

PRINCESS IN THAILAND AND BURMA.

The Massive Temple of the Dawn, to the eye of everyone who sees it for the first time, as Princess Alexandra was soon to do, beckons all arrivals in Bangkok to a land of enchantment. Pathe News was permitted by The King of Thailand to film the Imperial Palace (a rare concession), as the Princess from Britain was escorted by members of the Thai royal house. Monks, meanwhile, pursued their religious observances, little affected by earthly considerations. To Princess Alexandra, all this oriental beauty added to the splendours which, in the Far East, seem inexhaustible. Inside the Tri Mith Temple the solid gold figure of Buddha (five-and-a-half tons) is one of the wonders of the country. On every side is evidence of the beauty, wealth and superb artistry in which generations of devout men have expressed their faith.

In honour of Her Royal Highness there was a display of the Fawn Lep, whose dancers wear long artificial nails, to enhance their grace of movement.

From Thailand Princess Alexandra went to Burma. And at the war cemetery saw graves of British prisoners-of-war whom the Japs forced to build the Burma-Siam railway. What a tale of war's bestiality these mute stones recall at this now peaceful place.

The Princess was herself a child, not ten years old, when Burma lay under enemy occupation; and to her those terrible times must have seemed long ago, as she paid her tribute at the cross made of sleepers laid for that wartime Burma railway.

Sir Philip Hay, in attendance upon the Princess during her tour, was himself a prisoner of war and knew some of the men who lie buried here. Bitter memories the names must have looked. A simple inscription: Bombardier Christian, Royal Artillery, August, 1943.

One of the wonders of the Orient, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, which must be entered barefotted. By the million Buddhists of Burma it is the most venerated of their holy buildings.

The two principal trustees of the Shwe Dagon conducted H.R.H. The Pagoda has long been a place of pilgrimage for the devout from all parts of the country.

The West has much to learn from Burma. This nation became 'politically independent' in 1948, but under no rule - even enemy occupation - can it ever have been subjugated. Their values are not rooted in the earth; their hospitality (as the Princess knew) reflects their nature. And her charm captivated them. Of lasting benefit to both our countries has been Princess Alexandra's visit to Burma.

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