

Someday, I involuntarily flipped through some leaves of the Iron & Blood and my eyes fell on such curious sub titles as “*My name is Maung Nyo. My sword knows no name*”, “*A feeble one fond of playing with palace affairs*”, “*Helped hide the two Princes that might be,*” and “*Foe and friend*” and hence I came to notice that the book in my hand was but a novel, and the some titles I had just read evoked my interest. I borrowed and read it. A very interesting novel based on the later era of the Konbaung Dynasty.

The characters of Iron & Blood were becoming animated and alive in my memory for a very long time. Maung Nyo a young celebrated swordsman from Ava, TadarU, his little brother, Maung So who was meek and gentle but was bent on getting interested in palace affairs. Maung Naung, was from the district of Shwebo and notoriously known as Shwebo Maung Naung, a handsome man with a thin moustache and a sinister smile on his stern face. Maung Htun was a trusted friend of Maung Nyo. Maung Nyo's the most loved one was Dwemai. Khin Hmon, a carefree young woman, loved Maung So very much but unluckily had to marry Shwebo Maung Naung and sadly met with a tragic end. A man by the name U Minn Dan who had a big scar that ran across his ugly face was a villain. All these characters, having read the novel, had long been staying on in my mind for a certain period of time, acting their respective roles.

Maung Naung, having got married to Khin Hmon, took the newly wedded wife to his old house. Maung Naung's mother, a bedridden widow boasted of their old hideous house that had long been in a state of dilapidation; the widow boasted on while loose pieces of roof and beams, as being gnawed by an army of termites, were raining down from above.

My old friend from past 50 years ago

By the time I first met Iron & Blood I was only a middle school student. At the first glimpse Iron & Blood could not excite my interest, being unfriendly for a long while thus.

I saw Iron & Blood in the library of the State High School No.2 Bahan. I did not think it a novel when I first caught sight of it on the shelf, thinking it might be a book on dull subject, something like an educative big book. My guess work was encouraged by the drab cover of the book. No such interesting picture as a beautiful woman or a dashing couple instead there was only a floral pattern trimmed the cover of the book, and in the middle, were some words simply saying, Iron & Blood written by Nanda. On seeing the cover of the book I found nothing interesting on the cover. Besides, too thick, two volumes! The words on the cover seemed to be stating the boring educative books published from Sarpay Beikman (Government Publishing House) as “Science and Biology” It might be of something like nutritional substance (iron \ferrous) for blood, the vital part of our human body. That thought discouraged me to go near the Iron & Blood.

The style of writing successfully earned the interest and attention of the readers. The novel Iron & Blood is really an unputdownable one! As setting the story in upland Myanmar (upper Myanmar) the dialects in the novel were typical Anyar dialects, typical style of upper Myanmar conversation. Moreover the author pictured the insides of the Palace with reliable facts and figures. Iron & Blood brings the readers back to the scenes and sounds of the reminiscences of the last days of the Konbaung Dynasty during which Myanmar men the instant they held the swords made of well-tempered iron, the blood, the patriotic passion in them got boiled and poised themselves to stage their manly might.

I read Iron and Blood so many a times as it was one of my favourite novels and when, during my early days at the Art & Science University, Yangon, I luckily came across it, a set of two volumes of Iron & Blood at the book stall run by Sarpalwe Ko Oo and I bought them thus and fondly kept them. In 1965, Kyaw Nyunt & Associate, published the second edition of Iron & Blood, combining two books into one, but I felt that the thick book looked not so grand as the former ones.

The keen interest in Iron & Blood later prompted me to take interest in its writer. I came to learn that the real name of Nanda was U Aung Kyi who was a retired major, a soldier! And the fact that made me far more surprised was that the one who wrote the novels based on historical facts and figures was but an engineer, not a historian. The list of the references for making Iron & Blood moderately mentioned the fact that the author was a man of profound knowledge in history. Iron & Blood was first published in 1951 and after ten years later, that is, since 1960 Nanda proved himself to be a true writer of novels, having prolifically written a good number of novels, mostly with

historical setting, among the Nanda's works, “Moyanthochi” (Soaring up to the zenith), “Daunglan-chi chi thway ni-ni” (The peacock flag flies and the blood reddens) and “Nga dah. Nga thway. Nga Ayayarwaddy” (My sword. My blood and My Ayayarwaddy) gained a wider readership. I felt very sorry when I saw Nanda's death announcement in a paper.

Having been known as the one who was, and is yet crazy about Iron and Blood, the publishing House, Yarpye that is going to publish the third edition of Iron & Blood, asks me to write a preface for the third edition of Iron & Blood. I felt honoured and happy to take the chance offered and what makes me happier is that in the first edition, despite still looking great and grand in my eye, admittedly there were dozens of spelling mistakes which made me rather annoyed in seeking leisure and pleasure in Iron & Blood. It can be expected this time that, and I felt sure too, the third edition will be free from those kinds of spelling blunders.¹

When the time comes to get the third edition, I shall be very happy to read it again and it is certain that I'll be feeling something like the one who meets his old friend whom he has never seen for about fifty years!

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¹ We tried as much as we could. (Yarpye Publishing House)