living beliefs.

It is from the standpoint of this outsider that I have looked at and tried to understand the soul of the Burmese people. When I have read or heard of a teaching of Buddhism, I have always taken it to the test of the daily life of the people to see whether it was a living belief or no. I have accepted just so much as I could find the people have accepted, such as they have taken into their hearts to be with them for ever. A teaching that has been but a teaching or theory, a vain breath of mental assent, has seemed to me of no value at all. The guiding principles of their lives, whether in accordance with the teaching of Buddhism or not, these only have seemed to me worthy of inquiry or understanding. What I have desired to know is not their minds, but their souls. And as this test of mine has obliged me to omit much that will be found among the dogmas of Buddhism, so it has led me to accept many things that have no place there at all. For I have thought that what stirs the heart of man is his religion, whether he calls it religion or not. That which makes the heart beat and the breath come quicker, love and hate, and joy and sorrow – that has been to me as worthy of record as his hopes of a future life. The thoughts that come into the mind of the ploughman while he leads his team afield in the golden glory of the dawn; the dreams that swell and move in the heart of the woman when she knows the great mystery of a new life; whither the dying man's hopes and fears are led – these have seemed

to me the religion of the people as well as doctrines of the unknown. For are not these, too, of the very soul of the people?

CHAPTER II

HE WHO FOUND THE LIGHT – I

'He who pointed out the way to those that had lost it.'
Life of the Buddha.

The life-story of Prince Theiddatha, who saw the light and became the Buddha twenty-five centuries ago, has been told in English many times. It has been told in translations from the Pali, from Burmese, and from Chinese, and now everyone has read it. The writers, too, of these books have been men of great attainments, of untiring industry in searching out all that can be known of this life, of gifts such as I cannot aspire to. There is now nothing new to learn of those long past days, nothing fresh for me to tell, no discovery that can be made. Yet in thinking out what I have to say about the religion of the Burmese, I have found that I must tell again some of the life of the Buddha, I must rewrite this ten-times-told tale, of which I know nothing new. And the reason is this: that although I know nothing that previous writers have not known, although I cannot bring to the task anything like their knowledge, yet I have something to say that they have not said. For they have written of him as they have learned from books, whereas I want to write of him as I have learned from men. Their knowledge has been taken from the records of the dead past, whereas mine is from the actualities of the living present.

I do not mean that the Buddha of the sacred books and the Buddha of the Burman's belief are different persons. They are the same. But as I found it with their faith, so I find it with the life of their teacher. The Burmese regard the life of the Buddha from quite a different standpoint to that of an outsider, and so it has to them quite a different value, quite a different meaning, to that which it has to the student of history. For to the writer who studies the life of the Buddha with a view merely to learn what that life was, and to criticise it, everything is very different to what it is to the Buddhist who studies that life because he loves it and admires it, and because he desires to follow it. To the former the whole detail of every portion of the life of the Buddha, every word of his teaching, every act of his ministry, is sought out and compared and considered. Legend is compared with legend, and tradition with tradition, that out of many authorities some clue to the actual fact may be found. But to the Buddhist the important parts in the great teacher's life are those acts, those words, that appeal directly to him, that stand out bravely, lit with the light of his own experiences and feelings, that assist him in living his own life. His Buddha is the Buddha he understands, and who understood and sympathized with such as him. Other things may be true, but they are matters of indifference.

To hear of the Buddha from living lips in this country, which is full of his influence, where the spire of his monastery marks every village, and where every man has at one time or another been his monk, is quite a different thing to reading of him in far countries, under other skies and swayed by other thoughts. To sit in the monastery garden in the dusk, in just such a tropic dusk as he taught in so many years ago, and hear the yellow-robed monk tell of that life, and repeat his teaching of love, and charity, and compassion – eternal love, perfect charity, endless compassion – until the stars come out in the purple sky, and the silver-voiced gongs ring for evening prayers, is a thing never to be forgotten. As you watch the starlight die and the far-off hills fade into the night, as the sounds about you still, and the calm silence of the summer night falls over the whole earth, you know and understand the teacher of the Great Peace as no words can tell you. A sympathy comes to you from the circle of believers, and you believe, too. An influence and an understanding breathes from the nature about you – the same nature that the teacher saw – from the whispering fig-trees and the scented champaks, and the dimly seen statues in the shadows of the shrines, that you can never gain elsewhere. And as the monks tell you the story of that great life, they bring it home to you with reflection and comment,

with application to your everyday existence, till you forget that he of whom they speak lived so long ago, so very long ago, and your heart is filled with sorrow when you remember that he is dead, that he is entered into his peace.

I do not hope that I can convey much of this in my writing. I always feel the hopelessness of trying to put on paper the great thoughts, the intense feeling, of which Buddhism is so full. But still I can, perhaps, give something of this life as I have heard it, make it a little more living than it has been to us, catch some little of that spirit of sympathy that it holds for all the world.

Around the life of the Buddha has gathered much myth, like dust upon an ancient statue, like shadows upon the mountains far away, blurring detail here and there, and hiding the beauty. There are all sorts of stories of the great portents that foretold his coming: how the sun and the stars knew, and how the wise men prophesied. Marvels attended his birth, and miracles followed him in life and in death. And the appearance of the miraculous has even been heightened by the style of the chroniclers in telling us of his mental conflicts: by the personification of evil in the spirit Man, and of desire in his three beautiful daughters.

All the teacher's thoughts, all his struggles, are materialized into forms, that they may be more readily brought home to the reader, that they may be more clearly realized by a primitive people as actual conflicts.

Therefore at first sight it seems that of all creeds none is so full of miracle, so teeming with the supernatural, as Buddhism, which is, indeed, the very reverse of the truth. For to the supernatural Buddhism owes nothing at all. It is in its very essence opposed to all that goes beyond what we can see of earthly laws, and miracle is never used as evidence of the truth of any dogma or of any doctrine.

If every supernatural occurrence were wiped clean out of the chronicles of the faith, Buddhism would, even to the least understanding of its followers, remain exactly where it is. Not in one jot or tittle would it suffer in the authority of its teaching. The great figure of the teacher would even gain were all the tinsel of the miraculous swept from him, so that he stood forth to the world as he lived – would gain not only to our eyes, but even to theirs who believe in him. For the Buddha was no prophet. He was no messenger from any power above this world, revealing laws of that power. No one came to whisper into his ear the secrets of eternity, and to show him where truth lived. In no trance, in no vision, did he enter into the presence of the Unknown, and return from thence full of the wisdom of another world; neither did he teach the worship of any god, of any power. He breathed no threatenings of revenge for disobedience, of forgiveness for the penitent. He held out no everlasting hell to those who refused to follow him, no easily gained heaven to his believers.

He went out to seek wisdom, as many a one has done, looking for the laws of God with clear eyes to see, with a pure heart to understand, and after many troubles, after many mistakes, after much suffering, he came at last to the truth.

Even as Newton sought for the laws of God in the movement of the stars, in the falling of a stone, in the stir of the great waters, so this Newton of the spiritual world sought for the secrets of life and death, looking deep into the heart of man, marking its toil, its suffering, its little joys, with a soul attuned to catch every quiver of the life of the world. And as to Newton truth did not come spontaneously, did not reveal itself to him at his first call, but had to be sought with toil and weariness, till at last he reached it where it hid in the heart of all things, so it was with the prince. He was not born with the knowledge in him, but had to seek it as every other man has done. He made mistakes as other men do. He wasted time and labour following wrong roads, demonstrating to himself the foolishness of many thoughts. But, never discouraged, he sought on till he found, and what he found he gave as a heritage to all men for ever, that the way might be easier for them than it had been for him.

Nothing is more clear than this: that to the Buddhist his teacher was but a man like himself, erring and weak, who made himself perfect, and that even as his teacher has done, so, too, may he if he do but observe the everlasting laws of life which the Buddha has shown to the world. These laws are as immutable as Newton's laws, and come, like his, from beyond our ken.

And this, too, is another point wherein the parallel with Newton will help us: that just as when Newton discovered gravitation he was obliged to stop, for his knowledge of that did not lead him at once to the knowledge of the infinite, so when he had attained the laws of righteousness, Gaudama the Buddha also stopped, because here his standing-ground failed. It is not true, that which has been imputed to the Buddha by those who have never tried to understand him – that he denied some power greater than ourselves; that because he never tried to define the indefinite, to confine the infinite within the corners of a phrase, therefore his creed was materialistic. We do not say of Newton that he was an atheist because when he taught us of gravity he did not go further and define to us in equations Him who made gravity; and as we understand more of the Buddha, as we search into life and consider his teaching, as we try to think as he thought, and to see as he saw, we understand that he stopped as Newton stopped, because he had come to the end of all that he could see, not because he declared that he knew all things, and that beyond his knowledge there was nothing.

