

Notes of a trip up the Salween—By Rev. C. PARISH.

[Received 30th June, 1865.]

In March last, as I had never travelled on the Martaban side of the Salween, and as I had been promised by Captain Harrison, the Deputy Commissioner of Shway-gyeen, that, if I would pay him a visit, he would accompany me through the Fir forests of the Yoonzalin, which I have long wished to see; I availed myself of a month's privilege leave to take a trip northwards. Col. Fytche was going, at the same time, on his official tour to Shway-gyeen. His company was an additional inducement to go in that direction.

The road to Shway-gyeen lies through Beling and Sittoung, and affords good riding ground all the way in the dry season, as it keeps to the plain, leaving the mountains on the right hand, that is, on the east. These mountains, which, N. E. of Shway-gyeen, cover a great breadth of country, divide themselves towards the south into two narrow ranges, one of which separates the Yoonzalin and Salween rivers, terminating at their point of confluence: the other and longer range terminates at Martaban, and is the watershed between the Sittoung and Beling rivers on the west, and the lower Salween on the east. Westward of the latter range stretches a vast plain; and it is along this plain, parallel with the mountains, though at some little distance from them, that the road from Martaban to Shway-gyeen lies.

While at Beling, on the way, I rode out in company with Col. Fytche and Capt. Harrison to a place called *Kothanaiong*, about 7 miles off, to see the *Amherstia* trees there. This place had often been mentioned as one where the *Amherstia* was to be seen in great perfection, and where, indeed, it might perhaps be wild. I was well rewarded, for a prettier little spot I never visited. The *Amherstias*, growing in a well-shaded place and watered by a perennial stream which tumbles down a steep granite hill, and is ingeniously directed hither and thither in large bamboo troughs, were, indeed, to be seen in the wildest luxuriance of growth. But *Kothanaiong* is a sacred spot. Here are Pagodas, Pongyee-houses, *Zayats* all around. A flight of stone steps leads from the bottom to the top of the overhanging

hill, which is about 600 feet high, and on which are more sacred buildings. The Amherstias, seen only round the principal Pagoda, were undoubtedly planted, although they are left now to take care of themselves, and have a wild appearance. Evidently, this is not a native habitat of the tree.

From Beling we went on to a place called *Kyik-hto*. Eastward of this place and distant about 14 miles, is a remarkable mountain, called *Kyik-hteo*. Capt. Harrison, one of the very few Europeans who had been there, assured me that it was well worth a visit, as there was, on the summit, a very singular hanging rock, surmounted by a Pagoda. We went accordingly, riding the 14 miles to the foot of the mountain in the morning, and walking up it in the middle of the day. We reached the top 3,650 feet at 3.30 p. m. The view from the summit is very fine, as all views from great heights are; but the many granite boulders which are scattered about, some of them perched and balanced in the strangest manner on the most prominent peaks, constitute the most remarkable feature of this mountain. On all the most striking of these boulders small Pagodas have been built; in several instances, I should say, at the extreme risk of life to the builders. As the only way of conveying a true idea of the appearance of these rocks, I send a rough sketch of two or three of them.

There are two principal ones.—The one at the very summit is called *Kyik-hteo* "*par excellence*;" the other, some little way down the hill is, *Kyik-hteo galay*, or, "*little Kyik-hteo*." We could not ascertain for certain what their names signify, further than that "*Kyik*" is "rock" or "mountain-peak." I have observed that the Burmese never know the meaning of the names which the mountains and prominent rocks in the country bear; the names being older than the Burman occupation of it. They are, I believe, generally *Talaing*, but sometimes *Karen*. The chief rock of all, which gives the name to the mountain, is simply a wonder. It is a huge rounded granite boulder perched on a projecting and shelving tabular rock at the very summit. This tabular rock is itself reached by a small foot-bridge, for it is separated by several feet from the mountain by a rent or chasm; and on the farther side it drops down perpendicularly, I do not know how many hundred feet, into a valley below. On the extreme verge of this flat sloping rock-table, and actually over-

hanging it by nearly half, is perched this wonderful boulder, which is about 30 feet high, and is surmounted by a small Pagoda about 15 feet high. A rude bamboo ladder is leant against it on the inside, which enables an adventurous person to ascend. Every native will do this, but we, being both heavier and more awkward, preferred to remain at the bottom.

