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THE CHURCH AT HOME AND ABROAD.

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CHURCH WORK AND CHURCH GROWTH.

There are a few instances in which a particular church is the only one existing in a considerable district—say, a township. By a higher commission than any conference or council or presbytery can give—by a commission which those ecclesiastical bodies can merely authenticate—the minister of a church thus situated is the pastor of every soul living within the limits of that district. He is bound not only to have open doors at his place of preaching, welcoming all who come, and then and there faithfully declaring the counsel of God to them; but with all the assistance he can get and all the tact he can acquire, to induce that entire population to accept and profit by his pastoral care, to become, not only virtually but consciously and thankfully members of his flock—*i. e.* of the flock of Christ which Christ has sent him to tend and feed.

It may indeed be, in such a case, that some devout Christians, living on his field, may accept his ministration thankfully, support it loyally and improve it with docility and fidelity, as the best and, for the time being, the only ministry available to them, who, if a minister of some other denomination were within their reach, would prefer his ministry.

It may even be that a minister bearing alone the whole pastoral responsibility of such a field and trying to minister faithfully to all

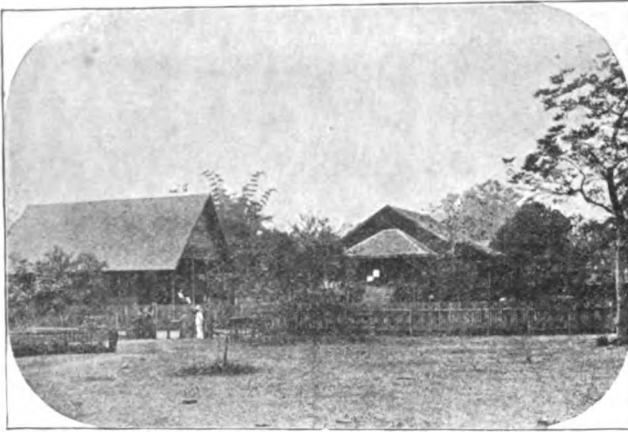
its people, will find some of them whose antecedents have been such elsewhere, or who have such opinions or temperaments or prejudices, that he will have greater difficulty in winning them to church-attendance than a minister of some other denomination would probably have.

We can imagine a Presbyterian minister, in such circumstances, wishing with all his heart that there was a Methodist or a Baptist, or a Congregational, or an Episcopal church across the village green from his own; and vice versa.

But most frequently there is a church of another denomination—if not just across the green, at least, in a neighboring street.

Let us suppose a village in which there are three churches, of three different denominations. The village is small, containing not more people than could be comfortably seated—every man and woman and child of them—in one of those churches. But it is at the centre of a township six miles square. The people all come to that village to buy their groceries—to get their letters—to market their grain and eggs and potatoes—and to have their horses shod. Why should they not all come there to worship God and to hear his Gospel?

Their three houses of worship have not been placed so near together for any purpose of unfriendly rivalry, but because each is to



CHAPEL AND DISPENSARY, LAKAWN.

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD IN LAOS: A STORY OF PROVIDENTIAL IN- TERPOSITIONS.

REV. DANIEL MCGILVARY, D. D., CHIENG-MAI.

The pillar of cloud has led the North Laos Mission from the beginning. God's providential care antedates its establishment, and prepared for it. Its very geographical position, by which the country is separated by a long river with rapids, and by mountain ranges, from the vices of the great commercial emporium was not an unimportant factor. The Gospel had been preached in Siam for over three decades. Its civilizing and educating influences had been accepted, but the nation had been quite satisfied with these. The fact that the nation was benefitted may be pointed to with gratitude and pride as one of the best illustrations of the *incidental* advantages flowing from mission work. But it was reserved for the Laos people to show the direct influence of the power of the Gospel in Siam.

EARLY IMPRESSIONS.

