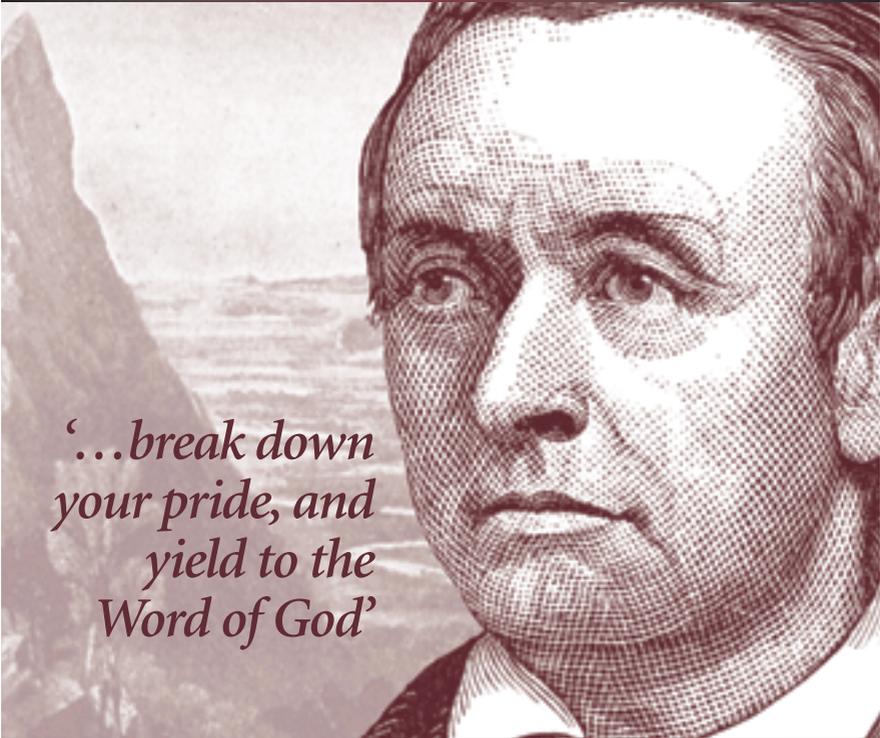


Adoniram Judson

1788 1850

THE WORD OF GOD TO BURMA



*‘...break down
your pride, and
yield to the
Word of God’*

PART TWO

‘...WE GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS ALSO:
KNOWING THAT TRIBULATION WORKETH
PATIENCE’¹

by C.P.Hallihan

CRISES AND COURAGE

We left Judson translating the New Testament, preaching, at last, in Burmese, and seeing Burmans returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Perhaps because of this he was so harassed by



A page from the Burmese Gospel of John

the authorities as to appeal to the Emperor at Ava, but ineffectually. Greatly discouraged, he planned to move the mission to Chittagong, under protection of the British flag. Gathering converts and inquirers together, warning them of the sufferings to which they would be exposed, he declared his intent to leave the country. His converts stood firm, willing to suffer persecution, even death, rather than renounce Christ. They begged him not to leave. 'Stay,' they said, 'at least until a little

church of ten is collected, and a native teacher is set over it, and then, if you must go, we will not say nay... This religion will spread of itself. The emperor cannot stop it.' Faced with such heroic discipleship Adoniram and Ann remained in Rangoon.

In this demanding hour God worked mightily, their weakness the occasion of His strength.² Within five months seven Burmese were converted, including the hitherto sceptical MOUNG SHWA-GNONG, and the first woman, MAH-MEN-LA. The church grew, but Ann's state of health caused fear for her life. Judson took her to Calcutta, arriving on the 18th of August, 1820. They spent three months at Serampore with the English Baptists, with marked improvement in Ann's health. Adoniram was anxious about 'those few sheep that I have left in the Burman wilderness... Oh, may the great Shepherd feed the little flock, and gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom!'

Returning to their labours in Rangoon early in 1821, concern over Ann's health was renewed, and Adoniram determined that she should return to the U.S. This she did, via Bengal and England, arriving in America in September 1822. Her nine-months stay³ in the country stirred great interest, especially through the book *An account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire*. This was written and published there in the States, and made immediate impact. From this providence, bringing Ann to America, alone and in ill health, there followed a renewal of prayerful interest, of financial support, and some new recruits to the work.

