

*missionary heroes*  
**Adoniram Judson**

Missionary to Burma, 1813-1850

by Julia H. Johnston

A dark-eyed baby boy lay in his old fashioned cradle more than one hundred and twenty-four years ago. In the little town of Malden, Massachusetts, August 9, 1788, this child was born, and named Adoniram, after his father, who was Rev. Adoniram Judson, a Congregational minister in that far-away time. The father, and the mother, too, thought this baby a wonderful child, and determined that he should do a great deal of good in the world. They thought that the best way to get him ready for a great work was to begin early to teach him as much as he could possibly learn. Long pieces were given him to commit to memory when he was hardly more than a baby, and he learned to read when he was three. Think of it!



When he was four, he liked best of all to gather all the children in the neighbourhood about him and play church. He always preached the sermon himself, and his favourite hymn was, "Go, preach My Gospel, saith the Lord." This was a good way to have a happy time, and he wasn't a bit too young to think about telling others the Good News, for he was old enough to know about Jesus and His love.

The little Adoniram, like boys who live now, liked to find out about things himself. When he was seven, he thought he would see if the sun moved. For a long time he lay flat on his back in the morning sunlight, looking up to the sky through a hole in his hat. He was away from home so long that he was missed, and his sister discovered him, with his swollen eyes nearly blinded by the light. He told her that he had "found out about the sun's moving," but did not explain how he knew.

At ten this boy studied Latin and Greek, and at sixteen he went to Brown University, from which he was graduated, as valedictorian of his class, when he was nineteen. He was a great student, loving study, and ambitious to do and be something very grand and great indeed. Two years after this, he became a Christian, and then came a great longing to be a minister, and he studied diligently with this end in view. There was one question which this splendid young man asked about everything, and this was, "Is it pleasing to God?" He put this question in several places in his room so that he would be sure to see and remember it.

Mr. Judson taught school for a while, wrote some school-books, and traveled about to see the world. After some years he read a little book called "The Star in the East." It was a missionary book, and turned the young man's thoughts to missions. At last he

seemed to hear a voice saying, "Go ye," and with all his heart he said, "I will go." From that moment he never once faltered in his determination to be a missionary. His thoughts turned towards Burma, and he longed to go there. About this time Mr. Judson met the four young men who had held a prayer-meeting in the rain, when they sheltered themselves in a haystack, and there promised God to serve Him as missionaries if He would send them out. These five were of one heart, and were much together encouraging one another. There was no money to send out missionaries, and Mr. Judson was sent to London to see if the Society there would promise some support. The ship was captured by a privateer, and the young man made prisoner, but he found an American who got him out of the filthy cell. This man came in, wearing a large cloak, and was allowed to go into the cell to see if he knew any of the prisoners. When he came to Mr. Judson he threw his cape over him, hiding him from the jailer, and got him out safely, giving him a piece of money, and sending him on his way. The London Society was not ready to take up the support of American missionaries, but not long after this, the American Board, in Boston, sent him to Burma, with his lovely young bride, whose name, as a girl, was Ann Hasseltine. It took a year and a half to reach the field in Rangoon, Burma, and get finally settled, in a poor, forlorn house, ready to study the language. By this time, Mr. Judson was taken under the care of the Baptist Board, just organized, as he felt that he belonged there. The Burmans were sad heathen, and the fierce governors of the people were called "Eaters." The work was very hard, but the missionary said that the prospects were "bright as the promises of God." When he was thirty-one and had been in Burma six years, he baptized the first convert to Christianity. The preparation of a dictionary, and the translation of the New Testament, now occupied much time.

After this came great trouble. It was war time. Missionaries were unwelcome. Dr. Judson was put in a dreadful prison. After great suffering there, his wife was allowed to take him to a lion's cage, left empty by the lion's death. She put the translation of the New Testament in a case, and it was used for a pillow. After he left the prison, a servant of Dr. Judson's found and preserved the precious book. Set free at last, he went on with his work. Death came to his home again and again, and trials bitter to bear. For thirty-seven years he toiled on, several times returning to America, but hastening back to his field. By that time there were sixty-three churches in Burma, under the care of one hundred and sixty-three missionaries and helpers, and over seven thousand converts had been baptized. Worn out with long labour, the hero-missionary, stricken with fever, was sent home, only to die on shipboard, and his body was buried at sea.