No teacher more full of reverence, more humble than Gaudama the Buddha ever lived to be an example to us through all time. He tells us of what he knows; of what he knows not he is silent. Of the laws that he can see, the great sequences of life to death, of evil to sorrow, of goodness to happiness, he tells in burning words. Of the beginning and the end of the world, of the intentions and the ways of the great Unknown, he tells us nothing at all. He is no prophet, as we understand the word, but a man; and all that is divine in him beyond what there is in us is that he hated the darkness and sought the light, sought and was not dismayed, and at last he found.

And yet nothing could be further from the truth than to call the Buddha a philosopher and Buddhism a philosophy. Whatever he was, he was no philosopher. Although he knew not any god, although he rested his claims to be heard upon the fact that his teachings were clear and understandable, that you were not required to believe, but only to open your eyes and see, and 'his delight was in the contemplation of unclouded truth,' yet he was far from a philosopher. His was not an appeal to our reason, to our power of putting two and two together and making five of them; his teachings were no curious designs woven with words, the counters of his thought. He appealed to the heart, not to the brain; to our feelings, not to our power of arranging these feelings. He drew men to him by love and reverence, and held them so for ever. Love and charity and compassion, endless compassion, are the foundations of his teachings; and his followers believe in him because they have seen in him the just man made perfect, and because he has shown to them the way in which all men may become even as he is.

He was a prince in a little kingdom in the Northeast of India, the son of King Thudoodana and his wife Maia. He was strong, we are told, and handsome, famous in athletic exercises, and his father looked forward to the time when he should be grown a great man, and a leader of armies. His father's ambition for him was that he should be a great conqueror, that he should lead his troops against the neighbouring kings and overcome them, and in time make for himself a wide-stretching empire. India was in those days, as in many later ones, split up into little kingdoms, divided from each other by no natural boundary, overlooked by no sovereign power, and always at war. And the king, as fathers are, was full of dreams that this son of his should subdue all India to himself, and be the glory of his dynasty, and the founder of a great race.

Everything seemed to fall in with the desire of the king. The prince grew up strong and valiant, skilled in action, wise in counsel, so that all his people were proud of him. Everything fell in with the desire of the king except the prince himself, for instead of being anxious to fight, to conquer other countries, to be a great leader of armies, his desires led him away from all this. Even as a boy he was meditative and given to religious musings, and as he grew up he became more and more confirmed in his wish to know of sacred things, more and more an inquirer into the mysteries of life.

He was taught all the faith of those days, a faith so old that we do not know whence it came. He was brought up to believe that life is immortal, that no life can ever utterly die. He was taught that all life is one; that there is not one life of the beasts and one life of men, but that all life was

one glorious unity, one great essence coming from the Unknown. Man is not a thing apart from this world, but of it. As man's body is but the body of beasts, refined and glorified, so the soul of man is but a higher stage of the soul of beasts. Life is a great ladder. At the bottom are the lower forms of animals, and some way up is man; but all are climbing upwards for ever, and sometimes, alas! falling back. Existence is for each man a great struggle, punctuated with many deaths; and each death ends one period but to allow another to begin, to give us a new chance of working up and gaining heaven.

He was taught that this ladder is very high, that its top is very far away, above us, out of our sight, and that perfection and happiness lie up there, and that we must strive to reach them. The greatest man, even the greatest king, was farther below perfection than an animal was below him. We are very near the beasts, but very far from heaven. So he was taught to remember that even as a very great prince he was but a weak and erring soul, and that unless he lived well, and did honest deeds, and was a true man, instead of rising he might fall.

This teaching appealed to the prince far more than all the urging of his father and of the courtiers that he should strive to become a great conqueror. It entered into his very soul, and his continual thought was how he was to be a better man, how he was to use this life of his so that he should gain and not lose, and where he was to find happiness.

All the pomp and glory of the palace, all its luxury and ease, appealed to him very little. Even in his early youth he found but little pleasure in it, and he listened more to those who spoke of holiness than to those who spoke of war. He desired, we are told, to become a hermit, to cast off from him his state and dignity, and to put on the yellow garments of a mendicant, and beg his bread wandering up and down upon the world, seeking for peace.

This disposition of the prince grieved his parents very much. That their son, who was so full of promise, so brave and so strong, so wise and so much beloved by everyone, should become a mendicant clad in unclean garments, begging his daily food from house to house, seemed to them a horrible thing. It could never be permitted that a prince should disgrace himself in this way. Every effort must be taken to eradicate such ideas; after all, it was but the melancholy of youth, and it would pass. So stringent orders were given to distract his mind in every way from solemn thoughts, to attempt by a continued round of pleasure and luxury to attract him to more worldly things. And when he was eighteen he was married to his cousin Yathodaya, in the hope that in marriage and paternity he might forget his desire to be a hermit, might feel that love was better than wisdom. And if Yathodaya had been other than she was – who can tell? – perhaps after all the king might have succeeded; but it was not to be so. For to Yathodaya, too, life was a very solemn thing, not to be thrown away in laughter and frivolity, but to be used as a great gift worthy of all care. To the prince in his trouble there came a kindred soul, and though from the palace all the teachers of religion, all who would influence the prince against the desires of his father, were banished, yet Yathodaya more than made up to him for all he had lost. For nearly ten years they lived together there such a life as princes led in those days in the East, not, perhaps, so very different from what they lead now.

And all that time the prince had been gradually making up his mind, slowly becoming sure that life held something better than he had yet found, hardening his determination that he must leave all that he had and go out into the world looking for peace. Despite all the efforts of the king his father, despite the guards and his young men companions, despite the beauty of the dancing-girls, the mysteries of life came home to him, and he was afraid. It is a beautiful story told in quaint imagery how it was that the knowledge of sickness and of death came to him, a horror stalking amid the glories of his garden. He learnt, and he understood, that he too would grow old, would fall sick, would die. And beyond death? There was the fear, and no one could allay it. Daily he grew more and more discontented with his life in the palace, more and more averse to the pleasures that were around him. Deeper and deeper he saw through the laughing surface to the depths that lay beneath. Silently all these thoughts ripened in his mind, till at last the change came. We are told that the end came

suddenly, the resolve was taken in a moment. The lake fills and fills until at length it overflows, and in a night the dam is broken, and the pent-up waters are leaping far towards the sea.

As the prince returned from his last drive in his garden with resolve firmly established in his heart, there came to him the news that his wife had borne to him a son. Wife and child, his cup of desire was now full. But his resolve was unshaken. 'See, here is another tie, alas! a new and stronger tie that I must break,' he said; but he never wavered.

That night the prince left the palace. Silently in the dead of night he left all the luxury about him, and went out secretly with only his faithful servant, Maung San, to saddle for him his horse and lead him forth. Only before he left he looked in cautiously to see Yathodaya, the young wife and mother. She was lying asleep, with one hand upon the face of her firstborn, and the prince was afraid to go further. 'To see him,' he said, 'I must remove the hand of his mother, and she may awake; and if she awake, how shall I depart? I will go, then, without seeing my son. Later on, when all these passions are faded from my heart, when I am sure of myself, perhaps then I shall be able to see him. But now I must go.'

So he went forth very silently and very sadly, and leapt upon his horse – the great white horse that would not neigh for fear of waking the sleeping guards – and the prince and his faithful noble Maung San went out into the night. He was only twenty-eight when he fled from all his world, and what he sought was this: 'Deliverance for men from the misery of life, and the knowledge of the truth that will lead them unto the Great Peace.'

This is the great renunciation.

I have often talked about this with the monks and others, often heard them speak about this great renunciation, of this parting of the prince and his wife.

'You see,' said a monk once to me, 'he was not yet the Buddha, he had not seen the light, only he was desirous to look for it. He was just a prince, just a man like any other man, and he was very fond of his wife. It is very hard to resist a woman if she loves you and cries, and if you love her. So he was afraid.'

And when I said that Yathodaya was also religious, and had helped him in his thoughts, and that surely she would not have stopped him, the monk shook his head.

'Women are not like that,' he said.

And a woman said to me once: 'Surely she was very much to be pitied because her husband went away from her and her baby. Do you think that when she talked religion with her husband she ever thought that it would cause him to leave her and go away for ever? If she had thought that, she would never have done as she did. A woman would never help anything to sever her husband from her, not even religion. And when after ten years a baby had come to her! Surely she was very much to be pitied.' This woman made me understand that the highest religion of a woman is the true love of her husband, of her children; and what is it to her if she gain the whole world, but lose that which she would have?

All the story of Yathodaya and her dealings with her husband is full of the deepest pathos, full of passionate protest against her loss, even in order that her husband and all the world should gain. She would have held him, if she could, against the world, and deemed that she did well. And so, though it is probable that it was a great deal owing to Yathodaya's help, to her sympathy, to her support in all his difficulties, that Gaudama came to his final resolve to leave the world and seek for the truth, yet she acted unwittingly of what would be the end.