'WHEREIN I SUFFER TROUBLE, AS AN EVIL DOER, EVEN UNTO BONDS; BUT THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND.'⁴

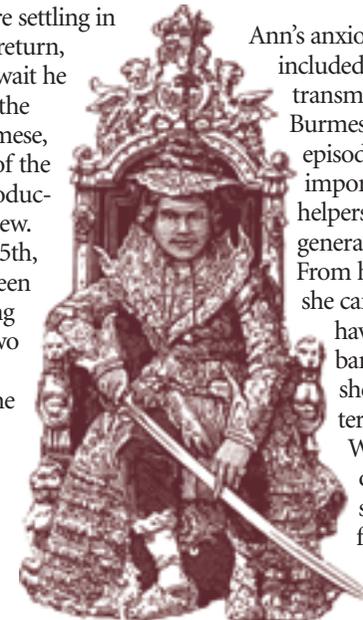
In 1822 the Burman Emperor became aware of the medical skills of Jonathan Price, a fellow labourer with Judson, and summoned him to the court. Adoniram determined to accompany him. He asked leave to work in the city (a church in the heart of the empire would be good!), and this time was received favourably. Before settling in Ava he must await Ann's return, at Rangoon. During this wait he completed translation of the New Testament into Burmese, and prepared a synopsis of the Old Testament as an introduction to the study of the New. Ann returned December 5th, 1823. Rangoon had eighteen converts, a chapel, printing press and schools, with two missionary couples from America to take care of the work. Eight days after Ann's arrival they set out for Ava, where they arrived January 23rd, 1824. By June, Judson was in prison.

The Emperor had given Judson a plot of ground, with assurance of royal protection. Then war broke out between Burma and British-India; the Judsons were once more regarded as 'enemy aliens'⁵

Adoniram was imprisoned in Oung-pen-la: forty by thirty by five feet high; no ventilation; one hundred persons of both sexes and all nationalities, nearly all naked, and half famished. He lay with fetters on legs and ankles weighing about fourteen pounds, the marks of which he carried to his death. At night a bamboo pole was placed between the legs and lifted so that the shoulders were on the ground, the feet high in the iron rings. 'Durance vile' assumes a vile reality. Judson in his diaries passed over the anguish, crudities and cruelties in a few modest words. We follow his example. Of more concern to him were the pages of his unfinished Burmese Bible—ten years of diligent, prayerful labour.

Ann's anxious care for her husband included the preservation and transmission of his text of the Burmese Bible: a thrilling episode in Bible history. She importuned all possible helpers: governors, princesses, generals—none were ignored. From having no access at all, she came by insistent stages to have daily access to her husband. In the midst of this she gave birth to a daughter, Mary Elizabeth Judson. With mother and tiny daughter sinking into smallpox and spotted fever, Ann administered what comfort and help she could to Adoniram. They discussed the problem of the

Scripture manuscripts: buried in the ground they would not survive the rainy season. Ann determined to sew them into a pillow, and there, under Adoniram's



The Emperor of Burma.

head, they survived his time in Oung-pen-la. The pillow was once stolen by a jailer, but restored because it was too hard. The foreign prisoners were suddenly moved, Ann knew not where, nor what had become of the precious pillow. One of the Burman disciples went to the prison compound, hoping to see the pillow; instead he found the Scripture pages. A jailer had wanted the pillow case, but had thrown away the too-hard stuffing!

‘... ALL THINGS BUT LOSS...’

Through many dangers, toils and snares, the sufficient Grace of God sustained the Judsons, and at last they were able to return together to Rangoon in March 1826. They found the workers scattered and mission property destroyed. Famine, anarchy, an infestation of wild beasts, all convinced Adoniram to relocate the remaining believers to Amherst, and continue the mission work in greater safety there. In September Adoniram had to go to Ava, scene of his loathsome imprisonment, to help the British negotiate a treaty there. During his absence Ann sank again into a fevered disease, and on the evening of October 24, 1826, crying out one last time in Burmese, she died, thirty-seven years old. On November 24th Adoniram at last received this trying news in Ava; on January 24th (1827) he returned to Amherst; on April 24th the daughter, Maria Elizabeth, his earthly comfort, being bereft of Ann, also died, age two years and three months.

