

**A HALF CENTURY AMONG
THE SIAMESE AND THE LĀO**

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By

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dah for it. I was as proud of my new acquisition as ever a boy was of a new toy. But since few elephants will travel well alone, I now needed a mate for him. Before long I was fortunate enough to get a cheap and equally good female. I was then prepared for my long tours. I could cross streams in safety, and be protected from rain, even if my journey were prolonged beyond the limits of the dry season.

On our return journey, in Múang Payao, we came in contact with the worst epidemic of smallpox that I have ever seen. We met it at every turn in the street. With difficulty could we keep parents with children, all broken out with the disease, in their arms, from crowding round us in our sālā. We had hardly taken our seats on the rugs spread for us at the governor's official reception of Mr. Hallett, when we discovered cases of smallpox all about us. Dr. Cushing was nervously afraid of it, and retired. I had to remain an hour as interpreter. Imagine our consternation on reaching the next station to find that the Doctor showed unmistakable signs of having contracted the dreadful disease, although he had been vaccinated in his youth. What a discovery to be made on a journey, and four days from home! On consultation it was thought best to hasten on to Chiengmai, a thing which our mode of travel made possible. Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers Martin had arrived during our absence, and had taken up their quarters in our house. It was, therefore, impossible to take our sick friend in. We did the next best thing, and gave him a new bamboo house on our hospital lot, where Dr. Peoples carefully watched over him till he made a rapid recovery, and was able to return home in a boat as far as Bangkok, and thence by sea *via* Singapore. It was a sad close,

however, to our pleasant visit together, and to our otherwise interesting and profitable tour.

I returned from Chieng Sên, as we have seen, with an elephant of my own. On reaching home I found awaiting me the best pony I ever had. It was sent to me as a present from the governor of Mè Hawng Sawn, near the Salwin River. I had never been to Mè Hawng Sawn, and had but a very limited acquaintance with the governor. According to my uniform custom in those days, on his official visits to Chiengmai, I had twice called upon him as the governor of a neighbouring province. On both occasions we had conversation on the different merits of the two religions. On one of these visits he had brought down some ponies to sell, and on my asking the price of one he said, "I am very sorry that I have sold all my gentle ones. There is only one left. If you can use him, I shall be glad to give him to you." It is a McGilvary trait not to be timid about horses, and I said, "I will try him." So the pony was sent down to my house; but he proved rather too much for my horsemanship. The first time I mounted him, he threw me and sprained my wrist. It was the unanimous vote of the family that he be returned with thanks. The governor sent back word that he was very sorry; but never mind; when he reached home he would see to it that I had a good pony—a message which, I am sorry to say, I took as a good oriental compliment. I had even forgotten all about the matter, when, on my return from this trip, I found the pony in my stable. He was a most valuable and timely present.

But we are not quite done with Mr. Hallett's survey. He made a short excursion without an inter-

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preter to the hot springs. But his final trip was to be to Mûang Fâng, six days to the north and west of the route previously taken, and distant some eighty-three miles from Chiengmai. His object was to see if there were not an easier route to Chieng Râi down the valleys of the Mê Fâng and the Mê Kok. The trip strongly appealed both to Mr. Martin and to me, and we gladly accepted Mr. Hallett's invitation to accompany him.

Mûang Fâng was an ancient city captured and destroyed by the Burmese in 1717; so that it lay in ruins nearly two hundred years before it was repeopled. Besides Mûang Fâng, we visited, either in going or returning, four other cities—Chieng Dão, Mûang Ngâi, Mûang Pão, and Mûang Kên. Not far to the south of Mûang Fâng we visited the cave of Top Tao, noted in the Buddhist legends of Northern Siam. Mr. Hallett thus describes our experiences there:

“Inside was a lofty cavern lighted by a natural skylight. On a raised platform in the cave was a great reclining image of Buddha some thirty feet long, and around it a number of figures representing his disciples. Numerous small wooden and stone images of Buddha had been placed by pious pilgrims about the platforms. Pillows, mattresses, robes, yellow drapery, flags, water-bottles, rice-bowls, fans, dolls, images of temples, doll's houses for the spirits, and all sorts of trumpery, were lying together with fresh and faded flowers that had been offered to the images, and were strewn in front of them. A steep ladder led up to niches near the roof of the cave, in which images were enshrined.