Viewed on one side, it is difficult to understand why this rock does not slide off its shelving support into the valley below! As one looks at it, it appears as if, assisted with a little grease and a slight push, it *must* go! But there it hangs, as it had hung, and I suppose, will hang yet,—one might indeed almost say, there it *slides* and will *slide*,—for many an age: “*Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum;*” unless some earthquake (and a very slight one surely would do it) should rudely shake it from its precarious foundation. This place is annually visited for the purpose of worship by people from all parts of the country round; many, I am informed, going to it even from Moulmein. Many were already there, and very many more shortly expected, as was shewn by the temporary booths of grass which had been erected, and were calculated to hold several thousand people. Altogether, this is a remarkable place, very little known, and well worthy of the trouble of visiting it from a long distance.

I was disappointed, however, here, in a botanical point of view. I expected great things from a high mountain in a totally new part of the country; but I gathered scarcely anything. There were no Orchids at all. The Ferns, if any, were dried up; one or two new Acanthaceous plants alone rewarded my search. At this season the mountain is arid, and vegetation on it scanty. On the top there is little else besides long grass.

We passed the night on the top; and descended on the opposite, or north side the next morning. Our ponies had been sent round, and were found waiting for us at the appointed place; and a ride of 18 miles brought us by evening into Sittoung. From Sittoung to Shway-gyeen the distance is about 40 miles. After two or three days spent at Shway-gyeen in making preparation, Capt. Harrison and I started upon our walking trip to the Yoonzalin district.

The Yoonzalin river is a tributary of the Salween and takes its rise in (about) Lat. 18° 30' and flows in a very tortuous course, but in

a general southerly direction until it joins the Salween at Kankareet, a little below the Hat-gyee. It drains a very mountainous district, and during the rainy season, rolls down a considerable body of water, but during the dry weather, it is a shallow rocky stream, full of rapids and scours. It takes small boats 15 or 20 days to ascend from Kankareet to Pabpoon, about two-thirds of its course. It took us 5 days to descend that distance.

The valley of the Yoonzalin is an extremely wild and almost uninhabited district. All the way from Bangatah in the valley of the Sittoung to Panpoon we did not meet with a single village. The Karens, the only inhabitants, are very few and scattered; and they have been so harried during the last few years, by the incursions of the Shan Pretender who styled himself *Ming-loung*, on the one side; and by us, in our attempts to drive him out, on the other, that they have hidden themselves away in the most inaccessible places. Occasionally only we saw a stray house or two perched up on the top of some distant mountain, or on its almost perpendicular side, with no visible way of approach from the spot where we stood. When the inhabitants become reassured and gain confidence in the permanency of peace, they will no doubt increase, and settle down in more accessible places.

I will not attempt any description of the scenery of this district, because mountain scenery in one place is very like mountain scenery in another place; and because I have rarely found that attempted descriptions of the kind convey any definite picture to the mind. All that needs be said is, that it was extremely wild and beautiful, and afforded all that endless variety of view which a chaos of mountains rudely thrown together, might be expected to afford. Neither shall I give the length of the stages which we performed, nor the names of the places where we halted; for these places were not villages, only well known spots conveniently chosen for the purpose, as combining the advantages of level ground and water. And the stages, if measured by miles, might appear small; though measured by labour, by no means so. A more laborious, at the same time thoroughly enjoyable, walking tour I never took. It is ceaseless ascent and descent, to the extent of several thousand feet a day, all the way. There are two words in Burmese for hill: *Toung*, and *Kön*. A *Toung*, hereabouts, is

a good stiff hill, in fact, a regular mountain. The word *Kõn* seemed to be applied to any thing under 1000 feet. Two or three *Kõns* go for nothing, no account is taken of them in the prospective march, if you should ask what it is like. After two or three days, one learnt oneself to despise a *mound* of 1000 feet. In this sort of travelling, one counts hours not miles; and, beginning to walk at 5.30 or 6 A. M., a man has generally had enough of it by 11 or 12 o'clock, and rejoices to hear that the "*tsikan*" or halting-place is near at hand. And this is the country through which some enterprising person has, I believe, proposed to make a Railroad to China!