‘...And I am left alone in the wide world. My own dear family I have buried; one in Rangoon and two in Amherst. What remains for me but to hold myself in readiness to follow the dear departed to that blessed world—*Where my best friends, my kindred, dwell, Where God, my Saviour, reigns?*’

During Judson’s absence from Amherst Mr. and Mrs. Wade had arrived there—Mrs. Wade caring for his motherless child. Two months later Mr. and Mrs. Boardman joined them,⁶ strengthening the work. They resolved to move the mission to Moulmein, where it was centred for the rest of Judson’s life. First they had the bitter-sweet task of burying, beside Ann and Maria Judson, Mah-men-la, the first woman convert. They also learned at Amherst of the death of Adoniram Judson senior in Massachusetts, aged seventy-five. Not surprisingly the forty-year-old Adoniram reveals a great sense of loneliness at this time in his letters, sharpened by sorrow over the seeming tardiness of support from America.

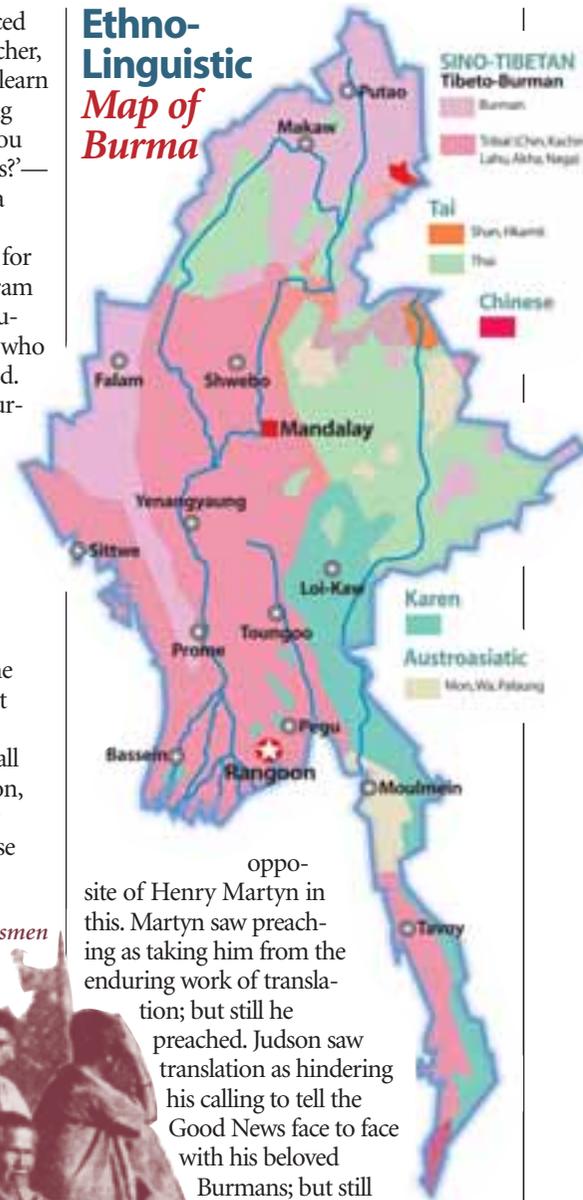
MOULMEIN. THE SCRIPTURES COMPLETED

The congregation at Moulmein included inquirers and nineteen scholars, a splendid nucleus for work in four scattered ‘zayats’, or ‘reading rooms.’⁷ Soon the first convert was baptized and others followed. Renewed by this joyous labour Judson resumed his translation work in the Old Testament, still the only person able to do so. He had begun with thirty Psalms, perhaps needing the consolations of the sweet psalmist of Israel. Alongside the Bible

work tracts and outlines were produced and distributed—or demanded! ‘Teacher, are you asleep? We want a writing to learn by heart.’—‘Sir, we have seen a writing that tells about an eternal God. Are you the man that gives away such writings?’—‘Are you Jesus Christ’s man? Give us a writing that tells about Jesus Christ.’ Twenty thousand tracts were printed for use at a Buddhist festival, and Adoniram speaks of distributing almost ten thousand tracts, ‘giving to none but those who ask’. In 1831, 217 people were baptized. In September that year Adoniram journeyed amongst the Karen people, and baptized the first tribal believers. The ministry among the Karen people was an enduring one, and a Karen Church exists still today, albeit sorely tried and persecuted.