Our first direct acquaintance with the Laos race was through captives located in Petchaburee, where they formed an important portion of our parish. Dr. Bradley was the first to be interested in the more distinct Northern Laos in their triennial visits to Bangkok. This was also their first acquaintance with the mission work. The printing press and the medical work excited their admiration and wonder. The Viceroy, or Chief, of

Chieng-Mai, whose consent was essential, had expressed a willingness to have a mission in his country. Previous to this date the Laos provinces had been semi-independent, serving more as buffer states between Siam and Burma, while even in Siam proper foreigners had not been permitted to settle out of the capital. The late Regent used to remark with pride that while other eastern nations had been opened to commerce and civilization by foreign gunboats. Siam had been opened by the missionaries. It was reserved to them also to open the interior by the same peaceful and beneficent agency.

THE ROYAL PERMISSION.

The King then expressed his willingness to grant permission for a mission in Chieng-Mai, but only with the consent of the Chief. A time was therefore selected when Chow Kawilarot, the Chief, was in Bangkok. At the suggestion of the King, an audience was held with him by the missionaries, at which his Secretary and the United States Consul were present. That audience was held in the Sala of Wat Chaang, the great Buddhist temple of Bangkok, almost under the shadow of its towering pagoda. It was a singular spectacle. The Chief sat on a high stool used by the steersmen in Laos boats, some of the foreign auditors sitting on side seats, and others standing, while the natives crouched before him. The Consul stated our object, Dr. Bradley acting as interpreter. The Chief's consent was readily obtained, as he no doubt thought that no Laos subject would dare to embrace a new religion while he remained a Buddhist. The Secretary reported his consent to the King in writing. On that basis the royal sanction was given, and the passports issued through the Consul. This gave our mission a legal standing with the Siamese and Laos authorities and our own official representative, and probably afterwards proved to be the providential means of saving the mission.

EARLY MARTYRDOMS.

Another wonderful interposition was the subsequent death of the Viceroy, just as the death of a former king of Siam had proved to be to the Siamese Mission. The crowds that came to the mission in Laos at its very inception, and the boldness of the first converts in embracing the Gospel, showed a secret power that the Viceroy could not understand, and suggested to him the plan of stopping it in its early stages. His religious zeal, combined possibly with political motives urged upon him by enemies, were the probable causes which led him to make martyrs of some of the converts. Martyrdom, however, never stopped the progress of the Gospel. It was his design to compel us to leave, but people who were willing to die for the Gospel were not the ones to be deserted. They were worthy of sacrifice and suffering on our part to make the truth known to them. The next three months brought great anxiety to the mission and its friends, and to the remnant of the scattered flock, as no one knew to what extent a ruler who had gone so far might go. When the news reached Bangkok an officer was sent up with Rev. Messrs. McDonald and George, with a royal letter. The next day an audience was held with the Chief before the whole Laos court. The letter was read. It made no allusion to the martyrdom. The Siamese government was anxious for the missionaries, but not for the continuance of the mission. When the martyrdom was alluded to by one of our party the rage of the Viceroy knew no bounds. The lion had been bearded in his den. "Yes, he had killed the Christians, and would execute any of his people who became Christians. The missionaries might stay to doctor the people, or make merit in any other way, but rebellion against his god would be treated as rebellion against himself." All the court was alarmed at his rage. The audience closed. Nothing was accomplished. Apparently the mission must be relinquished. Our Laos friends were alarmed

for our own safety. But how could it be the will of Providence that such an opening should be closed! Rahang was spoken of as a place to which we might retire. But we had seen more deeply than the Viceroy could see, the disposition of the people towards Christianity. Next day the writer of this article called alone upon the Chief, and had a private interview. He was evidently a little anxious lest he had gone too far, and readily consented, and even advised us to remain till his return from Bangkok, for which trip his preparations were nearly complete. That gave what we wanted, —time to wait the development of Providence.

"THE WRATH OF MAN SHALL PRAISE HIM."

