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Presented to Mr.
Christian Luntz
Sept 21: 1895

DEPOSE.



SHORT HISTORY OF THE KARENS.

The first intimation of the Karen race in the annals of Europe is found in the travels of Marco Pollo in the 14th century. After leaving Ava, he spent some time in Boman, 260 miles north—then turned to the east into Yuman, a province of China. In describing the races in the northern provinces of Burmah, he mentions the Karens as one of the most numerous, and in speaking of the country still farther north, he calls it the country of the Karens. I had an opportunity of verifying the correctness of Marco Pollo's information, in 1837, during a trip up the Irrawaddy, some 500 miles north of Ava. After getting 200 miles north of the royal city, I found the interior of the country every where inhabited by Karens. Cities and villages along the river are inhabited by Burmans and Shans. After leaving Boman, there are few Burmans, and in the monasteries there are only Shan priests and Shan books. The bazaars in the market towns were supplied with fish and vegetables by the Karens and mostly by females. When about 200 miles north of Boman, I was told that, if I went ten days farther up the river, I would find only wild Karens. Some Karen villages that I visited contained from 30 to 80 families, and invariably each village contained but one house built like barracks for soldiers, and sufficient in length to contain all the families. They had large herds of cattle for agricultural purposes. Coloring, weaving and blacksmithing are brought to a very good degree of perfection as far as opportunity offered. I in-

and

quired the extent of the Karens, but could obtain but little more than that they regarded themselves as the first and most extensive of all the races in the world. For the last 200 years, Europeans have been visiting this coast and trading in all parts along the Martaban gulf, and for nearly the same length of time Jesuit missionaries have been in Burmah, and yet there was no intimation that such a race as the Karens inhabited the interior in vast numbers—living remote from cities and keeping at a distance from all the great rivers and avoiding intercourse with strangers, they have been unnoticed. They are found in all the retired districts and in mountain ranges along the eastern shore of the Martaban gulf, and still east of the mountains in Siam, and then to the north of the Salwin river and all its tributaries as far as they have been explored. The Sitang valley, situated between the Salwin and Irrawaddy, is known to be inhabited by vast numbers of this people and every where through the rich delta of the Irrawaddy. Even to the north of Prome they form a large part of the agricultural population. The conversion of one Karen to the Christian faith, about 25 years ago, awakened no interest and induced no inquiry in reference to the peculiarities and extent of this race. But when *Ka Tha Byn*, prompted by impulses of his faith in the gospel of Christ, went out among his countrymen and gained a goodly number to receive the glad tidings, the existence of such a people was first made known to the friends of Missions. Little however was known of their numbers, and for years they were regarded as a mere fragment of an almost extinct race.

3 Without letters, without religion, having neither temple nor priest, they were despised by the Burmans. During the first five years after they became known, very little was done for them. It was found they had oral songs, some of the most singularly interesting traditions relating to the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, the apostasy of man, the loss of the divine knowledge and promises in reference to their future enlightenment. All these scattered rays of light are in harmony with the Mosaic record, reaching back to the infancy of the human family. When America was inhabited only by savages, and our ancestors in Britain and Germany were dwelling in the rudest tents and clothed in skins of beasts, and in the dark forest of oak, practising the most cruel and revolting forms of heathenism, the Karens stood firm in the *great truth* of one eternal God, the creator of all things and the only rightful object of adoration. From age to age they chanted songs of praise to Jehovah and looked as their songs directed towards the setting sun, from whence the white man was to come with the *good book* and teach them the worship of the living God. Bhoddism, claiming to embody all science and literature and all that pertains to the physical and moral world—propounding a system of morals admirably adapted to betray the understanding, while it fosters the pride and arrogance and selfishness so deeply seated in fallen humanity—reaching back in all its revelations through illimitable ages and absurdly depicting other worlds and systems and gods rising and then passing forever away—surrounding itself with pagodas and shrines, temples and priests as imposing as pagan Rome, and a ritual di-
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gorgeous as Rome papal, has failed to gain an ascendancy over the Karen race. Arbitrary power, surrounded by imperial pomp and splendor, has neither awed nor seduced them from their simple faith. The preservation of this widely scattered people from the degrading forms of heathenism which darken every part of this vast continent, is a great and unfathomable mystery of God's providence. They have seen the proudest monuments of heathenism rise around them—many of them glittering in the sun like mountains of gold, and in construction tasking the energies of an empire, still they chanted their oral songs and looked toward the setting sun for the white men to bring them the promised book of Jehovah. They have seen dynasties rise and fall, age after age, and yet their faith has never failed them.—Twenty-five years ago the great fact was proclaimed on the mountains of Tavoy by one of their own race, that the *white man* had come and brought them God's book. *Ka Thah Byn*, the Karen apostle, did not preach in vain. Some thirty followed him to the city, and there saw the tall, pale, emaciated form of Boardman. He opened God's book and expounded to them the things concerning the kingdom of God. In no long time they became the disciples of Christ, and when they were baptized, the dying Boardman, reclining on the margin of the river, exclaimed as he saw them rising from the baptismal waters, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Boardman died. In 1834 an alphabet was adopted and one or two small books written. In a short time a few had learned to read in their own language the wonderful things of God. In 1836 a press