When the first serious enquirer had approached Judson in 1817, all that he had was two and a half pages, the first chapters of Matthew. Now the whole Bible was complete, in draft. Amidst all the toil and trial, anguish and affliction, this work had groaned on. I say ‘groaned’ advisedly—because Adoniram was the exact

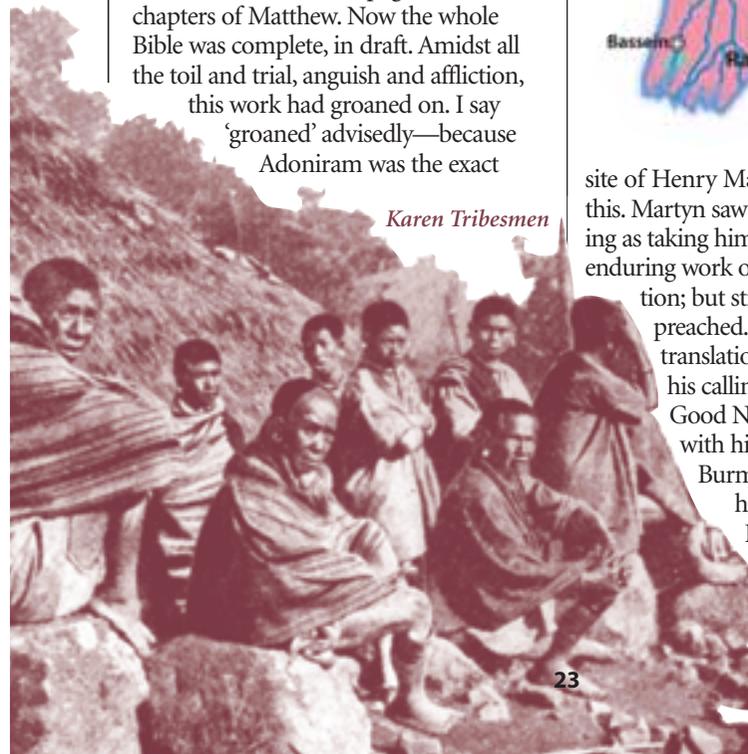
Ethno-Linguistic Map of Burma



opposite of Henry Martyn in this. Martyn saw preaching as taking him from the enduring work of translation; but still he preached. Judson saw translation as hindering his calling to tell the Good News face to face with his beloved Burmans; but still he translated. Both yielded themselves utterly to the guidance of the Living God,



Rangoon, Today it is a curious mixture of Modern and Colonial buildings



Karen Tribesmen

mortifying their own desires and even gifts, and displaying the Apostolic spirit, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'⁸ Prevented from ministering among the gospel-hungry Karens by the constraint of translation he groans, 'the tears flow as I write'. The Bible was essential to the continuance of the Burman churches, and at last in 1834, Judson recorded, 'Thanks be to God, I can now say I have attained. I have knelt down before him with the last leaf in my hand, and imploring his forgiveness for all the sins which have polluted my labours in this department, and his aid in future efforts to remove the errors and imperfections which necessarily cleave to the work, I have commended it to his mercy and grace; I have dedicated it to his glory. May he make his own inspired word, now complete in the Burman tongue, the grand instrument of filling all Burma with songs of praise to our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.' And let all Bible-lovers say, 'Amen!'