“My companions, full of ardor, determined to explore the inner recesses of the cave, and accordingly lighted their torches and proceeded further into the bowels of the earth, whilst I enjoyed a quiet smoke amongst the gods. Down they went, creeping through low, narrow passages, over rocks, and along ledges, with chasms and pits lining their path as

the cave expanded—bottomless as far as they could judge by the faint light of their torches, but really not more than twenty or thirty feet deep—until they could get no further, and had to return, having proceeded about the eighth of a mile."

That night brought us to the Mé Fāng River. The narrative proceeds:

"Here we spent the most unpleasant night we had yet spent, as we were troubled with rain, heat, and mosquitoes. We were told that game was plentiful. Wild cattle larger than buffaloes come in droves from the hills to graze in the plain, while the rhinoceros and the elephant roam about the plains.

"At our next stopping place, after we had settled ourselves in an empty house, a villager came to inform us that the house belonged to the Chief of Múang Fāng, and that anybody that slept in it would have his head cut off. As rain was threatening, we determined to risk the penalty, and we were soon glad that we had done so, as the rain poured down in torrents."

There is a small deer called tamné, which twenty years ago was very abundant in all the northern provinces. They are not found in the very tall grass of the river-bottoms, but in grass about waist-high thickly covering the higher plains. They have their beds in this grass by day, and graze at night. They are lower than the grass, and never leap so as to show the body, but glide smoothly along as if swimming, discovering their presence only through the parting and waving of the grass. Sometimes you get right upon them before they will run.

One Saturday we got Mr. Hallett interested in some survey or calculations not requiring the aid of an interpreter, and Mr. Martin and I had our first deer-hunt.

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We took six of our elephants, and, going out about an hour's ride or more from the city, we formed in open order abreast, about forty yards apart, and in perfect silence moved forward over the plain. The hunter thus starts his own game. He sits on the back, or, better still, on the neck of his elephant, with gun cocked, ready for a shot at the first noise or movement in the grass. We started about a dozen of the deer, and emptied many cartridges, but came back to camp with no meat—much to Mr. Hallett's disgust.

Mûang Fāng, like Chieng Sên, was rich in images of all sizes and materials. I never saw finer bronze ones. It was a favourite field from which Siamese princes and officials could get a supply otherwise unattainable in those days. Of course, *they* have a right to them. But when a German traveller undertook a wholesale speculation in the images of Buddha, it was quite another matter, and he got into serious difficulty with the government.

Soon after our return to Chiengmai, Mr. Hallett left us for Bangkok. From his long residence in Burma and from his close connection with the mission and missionaries during his expedition among what he calls the Shan States, he understood the methods and results of missionary work better than most visitors who have written upon the subject. The kind words of the dedication of his book, though often quoted, may well conclude this chapter.

"To the American Missionaries in Burma and Siam and the Shan States I dedicate this book, as a mark of the high esteem in which I hold the noble work the American Baptist Mission and the American Presbyterian Mission are accomplishing in civilizing and Christianizing the people of Indo-China."

XXIII

EVANGELISTIC TRAINING

ON our return from the surveying expedition in the summer of 1884, we found F. B. Gould, Esq., our first British Vice-Consul, already established in Chiengmai. It was an important event for the country; since a British official in any place is a guarantee that at least the outward forms of law and justice will be observed. In one important sense, too, it marked a new era for the mission, or, at least, for the missionaries.

Those who have not tried can hardly imagine the privation of living eighteen years without a mail system of any kind. Our only dependence so far was on catching chance trading boats to and from Bangkok. These were always an uncertain quantity; in very low water they almost ceased to travel. Some boatmen preferred not to be responsible for the mail, not knowing what it might contain. In the great city of Bangkok, and even in Chiengmai, it required a constant effort to keep ourselves informed of the departures of boats. The consequence was that an absence of news from children, friends, and the outside world generally, for three or four months at a time, was very common. Sometimes the interval was as much as eight months. Add to this the time of the long river trip, and our news sometimes would be nearly a year old when it reached us. Mr. Wilson's family and mine

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had schooled ourselves to these conditions; but to those who had been accustomed to a daily mail, they must have been almost unendurable.

The new Vice-Consul came, determined by all means to get some regular communication established, if it were only a monthly one. We were only too glad to do whatever we could to that end. It was a matter of pride to both parties that we arranged at once for a regular and most successful semi-monthly mail overland to Maulmein. I furnished a reliable Christian man for chief contractor, and good men for carriers. Since Mr. Gould had as yet no authority from his government to incur any expense, the arrangement was wholly a private affair, with the understanding that all who availed themselves of it should pay a quarterly assessment for the maintenance of the line. But in a short time the British government assumed the whole expense. Mr. Gould promised to get the staff exempt from *corvée*, or compulsory government service. He had to use his official authority for that.

