

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

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*Take up the White Man's burden —
Send forth the best ye breed —
Go bind your sons to exile
to serve your captive's need;
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild —
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.*

Rudyard Kipling

“With New England care and cultivation Siam might be made a paradise.”¹ Thus did a Vermont Yankee, Lucia Hemenway, comment on the garden of Prince Kratai of Bangkok. She wrote that “it is laid out handsomely and with taste;” but she could not withhold the thought so common to westerners in Asia — It’s beautiful, but we can show them how to do it better!

Lucia’s remarks typify those of westerners a century ago. On the one hand they were greatly attracted by the land and its people, but they did not consider these Siamese their social equals — not to say superiors — which in fact most of them were. A handful of middle-class missionaries and commercial travellers were given access to the highest nobility of a nation whose history was richer than their own. But these self-appointed emissaries had come to preach salvation and technology to the “benighted” peoples of Asia, and accordingly were blind to the wonders which confronted them. Young, idealistic Mrs. Hemenway, spoke for all when she wrote, “My heart almost sinks when I think of the work that has to be done by Christians before the world is converted to Christianity.”² This brave band of missionaries had sailed half way around the world to save a people who did not want to be saved.

¹ Lucia Hemenway’s Journal, Feb. 11, 1840.

² Lucia Hemenway’s Journal, Nov. 24, 1839.

Lucia Hunt had married a cause as well as a husband — perhaps the two were indistinguishable to impressionistic young women like Lucia who chose to be missionary wives in nineteenth century America. They had been caught up in the frenzy of a religious revival whose storm center was located in the “burnt over district” of western New England and New York State. Outwardly these fervent crusaders appear self-confident to the point of arrogance. Their journals generally reinforce this impression. Occasionally, however, one finds a diary entry which does more than simply state the facts in the laconic fashion of Lucia’s account of her wedding day: “Attended church. In the evening again I returned to the church and was married to the Rev. Asa Hemenway, missionary to Siam. Mr. J. T. Goodhue preached from these words ‘For the love of Christ constraineth us’ 2 Cor. 5, 14.”³ When a mood of introspection is permitted to intrude upon the sparse chronicle, more often than not it is the wife’s journal which reveals the self-doubts, pain, and sorrows of a self-imposed exile from her native land. “I have felt for a few days past weak and like nothing and of no use to anybody,” wrote Mrs. Hemenway after four months at sea in the cramped quarters of the *Arno*. “Perhaps I am wrong and wicked in indulging these feelings. I should like to get away alone and repent of my sins before him who is my guide.”⁴

These innocent young missionaries had taken on their shoulders the “white man’s burden,” just as others of their generation in America were dedicating their lives to the liberation of slaves, the spread of temperance, and the founding of new sects. All reformers shared the conviction that God was calling a chosen few to wage full scale battle against sin and injustice in the United States and against idolatry outside Christendom. Young people were exhorted to enlist in a holy war against all the forces of evil, with the promise that if they battled for the Lord they might gain salvation for their souls.

Their courage was generally extraordinary, their ability often somewhat less. The renown accorded many of them as missionaries might not have accompanied less glamorous careers at home, though of a few it must be said that they were outstanding innovators, scholars, and statesmen who would have left a mark whatever their chosen occupation.

³ Lucia Hemenway’s Journal, Apr. 14, 1839.

⁴ Lucia Hemenway’s Journal, Oct. 18, 1839.

One thing seems clear, nonetheless: the official accounts of that period, in glossing over the personal eccentricities of missionaries and others, dehumanize these people whose passions were so strong as to induce them to forsake the security of their middle-class environment to risk martyrdom in uncharted regions overseas. Missionary histories and biographies have contributed to the stereotype of the missionary as a bloodless, naive idealist who knows nothing of ordinary life, cannot be tempted, and lives off the hard-won earnings of the folks back home. In fact they were youthfully naive at first, but soon they learned the hard ways of the world and occasionally succumbed thereto. They knew sin at first hand, particularly the sin of pride. They deserve to be recognized for what they truly were: very human creatures, not saints, trying desperately to fight God's battles in a world they saw threatened by the knavery of scoundrels and idolaters, fearful lest the contest against evil would be lost because of their waning zeal.