A SECOND MARRIAGE AND A PRINTED BIBLE

George Boardman had died in 1831. His indefatigable labours to carry the Gospel to regions beyond in Central Burma, leading inexorably to ill health and death, is another soul-stirring testimony. His wife, Sarah, had been an heroic fellow-labourer, and now as his widow she continued the work among the Karens at Tavoy. This intrepid woman put aside the appeals of friends in America to return home with her little boy. Instead she made long missionary trails into the Karen jungles, conducting her 'schools' so well that the

authorities came to require that all such establishments be 'conducted on the plan of Mrs. Boardman's schools at Tavoy'. Adoniram Judson found in Sarah Boardman a kindred spirit, who wept as she read the handwritten pages of the Burmese Bible. Perhaps, as well as the sufferings of Christ and the Glory that should follow, she saw the fellowship of



Looking out across Moulmein (Mawlamyine)

his sufferings in the sacrificial labours of Ann and Adoniram Judson in those costly pages. In April 1834 the thirty-one-year-old widow married the forty-five-year-old widower. In November 1835 their daughter Abigail Ann Judson was born.

Adoniram's burden now was the laborious work of revising his full draft of the Bible. He had a passion for improving, reluctant to leave any task before he considered it 'finished'. He tells us that he never read a chapter without pencil in hand, the original language text beside him, a dictionary close by. His object was 'to bring the translation to such a state that it may be a standard work', and it was printed in 1835. In 1840 he notes 'I enjoyed the great happiness of commit-

ting to the press the last sheet of the new edition of the Burmese Bible.'

Adoniram and Sarah continued their ministry among the Taling people around Moulmein. Sarah addressed herself to learning the language, tract translation and preparation. Adoniram met daily with the Taling disciples before sending them out to the work, and conducted meetings in the *zayat*. The birth of their sons, Adoniram Brown in 1837, Elnathan in 1838 and Henry in 1839, meant that Sarah must concentrate more upon the children, and also upon Adoniram's health. In the fiftieth year of his life, twenty-fifth in Burma, he was troubled by an illness which affected his lungs. This brought intense pain and loss of voice, and once more a restorative sea voyage was thought to be needed. Adoniram sought the comforting fellowship of the Serampore Mission once again, and found some relief.

Having laboured to complete the Burmese Bible, another daunting task was laid upon him by the Mission Board, to write the first English-Burmese dictionary. He had long shrunk from this. He longed to be engaged in directly declaring Christ to needy souls, and had no relish for the secluded work which lexicography required. He thought it an 'un-missionary' task, but, again, no one else was adequate to it, and the failure of his voice prevented all preaching. The young man who had thought true religion and a Personal God to be unreasonable, here in his maturity brings every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, the God of his father, and faithfully takes up a work which was to occupy the greater part of the rest of his life.

SARAH'S FAILING HEALTH

In March 1841 Sarah gave birth to a stillborn boy, Luther Judson, and her own health never fully recovered. Serampore was again chosen to be sanatorium for Adoniram and Sarah and the four children. The sea journey afforded some relief, but no real recovery. To compound the anguish Henry died there, just nineteen months old. Their journey back across the Bay of Bengal assumed nightmare proportions, yet in the worst storms of all Adoniram's experience, God blessed him: nineteen seamen professed faith in Jesus Christ, seventeen of whom he subsequently deemed to have endured. They returned to Moulmein in December 1841, and in July 1842 another baby boy was born, named Henry in remembrance of the son buried at Serampore.

Sarah attended to the needs of her family, and worked steadily at a Burmese translation of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Two more sons were born, Charles in December 1843 and Edward in December 1844. Sarah was utterly worn out, prone to any disease. She took short journeys along the coast, with no lasting benefit. The situation shocked Adoniram into seeking leave to bring her to America. 'The hand of God is heavy upon me,' he wrote to the Board. 'The complaint to which Mrs. Judson is subject has become so violent that nothing but a voyage beyond the tropics can possibly protract her life beyond a period of a few weeks... She is willing to die, and I hope I am willing to see her die, if it be the divine will... She is now so desperately weak, and almost helpless, that all say it would be nothing but savage inhumanity to send her off alone. The three younger children, the youngest but three and a half months old,