'She did not know,' said the woman. 'She helped her husband, but she did not know to what. And when she was ill, when she was giving birth to her baby, then her husband left her. Surely she was very much to be pitied.'

And so Yathodaya, the wife of the Prince Gaudama, who became the Buddha, is held in high honour, in great esteem, by all Buddhists. By the men, because she helped her husband to his resolve to seek for the truth, because she had been his great stay and help when everyone was against him,

because if there had been no Yathodaya there had been perchance no Buddha. And by the women – I need not say why she is honoured by all women. If ever there was a story that appealed to woman's heart, surely it is this: her love, her abandonment, her courage, her submission when they met again in after-years, her protest against being sacrificed upon the altar of her husband's religion. Truly, it is all of the very essence of humanity. Whenever the story of the Buddha comes to be written, then will be written also the story of the life of Yathodaya his wife. If one is full of wisdom and teaching, the other is full of suffering and teaching also. I cannot write it here. I have so much to say on other matters that there is no room. But some day it will be written, I trust, this old message to a new world.

CHAPTER III

HE WHO FOUND THE LIGHT – II

'He who never spake but good and wise words, he who was the light of the world, has found too soon the Peace.' —Lament on the death of the Buddha.

The prince rode forth into the night, and as he went, even in the first flush of his resolve, temptation came to him. As the night closed behind he remembered all he was leaving: he remembered his father and his mother; his heart was full of his wife and child.

'Return!' said the devil to him. 'What seek you here? Return, and be a good son, a good husband, a good father. Remember all that you are leaving to pursue vain thoughts. You, a great man – you might be a great king, as your father wishes – a mighty conqueror of nations. The night is very dark, and the world before you is very empty.'

The prince's heart was full of bitterness at the thought of those he loved, of all that he was losing. Yet he never wavered. He would not even turn to look his last on the great white city lying in a silver dream behind him. He set his face upon his way, trampling beneath him every worldly consideration, despising a power that was but vanity and illusion; he went on into the dark.

Presently he came to a river, the boundary of his father's kingdom, and here he stopped. Then the prince turned to Maung San, and told him that he must return. Beyond the river lay for the prince the life of a holy man, who needed neither servant nor horse, and Maung San must return. All his prayers were in vain; his supplications that he might be allowed to follow his master as a disciple; his protestations of eternal faith. No, he must return; so Maung San went back with the horse, and the prince was alone.

As he waited there alone by the river, alone in the dark waiting for the dawn ere he could cross, alone with his own fears and thoughts, doubt came to him again. He doubted if he had done right, whether he should ever find the light, whether, indeed, there was any light to find, and in his doubt and distress he asked for a sign. He desired that it might be shown to him whether all his efforts would be in vain or not, whether he should ever win in the struggle that was before him. We are told that the sign came to him, and he knew that, whatever happened, in the end all would go well, and he would find that which he sought.

So he crossed the river out of his father's kingdom into a strange country, and he put on the garment of a recluse, and lived as they did.

He sought his bread as they did, going from house to house for the broken victuals, which he collected in a bowl, retiring to a quiet spot to eat.

The first time he collected this strange meal and attempted to eat, his very soul rose against the distastefulness of the mess. He who had been a prince, and accustomed to the very best of everything, could not at first bring himself to eat such fare, and the struggle was bitter. But in the end here, too, he conquered. 'Was I not aware,' he said, with bitter indignation at his weakness, 'that when I became a recluse I must eat such food as this? Now is the time to trample upon the appetite of nature.' He took up his bowl, and ate with a good appetite, and the fight had never to be fought again.

So in the fashion of those days he became a seeker after truth. Men, then, when they desired to find holiness, to seek for that which is better than the things of this world, had to begin their search by an utter repudiation of all that which the world holds good. The rich and worldly wore handsome garments, they would wear rags; those of the world were careful of their personal appearance, they would despise it; those of the world were cleanly, the hermits were filthy; those of the world were decent, and had a care for outward observances, and so hermits had no care for either decency or

modesty. The world was evil, surely, and therefore all that the world held good was surely evil too. Wisdom was to be sought in the very opposites of the conventions of men.

The prince took on him their garments, and went to them to learn from all that which they had learnt. He went to all the wisest hermits of the land, to those renowned for their wisdom and holiness; and this is what they taught him, this is all the light they gave to him who came to them for light. 'There is,' they said, 'the soul and the body of man, and they are enemies; therefore, to punish the soul, you must destroy and punish the body. All that the body holds good is evil to the soul.' So they purified their souls by ceremonies and forms, by torture and starvation, by nakedness and contempt of decency, by nameless abominations. And the young prince studied all their teaching, and essayed to follow their example, and he found it was all of no use. Here he could find no way to happiness, no raising of the soul to higher planes, but, rather, a degradation towards the beasts. For self-punishment is just as much a submission to the flesh as luxury and self-indulgence. How can you forget the body, and turn the soul to better thoughts, if you are for ever torturing that body, and thereby keeping it in memory? You can keep your lusts just as easily before your eyes by useless punishment as by indulgence. And how can you turn your mind to meditation and thought if your body is in suffering? So the prince soon saw that here was not the way he wanted. His soul revolted from them and their austerities, and he left them. As he fathomed the emptiness of his counsellors of the palace, so he fathomed the emptiness of the teachers of the cave and monastery. If the powerful and wealthy were ignorant, wisdom was not to be found among the poor and feeble, and he was as far from it as when he left the palace. Yet he did not despair. Truth was somewhere, he was sure; it must be found if only it be looked for with patience and sincerity, and he would find it. Surely there was a greater wisdom than mere contempt of wealth and comfort, surely a greater happiness than could be found in self-torture and hysteria. And so, as he could find no one to teach him, he went out into the forest to look for truth there. In the great forest where no one comes, where the deer feed and the tiger creeps, he would seek what man could not give him. They would know, those great trees that had seen a thousand rains, and outlived thirty generations of men; they would know, those streams that flashed from the far snow summits; surely the forest and the hills, the dawn and the night, would have something to tell him of the secrets of the world. Nature can never lie, and here, far away from the homes of men, he would learn the knowledge that men could not give him. With a body purified by abstinence, with a heart attuned by solitude, he would listen as the winds talked to the mountains in the dusk, and understand the beckoning of the stars. And so, as many others did then and afterwards, he left mankind and went to Nature for help. For six years he lived so in the fastnesses of the hills.

We are told but very little of those six years, only that he was often very lonely, often very sad with the remembrance of all whom he had left. 'Think not,' he said many years later to a favourite disciple – 'think not that I, though the Buddha, have not felt all this even as any other of you. Was I not alone when I was seeking for wisdom in the wilderness? And yet what could I have gained by wailing and lamentation either for myself or for others? Would it have brought to me any solace from my loneliness? Would it have been any help to those I had left?'

We are told that his fame as a solitary, as a man who communed with Nature, and subdued his own lower feelings, was so great that all men knew of it. His fame was as a 'bell hung in the canopy of the skies,' that all nations heard; and many disciples came to him. But despite all his fame among men, he himself knew that he had not yet come to the truth. Even the great soul of Nature had failed to tell him what he desired. The truth was as far off as ever, so he thought, and to those that came to him for wisdom he had nothing to teach. So, at the end of six years, despairing of finding that which he sought, he entered upon a great fast, and he pushed it to such an extreme that at length he fainted from sheer exhaustion and starvation.

When he came to himself he recognised that he had failed again. No light had shone upon his dimmed eyes, no revelation had come to him in his senselessness. All was as before, and the truth – the truth, where was that?

For this man was no inspired teacher. He had no one to show him the way he should go; he was tried with failure, with failure after failure. He learnt as other men learn, through suffering and mistake. Here was his third failure. The rich had failed him, and the poor; even the voices of the hills had not told him of what he would know; the radiant finger of dawn had pointed to him no way to happiness. Life was just as miserable, as empty, as meaningless, as before.

All that he had done was in vain, and he must try again, must seek out some new way, if he were ever to find that which he sought.

He rose from where he lay, and took his bowl in his hands and went to the nearest village, and ate heartily and drank, and his strength came back to him, and the beauty he had lost returned.

And then came the final blow: his disciples left him in scorn.

'Behold,' they said to each other, 'he has lived through six years of mortification and suffering in vain. See, now, he goes forth and eats food, and assuredly he who does this will never attain wisdom. Our master's search is not after wisdom, but worldly things; we must look elsewhere for the guidance that we seek.'

They departed, leaving him to bear his disappointment alone, and they went into the solitude far away, to continue in their own way and pursue their search after their own method. He who was to be the Buddha had failed, and was alone.