It was presumptuous of such inexperienced young people as these, inadequately educated in a homeland which even then displayed unfounded messianic pretensions, to believe that they bore the responsibility and capacity to convert the continents of Africa and Asia to Protestantism in their generation. Possibly it was their very ignorance of the world outside that gave them courage to attempt this impossible task. Motivating them in this crusade was the conviction that they were engaged in God's business, and that he would support them in every trial. They did not doubt that their cause was just and would ultimately prevail. "The war of God against Buddhism has commenced," wrote Dr. Dan Bradley. "The Almighty has already planted his standard in almost every Buddhist nation on earth, and he is determined that the cross of Jesus Christ his Son shall ere long draw all men among them to confide in, and serve him who was nailed upon it . . . Why should it be thought incredible that he will fulfill this promise within the present century?"⁵

In those not-infrequent cases where private judgment stood in opposition to majority will, personal conviction would prevail. "Duty is mine and consequences the Lord's,"⁶ reflected amateur theologian Bradley in defending his position — which had contributed to the demise of the Congregational mission in Siam — against the views of

⁵ *Bangkok Calendar*, 1862, p. 69.

⁶ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Aug. 27, 1954.

his seminary-educated colleagues. "I am not disposed to consult flesh and blood on any point when I have the word of God clearly before my mind."⁷

Fortunately perhaps for the resolution of their public as well as private doubts about their own roles in the missionary crusade, they had an Enemy to blame for every failure. Arrayed against them was God's great adversary, Satan himself, exploiting their every weakness to bring Jehovah's cause to nought. Too often they proved unequal to the struggle, but at least they could rationalize their failures and need never question for long the validity of their mission.

Lest the reader think that only missionaries were self-righteous, let him be assured that traders, mechanics, sea captains, and even diplomats were victims of the same conceit. True humility, then as now, was a quality uncommonly found in the foreign colony in Siam.

The story of American involvement in the domestic and international affairs of Siam begins in earnest in 1833, when Edmund Roberts concluded a commercial treaty with the Siamese Government. This provided diplomatic immunity and the freedom to propagate religion to the missionaries who began to arrive the following year. The first Americans to make Bangkok their permanent home were a group of Baptist missionaries, followed soon thereafter by representatives of the American Board. Not until 1856 when a consulate was established, did American business interests begin to find trade with Siam in any way attractive. So poor were the prospects until then, in fact, that not a single American vessel called at the bar of the Meinam Chao Phya between 1838 and 1856. The lean years for American trade mark the most influential ones for the missionaries, because their practical skills were sorely needed by the leaders of Siam as it adapted to modernizing pressures from the west. Some missionaries were asked by the Government to assist as English teachers, interpreters, and translators; others as printers and machinists; still others as physicians. Occasionally, as in Bradley's case, one man could fill all these roles. The Americans' great merit in the opinion of the Siamese, was their isolation from the struggle for control of Asia by expansionist European powers, notably England and France. The American missionaries sometimes quite self-consciously helped the Siamese balance the claims of European powers against each other.

⁷ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Feb. 1845.

Siamese noblemen gladly granted the missionaries freedom to propagate their brand of Christianity, because Siam feared less the power of the Americans' religion than that of the Europeans' guns. In 1840 Prince Itsaret reported to Dan Bradley that he thought King Rama III "would like to get a good American sea captain because he is pleased with the Americans, they are honest."⁸ For the religious freedom freely granted to American missionaries, Siam received the benefits of medicine, education, and technology. In this Siam was fortunate, for not a few of those strangely garbed, bearded zealots had knowledge and interests beyond theology. When finally commercial treaties favorable to the expansion of western trade attracted businessmen and diplomats to Bangkok, the Siamese had decreasing need for the services of missionaries, and the latter played a diminishing role in the development of the country. It was then that an increasing sense of alienation afflicted the missionary community, leading some to abandon the formal work of missions completely, others to depart from the country, and still others to manifest neurotic symptoms even to the point of physical assault upon their colleagues.

