

ASHES OF BUDDHA

By Frank G. Carpenter

Authentic Relics Twenty-four Hundred Years Old in a Casket of Crystal—How Earl Minto Gave Them to Burma—His Suggestion for a Pagoda—The Revival of Buddhism and Its 150,000,000 Believers—In the Footprints of the Teacher—A Look at Buddha Gaya, Where the Prophet Was Enlightened—Under the Bo Tree—The Ten Commandments of Buddhism and Its Ten Million Years of Hell.

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CALCUTTA, 1910.

The Buddhist religion is on the eve of a revival. The movement has already made some headway in Japan, Korea and China, and it is having a great impetus here and in Burma through the discovery of the ashes of Buddha, which were recently found in a buried chamber near Peshawar. The prophet was born here in India more than twenty-four hundred years ago, and he is said to have died in northern India at the age of eighty. There is no doubt as to the authenticity of the relics. They were found by the archeological department of the British government and the viceroy of India, Earl Minto, has had them brought here to Calcutta and has made a formal presentation of them to a delegation of Buddhist priests from Burma.

The relics were discovered through investigations made by ancient writings which described their existence. They lay in a chamber far down under the ground below the heavy foundation of a tower which had long since been blotted from the face of the earth. They were in a bronze casket and inside a crystal box, and they consisted of a mass of grayish white powder and four charred human bones. The box was first carried to Simla, and it is now on its way to Burma. It probably will be kept at Mandalay and a mighty pagoda erected above it.

Earl Minto's Speech.

In making his speech to the priests the viceroy said:

"The government of India has decided that the relics should remain within the confines of the Indian empire, and that Burma, as a Buddhist province, and Mandalay, as its capital, should provide for their safe custody. I am sure that the great honor done to Burma will be thoroughly appreciated by its people, and that the relics will be carefully preserved and cherished."

The viceroy concluded with this statement, which seems remarkable, as coming from the Christian ruler of India, the King of England's greatest subject. He closed:

"I trust, too, that a suitable shrine may be erected at Mandalay over these relics, where in future years devout pilgrims may gather from all parts of the world to do honor to the memory of the great founder of their religion."

The ceremony connected with the presentation of the relics was impressive. It occurred in the throne-room of the viceregal palace, the floor of which was covered with rich golden carpets. The lieutenant governor of Burma was present, and among the spectators were Lady Minto, Mrs. Anna Besant and the highest officials of India.

The Ashes of Buddha.

Suppose the Christian world of today could have authentic information of the discovery of some of the bones and ashes of St. Peter or St. Paul? What a sensation it would create! Suppose, further, that they might have relics of the Savior which were real beyond the shadow of a doubt? The whole civilized world would be excited about it. This is what has happened out here in India. Buddha is just as real to these people as Christ is to us, and they have now found this casket containing his bones.

During the presentation Mr. Marshall, director of the archeological department of the government of India, described how the relics were found. The first information concerning them came from records left by Chinese travelers who walked over India on pilgrimages about four or five hundred years after Christ. One of these men was a Buddhist monk, who spent seven years in traveling through India collecting Buddhist writings and visiting the shrines. He tramped across the Himalaya mountains, stopping in the little province where Buddha was born. He walked to Buddha Gaya, where the saint received his great enlightenment, and then went to pray at the various places where the relics of Buddha were kept. In the records of his pilgrimages he described a great pagoda near Peshawar, not far from where the Emperor Knishka had his palaces. This tower was about fifteen hundred feet in circumference, and was higher than the Washington Monument. It had thirteen stories, and the top was crowned with a pinnacle of gilded disks attached to an iron pillar. Mr. Marshall says that this tower lasted for more than three hundred years after the Chinese Buddhists above spoken of had paid

their visit. Their records stated that the relics of Buddha lay under the tower.

Discovered by a Frenchman.

The origin of the discovery came from a French scientist who came out to India a few years ago to study Buddhism. He had the writings of these pilgrims, and from them he located the site of the pagoda as being under one of two mounds which lie about a half mile east of the city of Peshawar. At that time there was no tower in existence. It had fallen to ruins centuries ago, and no vestiges were in sight excepting these mounds. The Frenchman's name was Foucher.

Mr. Foucher found himself unable to make the excavations required to verify his theory. He presented his evidence, however, to Dr. Spooner, of the archeological department of the Indian government, and the latter took up the work. That was two years ago. Since then the mounds have been dug over and the remains of the great tower found. The heavy foundation was uncovered, and it was shown to have been larger than any other known Buddhist pagoda. It was square, with massive walls of dressed stone, and, according to the records of Heuen Chwang the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, it was so lofty that four towers had to be built at the corners to hoist the coping stones into place. The remains of those towers have been found.

After the dimensions of the pagoda had been outlined, and the heavy foundation uncovered, the British archeologists sank a shaft down through the stone floor to a depth of twenty feet, and came to the relic chamber described in the records. There, in that little stone room, which had been buried from the sight of man for over 2,400 years, they found a bronze casket seven inches high and five inches in diameter.

It was round, and it had a lid, slightly curved at the top, made to represent a full-blown lotus, upon which a small figure of Buddha sat. Along the lid of the box which overhung was a frieze of flying geese, and lower down around the main body of the casket were figures of Buddha, beautifully carved, representing him in the different stages of his life. In the center of these was engraved a large standing figure of King Kanishka, the great Buddhist ruler and conqueror of the time the casket was made, and there were also inscriptions stating that the maker was the head engineer of this king.

Upon opening the casket a lump of rock crystal was found within. This had been hollowed out at one end for the reception of the relics. It was originally sealed with clay, but the moisture had detached the seal, and this was found lying at the side of the crystal. Coins bearing the head of Kanishka were also found. The government of India considers the relics as beyond any doubt genuine.