In Bangkok he had an apoplectic attack. His friends were anxious that he should die in his own capital, but only his remains reached it. Through a Laos superstition, not even a royal corpse is allowed to enter the city. His remains lay in state outside the city wall till the grand cremation ceremonies were performed months afterwards. What a commentary on the second Psalm! "He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision." The mission was saved, and now there is a fine church, with 719 members, just outside of the city that no Christian was to be allowed to enter! We had permission to remain till his return. So we are still there, even to the present hour, by the consent and advice of one who martyred Nai Sunyah and Nan Chai.

A NEW ENEMY.

The son-in-law, Chow Intanon, the present Viceroy, succeeded. Of his kindness we



RETURNING FROM ANNUAL MEETING, LAKAWN.

cannot say too much. Before and since his accession he has been our true friend. But the line that distinguishes between personal hostility in a ruler, and a weakness that cannot prevent the hostility of others, is, as far as results are concerned, very slight. His brother, Chow Rachawong, was the virtual head of the government. Strong, hostile, and unprincipled, he had the spirit, without some of the noble qualities, of the old Chief. For a time he was satisfied with secret opposition. But the growth and influence of the Church, though still retarded by his influence, rendered more energetic measures necessary. He threatened the Christians with expatriation and slavery. The latter he began to carry into effect. Forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and we had to fall back on the legal rights granted by the Siamese Government, and applied to the present young King, who has always been a friend to the missionary cause.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BY ROYAL PROCLAMATION.

A combination of circumstances favored the appeal. Probably at no time before or since could the same result have been obtained. The Siamese commissioner, Phya Tape, favored us. Our appeal was sent down with other dispatches in the commissioner's swift boat. In two months the royal seal was sent up with an order to the commissioner to make a Royal Proclamation securing liberty to the Laos to worship according to the dictates of their own consciences. When it arrived we were "like them that dream," and could hardly believe that the answer to our prayers had come. What our ancestors had fought for ages to attain was secured to the Laos Christians by a single edict. The second Viceroy and his hostile party were astounded. The royal letter that secured liberty to Laos Christians censured the opposition to Christianity, "a religion that taught the people to be good." A desperate effort was still made with the commissioner to suppress the edict, but they were quietly told the matter was settled. The first draft was sent us for suggestions. A few were made, and the next day it was posted on the courthouse, and sent to Lam-poon and Lakawn. But even after the Royal

Proclamation the second Viceroy could and would have been a strong opposing power. His death soon after was another of the providential interpositions in behalf of the mission. "Surely by terrible things in righteousness Thou hast answered us, O God of our salvation."

"WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD."

I leave to younger brethren to report the work of later years of greater visible results which they have witnessed, and towards which they have largely contributed. Among the special providences for the mission, I would not forget the sending of earnest, congenial workers, and, above all, the constant outpouring of the Holy Ghost, "adding unto the Church almost daily of the saved," for which the incidents mentioned in the early history of the mission were the providential preparation.

SHALL WE TAKE LAOS?

REV. W. C. DODD, LAMPOON.

Last year an appeal came from the Laos Mission for eighteen new workers. The feeling on the field was unanimous, both among the missionaries and the native Christians, that the time had come for a movement looking to the immediate occupation of such points as would command the whole territory occupied by the Laos people. This year the appeal is renewed. Why should we answer it in the affirmative? Why should we seriously undertake to capture the Laos people at once and completely?

IT IS FEASIBLE.

There are no closed doors, unless the French close them in the future in some of their recently acquired territory inhabited by the Laos people. At present there is a cordial reception given to missionaries by the common people everywhere among all the Laos. To whatever village they go they are not only welcomed, but are urged to stay longer than the time which they have at their disposal. There is no danger of mobs or even of disrespectful treatment. In all the four stations already established by the Mission, ground has been given by the Government. In Lakawn two thousand rupees in cash were