The extremely low temperature of the upper part of the Yoonzalin district is remarkable. Immediately you get in among the mountains, even before crossing the watershed which divides the Sittoung and Yoonzalin, it becomes very much colder. It was the beginning of March; yet, at a place called *Thayet-penkindat*, on the west of the watershed, the nights and mornings were uncomfortably cold, and the water in the stream excessively so. Before reaching this place, an elevation of at least 4,000 feet, has to be made from *Bangatah*. *Thayet-penkindat* is the name given to a stockade which we have placed here. It is beautifully situated at the head of a fine valley, and is 2206 feet above the sea, and closely surrounded by mountains 2000 or 3000 feet higher. The stockade is guarded by a Police force, and the site appears to be well chosen, as it is situated at the entrance of the Pass into this part of the Yoonzalin. This Pass is called *Kyouk-taga* or *Rock-gate*, and is a narrow defile, two or three miles long. The head of this pass is 3343 feet above the sea.* A small stream runs through it, and the vegetation consequently is very rank. I was told that I should probably find some new ferns here, but though there were many species, there was nothing which I had not seen before. Near the head of the pass, however, I discovered a new species of *Bulbophyllum*, and one or two other orchids.

Through this pass, we were in the Yoonzalin district, and, to my great delight, the next day, among the Fir trees. The sight and the fragrance of a Fir forest to me, who had not seen one for a long time, was most refreshing. The trees are all of one kind, *Pinus longifolia*,

* The heights given have been furnished by Col. Blake, and are from his own measurements by an aneroid.

and cover the mountains from top to bottom. In many places it is the only tree visible. It attains a considerable height, 80 to 100 feet, and are, (the full grown ones) 8 to 9 feet in girth. The temperature of the tract or belt of country where the Fir grows, as I said just now, is extremely low. In the month of January, Capt. Harrison informs me, (for he had been here in that month) there is hoar frost, and a thin covering of ice forms on a basin of water by the morning. Even in March we found the nights and mornings so cold, that we were glad of thick over-coats and a blazing fire of Pine logs. At 11 and 12 o'clock in the day, and while walking in the sun, the heat was not unpleasant. The vegetation gave indications of low temperature. I gathered violets in the valleys. *Rubus* was met with; and instead of the *Acanthaceæ* and *Zingiberaceæ*, which cover the hills to the south but which were not seen here at all, *Compositæ* (among them a large *Carduus*) abounded; many of them attaining to the dimension of large shrubs. The *Compositæ*, however, were not confined to the Fir tract. Of Epiphytic *Orchideæ*, there were none: though I dare say that, in the rainy season, the terrestrial kinds would be numerous. As the forests were dry, ferns were scarce, though I was gratified at finding that singular little tree fern "*Brainea insignis*" in large quantities. I had never met with it before. I gathered also *Adiantum flabellulatum* and *Lindsæa tenuifolia*.

Immediately we crossed the watershed to the eastward, though still among the mountains, the Fir trees ceased, and it became very hot; and so it continued when we turned southward and crossed again into the Yoonzalin valley. It is only in the upper Yoonzalin that the temperature is so remarkably low, and that the Fir forests exist. Strange, however, to say, the Fir reappears in the Tenasserim provinces at Myawaddee, on the Thoung-yeen, some 50 miles due east of Moulmein, and thence stretches southwards for several miles, as I have myself seen. The tree there does not form forests, but is sparsely scattered among other trees; nor does it grow so large. But, and this is most remarkable, in the Thoung-yeen valley, it is found on hills only about 1000 or 1500 feet high, and descends nearly to the river; therefore in many places, cannot be more than 300 or 400 feet above the level of the sea; and this in N. Lat. 16.°!

