

SPLENDOR *of* GOD

Honoré Willsie Morrow

S P L E N D O R O F G O D

BY
HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW

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CHAPTER I

THE SAD, SILLY TOWN

LATE in the afternoon of July 13, 1813, the ruinous old coasting vessel, *Georgiana*, dropped anchor before Rangoon.

Ann and Adoniram Judson had arrived in Burma.

Ann had been very ill during the three weeks' stormy voyage from Madras. She had lost her baby prematurely and had almost lost her life during the dreadful trip. There had been only Adoniram to help her in her hour of need and Adoniram was little more than a boy. The Judsons were the only passengers. The crew was a miscellany of Orientals, the captain alone speaking English. There were no cabins; only a canvas shelter for Ann's sake. And she was a New England girl, reared in the meticulous modesty, the chaste orderliness of a Puritan home. She was twenty-one years old. Adoniram was twenty-five.

From the moment the ship had entered the Rangoon River, Adoniram had stood just without the shelter, his eyes strained toward the shore.

He looked very much younger than his years for his face was unlined and he had not yet lost the high coloring and the rounded cheeks that had made a pretty child of him. He was a trifle over medium height with thick black hair touched by ruddy tones and hazel eyes that looked brown in a half light. His features, the shape of his head were of the type we have come to associate with the finest of our New England scholars. Emerson had such a head and Whittier and Hawthorne; high domed and broad across the brows, with large ears set close to the skull. He had a

rather long, straight nose, wide, delicately turned mouth, the underlip a little full and a strong jaw line, ending in a firmly rounded but dimpled chin. The dimple counter-acted somewhat the over-determination of the lower part of the face. Adoniram's eyes were his most beautiful feature. They were set under the full upper lid of the linguist and were very large and filled with a wistful and searching fire.

He wore black, as became a missionary; breeches and coat of broadcloth, stockings of white cotton and white cambric neckerchief. He didn't know as yet how to dress for the Burmese climate.

It was the rainy season. All day long the southwest wind had driven slanting lines of gray drizzle over the mangroves that fringed the river and across an immense expanse of flat lands now flooded by many waters.

Hour after hour, Adoniram had watched for signs of civilization, but it was noon before he had his reward. Then there suddenly emerged from the clouds to the north a tremulous, perpendicular line of gold. It remained but a moment. Lavender mists covered it almost at once and although it appeared occasionally during the afternoon, it was not until the *Georgiana* was dropping her anchor that it came into full view. Then the clouds definitely lifted, the westering sun flamed across the paddy fields and Adoniram gasped in admiration.

From a green hill to the north rose an exquisitely proportioned spire of gold, broadly round where it left the trees and tapering to a point where it touched the crimsoned heavens. That enormous love of beauty which was to so complicate Adoniram's tremendous experiences in Burma responded overwhelmingly to this his first view of the Buddha's greatest shrine. This was no concept of barbarity! This was an expression of minds both intelligent and spiritual. His folded arms stiffened. His pulse raced. If this glorious monument was a true symbol of the Burman's spiritual aspirations, what a glorious battle waited

for Christ in Burma! Here was a struggle worthy of any man's intellect!

He was smiling happily when his eye dropped to the town which lay between the golden pagoda and the shore. As far as Adoniram knew, he and Ann were destined to spend the remainder of their lives in this spot and he began to examine its outlines with eager curiosity. He saw, a stone's throw from the *Georgiana*, a sandy beach, dotted with small boats, and above this a line of thatched huts on stilts. Behind the huts, a tall log stockade, stretching perhaps a mile along the beach. Behind the stockade, trees sloped up to the pagoda hill. An occasional clump of palms towered above the general level of foliage.

Somewhere behind that stockade was a shelter for Ann and him. He peered under the canvas. Ann was still asleep. She had slept, poor dear, from the moment they had left behind the rough waters of the Bay of Bengal. Adoniram dropped the curtain and asked the captain to set him ashore. Ten minutes later, he crossed the beach and walked through the south gate of the stockade.

Before him opened a tree-shaded street, rudely paved with brick, the gutters running flush with dirty water. On either side stood a row of thatched huts on stilts, pigs and chickens messing in the muck beneath or if the water were deep, rooting and scratching on the highway.