To the followers of the Buddha, to those of our brothers who are trying to follow his teachings and emulate his example to attain a like reward, can there be any greater help than this: amid the failure and despair of our own lives to remember that the teacher failed, even as we are doing? If we find the way dark and weary, if our footsteps fail, if we wander in wrong paths, did not he do the same? And if we find we have to bear sufferings alone, so had he; if we find no one who can comfort us, neither did he; as we know in our hearts that we stand alone, to fight with our own hands, so did he. He is no model of perfection whom it is hopeless for us to imitate, but a man like ourselves, who failed and fought, and failed and fought again, and won. And so, if we fail, we need not despair. Did not our teacher fail? What he has done, we can do, for he has told us so. Let us be up again and be of good heart, and we, too, shall win in the end, even as he did. The reward will come in its own good time if we strive and faint not.

Surely this comes home to all of our hearts – this failure of him who found the light. That he should have won – ah, well, that is beautiful; but that he should have failed – and failed, that is what comes home to us, because we too have failed many times. Can you wonder that his followers love him? Can you wonder that his teaching has come home to them as never did teaching elsewhere? I do not think it is hard to see why: it is simply because he was a man as we are. Had he been other than a man, had truth been revealed to him from the beginning, had he never fought, had he never failed, do you think that he would have held the love of men as he does? I fear, had it been so, this people would have lacked a soul.

His disciples left him, and he was alone. He went away to a great grove of trees near by – those beautiful groves of mango and palm and fig that are the delight of the heart in that land of burning, flooding sunshine – and there he slept, defeated, discredited, and abandoned; and there the truth came to him.

There is a story of how a young wife, coming to offer her little offerings to the spirit of the great fig-tree, saw him, and took him for the spirit, so beautiful was his face as he rose.

There are spirits in all the great trees, in all the rivers, in all the hills – very beautiful, very peaceful, loving calm and rest.

The woman thought he was the spirit come down to accept her offering, and she gave it to him – the cup of curdled milk – in fear and trembling, and he took it. The woman went away again full of hope and joy, and the prince remained in the grove. He lived there for forty-nine days, we are told, under the great fig-tree by the river. And the fig-tree has become sacred for ever because he

sat there and because there he found the truth. We are told of it all in wonderful trope and imagery – of his last fight over sin, and of his victory.

There the truth came to him at last out of his own heart. He had sought for it in men and in Nature, and found it not, and, lo! it was in his own heart.

When his eyes were cleared of imaginings, and his body purified by temperance, then at last he saw, down in his own soul, what he had sought the world over for. Every man carries it there. It is never dead, but lives with our life, this light that we seek. We darken it, and turn our faces from it to follow strange lights, to pursue vague glimmers in the dark, and there, all the time, is the light in each man's own heart. Darkened it may be, crusted over with our ignorance and sin, but never dead, never dead, always burning brightly for us when we care to seek for it.

The truth for each man is in his own soul. And so it came at last, and he who saw the light went forth and preached it to all the world. He lived a long life, a life full of wonderful teaching, of still more marvellous example. All the world loved him.

He saw again Yathodaya, she who had been his wife; he saw his son. Now, when passion was dead in him, he could do these things. And Yathodaya was full of despair, for if all the world had gained a teacher, she had lost a husband. So it will be for ever. This is the difference between men and women. She became a nun, poor soul! and her son – his son – became one of his disciples.

I do not think it is necessary for me to tell much more of his life. Much has been told already by Professor Max Müller and other scholars, who have spared no pains to come to the truth of that life. I do not wish to say more. So far, I have written to emphasize the view which, I think, the Burmese take of the Buddha, and how he came to his wisdom, how he loved, and how he died.

He died at a great age, full of years and love. The story of his death is most beautiful. There is nowhere anything more wonderful than how, at the end of that long good life, he entered into the Great Peace for which he had prepared his soul.

'Ananda,' he said to his weeping disciple, 'do not be too much concerned with what shall remain of me when I have entered into the Peace, but be rather anxious to practise the works that lead to perfection; put on those inward dispositions that will enable you also to reach the everlasting rest.'

And again:

'When I shall have left life and am no more seen by you, do not believe that I am no longer with you. You have the laws that I have found, you have my teachings still, and in them I shall be ever beside you. Do not, therefore, think that I have left you alone for ever.'

And before he died:

'Remember,' he said, 'that life and death are one. Never forget this. For this purpose have I gathered you together; for life and death are one.'

And so 'the great and glorious teacher,' he who never spoke but good and wise words, he who has been the light of the world, entered into the Peace.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAY TO THE GREAT PEACE

'Come to Me: I teach a doctrine which leads to deliverance from all the miseries of life.' —Saying of the Buddha.

To understand the teaching of Buddhism, it must be remembered that to the Buddhist, as to the Brahmin, man's soul is eternal.

In other faiths and other philosophies this is not so. There the soul is immortal; it cannot die, but each man's soul appeared newly on his birth. Its beginning is very recent.

To the Buddhist the beginning as well as the end is out of our ken. Where we came from we cannot know, but certainly the soul that appears in each newborn babe is not a new thing. It has come from everlasting, and the present life is merely a scene in the endless drama of existence. A man's identity, the sum of good and of evil tendencies, which is his soul, never dies, but endures for ever. Each body is but a case wherein the soul is enshrined for the time.

And the state of that soul, whether good predominate in it or evil, is purely dependent on that soul's thoughts and actions in time past.

Men are not born by chance wise or foolish, righteous or wicked, strong or feeble. A man's condition in life is the absolute result of an eternal law that as a man sows so shall he reap; that as he reaps so has he sown.

Therefore, if you find a man's desires naturally given towards evil, it is because he has in his past lives educated himself to evil. And if he is righteous and charitable, long-suffering and full of sympathy, it is because in his past existence he has cultivated these virtues; he has followed goodness, and it has become a habit of his soul.

Thus is every man his own maker. He has no one to blame for his imperfections but himself, no one to thank for his virtues but himself. Within the unchangeable laws of righteousness each man is absolutely the creator of himself and of his own destiny. It has lain, and it lies, within each man's power to determine what manner of man he shall be. Nay, it not only lies within his power to do so, but a man *must* actually mould himself. There is no other way in which he can develop.

Every man has had an equal chance. If matters are somewhat unequal now, there is no one to blame but himself. It is within his power to retrieve it, not perhaps in this short life, but in the next, maybe, or the next.

Man is not made perfect all of a sudden, but takes time to grow, like all valuable things. You might as well expect to raise a teak-tree in your garden in a night as to make a righteous man in a day. And thus not only is a man the sum of his passions, his acts and his thoughts, in past time, but he is in his daily life determining his future – what sort of man he shall be. Every act, every thought, has its effect, not only upon the outer world, but upon the inner soul. If you follow after evil, it becomes in time a habit of your soul. If you follow after good, every good act is a beautifying touch to your own soul.

Man is as he has made himself; man will be as he makes himself. This is a very simple theory, surely. It is not at all difficult to understand the Buddhist standpoint in the matter. It is merely the theory of evolution applied to the soul, with this difference: that in its later stages it has become a deliberate and a conscious evolution, and not an unconscious one.

And the deduction from this is also simple. It is true, says Buddhism, that every man is the architect of himself, that he can make himself as he chooses. Now, what every man desires is happiness. As a man can form himself as he will, it is within his power to make himself happy, if

he only knows how. Let us therefore carefully consider what happiness is, that we may attain it; what misery is, that we may avoid it.

It is a commonplace of many religions, and of many philosophies – nay, it is the actual base upon which they have been built, that this is an evil world.

Judaism, indeed, thought that the world was really a capital place, and that it was worth while doing well in order to enjoy it. But most other faiths thought very differently. Indeed, the very meaning of most religions and philosophies has been that they should be refuges from the wickedness and unhappiness of the world. According to them the world has been a very weary world, full of wickedness and of deceit, of war and strife, of untruth and of hate, of all sorts of evil.

The world has been wicked, and man has been unhappy in it.

'I do not know that any theory has usually been propounded to explain why this is so. It has been accepted as a fact that man is unhappy, accepted, I think, by most faiths over the world. Indeed, it is the belief that has been, one thinks, the cause of faiths. Had the world been happy, surely there had been no need of religions. In a summer sea, where is the need of havens? It is a generally-accepted fact, accepted, as I have said, without explanation. But the Buddhist has not been contented to leave it so. He has thought that it is in the right explanation of this cardinal fact that lies all truth. Life suffers from a disease called misery. He would be free from it. Let us, then, says the Buddhist, first discover the cause of this misery, and so only can we understand how to cure it.' It is this explanation which is really the distinguishing tenet of Buddhism, which differentiates it from all other faiths and all philosophies.

