

MISSIONS IN SIAM AND LAOS.

BY REV. F. F. ELLINWOOD, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

Historic Sketch.—The history of American missions in Siam is interesting and even romantic. The earnest call which led to missionary operations seems to have been visibly represented not by a phantom Siamese, like the Man of Macedonia, but by the famous and very substantial Siamese twins. The American trading vessel commanded by Captain Coffin which in 1829 brought to this country this strange pair brought also an earnest appeal from the zealous German missionary, Gutzlaff, and from Rev. Mr. Tomlin, of the London Missionary Society, to the American churches, to take part in the missionary work in Siam. Their own societies could not enter upon a permanent occupation, and hence the appeal to America. In response to this appeal the American Board of Foreign Missions instructed Rev. David Abeel to visit Siam with a view to its occupancy if he deemed it advisable. He reached Siam June 30th, 1831, a few days after Mr. Gutzlaff, saddened by the death of his beloved wife, had sailed away in a native junk for Tientsin on an exploration of the coast of China. After six months Mr. Tomlin, of the London Society, was also called away. In 1832 Mr. Abeel was obliged to leave on account of ill health. In the same year Rev. John Taylor Jones was sent as a missionary to Siam by his American Baptist associates in Burmah, to whom Gutzlaff and Tomlin had also written. He reached Siam in March, 1833, and his first work was among the Chinese. Two more missionaries of the American Board reached Bangkok in 1834, having been more than a year on their way. One of these labored among the Chinese, the other among the Siamese. Rev. William Dean and his wife of the American Baptist Missionary Union also arrived in 1834 as missionaries to the Chinese in Siam, and Rev. D. B. Bradley and wife arrived in 1835.

In 1838 Rev. R. W. Dee, a representative of the Presbyterian Board, was sent to Bangkok for the purpose of reporting upon its eligibility as a missionary station for labors among the Chinese. Mr. Dee, in his report, urged the occupancy of Siam as a mission field, not merely for the Chinese, but more particularly for the Siamese. Rev. William Buel, of the Presbyterian Board, arrived in 1840. In the same year the Siamese department of the American Board's mission was strengthened by the arrival of Messrs. Caswell, Hemingway, and Bacon and their wives, and Miss Pierce. In 1845 Prince Chow Fa Mongkut, then head priest of a royal monastery, invited Mr. Caswell, of the American Board, to become his private teacher, and the engagement continued for a year and a half. Mr. Caswell was a graduate of Lane Theological Seminary and a member of the Presbytery of Cincinnati. In 1846 the American Board directed its missionaries in Bangkok to remove to China, which had opened five treaty ports. In 1847 Rev. Stephen Mattoon and wife and Samuel R. House,