was established in Tavoy under the direction of Mr. Bennett. Messrs. Wade and Mason gave a large part of their time to the Karen work. Small portions of the scriptures were translated—books and tracts written and schools established, coeval with the preaching of the gospel. The press along with the preacher and translator were incessantly at work. In 1835 Mr. Vinton commenced his labors in the Mountain province, and as early as 1837 he had traveled extensively in the Rangoon and Pegu provinces. Mr. Howard was pioneer in Bassein, when the gospel was first made known to the Karens in that region. Mr. Abbott and Mr. Brayton were in the Karen work in 1837. Several years then passed before any new laborers entered the field, and there were no schools in existence beyond the mere art of teaching pupils to read, except as the few missionaries in the depth of the rains could give a scrap of time to teaching amidst a multitude of other labors. Early in 1844 Mr. Binney came out for the express purpose of giving to the rising ministry a thorough biblical training. Few men ever entered a more important work, few ever contended with greater difficulties—and no one, perhaps, ever addressed himself more wisely or successfully to the work he had in hand. He had to deal with untrained minds, and had, but few books to put into their hands, and even the art of reading was but imperfectly known. The work however went forward and a goodly number were so *trained* as to preach with great fullness and to expound the scriptures with ability. Few men in so short a time ever made a deeper impression or exerted a wider influence. He

and, as he deserved, the constant and warm support of all the Karen missionaries. The churches as well as the pastors began to feel the importance of education, and a thirst for knowledge was awakened. Mr. Binney took broad views of the wants and necessities of the Karen races, and projected a school in which a select number of both races should be so trained as to become teachers among their own people. Without exception every Karen missionary warmly sympathized with him in his views, and hence arose the Karen Normal School in Maulmain. At first it was limited to 30, ultimately to 50 pupils, and was taught by the ladies of the Mission. This was the *first and only* school that aimed to give anything like a thorough mental training, and this school was broken up by the Deputation in 1853, under the mistaken apprehension that the pupils would be anglicized and unfitted for work among their own countrymen. To this school the churches and the ministry looked with the fondest hopes. The more enlightened and thoughtful among them had begun to inquire, "Why may we not have men raised up among *ourselves* who shall be qualified to take the place of our teachers?" There are great and urgent reasons why they should have *one school* where a sound education may be obtained, an education fitted to meet the wants of the churches, and the desires of the churches with reference to the entire race. Since the fall of Rangoon in April, 1852, the long pent-up fires in the Karen heart have burst forth. The last gun from the war-ships had not been fired on Shway-dagang when a deputation of five Karens was hanging about the outskirts of the