The reason, says Buddhism, why men are unhappy is that they are alive. Life and sorrow are inseparable – nay, they are one and the same thing. The mere fact of being alive is a misery. When you have clear eyes and discern the truth, you shall see this without a doubt, says the Buddhist. For consider, What man has ever sat down and said: 'Now am I in perfect happiness; just as I now am would I like to remain for ever and for ever without change'? No man has ever done so. What men desire is change. They weary of the present, and desire the future; and when the future comes they find it no better than the past. Happiness lies in yesterday and in to-morrow, but never in to-day. In youth we look forward, in age we look back. What is change but the death of the present? Life is change, and change is death, so says the Buddhist. Men shudder at and fear death, and yet death and life are the same thing – inseparable, indistinguishable, and one with sorrow. We men who desire life are as men athirst and drinking of the sea. Every drop we drink of the poisoned sea of existence urges on men surely to greater thirst still. Yet we drink on blindly, and say that we are athirst.

This is the explanation of Buddhism. The world is unhappy because it is alive, because it does not see that what it should strive for is not life, not change and hurry and discontent and death, but peace – the Great Peace. There is the goal to which a man should strive.

See now how different it is from the Christian theory. In Christianity there are two lives – this and the next. The present is evil, because it is under the empire of the devil – the world, the flesh, and the devil. The next will be beautiful, because it is under the reign of God, and the devil cannot intrude.

But Buddhism acknowledges only one life – an existence that has come from the forever, that may extend to the forever. If this life is evil, then is all life evil, and happiness can live but in peace, in surcease from the troubles of this weary world. If, then, a man desire happiness – and in all faiths that is the desired end – he must strive to attain peace. This, again, is not a difficult idea to understand. It seems to me so simple that, when once it has been listened to, it may be understood by a child. I do not say believed and followed, but understood. Belief is a different matter. 'The law is deep; it is difficult to know and to believe it. It is very sublime, and can be comprehended only by means of earnest meditation,' for Buddhism is not a religion of children, but of men.

This is the doctrine that has caused Buddhism to be called pessimism. Taught, as we have been taught, to believe that life and death are antagonistic, that life in the world to come is beautiful, that death is a horror, it seems to us terrible to think that it is indeed our very life itself that is the evil to

be eradicated, and that life and death are the same. But to those that have seen the truth, and believed it, it is not terrible, but beautiful. When you have cleansed your eyes from the falseness of the flesh, and come face to face with truth, it is beautiful. 'The law is sweet, filling the heart with joy.'

To the Buddhist, then, the end to be obtained is the Great Peace, the mighty deliverance from all sorrow. He must strive after peace; on his own efforts depends success or failure.

When the end and the agent have been determined, there remains but to discover the means, the road whereby the end may be reached. How shall a man so think and so act that he shall come at length unto the Great Peace? And the answer of Buddhism to this question is here: good deeds and good thoughts – these are the gate wherein alone you may enter into the way. Be honourable and just, be kind and compassionate, truth-loving and averse to wrong – this is the beginning of the road that leads unto happiness. Do good to others, not in order that they may do good to you, but because, by doing so, you do good to your own soul. Give alms, and be charitable, for these things are necessary to a man. Above all, learn love and sympathy. Try to feel as others feel, try to understand them, try to sympathize with them, and love will come. Surely he was a Buddhist at heart who wrote: 'Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.' There is no balm to a man's heart like love, not only the love others feel towards him, but that he feels towards others. Be in love with all things, not only with your fellows, but with the whole world, with every creature that walks the earth, with the birds in the air, with the insects in the grass. All life is akin to man. Man's life is not apart from other life, but of it, and if a man would make his heart perfect, he must learn to sympathize with and understand all the great world about him. But he must always remember that he himself comes first. To make others just, you must yourself be just; to make others happy, you must yourself be happy first; to be loved, you must first love. Consider your own soul, to make it lovely. Such is the teaching of Buddha. But if this were all, then would Buddhism be but a repetition of the commonplaces of all religions, of all philosophies. In this teaching of righteousness is nothing new. Many teachers have taught it, and all have learnt in the end that righteousness is no sure road to happiness, to peace. Buddhism goes farther than this. Honour and righteousness, truth and love, are, it says, very beautiful things, but are only the beginning of the way; they are but the gate. In themselves they will never bring a man home to the Great Peace. Herein lies no salvation from the troubles of the world. Far more is required of a man than to be righteous. Holiness alone is not the gate to happiness, and all that have tried have found it so. It alone will not give man surcease from pain. When a man has so purified his heart by love, has so weaned himself from wickedness by good acts and deeds, then he shall have eyes to see the further way that he should go. Then shall appear to him the truth that it is indeed life that is the evil to be avoided; that life is sorrow, and that the man who would escape evil and sorrow must escape from life itself – not in death. The death of this life is but the commencement of another, just as, if you dam a stream in one direction, it will burst forth in another. To take one's life now is to condemn one's self to longer and more miserable life hereafter. The end of misery lies in the Great Peace. A man must estrange himself from the world, which is sorrow. Hating struggle and fight, he will learn to love peace, and to so discipline his soul that the world shall appear to him clearly to be the unrest which it is. Then, when his heart is fixed upon the Great Peace, shall his soul come to it at last. Weary of the earth, it shall come into the haven where there are no more storms, where there is no more struggle, but where reigns unutterable peace. It is not death, but the Great Peace.

'Ever pure, and mirror bright and even,
Life among the immortals glides away;
Moons are waning, generations changing,
Their celestial life flows everlasting,
Changeless 'midst a ruined world's decay.'

This is Nirvana, the end to which we must all strive, the only end that there can be to the trouble of the world. Each man must realize this for himself, each man will do so surely in time, and all will come into the haven of rest. Surely this is a simple faith, the only belief that the world has known that is free from mystery and dogma, from ceremony and priestcraft; and to know that it is a beautiful faith you have but to look at its believers and be sure. If a people be contented in their faith, if they love it and exalt it, and are never ashamed of it, and if it exalts them and makes them happy, what greater testimony can you have than that?

It will seem that indeed I have compressed the teaching of this faith into too small a space – this faith about which so many books have been written, so much discussion has taken place. But I do not think it is so. I cannot see that even in this short chapter I have left out anything that is important in Buddhism. It is such a simple faith that all may be said in a very few words. It would be, of course, possible to refine on and gloze over certain points of the teaching. Where would be the use? The real proof of the faith is in the results, in the deeds that men do in its name. Discussion will not alter these one way or another.

CHAPTER V

WAR – I

'Love each other and live in peace.'
Saying of the Buddha.

This is the Buddhist belief as I have understood it, and I have written so far in order to explain what follows. For my object is not to explain what the Buddha taught, but what the Burmese believe; and this is not quite the same thing, though in nearly every action of their life the influence of Buddhism is visible more or less strongly. Therefore I propose to describe shortly the ideas of the Burmese people upon the main objects of life; and to show how much or how little Buddhism has affected their conceptions. I will begin with courage.

I think it will be evident that there is no quality upon which the success of a nation so much depends as upon its courage. No nation can rise to a high place without being brave; it cannot maintain its independence even; it cannot push forward upon any path of life without courage. Nations that are cowards must fail.

I am aware that the courage of a nation depends, as do its other qualities, upon many things: its situation with regard to other nations, its climate, its food, its occupations. It is a great subject that I cannot go into. I wish to take all such things as I find them, and to discuss only the effect of the religion upon the courage of the people, upon its fighting capabilities. That religion may have a very serious effect one way or the other, no one can doubt. I went through the war of annexation, from 1885 to 1889, and from it I will draw my examples.

When we declared war in Upper Burma, and the column advanced up the river in November, 1885, there was hardly any opposition. A little fight there was at the frontier fort of Minhla, but beyond that nothing. The river that might have been blocked was open; the earthworks had no cannon, the men no guns. Such a collapse was never seen. There was no organization, no material, no money. The men wanted officers to command and teach them; the officers wanted authority and ability to command. The people looked to their rulers to repel the invaders; the rulers looked to the people. There was no common intelligence or will between them. Everything was wanting; nothing was as it should be. And so Mandalay fell without a shot, and King Thibaw, the young, incapable, kind-hearted king, was taken into captivity.

That was the end of the first act, brief and bloodless. For a time the people were stupefied. They could not understand what had happened; they could not guess what was going to happen. They expected that the English would soon retire, and that then their own government would reorganize itself. Meanwhile they kept quiet.