Shortly after passing out of the Fir forests I was delighted to come

upon a truly splendid *Bauhinia*, which I discovered for the first time last year in the Thoung-yeen valley. Then, however, I met with but one tree—here now I found many, and all in flower. The flowers are very large, about 4 inches in diameter, of the purest white, save the single coloured petal which is streaked with purple and gold. It far surpasses *B. Richardiana* in beauty, for the petals of that plant are very narrow, consequently the flower looks poor, whereas, those of the species I am describing, are broad and meet at their margins, and this adds immensely to its beauty. The flowers also are of the sweetest fragrance, and are produced in profuse abundance all over the tree. I hope to get seeds of it. I left particular instructions with the head-man of that part of the district, to gather some when ripe and forward them to Capt. Harrison, who kindly promised to remember me in the matter.

The most northerly point to which we went was *Kanlado*, another police station, and our frontier out-post. It is but some 15 miles from our boundary on the North, and not far from the Salween. There is a strong block-house here besides a stockade. It is situated on the top of a small cleared hill, and 1881 feet above the sea; it is surrounded on all sides by higher hills. This is the lively abode of the officer who has the honour of serving Her Majesty in the capacity of Assistant Commissioner of the Yoonzalin district. He, at least, if no one else, will rejoice at the completion of the projected Railway; but he is likely to be the only passenger!

The vegetation of the hills round *Kanlado* is very different from that which is seen in the Tenasserim Provinces. The forests consist almost wholly of what the Burmese call *Engyen* a species of *Shorea*, a middle-sized tree, at this season of the year in flower and without a leaf. The forests consequently have a bare wintry look, a condition of jungle never seen in the Tenasserim Provinces, where the whole country is densely green throughout the year. There are, of course, a few other trees mixed with the *Shorea*, such as *Careya*, *Dillenia*, *Eugenia*, and *Ameslea fragrans*; but not in sufficient quantities to alter the character of the jungle which is given by the prevailing *Shorea*. Orchids grow sparingly on the trees here, but some good kinds; *Dendrobium Dalhousianum*, *formosum*, and *eburneum*. The only other locality known for the last plant is the valley of the Shoung-

yeen. Besides these, I collected two or three other species familiar to me, but not yet described or named. There was nothing absolutely new to me here; indeed, the whole expedition only yielded two new Orchideæ; the *Bulbophyllum* already mentioned as found in the *Kyook-taga*; and a *Dendrobium* with the flowers of *D. aggregatum*, but with short, erect cylindrical pseudo-bulbs.

From *Kanlado*, after a day's halt, we bent our steps southwards and homewards; as my limited time would not allow me to go further, not even to visit the banks of the *Salween* which is within an easy day's march of *Kanlado* on the east. About half way between *Kanlado* and *Pahpoon*, we turned aside from our path to visit a waterfall on the Yoonzalin river. I had often noticed on a map made by a local surveyor, professing to be a map of this district, high up on this river, the words, "Waterfall, 400 feet;" but I could never find any one who had seen the waterfall. Now, a waterfall of 400 feet is a very unusual feature in the scenery of any country and a grand sight; and I had long formed a secret resolution to find out this waterfall some day, and verify the statement as to its height. We were now at the very part of the country whence, if visited at all, it must be visited. I determined, therefore, not to return home without seeing it. Capt. Harrison, happily, was of the same mind; so, notwithstanding the assurance of the natives that the place was very difficult of access, and the mountain side very steep and slippery, we sent on a party in advance to find out a way for us and to clear the jungle sufficiently to make it passable. Arrived at the point of our road whence it was necessary to diverge from it to go in search of the waterfall, we struck off, and had certainly as hard a morning's work before we reached the object of our search, as any man could desire: but we reached it about noon, and that was enough.

On arrival we were at once gratified and disappointed: gratified at finding ourselves in a most romantic spot, and at the preparation made for us: disappointed at seeing no waterfall, although we were told that all that was to be seen lay before us.

