

Africa, from which it excludes all American missionary operations except upon the condition that they shall use the French language in their mission schools, and shall be forbidden even the employment of the vernacular, has given good reason to fear that a similar restrictive policy, which virtually would amount to suppression, might be carried out in Laos and Siam. Tho the boundaries agreed upon between Great Britain and France are not as yet very clearly known, it appears that these two powers have agreed to a French protectorate or virtual possession in the northeastern dependencies, while England extends a similar control over territories on the west. Both of the great contracting powers are understood to have guaranteed the independence of Siam in the territory that remains.

While this treaty must be regarded as another of those encroachments either by single powers or by joint action which the stronger governments of the world have made and are making upon the territory of weaker nations, there is perhaps this satisfaction, namely, that the action of Great Britain has prevented France from usurping the entire kingdom of Siam, or at least reducing it to a mere dependency of France, as in the case of Madagascar. It will secure also the continued work of Protestant missions both in the territory occupied by Great Britain and in the independent kingdom of Siam. On the whole, the congratulatory view which the British Queen seems to have taken of the situation may therefore be shared by all those who love the cause of evangelical missions. It is probable also that this arrangement may on the whole promote the general advance of civilization in Siam. Buttressed and secured in its rights by a specific treaty between two powerful nations, it may carry forward all those industries and foster all those lines and methods of advancement which the general movement of this age demands. A portentous uncertainty which for many months has hung over Siam having now been removed, there is perhaps new incentive to missionary effort. There is reason to believe that such effort will be welcomed, or at least more freely tolerated, in the future than it has been in the past. And the religious barriers to be encountered there are less formidable than in most Eastern lands. In Laos especially the influence of Buddhism is weak, and the influence of animism, or spirit worship, tho prevalent, is less antagonistic. It does not prevent the people from listening to the truth of Christianity. The field is therefore much more accessible than a country ruled by the intolerance of Islam or the conceit and self-satisfaction of either the Confucian or the Brahmanical cults. There is also comparative freedom from the spirit of caste and the social barriers which it presents. Both Siam and the Laos country are also less trammelled by restraints placed upon woman. She has greater social freedom, and may freely exert that womanly influence which is everywhere so helpful in all religious life and growth. Many great mission fields are just now environed with difficulties; but in Siam and Laos a great door and effectual is presented. For every ten missionaries there should be a hundred.