

# The Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.  
Vol. I. No. 8.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1856.

WHOLE SERIES  
Vol. XX. No. 8.

## Poetry.

### READY.

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A dying Christian endeavored, as she was departing, to whisper two or three sentences to those who were watching by her bedside. The whole, however, was unintelligible, except the last word, which was "Ready."

Ready now to spread my pinions,  
Glad to wing my flight away,  
From the gloom that hovers round me  
To the realms of endless day.  
Ready to be washed and pardoned,  
Ready to be pure from sin,  
Ready to complete the conflict,  
Ready heavenly joy to win.

Ready over death to triumph,  
And to tread the tempter down;  
Ready life and bliss to inherit,  
And to wear the glorious crown.  
Ready to be freed from sorrow,  
Tears and partings, toil and pain;  
Ready for the heavenly mansion—  
Life is dear, but death is gain.

Ready to forsake the shadows  
Of the night so dim and long;  
Ready for my harp of glory,  
Ready for the angels' song.  
Ready with salvation's banner,  
To exult in joy to rise;  
Ready for the glad hosanna  
In the heavenly Paradise.

Ready with the just made perfect,  
Clothed in robes of light to be,  
Swelling the enraptured chorus—  
Singing "joy" and "victory."

Heavenly messengers are round me,  
Hark, their voices bid me come;  
"Earth and time too long have bound thee,  
Sister spirit, welcome home."  
Glad I go—my toil is finished;  
Broke at last each earthly spell,  
Upward now my soul is tending—  
"Earth and time and death, farewell."

As the bird with warbling music  
Soars above our feeble sight,  
Singing still, and still ascending—  
Melting in the glorious light—  
So the dying saint, departing,  
Joyful took her heavenward way,  
Life and time and gladness blending  
In the light of perfect day.

## Missionary.

For the Christian Messenger.

### History of the Baptist Mission in Rangoon.

[No. 4.]

In 1830 an effort was made by the missionaries to re-occupy Rangoon. Early in the year Mr. Wade arrived and remained for several months. In May he was followed by Mr. Judson, who did not remain long. Leaving Mr. Wade he pushed up the Irrawaddy, preaching the gospel in the villages and towns along its banks, until he came to Prome. Here he took possession of an old gayat, and for several months proclaimed the gospel to all who would listen. For the first time the sound of the gospel was heard in that ancient city. For the first time its people heard of an Eternal Creator. The proclamation of the unknown God, made by Paul on Mars hill, when surrounded by the noble statues and majestic temples of the Olympian Gods, was here repeated by Judson beneath the shadows of the venerable pagodas of Gandama. The sound was not the mere truth of man; and before he left this city he had reason to believe that it had interested reasonable minds, and still more, had converted immortal souls.

In September Mr. Judson returned to Rangoon well pleased with his excursion up the Irrawaddy.

He laboured in this station with many disadvantages. The governor tolerated his presence but not his religion. All his meetings with the disciples whether for business

or for worship, were in private. Under these circumstances he confined himself mainly to translating the scriptures.

Still while his labours were thus restricted, there were opportunities for presenting truth which were not thrown away. Many visitors from distant parts of the country were anxious to see Jesus Christ, and others had heard of the gospel and were curious to know its peculiarities and claims. Besides the conversations held with those persons another instrumentality was set in operation. Tracts were sent up from Maulmain and distributed in great numbers—chiefly by the native assistants. These were greedily received, and promised, at no very distant day, to produce an abundant harvest.

In May, 1851, a great festival in honour of Gaudama was held in the Shway Dagon pagoda in Rangoon. We have already given a brief description of this huge and costly structure; but size and splendour does not constitute its chief value. The precious possession of seven real hairs of the divinity—gives it its chief ornament and treasure in the eyes of every true Buddhist. At the time of the festival multitudes flocked hither from every portion of Burmah. Mr. Judson had provided himself with a plentiful supply of tracts, and thousands who had flocked hither to honor Gaudama, learnt for the first time of the true God. The missionary had a glorious festival, as he sowed the message of salvation thus conveyed to every corner of the empire.

Not long after, he was called to Maulmain to supply the place of Mr. Wade—whose failing health required a more congenial climate. Mr. Jones who had lately arrived from the United States now went to Rangoon but soon left to form a mission in the kingdom of Siam. His place was taken by Mr. Kincaid who, however, soon left to re-establish a mission in Ava. Mr. Bennett, of Maulmain, then took the vacant station, but was not long after re-called to take charge of a government school. The post thus deserted was called for by Mr. Webb, and in 1836 by Mr. Vinton.

Thus for several years, from 1831 to 1836, we find Rangoon constantly occupied by missionaries, but we cannot look for much fruit from their labours. Several of these missionaries were not in Rangoon long enough to learn the language. Their frequent changes operated unfavourably, while tyranny, like a vampire, brooded over the mission, and sucked the life-blood from its heart.

Before Mr. Kincaid left for Ava, the schools established by his predecessor, Mr. Jones, were broken up, and their teacher whipped. Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, on their arrival, sought to re-establish them, but an excitement was at once created. The scholars were dispersed and their master punished. Nor did the persecutors stop here. The native pastor, Ko Thah A, was imprisoned, put in the stocks, and fined fifty rupees.

Mr. Webb had scarcely begun his work when another persecution commenced. Ko Sau Low, the assistant, was seized while preaching, was imprisoned, tortured, threatened with death, and only regained his liberty by paying a fine of 200 rupees. Six or seven Karen Christians were seized, placed in the stocks, and finally banished from the city. This violence put a stop for a time to all missionary effort, and in 1840 led to the withdrawal of the missionaries from Rangoon.