It is curious to think how peaceful the country really was from November, 1885, till June, 1886. Then the trouble came. The people had by that time, even in the wild forest villages, begun to understand that we wanted to stay, that we did not intend going away unless forced to. They felt that it was of no further use looking to Mandalay for help. We had begun, too, to consider about collecting taxes, to interfere with the simple machinery of local affairs, to show that we meant to govern. And as the people did not desire to be governed – certainly not by foreigners, at least – they began to organize resistance. They looked to their local leaders for help, and, as too often these local governors were not very capable men, they sought, as all people have done, the assistance of such men of war as they could find – brigands, and freelances, and the like – and put themselves under their orders. The whole country rose, from Bhamo to Minhla, from the Shan Plateau to the Chin Mountains. All Upper Burma was in a passion of insurrection, a very fury of rebellion against the usurping foreigners. Our authority was confined to the range of our guns. Our forts were attacked, our convoys ambushed, our

steamers fired into on the rivers. There was no safety for an Englishman or a native of India, save within the lines of our troops, and it was soon felt that these troops were far too few to cope with the danger. To overthrow King Thibaw was easy, to subdue the people a very different thing.

It is almost impossible to describe the state of Upper Burma in 1886. It must be remembered that the central government was never very strong – in fact, that beyond collecting a certain amount of taxes, and appointing governors to the different provinces, it hardly made itself felt outside Mandalay and the large river towns. The people to a great extent governed themselves. They had a very good system of village government, and managed nearly all their local affairs. But beyond the presence of a governor, there was but little to attach them to the central government. There was, and is, absolutely no aristocracy of any kind at all. The Burmese are a community of equals, in a sense that has probably never been known elsewhere. All their institutions are the very opposite to feudalism. Now, feudalism was instituted to be useful in war. The Burmese customs were instituted that men should live in comfort and ease during peace; they were useless in war. So the natural leaders of a people, as in other countries, were absent. There were no local great men; the governors were men appointed from time to time from Mandalay, and usually knew nothing of their charges; there were no rich men, no large land-holders – not one. There still remained, however, one institution that other nations have made useful in war, namely, the organization of religion. For Buddhism is fairly well organized – certainly much better than ever the government was. It has its heads of monasteries, its Gaing-dauks, its Gaing-oks, and finally the Thathanabaing, the head of the Burmese Buddhism. The overthrow of King Thibaw had not injured any of this. This was an organization in touch with the whole people, revered and honoured by every man and woman and child in the country. In this terrible scene of anarchy and confusion, in this death peril of their nation, what were the monks doing?

We know what religion can do. We have seen how it can preach war and resistance, and can organize that war and resistance. We know what ten thousand priests preaching in ten thousand hamlets can effect in making a people almost unconquerable, in directing their armies, in strengthening their determination. We remember La Vendée, we remember our Puritans, and we have had recent experience in the Soudan. We know what Christianity has done again and again; what Judaism, what Mahommedanism, what many kinds of paganism, have done.

To those coming to Burma in those days, fresh from the teachings of Europe, remembering recent events in history, ignorant of what Buddhism means, there was nothing more surprising than the fact that in this war religion had no place. They rode about and saw the country full of monasteries; they saw the monasteries full of monks, whom they called priests; they saw that the people were intensely attached to their religion; they had daily evidence that Buddhism was an abiding faith in the hearts of the people. And yet, for all the assistance it was to them in the war, the Burmese might have had no faith at all.

And the explanation is, that the teachings of the Buddha forbid war. All killing is wrong, all war is hateful; nothing is more terrible than this destroying of your fellow-man. There is absolutely no getting free of this commandment. The teaching of the Buddha is that you must strive to make your own soul perfect. This is the first of all things, and comes before any other consideration. Be pure and kind-hearted, full of charity and compassion, and so you may do good to others. These are the vows the Buddhist monks make, these are the vows they keep; and so it happened that all that great organization was useless to the patriot fighter, was worse than useless, for it was against him. The whole spectacle of Burma in those days, with the country seething with strife, and the monks going about their business calmly as ever, begging their bread from door to door, preaching of peace, not war, of kindness, not hatred, of pity, not revenge, was to most foreigners quite inexplicable. They could not understand it. I remember a friend of mine with whom I went through many experiences speaking of it with scorn. He was a cavalry officer, 'the model of a light cavalry officer'; he had with him a squadron of his regiment, and we were trying to subdue a very troubled part of the country.

We were camping in a monastery, as we frequently did – a monastery on a hill near a high golden pagoda. The country all round was under the sway of a brigand leader, and sorely the villagers suffered at his hands now that he had leapt into unexpected power. The villages were half abandoned, the fields untilled, the people full of unrest; but the monasteries were as full of monks as ever; the gongs rang, as they ever did, their message through the quiet evening air; the little boys were taught there just the same; the trees were watered and the gardens swept as if there were no change at all – as if the king were still on his golden throne, and the English had never come; as if war had never burst upon them. And to us, after the very different scenes we saw now and then, saw and acted in, these monks and their monasteries were difficult to understand. The religion of the Buddha thus professed was strange.

'What is the use,' said my friend, 'of this religion that we see so many signs of? Suppose these men had been Jews or Hindus or Mussulmans, it would have been a very different business, this war. These yellow-robed monks, instead of sitting in their monasteries, would have pervaded the country, preaching against us and organizing. No one organizes better than an ecclesiastic. We should have had them leading their men into action with sacred banners, and promising them heaven hereafter when they died. They would have made Ghazis of them. Any one of these is a religion worth having. But what is the use of Buddhism? What do these monks do? I never see them in a fight, never hear that they are doing anything to organize the people. It is, perhaps, as well for us that they do not. But what is the use of Buddhism?'

So, or somewhat like this, spoke my friend, speaking as a soldier. Each of us speaks from our own standpoint. He was a brilliant soldier, and a religion was to him a sword, a thing to fight with. That was one of the first uses of a religion. He knew nothing of Buddhism; he cared to know nothing, beyond whether it would fight. If so, it was a good religion in its way. If not, then not.

Religion meant to him something that would help you in your trouble, that would be a stay and a comfort, a sword to your enemies and a prop for yourself. Though he was himself an invader, he felt that the Burmans did no wrong in resisting him. They fought for their homes, as he would have fought; and their religion, if of any value, should assist them. It should urge them to battle, and promise them peace and happiness if dying in a good cause. His faith would do this for him. What was Buddhism doing? What help did it give to its believers in their extremity? It gave none. Think of the peasant lying there in the ghostly dim-lit fields waiting to attack us at the dawn. Where was his help? He thought, perhaps, of his king deported, his village invaded, his friends killed, himself reduced to the subject of a far-off queen. He would fight – yes, even though his faith told him not. There was no help there. His was no faith to strengthen his arm, to straighten his aim, to be his shield in the hour of danger.

If he died, if in the strife of the morning's fight he were to be killed, if a bullet were to still his heart, or a lance to pierce his chest, there was no hope for him of the glory of heaven. No, but every fear of hell, for he was sinning against the laws of righteousness – 'Thou shalt take no life.' There is no exception to that at all, not even for a patriot fighting for his country. 'Thou shalt not take the life even of him who is the enemy of thy king and nation.' He could count on no help in breaking the everlasting laws that the Buddha has revealed to us. If he went to his monks, they could but say: 'See the law, the unchangeable law that man is subject to. There is no good thing but peace, no sin like strife and war.' That is what the followers of the great teacher would tell the peasant yearning for help to strike a blow upon the invaders. The law is the same for all. There is not one law for you and another for the foreigner; there is not one law to-day and another to-morrow. Truth is for ever and for ever. It cannot change even to help you in your extremity. Think of the English soldier and the Burmese peasant. Can there be anywhere a greater contrast than this?

Truly this is not a creed for a soldier, not a creed for a fighting-man of any kind, for what the soldier wants is a personal god who will always be on his side, always share his opinions, always support him against everyone else. But a law that points out unalterably that right is always right,

and wrong always wrong, that nothing can alter one into the other, nothing can ever make killing righteous and violence honourable, that is no creed for a soldier. And Buddhism has ever done this. It never bent to popular opinion, never made itself a tool in the hands of worldly passion. It could not. You might as well say to gravity, 'I want to lift this stone; please don't act on it for a time,' as expect Buddhism to assist you to make war. Buddhism is the unalterable law of righteousness, and cannot ally itself with evil, cannot ever be persuaded that under any circumstances evil can be good.

The Burmese peasant had to fight his own fight in 1885 alone. His king was gone, his government broken up, he had no leaders. He had no god to stand beside him when he fired at the foreign invaders; and when he lay a-dying, with a bullet in his throat, he had no one to open to him the gates of heaven.

Yet he fought – with every possible discouragement he fought, and sometimes he fought well. It has been thrown against him as a reproach that he did not do better. Those who have said this have never thought, never counted up the odds against him, never taken into consideration how often he did well.

Here was a people – a very poor people of peasants – with no leaders, absolutely none; no aristocracy of any kind, no cohesion, no fighting religion. They had for their leaders outlaws and desperadoes, and for arms old flint-lock guns and soft iron swords. Could anything be expected from this except what actually did happen? And yet they often did well, their natural courage overcoming their bad weapons, their passionate desire of freedom giving them the necessary impulse.