town, ready to rush in as soon as the Burman army had fled, and find the teacher. They did rush in and for two days amidst the ruins of the place and amidst ten thousand foreigners they sought for and found the teacher. Why this urgency? The churches had sent them, and night and day followed them with their prayers. Among their first inquiries was, "Will teacher Vinton come now?" They returned and in three days 40 Karens came in. They said, "All are praying for the teachers and also for the English." They had even taught their little children to pray that the teachers might come. Heathen Karens had joined them in this prayer. Such faith moves mountains from their base. Notwithstanding the waves of anarchy were rolling over them and the plague and famine were wasting their numbers, there was hope in God and earnest longing for the coming of Christ's kingdom. "Let us arise and build," was the cry of this long oppressed and enslaved but now emancipated people. The records of every month from the first of May, 1852, up to the present time, is enough to awaken songs of praise to the God of Missions in the bosoms of the most slumbering church. Within this time about 4000 have so received the gospel as to give evidence that their faith rests not upon the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. And not less than two-thirds of these have been gathered in districts where Christ was before unknown. This is not all; multitudes in other districts where only a feeble sound had reached them are asking to be taught the worship of God. This is not figurative language. It is a *simple fact of history*. In one district where no missionary

has ever been, a deputation was sent to the English Commissioner asking for teachers to be sent to them. The estimated number in that district is about 8000. It is sublimely beautiful to see a great people rising up from long ages of ignorance and degradation, to see them pressing forward to the attainment of moral truth; this has been the case with the Karens from the day when the *glad tidings* of redemption were announced to them on the mountains of Tavoy. During the last three years the indication of rapid reform has been a striking analogy to the early days of Christianity, when province after province in rapid succession turned away from their lying vanities and gave heed to the Word of God. All the older churches, to the number of about 100, have built themselves, chapels, and the larger half of them support their own pastors and their own village schools. Many of the pastors and school teachers are poorly qualified for their work—this is felt and deeply deplored by themselves and the churches; and *this is not all*, churches are rising up in new districts and no one to teach them to read God's book. Hundreds and thousands are asking to be taught how to read the good book and there are no men qualified to go to them. In view of the present state of things, missionaries can no longer delay encouraging the establishment of a school on a basis similar to that established by Mr. Binney. From this school will be drawn students for the theological school, and school teachers, and a few will have the opportunity of gaining a thorough mental training which shall fit them to go forth and plant churches and instruct and ordain pastors. Had we a few such men now, they could go among the thousands north

in order to know whether copies of the Bible of *Toungos*, in the provinces of Moona and Leque, and still north along the Salwin to the borders of China—they could go to the north of Ava and in all the upper provinces, amidst the tens of thousands on thousands, and proclaim the blessed gospel and plant churches in all those vast regions bordering upon Thibet and China. This is nothing visionary—nothing impracticable, and the Providence and promises of God are urging us to undertake this great and glorious work. Could we rise above the exactions of a narrow formula, and shake off the mere routine of a factory organization, the spirit and the genius of Christianity would go along with the letter, and we might expect in a large measure the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We must have a school in which men can be trained to read and reason, write and speak—this is one of the *necessities* of the Karen race. There can be no solid progress without it. An enlightened ministry and a well qualified class of instructors are needed to carry forward and perfect the great work now begun. In a few years this school will subsist and grow without foreign aid. Even now the churches will support 40 or 50 pupils in such a school. At this very moment we need 50 well qualified assistants to go into as many new districts to preach Christ and teach the people to read the scriptures, and probably the same number will be needed every successive year to supply new fields rapidly opening on every side. Evangelists, pastors and school-teachers are needed, and they can only be qualified for their work by such a school as we propose.—Can we shut our eyes to the obvious indications of divine providence in reference