Half-clad men and women went to and fro or squatted on the verandas. Naked little children shared the labors of the pigs and chickens. Dogs rushed at Adoniram from everywhere, snarling and barking. People stared at him and a few followed him along with the dogs. But the appearance of a white man in Rangoon was, he knew, not unprecedented. There were half a dozen Europeans in the town. The captain of the *Georgiana* had directed him to the house of the collector of the Port, a Spaniard, in the Burmese king's employ. So he followed the street until it widened into a bazaar, with stalls closed for the day, crossed

the bazaar and halted before a small brick house, painted red. The young missionary splashed on stepping stones from the bamboo gate to the veranda steps. Here sat a darkly bearded man of perhaps fifty, in a crumpled linen suit. He took a huge cheroot from his mouth and invited Adoniram very graciously in French to come up on the veranda.

Adoniram complying, said in the same tongue, "M. Lanciego, my name is Adoniram Judson. I have just arrived on the *Georgiana* and wish to land to-morrow."

"So the old tub has made it once more!" smiled the collector. "Will you be seated, M. Judson, on what I believe is one of the three chairs in Rangoon? Tell me what I may do for you, other than in my official capacity."

"I suppose there must be a good many things that I'm too ignorant to ask you for, monsieur," replied Adoniram with his ingenuous smile. "My first problem is shelter. But I think that's already solved. I'm to live at the Baptist Mission house."

Lanciego shook his head.

Adoniram, a little troubled, went on eagerly, "But there is one, you know. It was built several years ago by an Englishman named Chaytor. I believe he has left Burma but a M. Felix Carey remains."

The collector eyed Adoniram in silence for a long moment before he replied, "Officially, monsieur, I mustn't know of a mission house because I'm employed by the king who's a Buddhist. I do know of a house belonging to M. Carey. But he is no longer here. He's in Amarapura, the capital, employed by the king. Are you another English missionary?"

"I'm an American missionary. But I have a letter from M. Carey's father, the famous English missionary in Serampore to his son here in Rangoon. I'm to work with M. Felix."

The Spaniard's dark eyes were not unkindly as he leaned

toward Adoniram, confidentially. The rank smell of his cheroot cut wholesomely through the sickening miasma of flooded Rangoon.

"My dear young sir, let an older man advise you. And a man who knows his Burma. My wife is sister to one of the queens and his majesty has honored me with his confidence for many years. I know what I'm talking about when I say to you, Go back to America! Go back to-night! There's nothing for you here but heart-ache. These people have a fine, strong religion of their own. I tell you that, though I'm a Catholic. They'll resent you. And while they're the kindest, pleasantest people in the world they're also the most passionate and cruel. Go back while you're still a youth full of the fire of your faith!"

Adoniram listened, his gaze wandering from the collector's earnest face to the gloomy cavern of the tree-enclosed bazaar. Not since leaving Salem had he been so profoundly depressed, not even when, three months before, he'd become convinced that the British authorities would not permit him to remain in India. There was something in the filthy, tree-darkened town of Rangoon that was tomb-like and ghoulish. It gave him a feeling of fear. But no trace of doubt as to his course crossed the boy's mind.

"My wife and I have come to stay," he said, simply.

"Wife!" roared Lanciego. "Wife? Another babe like yourself, I suppose! So you plan to add murder to suicide!" He sank back in his bamboo chair with a grunt of disgust.

"Madame Judson's as eager to work here as I am. She is a very remarkable person, my wife. You'll see what I mean when you meet her," declared Adoniram, very earnestly. "M. Lanciego, we've been coming to Rangoon by God's devious path ever since February of last year. Every known device of Satan has been used to turn us back. But we're here! When we left America, we supposed we were to work in India. But the East India Company wouldn't

have it. We went to Madras, then to the Isle of France. Still we were not allowed to rest. Then the *Georgiana* agreed to take us to Rangoon. And here we are. God has sent us to save the Burmans from hell and no warning can unseat that purpose."

The Spaniard gasped but for several moments was silent. By the lines between his brows and the prominence of his lower lip he would appear to be a man of choleric temper. But after a deliberate study of Adoniram's face, something there must have convinced him that petulance would have no effect and that his protests were pitted against a force he did not understand. This was only a boy and yet—! Lanciego shrugged his shoulders.

"Carey's house," he said, "is north of the town, outside the stockade and near the hill on which the Shwé Dagôn pagoda stands. Madame Carey is there with their children. I suppose you know she's a native woman?"

Adoniram had not known and this really was a hard blow, when added to the news of Carey's having left the mission. The young American had a horror of mixed marriage and more than this, Ann had counted heavily on having a friend in Felix Carey's wife. For just a moment a great blast of homesickness made him speechless. He smiled a little pathetically at Lanciego. "I suppose we've got a good many things to unlearn," he murmured. Then he asked, firmly, "If you'll be so kind as to set me on the road, I'll go out to see Madame Carey."