In 1886, as I have said, all Burma was up. Even in the lower country, which we held for so long, insurrection was spreading fast, and troops and military police were being poured in from India.

There is above Mandalay a large trading village – a small town almost – called Shemmaga. It is the river port for a large trade in salt from the inner country, and it was important to hold it. The village lay along the river bank, and about the middle of it, some two hundred yards from the river, rises a small hill. Thus the village was a triangle, with the base on the river, and the hill as apex. On the hill were some monasteries of teak, from which the monks had been ejected, and three hundred Ghurkas were in garrison there. A strong fence ran from the hill to the river like two arms, and there were three gates, one just by the hill, and one on each end of the river face.

Behind Shemmaga the country was under the rule of a robber chief called Maung Yaing, who could raise from among the peasants some two hundred or three hundred men, armed mostly with flint-locks. He had been in the king's time a brigand with a small number of followers, who defied or eluded the local authorities, and lived free in quarters among the most distant villages. Like many a robber chief in our country and elsewhere, he was liked rather than hated by the people, for his brutalities were confined to either strangers or personal enemies, and he was open-handed and generous. We look upon things now with different eyes to what we did two or three hundred years ago, but I dare say Maung Yaing was neither better nor worse than many a hero of ours long ago. He was a fairly good fighter, and had a little experience fighting the king's troops; and so it was very natural, when the machinery of government fell like a house of cards, and some leaders were wanted, that the young men should crowd to him, and put themselves under his orders. He had usually with him forty or fifty men, but he could, as I have said, raise five or six times as many for any particular service, and keep them together for a few days. He very soon discovered that he and his men were absolutely no match for our troops. In two or three attempts that he made to oppose the troops he was signally worsted, so he was obliged to change his tactics. He decided to boycott the enemy. No Burman was to accept service under him, to give him information or supplies, to be his guide, or to assist him in any way. This rule Maung Yaing made generally known, and he announced his intention of enforcing it with rigour. He did so. There was a head man of a village near Shemmaga whom he executed because he had acted as guide to a body of troops, and he cut off all supplies from the interior, lying on the roads, and stopping all men from entering Shemmaga. He further issued a notice that the inhabitants of Shemmaga itself should leave the town. They could not move the garrison,

therefore the people must move themselves. No assistance must be given to the enemy. The villagers of Shemmaga, mostly small traders in salt and rice, were naturally averse to leaving. This trade was their only means of livelihood, the houses their only homes, and they did not like the idea of going out into the unknown country behind. Moreover, the exaction by Maung Yaing of money and supplies for his men fell most heavily on the wealthier men, and on the whole they were not sorry to have the English garrison in the town, so that they could trade in peace. Some few left, but most did not, and though they collected money, and sent it to Maung Yaing, they at the same time told the English officer in command of Maung Yaing's threats, and begged that great care should be taken of the town, for Maung Yaing was very angry. When he found he could not cause the abandonment of the town, he sent in word to say that he would burn it. Not three hundred foreigners, nor three thousand, should protect these lazy, unpatriotic folk from his vengeance. He gave them till the new moon of a certain month, and if the town were not evacuated by that time he declared that he would destroy it. He would burn it down, and kill certain men whom he mentioned, who had been the principal assistants of the foreigners. This warning was quite public, and came to the ears of the English officer almost at once. When he heard it he laughed.

He had three hundred men, and the rebels had three hundred. His were all magnificently trained and drilled troops, men made for war; the Burmans were peasants, unarmed, untrained. He was sure he could defeat three thousand of them, or ten times that number, with his little force, and so, of course, he could if he met them in the open; no one knew that better, by bitter experience, than Maung Yaing. The villagers, too, knew, but nevertheless they were stricken with fear, for Maung Yaing was a man of his word. He was as good as his threat.

One night, at midnight, the face of the fort where the Ghurkas lived on the hill was suddenly attacked. Out of the brushwood near by a heavy fire was opened upon the breastwork, and there was shouting and beating of gongs. So all the Ghurkas turned out in a hurry, and ran to man the breastwork, and the return fire became hot and heavy. In a moment, as it seemed, the attackers were in the village. They had burst in the north gate by the river face, killed the Burmese guard on it, and streamed in. They lit torches from a fire they found burning, and in a moment the village was on fire. Looking down from the hill, you could see the village rushing into flame, and in the lurid light men and women and children running about wildly. There were shouts and screams and shots. No one who has never heard it, never seen it, can know what a village is like when the enemy has burst in at night. Everyone is mad with hate, with despair, with terror. They run to and fro, seeking to kill, seeking to escape being killed. It is impossible to tell one from another. The bravest man is dismayed. And the noise is like a great moan coming out of the night, pierced with sharp cries. It rises and falls, like the death-cry of a dying giant. It is the most terrible sound in the world. It makes the heart stop.

To the Ghurkas this sight and sound came all of a sudden, as they were defending what they took to be a determined attack on their own position. The village was lost ere they knew it was attacked. And two steamers full of troops, anchored off the town, saw it, too. They were on their way up country, and had halted there that night, anchored in the stream. They were close by, but could not fire, for there was no telling friend from foe.

Before the relief party of Ghurkas could come swarming down the hill, only two hundred yards, before the boats could land the eager troops from the steamers, the rebels were gone. They went through the village and out of the south gate. They had fulfilled their threat and destroyed the town. They had killed the men they had declared they would kill. The firing died away from the fort side, and the enemy were gone, no one could tell whither, into the night.

Such a scene of desolation as that village was next day! It was all destroyed – every house. All the food was gone, all furniture, all clothes, everything, and here and there was a corpse in among the blackened cinders. The whole countryside was terror-stricken at this failure to defend those who had depended on us.

I do not think this was a particularly gallant act, but it was a very able one. It was certainly war. It taught us a very severe lesson – more severe than a personal reverse would have been. It struck terror in the countryside. The memory of it hampered us for very long; even now they often talk of it. It was a brutal act – that of a brigand, not a soldier.

But there was no want of courage. If these men, inferior in number, in arms, in everything, could do this under the lead of a robber chief, what would they not have done if well led, if well trained, if well armed?

Of desperate encounters between our troops and the insurgents I could tell many a story. I have myself seen such fights. They nearly always ended in our favour – how could it be otherwise?

There was Ta Te, who occupied a pagoda enclosure with some eighty men, and was attacked by our mounted infantry. There was a long fight in that hot afternoon, and very soon the insurgents' ammunition began to fail, and the pagoda was stormed. Many men were killed, and Ta Te, when his men were nearly all dead, and his ammunition quite expended, climbed up the pagoda wall, and twisted off pieces of the cement and threw them at the troops. He would not surrender – not he – and he was killed. There were many like him. The whole war was little affairs of this kind – a hundred, three hundred, of our men, and much the same, or a little more, of theirs. They only once or twice raised a force of two thousand men. Nothing can speak more forcibly of their want of organization than this. The whole country was pervaded by bands of fifty or a hundred men, very rarely amounting to more than two hundred, never, I think, to five hundred, armed men, and no two bands ever acted in concert.

It is probable that most of the best men of the country were against us. It is certain, I think, that of those who openly joined us and accompanied us in our expedition, very, very few were other than men who had some private grudge to avenge, or some purpose to gain, by opposing their own people. Of such as these you cannot expect very much. And yet there were exceptions – men who showed up all the more brilliantly because they were exceptions – men whom I shall always honour. There were two I remember best of all. They are both dead now.

One was the eldest son of the hereditary governor of a part of the country called Kawlin. It is in the north-west of Upper Burma, and bordered on a semi-independent state called Wuntho. In the troubles that occurred after the deposition of King Thibaw, the Prince of Wuntho thought that he would be able to make for himself an independent kingdom, and he began by annexing Kawlin. So the governor had to flee, and with him his sons, and naturally enough they joined our columns when we advanced in that direction, hoping to be replaced. They were replaced, the father as governor under the direction of an English magistrate, and the son as his assistant. They were only kept there by our troops, and upheld in authority by our power against Wuntho. But they were desired by many of their own people, and so, perhaps, they could hardly be called traitors, as many of those who joined us were. The father was a useless old man, but his son, he of whom I speak, was brave and honourable, good tempered and courteous, beyond most men whom I have met. It was well known that he was the real power behind his father. It was he who assisted us in an attempt to quell the insurrections and catch the raiders that troubled our peace, and many a time they tried to kill him, many a time to murder him as he slept.

There was a large gang of insurgents who came across the Mu River one day, and robbed one of his villages, so a squadron of cavalry was sent in pursuit. We travelled fast and long, but we could not catch the raiders. We crossed the Mu into unknown country, following their tracks, and at last, being without guides, we camped that night in a little monastery in the forest. At midnight we were attacked. A road ran through our camp, and there was a picket at each end of the road, and sentries were doubled.