T I M E L I N E

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| <p>1812 Judson married Ann Hasseltine in Bradford, Mass., and embarked for Calcutta.
Napoleon begins retreat from Moscow.</p> <p>1812–14 USA and Britain at War.</p> <p>1813 The Judsons arrived in Rangoon, in connection with Felix Carey.</p> <p>1814 American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions established.</p> <p>1815 Judson's son, Roger Williams Judson, born.</p> <p>1816 Roger Williams Judson died.</p> <p>1817–25 James Monroe, U.S. President.</p> <p>1817 Judson's Gospel of Matthew in Burmese.</p> <p>1819 Judson began public ministry in Burmese language. First Burmese convert.</p> <p>1820–30 George IV, King of England.</p> <p>1821–23 Ann visits U.S. for health reasons.</p> <p>1823 Judson's New Testament in Burmese completed, with an outline of the Old Testament.</p> <p>1824–26 The first Anglo-Burmese war. Judson imprisoned.</p> <p>1825 Maria Elizabeth Butterworth Judson born.</p> <p>1825–29 John Adams, U.S. President.</p> <p>1826 Ann Hasseltine Judson died. Adoniram Judson senior died.</p> <p>1827 Maria Judson died.</p> <p>1829–37 Andrew Jackson, U.S. President.</p> <p>1830–37 William IV, King of England.</p> <p>1831 TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY.</p> <p>1833 The Oxford Movement began.</p> <p>1834 William Carey died.</p> <p>1834 Judson finished translating the Old Testament. Married the widow Sarah Boardman.</p> | <p>1835 Abby Ann Judson born.
1837–41 Martin Van Buren, U.S. President.
1837–1901 Victoria, Queen of England.</p> <p>1837 Adoniram Brown Judson born. 'Digest of Scripture' in Burmese finished.</p> <p>1838 Elnathan Judson born.</p> <p>1839 Henry Judson born.</p> <p>1841 William Henry Harrison, U.S. President.</p> <p>1841 Luther Judson still-born. Henry Judson died.
1841–45 John Tyler, U.S. President.</p> <p>1842 Henry Hall Judson born. Adoniram's mother died, age 83, Plymouth, Mass. Charles Judson born.</p> <p>1843 Edward Judson born.</p> <p>1844 Embarked for journey to America. Sarah Boardman Judson died and was buried at St. Helena.</p> <p>1845 Charles Judson died in Burma.</p> <p>1845–49 James Polk, U.S. President.</p> <p>1846 Adoniram Judson married Emily Chubcock at Hamilton, NY, and returned to Burma.</p> <p>1847 Emily Judson writes memoir of Sarah Judson. Emily Francis Judson born.</p> <p>1849–50 Zachary Taylor, U.S. President.</p> <p>1849 English and Burmese Dictionary finished.</p> <p>1850 Millard Fillmore, U.S. President.</p> <p>1850 Adoniram Judson died, April 12th. Charles Judson born and died the same day.</p> <p>1854 Emily Chubcock Judson died.</p> |
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awfulbar/flickr

Dawn in the Batang Valley, Myanmar

we must leave behind us, casting them, as it were, on the waters, in the hope of finding them after many days. The three elder, Abby Ann, Adoniram, and Elnathan, we take with us, to leave in their parents' native land.'

TO AMERICA...

On April 26, 1845, the Judsons with the three elder children took ship for London, Adoniram intending to spend a portion of each day working on the Burman dictionary. This voyage was so rough that the captain determined to put in at the Isle of France. On July 5 the ship arrived at Port Louis.⁹ Sarah was improved in health and they discussed separating, thinking that she would now be able to continue the voyage to America alone, Adoniram returning to the work in Moulmein. It was not to be. Sarah suffered a severe relapse. Finding another ship about to sail directly for the United States, the Judsons sailed on July 25th. One month later the ship was at anchor in St. James Bay, St. Helena.¹⁰ In the pre-dawn of September 1 Sarah Judson died, and, as dictated by the climate, was buried the same day. The forlorn husband and children were at sea again the same evening. When they had talked of parting at Port Louis in July, Sarah had penned some valedictory verses for her husband— with what emotion he would now read them. I give just two

stanzas:-

My tears fall fast for thee, love;
How can I say Farewell!
But go; thy God be with thee, love,
Thy heart's deep grief to quell.