We had come prepared to rough it and sleep on the ground; we were, therefore, agreeably surprised at finding a very capacious and exceedingly pretty structure built, and all ready for us. The site was selected with great taste, for on stepping up out of the thick jungle

by a small ladder on to our house, and on going to the front of a broad balcony or verandah ornamented with a balustrade, the whole made of bamboo, we found that the boughs of the trees had been cut away in front, and that we stood over a large circular pool of water into which the Yoonzalin poured itself on one side, and out of which it flowed on the other, and we had the best view that it was possible to have. We were in a perfect punch-bowl, shut in by almost perpendicular mountains on all sides. Before us lay the still pool, 60 feet deep and about 150 yards across: we heard the roar of the water rushing in and rushing out, but, so hemmed in with rocks is the spot that we could neither see the course of the river above or below. As I said, we were charmed with the place, but where was the waterfall of 400 feet? The reply was, that this was the "*Yaytagon*" (so the Burmese call a waterfall) and that there was nothing more to be seen than this! A raft of bamboos was made for us, and on it we went close up to the "*embouchure*" of the stream, the mouth of the passage through which the water from above pours into the pool. It was a singular sight. The whole of the waters of the Yoonzalin at this point are poured through a long, straight, and very narrow *street* of rock. The passage, or *street* as I call it, through the rock is *perfectly* straight, about 14 feet wide only, and having exactly the same width throughout its whole length, which is about 20 or 30 yards. The rock, granite, rises on either side of this passage to the height, in the centre, of about 50 feet in perpendicular walls with smooth faces, as straight and smooth as if measured with a plumb line, and cut with a hay-knife. As the water enters the upper end of this passage at a right angle, we could see no more of the river than the length of the passage, but we could hear the roar of the water as it boiled and bubbled in its tortuous and bouldered channel above. But though lashed into foam above, so smooth and polished is the narrow passage that the water glides through it with a surface like glass, and sinks at once to the bottom of the pool, causing little or no commotion in it. I climbed to the top of the overhanging rock on one side to get a sight of the river above, but it takes so many short and sudden turns and the gorge in the mountains is so narrow, that I could see but a few yards upwards. Thinking that we had seen all that was to be seen, and having already spent a day and a half here, we determined to set out

on our return the next morning; but towards evening, some of our party, who had been exploring, came and informed us that they had discovered a way to get up the rocks on the opposite side, and that having ascended that way they had come upon a waterfall. As we wished not to leave the place without being able to speak positively on the subject of the fall, and thinking that there might yet be one higher up the stream but hid from our view, we resolved to stop another day, and explore on the morrow. We did so, and climbed the way pointed out to us; and thus, taking the passage before mentioned in the rear, we got a good view of the river for a mile or so above it. As far as the eye could see, the course of the river lay through an extremely narrow valley and was impeded the whole way by huge granite boulders. The fall of level also was considerable; and near the spot where we stood, it took a sudden perpendicular leap of some 30 feet, into a deep and very confined square hole, which at once turned the water at a right angle, whence it rushed on, and after 2 or 3 similar sharp turns within the length of a hundred yards, dashed through the beforementioned passage into the pool. We had now seen all certainly and could positively assert that the greatest perpendicular fall the Yoonzalin makes here, is not more than 30 feet. Though disappointed of a *grand* sight, we yet considered ourselves well repaid for our toil by the general beauty of the spot and by the very remarkable character of that natural feature in the scenery which I have attempted to describe; the narrow street with perpendicular walls through which the whole river, as well when at its height in the rainy season, as in dry weather, has to make its way. Several persons have thought that Pine logs might, in the rains, be floated down this river to Moulmein: but no one who had visited the Yay-tagon would allow it to be possible. No log could, I am convinced, pass this part of the river's course without being broken to pieces. It is unfortunate that all the Pine forests should be above the fall.

There was one drawback to our full enjoyment at this place. There is a pest here in the shape of a very small fly, met with happily nowhere else, which attacks every exposed part of the body most virulently. Its puncture immediately raises a blood pustule and causes considerable irritation for several days afterwards. I could scarcely sketch for these tormentors; and when we bathed, especially, their

attacks were so vigorous, that we wasted no unnecessary time in putting off and in resuming our garments. On the third day after our arrival we started for "*Pahpoon*." It was not far from "*Pahpoon*" that, for the first time in the whole journey, we heard the cry of the Gibbon. Its cry was totally different from that of the Gibbon of the Tenasserim Provinces. The latter is a wailing, plaintive, and, to me, not disagreeable cry: but the cries of the Gibbon here were most discordant, and not unlike that of a pack of jackals. They can hardly be the same species.