It was just after midnight that the first shot was fired. We were all asleep when a sudden volley was poured into the south picket, killing one sentry and wounding another. There was no time to dress, and we ran down the steps as we were (in sleeping dresses), to find the men rapidly falling in, and the

horses kicking at their pickets. It was pitch-dark. The monastery was on a little cleared space, and there was forest all round that looked very black. Just as we came to the foot of the steps an outbreak of firing and shouts came from the north, and the Burmese tried to rush our camp from there; then they tried to rush it again from the south, but all their attempts were baffled by the steadiness of the pickets and the reinforcements that were running up. So the Burmese, finding the surprise ineffectual, and that the camp could not be taken, spread themselves about in the forest in vantage places, and fired into the camp. Nothing could be seen except the dazzling flashes from their guns as they fired here and there, and the darkness was all the darker for those flashes of flame, that cut it like swords. It was very cold. I had left my blanket in the monastery, and no one was allowed to ascend, because there, of all places, the bullets flew thickest, crushing through the mat walls, and going into the teak posts with a thud. There was nothing we could do. The men, placed in due order about the camp, fired back at the flashes of the enemy's guns. That was all they had to fire at. It was not much guide. The officers went from picket to picket encouraging the men, but I had no duty; when fighting began my work as a civilian was at a standstill. I sat and shivered with cold under the monastery, and wished for the dawn. In a pause of the firing you could hear the followers hammering the pegs that held the foot-ropes of the horses. Then the dead and wounded were brought and put near me, and in the dense dark the doctor tried to find out what injuries the men had received, and dress them as well as he could. No light dare be lit. The night seemed interminable. There were no stars, for a dense mist hung above the trees. After an hour or two the firing slackened a little, and presently, with great caution, a little lamp, carefully shrouded with a blanket, was lit. A sudden burst of shots that came splintering into the posts beside us caused the lamp to be hurriedly put out; but presently it was lit again, and with infinite caution one man was dressed. At last a little very faint silver dawn came gleaming through the tree-tops – the most beautiful sight I ever saw – and the firing stopped. The dawn came quickly down, and very soon we were able once more to see what we were about, and count our losses.

Then we moved out. We had hardly any hope of catching the enemy, we who were in a strange country, who were mounted on horses, and had a heavy transport, and they who knew every stream and ravine, and had every villager for a spy. So we moved back a march into a more open country, where we hoped for better news, and two days later that news came.

CHAPTER VI

WAR – II

'Never in the world does hatred cease by hatred. Hatred ceases by love.'
—Dammapada.

We were encamped at a little monastery in some fields by a village, with a river in front. Up in the monastery there was but room for the officers, so small was it, and the men were camped beneath it in little shelters. It was two o'clock, and very hot, and we were just about to take tiffin, when news came that a party of armed men had been seen passing a little north of us. It was supposed they were bound to a village known to be a very bad one – Laka – and that they would camp there. So 'boot and saddle' rang from the trumpets, and in a few moments later we were off, fifty lances. Just as we started, his old Hindostani Christian servant came up to my friend, the commandant, and gave him a little paper. 'Put it in your pocket, sahib,' he said. The commandant had no time to talk, no time even to look at what it could be. He just crammed it into his breast-pocket, and we rode on. The governor's son was our guide, and he led us through winding lanes into a pass in the low hills. The road was very narrow, and the heavy forest came down to our elbows as we passed. Now and again we crossed the stream, which had but little water in it, and the path would skirt its banks for awhile. It was beautiful country, but we had no time to notice it then, for we were in a hurry, and whenever the road would allow we trotted and cantered. After five or six miles of this we turned a spur of the hills, and came out into a little grass-glade on the banks of the stream, and at the far end of this was the village where we expected to find those whom we sought. They saw us first, having a look-out on a high tree by the edge of the forest; and as our advanced guard came trotting into the open, he fired. The shot echoed far up the hills like an angry shout, and we could see a sudden stir in the village – men running out of the houses with guns and swords, and women and children running, too, poor things! sick with fear. They fired at us from the village fence, but had no time to close the gate ere our sowars were in. Then they escaped in various ways to the forest and scrub, running like madmen across the little bit of open, and firing at us directly they reached shelter where the cavalry could not come. Of course, in the open they had no chance, but in the dense forest they were safe enough. The village was soon cleared, and then we had to return. It was no good to wait. The valley was very narrow, and was commanded from both its sides, which were very steep and dense with forest. Beyond the village there was only forest again. We had done what we could: we had inflicted a very severe punishment on them; it was no good waiting, so we returned. They fired on us nearly all the way, hiding in the thick forest, and perched on high rocks. At one place our men had to be dismounted to clear a breastwork, run up to fire at us from. All the forest was full of voices – voices of men and women and even children – cursing our guide. They cried his name, that the spirits of the hills might remember that it was he who had brought desolation to their village. Figures started up on pinnacles of cliff, and cursed him as he rode by. Us they did not curse; it was our guide.

And so after some trouble we got back. That band never attacked us again.

As we were dismounting, my friend put his hand in his pocket, and found the little paper. He took it out, looked at it, and when his servant came up to him he gave the paper back with a curious little smile full of many thoughts. 'You see,' he said, 'I am safe. No bullet has hit me.' And the servant's eyes were dim. He had been very long with his master, and loved him, as did all who knew him. 'It was the goodness of God,' he said – 'the great goodness of God. Will not the sahib keep the paper?' But the sahib would not. 'You may need it as well as I. Who can tell in this war?' And he returned it.

And the paper? It was a prayer – a prayer used by the Roman Catholic Church, printed on a sheet of paper. At the top was a red cross. The paper was old and worn, creased at the edges; it had evidently been much used, much read. Such was the charm that kept the soldier from danger.

The nights were cold then, when the sun had set, and after dinner we used to have a camp-fire built of wood from the forest, to sit round for a time and talk before turning in. The native officers of the cavalry would come and sit with us, and one or two of the Burmans, too. We were a very mixed assembly. I remember one night very well – I think it must have been the very night after the fight at Laka, and we were all of us round the fire. I remember there was a half-moon bending towards the west, throwing tender lights upon the hills, and turning into a silver gauze the light white mist that lay upon the rice-fields. Opposite to us, across the little river, a ridge of hill ran down into the water that bent round its foot. The ridge was covered with forest, very black, with silver edges on the sky-line. It was out of range for a Burmese flint-gun, or we should not have camped so near it. On all the other sides the fields stretched away till they ended in the forest that gloomed beyond. I was talking to the governor's son (our guide of the fight at Laka) of the prospects of the future, and of the intentions of the Prince of Wuntho, in whose country Laka lay. I remarked to him how the Burmans of Wuntho seemed to hate him, of how they had cursed him from the hills, and he admitted that it was true. 'All except my friends,' he said, 'hate me. And yet what have I done? I had to help my father to get back his governorship. They forget that they attacked us first.'

He went on to tell me of how every day he was threatened, of how he was sure they would murder him some time, because he had joined us. 'They are sure to kill me some time,' he said. He seemed sad and depressed, not afraid.

So we talked on, and I asked him about charms. 'Are there not charms that will prevent you being hurt if you are hit, and that will not allow a sword to cut you? We hear of invulnerable men. There were the Immortals of the King's Guard, for instance.'

And he said, yes, there were charms, but no one believed in them except the villagers. He did not, nor did men of education. Of course, the ignorant people believed in them. There were several sorts of charms. You could be tattooed with certain mystic letters that were said to insure you against being hit, and there were certain medicines you could drink. There were also charms made out of stone, such as a little tortoise he had once seen that was said to protect its wearer. There were mysterious writings on palm-leaves. There were men, he said vaguely, who knew how to make these things. For himself, he did not believe in them.

I tried to learn from him then, and I have tried from others since, whether these charms have any connection with Buddhism. I cannot find that they have. They are never in the form of images of the Buddha, or of extracts from the sacred writings. There is not, so far as I can make out, any religious significance in these charms; mostly they are simply mysterious. I never heard that the people connect them with their religion. Indeed, all forms of enchantment and of charms are most strictly prohibited. One of the vows that monks take is never to have any dealings with charms or with the supernatural, and so Buddhism cannot even give such little assistance to its believers as to furnish them with charms. If they have charms, it is against their faith; it is a falling away from the purity of their teachings; it is simply the innate yearning of man to the supernatural, to the mysterious. Man's passions are very strong, and if he must fight, he must also have a charm to protect him in fight. If his religion cannot give it him, he must find it elsewhere. You see that, as the teachings of the Buddha have never been able to be twisted so as to permit war directly, neither have they been able to assist indirectly by furnishing charms, by making the fighter bullet-proof. And I thought then of the little prayer and the cross that were so certain a defence against hurt.

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