The Lāo government had absolutely no interest in a mail, whether weekly or yearly; but the Siamese looked rather askance at having in their own country a mail service over which they had no control. It seemed to be in some way a reflection on their national pride. There is little doubt that our private enterprise hastened the weekly government mail from Bangkok, which was started the next year. And since the Maulmein route is quicker by two weeks than the one by Bangkok, the Siamese government has of late maintained both, the two meeting at Rahéng, and giving us a very creditable and regular mail service.

In the spring of 1884 the mission sustained a great

loss in the death of Princess Tipa Késawn, Prince Intanon's consort, whom we were in the habit of calling "the Queen." Placed as she was, she could not well have avoided the making of priests' garments, and the going through with the form of making offerings to the spirits. But I seriously doubt whether she had any expectation of laying up thereby a store of merit for the future. One thing we do know, that in her last sickness she turned no anxious look to any of these things, at a time when thoughtful Buddhists are always most diligent in their efforts. Dr. Peoples of our mission attended her in her last illness, and the case was submitted entirely to him. Mrs. McGilvary and I were both with her the day before she died. Mrs. McGilvary was with her at her death, and remained to see the body dressed for the coffin. We missed her very much as a friend, and the whole country missed her as a balance-wheel for her husband.

On the arrival of the reinforcement in 1883, a Presbytery was organized of the four ministers, Wilson, Peoples, Hearst, and McGilvary. I was then full of the idea of a theological training-class. My experience of the accumulated power added to the missionary's efforts by having such assistants as Nān Inta, Nān Suwan, and Noi Intachak, raised in my mind the question, Why not increase the number? Having had no schools, we had, of course, no body of young men educated on Christian lines whom we might train for the ministry; and we could not have such for years to come. But we had in our churches mature men of deeply religious nature, earnest students of Buddhism, and carefully educated in all the learning of their race. And a man so trained has many compensations for

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his lack of training in our elementary schools. He knows the sacred books of his own people, their strength and their weakness. He understands the thoughts, the needs, and the difficulties of a Buddhist enquirer, and the mode of argument by which these difficulties are to be met, as no young man of his own race, and as no foreign teacher can do. The training needed to make such a man an efficient preacher of the Gospel, is training in the Christian Scriptures, together with practical experience in evangelistic work under efficient direction.

I was at that time giving regular instruction to Noi Intachak, one of the finest young men I have ever known in that country, and very anxious to become a minister.¹ To Nān Tā, afterwards our efficient minister, I was giving instruction less regularly, as it was possible for him to take it. But it would have been both easier and more profitable to teach a class of six or eight. By qualifying such a group of young men to work, and then working with them and through them, I believed that my own efficiency could be quadrupled, or even sextupled, as it was doubled when I had Nān Inta to work with.

With these thoughts and this experience impressed on my mind, and in order that my plan, if adopted, might have the ecclesiastical sanction of the Presbytery as well as the corporate sanction of the mission, I had urged the organization of the Presbytery just as soon as we had the minimum quorum required. In order to give the discussion its proper outlook and perspective, I noticed, also, in the paper which I read before the Presbytery, the necessity of a general edu-

¹Our hopes for his future career, alas, were cut short by his untimely death in the following year.

cation for all our Christians, and of High Schools for both sexes; while I sketched more in detail the nature and the methods of special instruction intended for those in training to become evangelists and ministers.

The training proposed for this last group was intended primarily to equip the most capable and most promising individuals among the converts for filling well their places as lay officers and leaders in the churches, and for engaging intelligently in evangelistic work. But beyond this it was thought that it would ultimately furnish a body of picked men from whom again the best might be chosen as candidates for further instruction leading up to the ministerial office. The course was to be flexible enough to permit occasional attendance with profit on the part of men whose household duties or whose business would not permit them to attend regularly. Its special feature was actual and constant practice in evangelistic work under the direction and supervision of the Principal, and with him as his assistants on his tours.

In view of the poverty of the Lāo generally, and in order to make it possible for these men to maintain their families while occupied with this training, it was further proposed that they should receive a moderate allowance of, perhaps, eight rupees per month of actual service, or about three dollars of our money. This seemed not unreasonable, since in Christian lands it is thought a wise provision to assist students in their preparation for the ministry; and since what is required to support one European missionary family, would support half a dozen fairly educated native ministers or ten good native evangelists.

The Presbytery took hold of the scheme with much ardour, and at once began to organise it into shape,