

Rev. George Dana Boardman, Sr.

The Baptist Encyclopedia, 1881

Rev. George Dana Boardman, Sr., was born in Livermore, Me., Feb. 8, 1801. His father, Rev. Sylvanus Boardman, at the time of his birth was the pastor of the Baptist church in that place. Mr. Boardman was a member of the first class that was formed in Waterville College; he graduated in 1822. He was ordained at North Yarmouth, Me., Feb. 16, 1825, and, with his wife, sailed the 16th of July for Calcutta, arriving there early in the following December. They took up their residence at Chitpore, near Calcutta. Here they remained until March 20, 1827, when they embarked for Amherst, in Burmah. From Amherst Mr. Boardman proceeded at once to Maulmain. In April, 1828, Mr. and Mrs. Boardman removed to Tavoy, and commenced missionary work in that town. It was a place of upwards of 9000 inhabitants. It was, moreover, one of the principal strongholds of the religion of Gaudama, filled with temples and shrines dedicated to heathen worship. Within the limits of the town there were nearly a thousand pagodas. As soon as his zayat was built Mr. Boardman began his work with apostolic zeal, and with a firm trust in God that this work would not be in vain. Two converts soon rewarded his labors, and a wide-spread interest in the new religion began very soon to show itself in Tavoy. In the family of Mr. Boardman there lived a man in middle life, once a slave, but now free through the kindness of the missionaries, who had bought his freedom. This man was a Karen, Ko Thahbyu by name. He belonged to a race among whom Mr. Boardman was to gain a multitude of converts to the Christian religion. This people are found in the forests and mountains of Burmah and Siam, and in some sections of China. The name by which they are known is Kanairs or Karens, which means *wild men*. They seem to have been singularly prepared to receive the gospel. It was to this interesting race that Mr. Boardman, assisted by his faithful co-laborer, Ko Thahbyu, directed his principal attention in the prosecution of his missionary work.

The constitution of Mr. Boardman, never very strong, began to give way under the severe labors of his missionary life. He had been entreated once more to visit the Karens in their villages, and administer to the new converts the sacred rite of Christian baptism. In spite of his feeble health he determined to yield to their request. Lying on a cot borne on the shoulders of the Karens, and accompanied by Mrs. Boardman, and Mr. and Mrs. Mason, who had lately arrived at Tavoy, he set out on his journey. Three days they toiled slowly on through the valleys and over the hills of Burmah, and reached at length the zayat which the faithful disciples had built for them. "It stood," says Prof. Gammell, "on the margin of a beautiful stream, at the foot of a range of mountains, whose sloping sides were lined with the villages of the strange people

whom they had come to visit. More than a hundred were already assembled at the zayat, nearly half of whom were candidates for baptism. At the close of the day, just as the sun was sinking behind the mountains, his cot was placed at the river-side, in the midst of the solemn company that was gathered to witness the first baptism which that ancient mountain-stream had ever beheld. As he gazed in silent gratitude upon the scene, he felt that his work was finished, his last promise to these scattered disciples was now fulfilled, and he was ready to depart in peace." The next day the missionaries started to return to Tavoy, hoping to reach the home of Mr. Boardman, so that he might die beneath his own roof, but it was ordered otherwise. Before the close of the second day's journey the end had come and the weary spirit passed to its home in the skies. The event took place Feb. 11, 1831. The remains were taken to Tavoy and laid in a tomb, in what was at one time a Buddhist grave. How much had been crowded into that brief thirty years' life! What trains of holy influence were set in motion within the few short years of that missionary career! We may, as a denomination, be truly grateful to God that he gave us so pure, so holy, so thoroughly consecrated a pioneer in the early missions among the Burmese and the Karens.