It is mournful to contemplate this station, the key to the empire, thus abandoned. Did we not hope for better things when Judson led his first convert into the baptismal stream? Did we not hope for better

things, as we saw the timid becoming courageous, through the influence of faith and under the frown of despotism? Did we not hope for better, as we saw Wade, Judson, Jones, Kincaid, Bennett, Webb, one after another daring the displeasure of a proud and bigotted people, the anger of a cruel and blood-thirsty ruler? Did we not hope for better things as the missionary stood beneath the shadow of the Shway Dagon pagoda, distributing messages of mercy by hundreds of thousands, as the preacher brought out from heathenism proclaimed in the zayat, and by the way side, the Gospel of a crucified Saviour. Did we not hope after each previous reverse that now the accepted time had arrived? But our hopes have all been disappointed.

A sad scene passes before the eye. The ruthless hand smites the church of Christ. His servants are imprisoned, scourged, fined, threatened with death, banished from their homes because they worship the Eternal God and his divine Son, and bid others to imitate their example. The missionary, after a vain struggle with accumulating obstacles, sadly turns to other fields. The native church without instruction, without the public means of grace, languishes. Some of its members mournfully gaze on the departing teachers. Others faint by the way. Some few weary and feeble—afraid to meet the hostility of their neighbours, the rage of their rulers—unable to withstand the temptation of Satan and the vain corruption, seek a refuge in the miry pit, which they had once left for higher, firmer, purer ground.

Judson labored here for a short time in 1847,—after his return from the United States, but he could do little for Rangoon. The vicerey, a cruel, bloody man, hated Christianity with a perfect hatred, and sought to drown in blood the new-born faith. No assemblies were permitted—the distribution of tracts was prohibited, and all that remained for the missionary was to watch in private over those who still hoped for salvation through the merits of the Saviour.

Soon after, this station was abandoned by the Board, as it was necessary to retrench in its expenses. Ko Thah A still labored to keep the little church together, but we cannot wonder if his labours were attended with but little success. The love of many waxed cold, while few inquired respecting the religion of Christ. Abandoned by the missionaries, exposed to ceaseless persecution, we are not surprised to find the little church dwindling away. The gospel light is breaking over other portions of the country. Converts to Christianity are numbered by thousands, while in Rangoon, but a few dispirited disciples remain.

However, not long after the departure of Judson, we notice faint indications of a happier day. The government became somewhat more tolerant. It was found that the Karens, when persecuted, rather than abandon their faith would flee into the British provinces. To keep them in the country at length toleration was granted them. Their pastors were freed from former imposition, and they were even allowed to erect places of worship. This change was not unnoticed by the missionaries.

In 1851, the condition of this old station excited renewed interest in the mind of Mr. Kincaid. He had always deemed it poor economy to desert this field, the pass to Burmah proper. He had groaned in spirit when he saw the church which had been planted, watered and gathered by the heroic Judson, falling to decay. He had marked the change which had taken place in the policy of the government. Under these circumstances he resolved to re-occupy this deserted post.

It is not to be supposed that a single truly liberal idea had penetrated the minds of the Burman rulers. The people were still grossly oppressed, foreigners were still regarded with the utmost jealousy. It was possible that the new effort to preach the gospel in Rangoon would bring persecution to the Christians, and failure to the missionaries.

The attempt was not a failure. Mr. Kincaid, accompanied by Dr. Dawson, met with a favourable reception, and soon matters presented a new aspect. The scattered remnant of the church were assembled, a new spirit of enquiry was infused in the minds of the devotees of Buddhism, and before December nine converts were baptized. The mission seemed to be regarded with favor, not only by the people but also by the priests and rulers.

But while the missionaries were treated with favor, the besotted rulers treated all other foreigners with a cruelty and injustice which soon brought down a merited retribution. The Burman government had openly violated its treaties with the Hon. East India Company but this was for a time overlooked. It was not until English subjects had been carelessly insulted, imprisoned, fined, and threatened with death, times without number that their government demanded redress.

On 23rd November, 1851, a British steamer and three men-of-war arrived off Rangoon to demand satisfaction for injuries inflicted on British subjects. As no notice was taken of these demands, Rangoon was attacked and taken. Soon after, the whole province of Pegu was formally annexed to the British East India possessions.

Under the tolerant government of Britain a new day dawns on this mission.

After a few months of unavoidable delay, the missionaries re-commenced their labors, with every thing to stimulate and encourage them. New preaching stations were opened, in districts where prospects were favourable. The stations soon grew into churches. At Kamlet and Pagoundang, churches have been organized, and men of their choice ordained over them as pastors.

A new spirit of enquiry seems to animate those who allowed the preaching of the gospel. And the Spirit of God is impressing on their hearts the truths which they hear. Since the annexation of Pegu, 140 converts have been baptized and added to the churches in and near Rangoon. The people seem to have lost their former zeal for Gaudama. Many openly avow their skepticism. This fact should stimulate Christians to renewed exertion.

### Hindoo Widows.

A bill is at present before the Legislative Council to enable Hindoo widows to marry without sacrificing their rights, and for legitimizing their children. At present a poor girl, scarcely released from the nursery, may become a widow before having seen her husband, and for the rest of her days is not only condemned to celibacy but to slavery. Her hair is immediately cut off, she is stripped of her ornaments, and condemned to perform the most degrading drudgery about the house. The proposed law, which is purely permissive, and may be taken advantage of or neglected as is thought fit, has been petitioned against by a considerable body of the wealthiest Hindoos in Calcutta, on the ground that as practices prevailed among them three thousand years ago, they ought still to be protected and persevered in. The Hindoos of Bombay are now petitioning for the passing of the law, which we hope will be given effect to without loss of time.