A Buddhist Revival.

During my present trip around the world I have traveled extensively through the great lands of the Buddhists. I first stopped in Japan, where the more advanced followers of this religion are modifying their faith to suit our modern civilization. I saw a temple in Kyoto which has an income of \$200,000 a year, and in Korea found the missionaries of that church at work.

The Buddhists are adopting the same plans of propagating their faith as those used by us Christians. They have Buddhist Young Men's Associations, corresponding to our Young Men's Christian Associations, and are now publishing tracts and distributing all sorts of religious documents. During my stay in China I visited the great lamaseries outside Peking, where the Dalai Lama, who had come from Tibet, was stopping while engaged in conference with the high Chinese officials. While in Burma I inspected many of the Buddhist monasteries there, and talked with the high priests, and laid flowers upon the shrines of the Golden Pagoda at Rangoon. That pagoda is built over eight hairs which came from the head of the great Buddha, and its sanctity is surpassed only by that of the temple of Kandy, which contains Buddha's favorite tooth.

This tooth was brought to Ceylon more than sixteen centuries ago by a princess, who concealed it in her clothing. Since then it has been fought over and captured and recaptured during several wars, and it is now so holy that it is shown only with the consent of the government. The tooth looks more like the tooth of a crocodile than that of a man. It is a piece of ivory about an inch in diameter and as long as my little finger. It reposes on a lotus flower of pure gold under a nest of seven bells of gold set with jewels. People come from all parts of the Buddhist world to worship at this shrine; and it is said that a single pilgrim upon one occasion laid 6,000,000 flowers upon it.

Next to Ceylon and Burma, I find that Siam is the chief Buddhist country of this part of the world. It has no relics of the saint, but the splendor of its temples beggars descrip-



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tion. I visited one at Bangkok which has a carpet of woven silver wire, and contains a little gold god set with emeralds and other precious stones. Bangkok has hundreds of figures of Buddha plated with gold, and in one temple there I saw what is perhaps the largest idol of the world. It is a sleeping Buddha so heavily plated that it shines like a new wedding ring. It is 150 feet long, and its arm is as big around as a flour barrel.

Indian Buddhism.

India should have more Buddhists than any other land. It was here that Buddha was born. Here he spent his whole life, and from here his religion spread to other parts of the world. Today, of the three hundred millions of India, not more than one in a thousand is a follower of Buddha. There are between nine and ten millions of that faith in Burma, and many more in Ceylon and parts of farther India.

The Buddhists of Hindustan number less than 300,000. They are found in small numbers along the northern frontier of Bengal and upon the lower slopes of the Himalayas. In Nepal, where Buddha was born, he has still many followers, and in Kashmir, near where these ashes were found, there are of his believers perhaps 40,000 all told.

The religion at first had great sway. It spread throughout Hindustan, and at the time of King Kanishka, who built the great temple over the ashes recently found, it was one of the predominant faiths. After that it began to decline, and it was almost wiped out at the time the Mohammedans came in and took possession of northern India. Today there are something like 150,000,000 Buddhists in the world, but this estimate is based upon figures which cannot be verified. The religion is the chief one of Japan, two-thirds of the Chinese are supposed to believe it, and its most ardent followers are Tibetans and the Mongolian population of Asia. There are Buddhists in Siberia and in the Dutch East Indies, and the faith is supposed to be alive in Korea, although the priests there are low fellows and are despised and rejected of men.

In the Footprints of Buddha.

During my present stay in India I have walked in the foot prints of Buddha. I passed his birthplace on my way up the Himalayas. He was the son of a king who lived on their slopes, in southern Nepal, and his boyhood was spent in the most beautiful scenery under the shadows of the highest mountains on earth. During the earlier part of his life he enjoyed such luxury as only India knows. He was given every pleasure,

was married to a Pharysian princess and in due time had a son. During this period he was led by the sight of all evil, and he fled for fear that his soft and delicate and ascetic nature might lead him to the church. It was not until he was most twenty-nine years of age that he learned of the troubles of the world, and decided upon the great renunciation. He then gave up his palace, cut off his long hair, and putting on the clothes of a beggar, went upon the highways. He spent six years in wandering about in his efforts for the attainment of peace. He practiced one religion after another, he fasted and prayed; he mortified himself in every way, and went through a single after struggle and temptation after temptation, until at last, at Buddha Gaya, he found the light, and went to Benares, where he first saved the mankind.

Buddha Gaya is to the Buddhists the most holy spot upon earth. The Bo tree under which Buddha was doing his great contemplations is believed to be the center of the earth. They will tell you that the sacred tree still stands and that branches of it have been carried to Ceylon and there sprouted. The tree is situated near a Buddhist temple which is about seven miles from the city of Gaya. It lies some distance from the Ganges, 322 miles by rail from Calcutta, and is reached by way of Patna, where the great cotton factories are. As the crow flies it is about 125 miles from Benares.

The temple, which stands near the tree, was erected about 200 years after Buddha's death, and is now about 1,300 years old. It is 150 feet high and the wall of its tower is seven feet thick. It is in the form of a pyramid of nine stories, embellished with niches and moldings. I had no space to speak of the tree or its surroundings. The shrines are chiefly in the hands of the Brahmins, although there are a few Buddhist monks who worship in a monastery nearby. They say their prayers before a beautiful statue of Buddha, which has been brought from Japan. Buddha Gaya has about 100,000 pilgrims a year.

The Great Temptation.

It was on this spot that Buddha, according to a manuscript supposed to date from the third century before Christ, spent six years in penance and mortification of the flesh. During that time he sat cross-legged under the Bo tree fasting and praying. He became a living skeleton, was naked and covered with dirt, and an object of contempt to the villagers.

(Continued on Page Fifteen.)

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