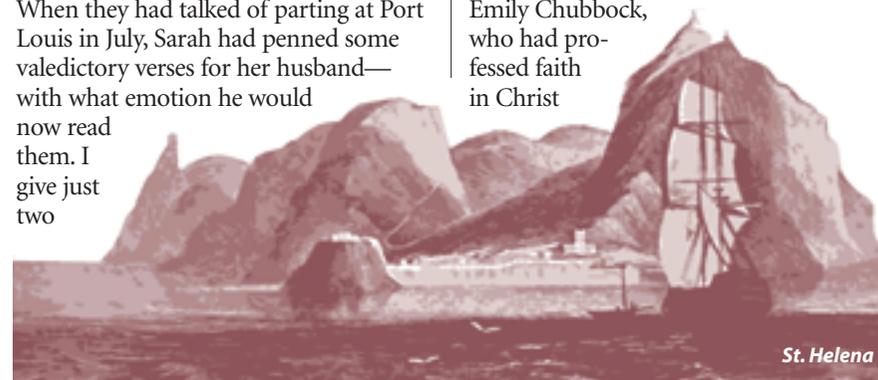
...

Then gird thine armour on, love,
Nor faint thee by the way,
Till Buddh shall fall and Burma's sons
Shall own Messiah's sway.

They arrived in Boston, October 15, 1845. Judson was ill-prepared for the greeting that awaited him. He was not well, could scarce speak above a whisper, and his very English was become strange and rusty to him. But all wanted to hear him, and so he addressed audiences with a helper beside him to repeat his whispers. Some were disappointed that he would rather speak of Christ than tell of his own labours. Visiting Ann Judson's hometown, Bradford, he there learned of the death of Charlie, one of the younger children left at Moulmein.

...AND BACK TO BURMA.

Ann Judson's story was already an inspiration to many in the U.S., and amongst those moved was Emily Chubcock, who had professed faith in Christ



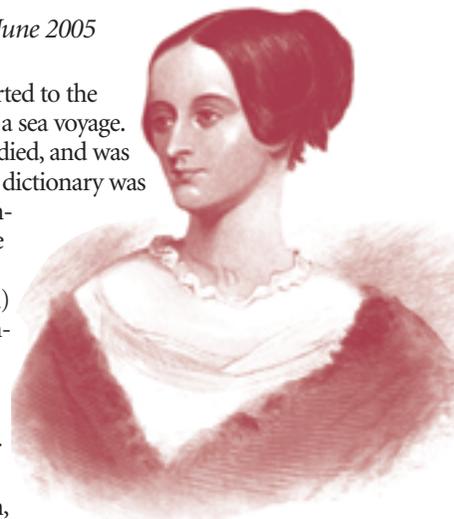
St. Helena

when eight years old. Writing under a nom de plume she had good standing in literary America, and Adoniram saw some of her work in a friend's home. He expressed regret that a person of such obvious gifts should devote them to the writing of light literature. 'I should be glad to know her,' he remarked. 'The lady who writes so well ought to write better. It is a pity that such fine talents should be employed on such subjects.' In January 1846 when they met, Emily agreed to write a sketch of the life of Sarah Judson. In June, Emily being two months short of twenty-nine, they married.¹¹ In July, with other helpers for the Mission, they embarked for Moulmein. In November they arrived, Emily becoming mother to Edward¹² and Henry.

Adoniram, still labouring with the dictionary, and still burdened to reach into the heart of Burma with the Gospel, decided to cross the Gulf of Martaban to Rangoon once more. Burma was now ruled by a king more cruelly intolerant than ever, whose opposition to Christianity meant that missionary work must be done in utmost secrecy. During the day Judson worked on his dictionary; at night in his home he saw the local Christians, risking their lives to meet him. The stress, inadequate diet, continued sickness in his family and the intolerance of the king compelled him to withdraw to Moulmein. He had hoped that the home Board would authorise him to go and face this fierce king; but 'the timid and narrow policy of his brethren in America' did not allow it.