nas to this great people? Can we satisfy our-
Eng selves that we are acting up to the *letter*
and *spirit* of the great commission when
in we preach the gospel and baptize those
lim who be'ieve, and then have no men to act
sing as pastors, and go and leave them in the
deg confines of heathenism, untaught in the
to things of the kingdom? Are we not
bee bound "to set in order things that are
day wanting"? "to ordain elders in every
wa church"? But where are we to obtain
of pastors among a people without letters?
the Before they can teach they must be taught
stri—they must learn to read and must have
tiam some Biblical knowledge. Protestants in
rapi the middle of the 19th century can not,
lyin DARE not adopt the popish maxim that
of "Ignorance is the mother of devotion."—
num The conversion of souls is the great work.
chap Baptized believers must be instructed in
pori "the *all things* which Christ commanded"
lage—the first must be done, and the other
sche must not be left undone. Evangelists,
thei Pastors and Teachers must be fitted to
plor carry forward the work. The expense
and of training one hundred Karens will not
in n much exceed the expense of two Mission
to r families for the same time. Allow an av-
sant erage of four years for each student, and
the we have a body of men qualified to labor
fied as Evangelists, and a goodly number of
stat these will be more efficient by far than
dela the average of missionaries, and in some
sch respects will be in advance of the best
by missionaries that have ever entered the
dra field. A question has been raised in re-
and ference to the singleness of purpose and
the steadfastness of well-educated Karens.
tal "Will not a thorough training furnish
and strong temptations to leave the ministry for
pas Government services?" The past history
the of the Karen ministry furnishes no evi-

dence against them, but on the contrary
every page of their history gives evidence
of a pure, noble, self-sacrificing spirit.—
The temptation to *wealth, honor and high*
positions has been resisted by not a few
Karen preachers. Salaries varying from
40 to 100 rupees per month have been
within their reach, yet not one of them
has been led astray by the dazzling prize.
From six to twelve rupees a month is the
salary of a Karen preacher, whether paid
by the Mission or by the church where he
labors. Can we have stronger evidence
of correct views and loftiness of purpose?
Conscientiousness and deep religious feel-
ing have ever been prominent traits in the
Karen Christian character. Where shall
we look in the history of modern Chris-
tianity for fairer, brighter examples of
faith and steadfastness? It is marvellous
that a people so numerous, so remarkable
in their past history and in their rapid
evangelization—so steadfast in Christian
principle, and so earnest in winning their
benighted fellow men to the knowledge of
Christ—I say it is marvellous that *such a*
people should awaken so little interest
among the friends of Missions. Some 12,
000 church members and a christian pop-
ulation but little less than 100,000 gather-
ed within 20 years after an alphabet was
formed, and yet *not one school in existence*
where a few of the rising ministry can
obtain a sound education. This simple
fact reveals a humiliating and melancholy
truth—"man is not disposed to labor in
harmony with God's revealed purposes."
Here is a people extending through 25 de-
grees of latitude, in a remarkable degree
prepared for the reception of Divine
knowledge—and now when thousands

have become Christians and many thou-
sands nominally so, we have *not one school*
where a select number of choice spirits
can obtain that mental discipline and that
sound biblical training which alone can
fit them to become "able ministers of the
New Testament." We appeal to all
thoughtful, serious Christians—Is it not
tempting God, to leave this people without
a native ministry? To read with *difficulty*
cannot "feed the flock of God," neither
can they go forth among the dark and su-
perstitious masses and explain *intelligibly*
the way of life through Christ. Let all
who read this paper ponder well the sub-
ject—the moral and mental regeneration
of a great and widely extended people is a
work compared with which all other
achievements sink into littleness. Untold
millions are expended in war and diplo-
macy, and can a humane and Christian
people grudge a few *thousands* for the en-
lightenment of a great nation rapidly
turning to God?

The above is respectfully submitted to
the missionaries in Burmah.

EUGENIO KINCAID.

PROME, April 24, 1855.

ments, that no jury, and much less the
of mere visitors, could form any re-
judgment as to the merits of rival ma-
by simply seeing them stand idle in an
biting, and they determined to have a wo-
test, if only of their machines. Accord-
Manny's mowing machine was tested
the end of June, with highly satisfac-
sults. There were no American plow
exhibition, and at the plowing match
English plows were decided to be the best.
Next followed a trial of Molineux's

EMENT FRANÇAIS.



Long - M.

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