

**HISTORICAL SKETCH OF
THE MISSIONS OF
THE AMERICAN BOARD
IN INDIA AND CEYLON**

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Historical sketch of the missions of the American Board in India and Ceylon by S. C. Bartlett

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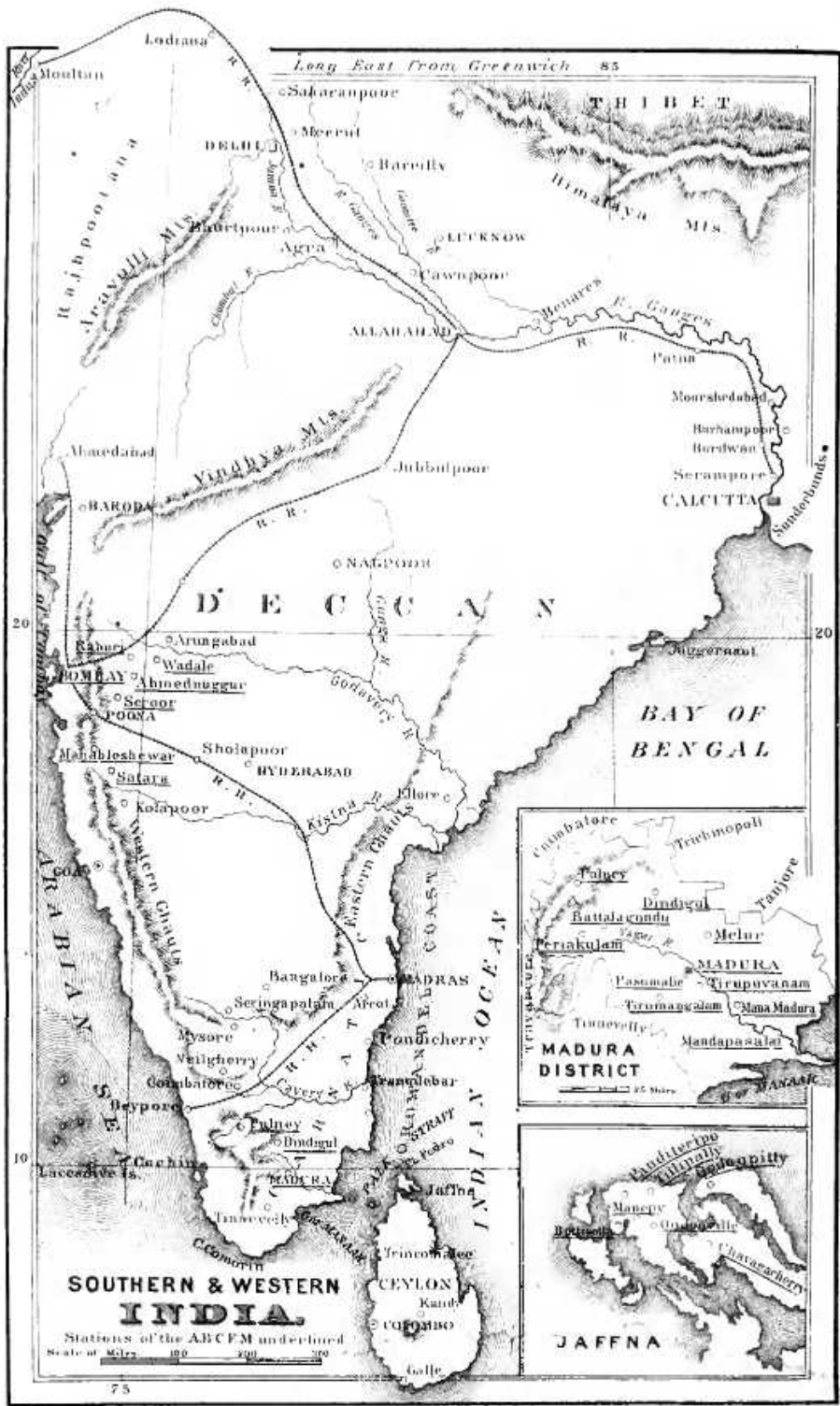
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BY
REV. S. C. BARTLETT, D. D.



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BARTLETT'S SKETCHES.

MISSIONS IN INDIA AND CEYLON.

HENRY MARTYN knew the Hindoos well ; and he once said, " If ever I see a Hindoo a real believer in Jesus, I shall see something more nearly approaching the resurrection of a dead body than anything I have yet seen."

But God knows how to raise the dead. And it was on this most hopeless race, under the most discouraging concurrence of circumstances, that he chose to let the first missionaries of the American Board try their fresh zeal.

The movements of commerce and the history of previous missionary effort naturally pointed to the swarming continent of Asia. It was over this benighted region that Mills brooded at his studies. The British Baptist mission near Calcutta readily suggested the particular field of India, and the impression was deepened by the ardent imagination of young Judson. His mind had, in 1809, been so "set on fire" by a moderate sermon of Buchanan's, the "Star of the East," that for some days he was unable to attend to the studies of the class ; and at a later period, a now forgotten book, Colonel Symes's "Embassy to Ava," full of glowing and overwrought descriptions, stirred him with a fascination for Burmah which he never lost. The Prudential Committee of the Board also looked to the Burman Empire because it was

beyond the control of British authority, and therefore beyond "the proper province of the British Missionary Society."