From Pahpoon, an obscure village on the Yoonzalin, we dropped down to Moulmein in boats. On the second day after leaving Pahpoon I noticed unexpectedly on the bank of the river, in one of the wildest spots, a fine *Amherstia* in full flower, about 30 feet high. I saw but one; for it was the middle of the day and hot; I had been, therefore lying down in the boat under cover, heedless of what I passed. I looked out of the boat casually, and saw this tree; so there *may* have been others which I did not see, both on the bank and in the adjacent jungle. I am sorry to say that my companion Capt. Harrison was a long way behind in another boat, so that I could not point it out to him; and he did not notice it, because, not caring for the character of the vegetation, he did not look out from his boat at all.

Now, my reasons for saying that this was a *bonâ fide* wild tree are these: in all this district, the valley of the Yoonzalin,—there are no Pagodas or Pon-gyee houses, or spots sacred to the Burmese where they have erected buildings. The inhabitants of the district, in fact, are Karens and not Burmese; and these Karens are exceedingly few and scattered. After leaving Pahpoon, we did not see a single village on the banks all the way until we came to the junction of the Yoonzalin with the Salween. There are, indeed, no doubt, a few villages a little way from the bank, here and there hidden among the trees, but these generally consist of but 2 or 3 houses: neither are they settled villages, for the custom of the Karens is to change the site of their houses continually. Besides the regular Karens, not being Buddhists, do not build Pagodas, nor do they ever trouble themselves to plant ornamental trees, as the Burmese always do in their sacred places. Besides, the spot where this *Amherstia* was seen, was not at all a likely place for an *Amherstia* to have been planted by any one; but

one of the wildest places imaginable. Had it been on a rising ground on a high bank alone, or on any prominent point on the river, I should have suspected that a hand had planted it : but it was on a low and sloping part of the bank, struggling for life with *Calamus*, *Bauhinia* and tall grasses and such other tangled stuff as forms the common vegetation of our river banks in the wildest places ; and behind again was dense jungle of the tallest trees. However, notwithstanding all this, had it been seen in a fairly peopled district, I should have doubted ; but in such a wild uninhabited country as the Yoonzalin is, I see no reason for suspecting that it was not a genuine native.* Had Wallich's first tree been here, I am satisfied that the idea of its *not* being wild would never for a moment have occurred to him. I am perfectly satisfied that the tree seen by me was a wild one. That the *Amherstia* in a wild state may be very scarce is not improbable, but that it should not exist any longer in that state, though possible, is, to say the least, very unlikely. Probably it is confined to a small area ; and I am inclined to think still, as I always have thought, that its habitat is the banks of the Salween, and of the Yoonzalin, which runs nearly parallel with the Salween in about the latitude where I suppose it grows. Very few Europeans, who would care to notice the vegetation of the country, have ascended either the Yoonzalin, or the Salween above the Great Rapid, that is to say, have been continuously along its banks, so that a rare tree may, not improbably, exist there, although it has not been seen on the latter river at all, nor on the former, except by myself, as I have described.

I append a rough but tolerably accurate map of the country.

