

Missionary.

Great Missionaries.

ADONIRAM JUDSON.

Adoniram Judson was born in Malden, Mass., Aug. 9th, 1788. He was the son of a Congregational minister, his father being a man of inflexible integrity and great strength of character. As a boy, it seems that Adoniram was somewhat of a prodigy. We are informed that he could read a chapter in the Bible at three, and at four years it was his great delight to stand up on a chair and preach to his playmates. Even then his favorite hymn was, "Go, preach my gospel, saith the Lord." At school and college he was very successful, and easily carried off the prizes.

He was graduated at the age of nineteen, and was appointed valedictorian of his class, of which honor he enthusiastically informed his father in a short letter: "Dear father, I have got it. Your affectionate son, A. Judson."

Upon returning from college, however, the pious parents were horrified to hear him coolly declare himself a decided infidel. He had imbibed sceptical views from a brilliant young associate named E. The arguments of his father and tears of his mother were both ineffectual in turning him from his sceptical notions. His conversion was brought about in a somewhat dramatic way.

Stopping one night at a country inn, he was placed in a room next to one occupied by a man who was not expected to live until morning. Young Judson could not sleep on account of the groanings of the dying man, and was very much affected. In the morning he heard from the landlady that all was over.

"Who was he?" asked Judson.

"Mr. E.," a young student from Providence College, was the reply. Judson was thunder-struck. It was his own college companion, the brilliant scoffer from whom he had himself imbibed sceptical ideas. He was led to see that infidelity was not the thing for a death-bed, and was also led to solemnly dedicate himself to God. In May, 1809, he united with the Church, being then twenty-one years of age. Shortly afterwards he went to Andover Theological College in training for the ministry, when Buchanan's "Star in the East" came into his hands, and stirred his soul with longings for service in some mission field. Then a work on "The Burmese Empire" interested him greatly, and soon the desire to preach the gospel in Burmah became the master-passion of his life, before he had spoken a word concerning it to any human being. He was offered a desirable position, as assistant pastor, in one of the largest churches in Boston. His friends all expected him to accept, but he told them it could not be. He informed them that God had called him to a far-distant field of service. The "Go ye" of the Master had come to him with such power that he felt he must obey, and after that he never faltered for an instant.

In 1811 he married Ann Heselstine, a young woman of unusual ability and great consecration. Shortly after they started for their distant mission field in the far east. After sixteen weary weeks of ocean travel, they came in sight of the mountains of India. They landed at Singapore, where he was received into the Baptist Church, which, from this time, undertook his support. Many tedious delays and hindrances occurred before the Judsons took their passage in a vessel bound for Rangoon, which was to be the starting point of their missionary operations. Mr. Judson felt assured that God had called him to Burmah, and, at the time of his coming, there was not a single native who

had accepted the religion of Jesus Christ. They obtained as comfortable quarters as possible and began the study of the language, which is a most difficult one to acquire. Such, however, was Mr. Judson's natural ability, and such his diligence in study, that in a short time he was able to make himself understood, and also to prepare several translations of tracts in this uncouth language, in which he afterwards became remarkably proficient.

There were severe trials during this time of hard study and preparatory work. Mrs. Judson's health broke down, and she was away six months at Madras. Their first-born child died and the father was in a low state of health for more than a year. Mr. Judson was cheered and encouraged in 1817 by the arrival of Mr. Huff and his family, bringing with them a printing press. It was not long before two little tracts were printed in the Burmese language. These gave brief summaries of Christian truth which were handed about in Rangoon, so that the new religion began to be talked about. One morning Mr. Judson was sitting on the veranda with his teacher, when a Burman, attended by native servants, came up the steps and sat down beside Mr. Judson. With downcast eyes he



ADONIRAM JUDSON.

remained silent for a few moments, and then asked:

"How long a time will it take me to learn the religion of Jesus?"