"She speaks only Burmese," warned the collector, a little maliciously, "and I cannot call there with you because of my official position."

But Adoniram's nerves were steady. He rose. "You've been very patient, monsieur. Tell me the Burmese words for missionary and wife, and I'll be off."

"There's no native word for missionary," grunted Lanciego. "You address the lady as Ma Carey, while your lady will be Ma Judson and you're Maung Judson."

Adoniram chuckled. "*Ma* Judson! How my wife will laugh! And now for the directions, monsieur."

They were simple enough. He was to follow the street beyond the bazaar to a stockade gate. Beyond the gate, the road led through the jungle to the Shwé Dagôn pagoda. If he followed this for half a mile, he'd come to the execution ground which he'd recognize by the smell and other matters. Just beyond this unsavory spot was Carey's house.

Adoniram thanked the Spaniard and went slowly down the steps. When he reached the gate, Lanciego called after him, "Be sure to take your shoes off before you enter their houses. It's very offensive to them, if you don't. And don't try to shake hands with any woman. No man must touch a woman but a relative." Adoniram waved his hand and set off on his journey.

The shade was deep, pierced but lightly by the setting sun. He recognized only a few of the trees, the palms, the plantains and the fig nor did the gorgeous chorus of birds speak a single homely word to him. The way was constantly intersected by little creeks over which bamboo bridges were thrown. Ducks floated and guzzled from ditch to creek and from creek to street. People stared at him. But only a few followed him. It was the supper hour. Little fires twinkled on the verandas.

He passed through a wide gate, over a moat, and northwest along a broad, well-paved road, built high enough to throw off the rainfall. Little and big pagodas and innumerable shrines heaped with flower and food offerings lined the way under magnificent trees. The air was filled with the deep notes of gongs while clear above them and silver sweet, sounded the desultory tinkling of many bells.

It was very beautiful. Adoniram, whose nerves had been jumping, suddenly felt soothed, almost happy. He strode along with growing assurance in every step, new beauties of tree and vine and bursting flowers opening on him as he

went. He forgot the execution place and it was inexpressibly shocking at the end of a half mile of sheer loveliness to meet by the roadside a man stretched on upright bamboos, naked and disemboweled!

Adoniram jerked backward, his heart racing. Then he clapped his hand to his nose to shut out the unspeakable stench and broke into a run. Almost immediately he came to a bamboo gate opening on a yard in which stood a larger house than any he'd seen. It was set on stilts and well roofed with split bamboo. He hurried along the stepping stones to the veranda. The house door was open. Adoniram slipped off his shoes.

Within, there glowed a little fire in a shallow box of sand. An earthen pot was propped over the coals and squatting before it was a woman, naked to the waist. She was smoking an enormous cheroot, and another was stuck through a hole in her ear lobe.

"Ma Carey?" asked Adoniram, uncertainly.

With a startled cry, the woman jumped to her feet. She wore a beautiful, rose-striped petticoat that trailed on the ground. Adoniram thought her very ugly with her flat nose and blackened teeth and as he took the elder Carey's letter of introduction from his pocket, he wondered more than ever at Felix Carey. He offered her the letter, at the same time pointing to himself and saying, "Maung Judson!" She gave him an uneasy look. Then he added with a gesture toward the town, "Ma Judson."

This she understood for she smiled and took the letter. Adoniram put his finger on the address. "Maung Carey," he said.

"Amarapura," returned Ma Carey, promptly.

Adoniram laughed delightedly and beckoned to the two brown babies hiding in the shadow. But they turned their little bare backs on him. Adoniram nodded to their mother, touched his breast, pointed to the children, and measured with his hands the length of the tiny son he had committed

to the waves, two weeks before. Then he wiped his eyes.

Ma Carey understood. She gave a little cry of grief, "Amé!" and from that moment the sign language between them became fluent. Adoniram told her that Ann was ill and that he would like to bring her to the mission. Ma Carey pattered in bare brown feet and trailing rose skirt across the room and through an open door. Adoniram followed her into a dim room with windows on the veranda. There was a bed in it and some fine black reed mats.

"Ma Judson," said Ma Carey.

"Yes! Yes! O wonderful! Thank you! Thank you!" cried Adoniram. He forgot and would have taken her hand had she not drawn back with a frown. But she accepted a very gallant bow from him cheerfully and Adoniram hurried out into the dusk.