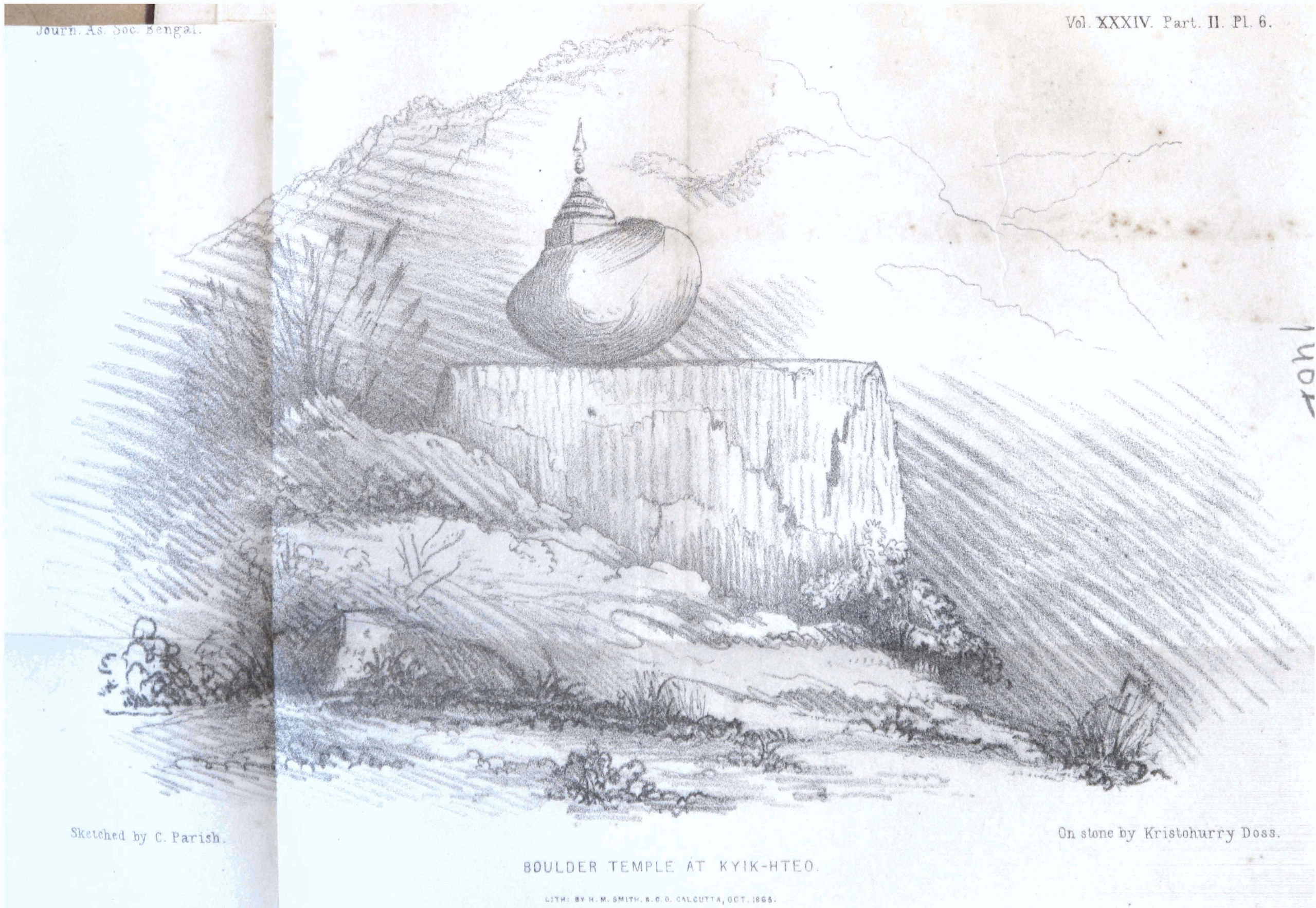
* The *Amherstia* has never been found wild before. Wallich discovered it, i. e. first saw it, at a place called *Paght*, some twenty or thirty miles up the Salween. The trees which he saw are still there, at least some of them, and are manifestly planted trees, being near an artificial tank, at the entrance to some sacred caves.

I have long had an idea that the native habitat of the *Amherstia* would be found to be somewhere high up the Salween. This is not at all unlikely, because very little, indeed almost nothing, is known of the banks of this river above the *Hit-gyee*, or *Great Rapid*, which is about 100 miles up the river.



MAP
ILLUSTRATING MR PARISH'S NOTES
OF A TRIP UP THE SALWEEN.

On crested paper by Bomanath Dases.



1401

Sketched by C. Parish.

On stone by Kristohurry Doss.

BOULDER TEMPLE AT KYIK-HTEO.

LITH: BY H. M. SMITH, S. G. O. CALCUTTA, OCT. 1866.

146C



Sketched by C. Parish.

On stone by Kristohurry Doss.

KYIK-HTEO-GALAY BOULDER PAGODA.

LITH. BY H. M. SMITH. S. G. O. CALCUTTA. OCT. 1868.