Judson did indeed find his way to Burmah, but in a mode how different from what he expected! cut adrift from his associates, and fleeing from British authority. The Board established this mission, but in a place and with a history how diverse from their intentions! Man proposes, but God disposes. Bombay became the first missionary station.

And that choice band of young disciples — God had roused their several hearts, brought them together from their distant homes, and united their burning zeal, to scatter them in the opening of their labor. There was Mills, given to God by his mother, now strengthening her faltering resolution; there was Hall, ready to work his passage, and throw himself on God's providence, in order to preach the gospel to the heathen; there was Judson, ardent, bold, and strong; and Newell, humble, tender, and devoted; there was Nott, with the deep "sense of a duty to be done;" and Rice, whose earnest desire to join the mission the Committee "did not dare to reject;" and there was the noble Ann Hasseltine, with a heart all alive with missionary zeal before the Lord brought Judson to her father's house in Bradford, and the young Harriet Atwood, gentle, and winning, and firm, mourning at the age of seventeen over the condition of the heathen, and at eighteen joining heart and hand with Newell, to carry them the gospel. Of all this precious band, two only, Hall and Newell, did God permit to bear a permanent part in that projected mission. Mills was to die on mid-ocean, in the service of Africa; Harriet Newell was to pass away before she found a resting-

place for the sole of her foot ; Nott was to break down with the first year's experience of the climate ; Mr. and Mrs. Judson, and Mr. Rice, were to found another great missionary enterprise.

On the 19th of February, 1812, the Caravan sailed from Salem, with Judson, and Newell, and their wives on board ; and on the 20th, the Harmony, from Philadelphia, with Nott, and Hall, and Rice ; the one vessel going forth from the heart of Congregationalism, the other from the centre of Presbyterianism, carrying the sympathies of both denominations. They sailed through the midst of the embargo and non-intercourse ; and the note of war with England followed their track upon the waters.

Their instructions pointed them to the Burman Empire, but gave them discretionary power to go elsewhere. The Burman Empire could be reached only through the British possessions, and both vessels were accordingly bound for Calcutta. But the British authorities in India at that time were resolutely opposed to Christian missions. The East India Company professed to believe that the preaching of the gospel would excite the Hindoos to rebellion, and was meanwhile drawing a large revenue from the protection of idolatry. The Baptist missionaries at Serampore had felt the power of this hostility, but, being British subjects, and having long held the ground, could not be dispossessed.

But the spirit of hostility had of late been kindled up anew. In the very year when Mills and Rice were founding their secret missionary society at Williams College, Rev. Sydney Smith was stirring up the British public, through the enginery of the Edinburgh Review, against the British mission in India. He opened by

insinuating that the mutiny at Vellore was connected with a recent increase of the missionary force; he continued with ridicule of "Brother Carey's" and "Brother Thomas'" Journals, and closed with an elaborate argument to show the folly of founding missions in India. He argues, first, from the danger of insurrection; secondly, from "want of success," the effort being attended with difficulties which he seems to think "insuperable;" thirdly, from "the exposure of the converts to great present misery;" and fourthly, he declares conversion to be "no duty at all if it merely destroys the old religion, without really and effectually teaching the new one." In regard to the last point, he argues that making a Christian is only destroying a Hindoo, and remarks that "after all that has been said of the vices of the Hindoos, we believe that a Hindoo is more mild and sober than most Europeans, and as honest and chaste." Such was the tone of feeling he represented, and he returned next year to the task of "routing out" "a nest of consecrated cobblers." The Baptist missionaries are "ferocious Methodists" and "impious coxcombs," and when they complain of intolerance, "a weasel might as well complain of intolerance when it is throttled for sucking eggs." He declares that the danger of losing the East India possessions "makes the argument against them conclusive, and shuts up the case;" and he adds, that "our opinion of the missionaries and of their employers is such that we most firmly believe, in less than twenty years, for the conversion of a few degraded wretches, who would be neither Methodists nor Hindoos, they would infallibly produce the massacre of every European in India." To this hostile feeling towards missionaries in general was

soon added the weight of open warfare between England and America.

The Caravan reached her destination on the 17th of June. Scarcely had the first warm greetings of Christian friends been uttered, when the long series of almost apostolic trials began. Ten days brought an order from government, commanding the return of the missionaries in the Caravan. They asked leave to reside in some other part of India, but were forbidden to settle in any part of the Company's territory, or its dependencies. May they not go to the Isle of France? It was granted. And Mr. and Mrs. Newell took passage in the first vessel, leaving their comrades, for whom there was no room on board. Four days later arrived the Harmony; and Hall, Nott, and Rice also were summoned before the police, and ordered to return in the same vessel. They also applied for permission to go to the Isle of France; and while waiting for the opportunity, another most "trying event" befell them. Mr. and Mrs. Judson, after many weeks of hidden but conscientious investigation, changed their views, and joined the Baptists. Four weeks later and another shock; Mr. Rice had followed Judson. "What the Lord means," wrote Hall and Nott, "by thus dividing us in sentiment and separating us from each other, we cannot tell." But we can now tell, that the Lord meant another great missionary enterprise, with more than a hundred churches and many thousand converts in the Burman Empire.

While the brethren still waited, they gained favorable intelligence of Bombay, and especially of its new governor. They received a general passport to leave in the ship Commerce, paid their passage, and got their trunks aboard, when there came a peremptory order to proceed