In December 1847 Emily Frances Judson was born. Judson, from sad experience, feared for his wife's health, but it was he who went into severe decline. On April

3rd, 1850, he resorted to the well tried tonic of a sea voyage. On April 12th he died, and was buried at sea. The dictionary was half done (English-Burmese), and the second part (Burmese-English) would need another hand to complete it. On April 22nd Emily, unknowing of her husband's death, gave birth to a son, Charles, who died the same day. Soon after Adoniram's death Emily returned to the United States, and she died in June 1854, in Madison County, New York.



Emily Chubbock Judson

Let Edward Judson, Sarah's son, give the review:-

[His] achievements far transcended the wildest aspirations of his youth. During the early years in Rangoon, when the mighty purpose of evangelizing Burma began to take definite shape in his mind; even before the first convert, Moug Nau, was baptized; when, indeed, the young missionary was almost forgotten by his fellow-Christians at home, or merely pitied as a good-hearted enthusiast, the outermost limit reached by his strong-winged hope was that he might, before he died, build up a church of a hundred converted Burmans, and translate the whole Bible into their language. But far more than this was accomplished during the ten years in Rangoon, the two years in Ava, and the twenty-three years in Moulmein. At the time of his death the native Christians (Burmans

and Karens publicly baptized upon the profession of their faith) numbered over seven thousand. Besides this, hundreds throughout Burma had died rejoicing in the Christian faith. He had not only finished the translation of the Bible, but had accomplished the larger and the more difficult part of the compilation of a Burmese dictionary. At the time of his death there were sixty-three churches established among the Burmans and Karens. These churches



The Notice Board of Judson Baptist Church in Mandalay

were under the oversight of one hundred and sixty-three missionaries, native pastors, and assistants. He had laid the foundations of Christianity deep down in the Burman heart, where they could never be swept away.



Judson's Memorial, Plymouth, Massachusetts

A memorial stone inscribed with the names of Adoniram, Ann, Emily and Abigail Judson

IN MEMORIAM
REV. ADONIRAM JUDSON

BORN AUG. 9, 1788
DIES APRIL 12, 1850

MALDEN, HIS BIRTHPLACE.
THE OCEAN, HIS SEPULCHRE.
CONVERTED BURMANS, AND
THE BURMAN BIBLE
HIS MONUMENT.
HIS RECORD IS ON HIGH.

Endnotes

¹ Romans 5.3

² 2 Corinthians 12.9

³ Ann was away from Adoniram for almost twenty-eight months because of the traveling. Some of his letters at this time reveal the cost of the separation, especially as he did not receive anything from her for the last ten months of his anxious waiting.

⁴ 2 Timothy 2.9

⁵ See *Quarterly Record* No. 570, page 18.

⁶ Boardman had arrived just in time to construct the coffin for little Maria, and later recorded, 'After leaving the grave we had a delightful conversation on the kindness and tender mercies of our Heavenly Father. Brother Judson seemed carried above his grief.'

⁷ Zayat: a public hall for meeting or shelter. There is a delightful anecdote that one of Judson's disciples at this time, wishing to draw the Teacher back from his sorrows and to the teaching, had erected a zayat overnight

where Judson could not fail to find it, knowing that he would not be able to resist sitting and reading aloud until someone came to discourse with him. It worked!

⁸ Acts 9.6. I cannot forbear a pastoral aside—how refreshing to see this spirit, when today some with the shadow of a grain of a gift insist on the 'right' to use it regardless of order, need or guidance.

⁹ For a sharp taste of déjà vu, see Part I, *Quarterly Record* No. 570, page 18.

¹⁰ Napoleon had died there in 1821.

¹¹ The marriage offended the literary and the religious world. The one thought that the brilliant 'Fanny Forester' was throwing herself away on 'an old missionary'; the other feared that the missionary cause was compromised by an alliance between its founding father and a writer of fiction.

¹² Edward, perhaps benefitting from his stepmother's tutelage, wrote a most affective life of his father, published in 1894, and available in full (a 72-page pdf file) on the Wholesome Words Web site at www.wholesomewords.org.