It was an eerie walk back to the stockade. Rain had begun to fall again. It was so dark when he rushed past the execution place that he recognized it only by the dreadful stench. One thing was certain, he'd not let Ann see this horror, on the morrow. He reached the beach breathless and depressed. Rangoon in the night and the rain were funereal.

But when he clambered aboard the *Georgiana*, the canvas shelter glowed with light and his heart rose. Ann must be awake and watching for him. And so she was.

Curious how sweet and homelike the shelter seemed, set as it was on the squalid deck with rain washing over the floor and only a pallet and their sea chests for furnishings. Yet, though during the three weeks' passage he'd loathed it for what Ann had suffered behind its walls, he now entered it with a thrill of relief and pleasure. One would, seeing that it contained Ann!

Even in her long-sleeved, high-necked nightgown, she was lovely. Even after her illness, her grief and the frightful voyage, her beauty was unimpaired. Her face was oval, with rather pronounced cheek bones and a high fore-

head round which her dark brown hair fell in curls. Her mouth was small and full with sensitive corners and extraordinarily tender for a mere girl. Her eyes, large, full and a deep brown, dominated her face, giving it its look of intelligence and self-control.

She sat up in bed and held out her hands. "Adoniram, *darling!*"

He rushed to her and kissed her a dozen times. "Lovely, lovely Nancy! I've been touring the metropolis of Rangoon. And as a metropolis, my sweet wife, it's the saddest, silliest spot on earth."

Ann laughed. "Sit down and tell me every single *unimportant* thing. O Adoniram! You're sopping wet!"

"Don't bother about that, Ann. We're Burmans now and amphibian. These clothes are all wrong for this climate, anyhow. And, O Nancy, it's a world of dirty water yonder, I assure you!"

He gave her a vivid picture of his experiences, eliminating only that crucified figure in the shadow of the mission. Ann was fascinated.

"I'm stronger already, just at the thought of a house and a woman friend, though we can't talk together," she declared. "Did you see her children, 'Don?"

"Only vaguely. Pretty brown shadows in corners," replied her husband, soberly. His spirits whipped up for Ann's edification drooped again. Children! To attempt a family life in such a spot! His shoulders drooped.

"The sad, silly town's depressed you," exclaimed Ann, quickly.

"A little," he admitted. Then looking at her with renewed consciousness of her sufferings and their loss, he whispered, "O my dearest wife, what have I done to you? Who am I to have brought your bright beauty to this rotting jungle?"

"You had very little to do with it, 'Don, darling, except to make the trip with me," returned Ann in a matter-of-fact

tone. "God planned it, you know." But she closed her eyes to hide the tears in them and for a moment neither spoke.

Then Adoniram went off to the cook's galley to prepare their evening meal.

The clouds of mosquitoes so tormented them that immediately after supper Adoniram went to bed. It was very hot behind the mosquito curtains. And his deep dejection finally had infected Ann. She cried a little for homesickness, she said, on Adoniram's shoulder. He comforted her with caresses and finally they both lay quietly listening to the thunder of the tropical rain on the canvas, their thoughts in far-away New England.

CHAPTER II

THE IRON MAUL

THE problem of moving Ann to the mission house was solved by the captain of the *Georgiana*. No wheeled vehicles were permitted on the streets of Rangoon and Ann couldn't sit on a pony in her weak condition. So the captain loaned an armchair in which Ann was set ashore and in which four native sailors carried her out to the mission. Adoniram was not ungrateful for the rain which fell during the entire trip. It enabled him to hold an umbrella between Ann and the execution place.

Ma Carey met them at the gate, all smiles and staccato exclamations. She wore a white jacket now over her gay tainein or skirt and a great red hibiscus in her hair. She directed the men in business-like tones and they carried Ann gently over the porch, into her room. When Adoniram returned from paying the sailors, Ma Carey already was helping Ann to undress, accompanying the process by cries of wonder over the unheard-of fact of underwear. He paused in the doorway, chuckled and went out to inspect the premises.

The house contained five rooms, unceiled and with walls of mats. Tiny lizards ran in and out of cracks in the teak-wood floor and up the walls to the roof beams where they disturbed festoons of bats. The only furniture in the house beside the bed in the Judsons' room consisted of a table and chair in the room that contained the cooking box. One or two earthen pots and some red- and black-lacquered trays and bowls were stacked beside the box. A huge water jar stood beside the veranda door. There were many beautiful mats, some spread on the floors, others rolled up against