This was the first cry for salvation from Burman lips, and it filled the heart of Judson with unspeakable joy. Other timid inquirers began to call occasionally, and on Sundays Mrs. Judson got together a class of women.

In 1823 Mr. Judson was arrested by order of the king, and thrown into prison. It appears that three Englishmen had been arrested as spies, and among the papers of one of them there had been found a receipt for money signed by Mr. Judson. The missionary remained in jail for some time, with his feet fastened by chains to a bamboo. His loving wife visited him regularly, having to walk two miles to the prison, mostly after dark. For a whole month Mr. Judson was one of a hundred prisoners in a windowless room, when the outside temperature was 106. Here he contracted a fever and was placed in a little bamboo room, measuring six by four, where his faithful wife was allowed to come to him with food and medicine. He was taken to another place miles away, and removed from point to point until his sufferings became almost unbearable. Through all his afflictions his faithful wife followed him uncomplainingly, wherever it was possible for her to do so. Nearly two years of

danger and suffering passed over them until they were released, the Burmans having had to accept of English terms and allow all foreigners to go free.

Mr. Judson commenced his work again in Burmah territory, but his heart was greatly saddened by the loss of his wife, who died of fever October 5th, 1826. His second wife was Sarah Boardman, widow of George Boardman, a devoted missionary. She was not long spared, however, and Dr. Judson married a third wife in 1846. He seems to have been exceedingly fortunate in his marriages, each wife being a true helpmeet. In November, 1849, he took a severe cold, which was followed by fever and he never rallied again, but died on April 12, 1850.

Mr. Judson was a man thoroughly devoted to his work, naturally of a very social temperament. He almost entirely withdrew himself from society. His innate love of pre-eminence he crucified by destroying everything that might be used in making him famous, all papers, testimonials and records of achievements in the past. He denied his natural love of literature and poetic taste and would not allow himself to translate any gems of poetry which might divert his mind, please his fancy, or bring him fame. He declined the doctorate conferred upon him, though as far as this was concerned he was called Dr. Judson universally.

He made over his personal property to the Missionary Board. Upon one occasion he fasted four days, taking only a little rice to sustain life.

His home life was very beautiful. He was a tender father and fond of giving innocent diversions of pleasant surprises to his people. He was an exceedingly humble man, and disliked talking about himself. He often disappointed people by preaching simple gospel sermons and making a fervent appeal to souls, instead of referring to his own personal experiences. His love of order and neatness was almost extraordinary. He always dusted his own papers, and could find the smallest thing in the dark.

The changes witnessed in Dr. Judson's lifetime may be thus summarized.

He went into the thick darkness of Burmah, feeling that it would be ample reward if he could see a church of one hundred members gathered and the Bible translated into the native tongue. When he had been there a quarter of a century he recorded his joy in having contributed to the conversion of the first Burman, the first Karen, the first Peguan, and the first Tungg-tung, and adds that the converts from heathenism number over a thousand.

At the time of his death the number of native Christians publicly baptized, reached over seven thousand, while hundreds had died in the faith during the thirty-seven years of his ministry. There were sixty-three churches under the care of one hundred and sixty-three missionaries, native pastors and assistants. The translation of the Bible was an accomplished fact, and a most important feature of the Christianization of the country. His biographer thus characterizes his career:

"What he did by 'the good hand of his God upon him' was wonderful. What he endured 'as seeing Him who is invisible' was as marvellous. What he was attests the power and grace of God no less."

In the little town of Malden, near Boston, Mass., the visitor to the Baptist Church may see therein a marble tablet thus inscribed:

IN MEMORIAM.

REV. ADONIRAM JUDSON,
BORN AUGUST 9, 1788,
DIED APRIL 12, 1850.

MALDEN HIS BIRTHPLACE,
THE OCEAN HIS SEPULCHRE,
CONVERTED BURMAN AND

THE BURMAN BIBLE
HIS MONUMENT.
HIS RECORD IS ON HIGH.