Modern Thais credit Dr. Bradley with two of the most significant contributions toward the modernization of their nation: the introduction of printing and western medicine. It is true that he was the first long-term resident doctor in Bangkok, and for several years the only western physician in the country. It is also the case that the first printing press imported to Siam was the primitive wood-and-stone machine he purchased from the Baptists while in Singapore enroute to Bangkok.

The first western doctor to live in Siam, however, was not Bradley but Dr. Carl Gutzlaff, a German missionary who worked in Bangkok from 1828-31, four years before Bradley's arrival. A second physician, Dr. David Abeel, lived in Bangkok from 1831-2, but left the country due to illness. The extent to which Gutzlaff and Abeel prepared the way for Bradley cannot be estimated, but it must have been considerable. A third man trained in medicine, who preceded Bradley to Bangkok and was his colleague for a number of years, was Stephen Johnson, who attended medical schools in Philadelphia and Brunswick, Maine prior to his departure for Siam in 1833. Johnson enrolled in medical classes at the request of the American Board,

⁸ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Jan. 11, 1840.

which had been urged by Gutzlaff and Abeel to send doctors to Siam. Strangely enough, Johnson seems never to have put his medical education into practice in Siam, for there is no record of his having done more than to dispense medicines at the time of his arrival; nor did he assist Bradley in the latter's clinic which was established soon after the latter's arrival in the summer of 1835.

Somewhat the same abbreviation of history is true in the case of printing. The first printing in the Siamese language was accomplished at the Baptist Press in Serampore, India, in behalf of a colony of captive Siamese in Burma. The type used in this press was then taken to Singapore where books in Siamese were printed by Robert Burn and C. H. Thompson. Bradley transported the press and type with him to Bangkok, and Charles Robinson was given charge of printing while Bradley conducted the clinic. For some reason — probably superior mechanical facility combined with an aggressive personality — Bradley slowly assumed management of the printing shop and established his reputation as the innovator, while Robinson and others were forgotten.

It was customary for missionaries to keep diaries beginning with the date of their commitment to a Christian vocation. Pages of these journals were mailed back to the mission boards, and excerpts were published in the religious press. Accordingly, most diaries were written with an eye to publication, and little was stated in them which could not be transcribed into print. Some missionaries kept private journals as well, and copies of these are still to be found occasionally in libraries, but more often in the attics of their descendants. These personal diaries reveal much that has long since been forgotten about the missionaries, and pieced together with letters and official records deposited in the U.S. National Archives, libraries, and mission headquarters, they provide living portraits of individuals of real flesh and blood.

Probably the most valuable foreign journal of nineteenth century Siam is Dan Bradley's. He was a renaissance man with a Puritan conscience. The diary commences with his decision at the age of twenty eight to complete a medical education begun eight years earlier, and to offer himself to the cause of foreign missions. It describes two years of training and practice in New York City, the search for a wife to accompany him to Southeast Asia, the voyage to Singapore and Bangkok, and his career of thirty-eight years in Siam.

A friend of kings, princes, and noblemen, Bradley records court gossip about domestic and international affairs of the Kingdom, describes the local practices of medicine, agriculture, religion, and politics, and chronicles the decades in which he played an active public role. Unlike many of his contemporaries who did not adjust as easily as he did to the changing circumstances of the foreign community, Bradley maintained some influence until his death at the age of nearly sixty-nine.

Important as are Bradley's copious journals for their record of public events in nineteenth century Siam, they serve another purpose as well. They reveal a complex personality who was constantly at odds with his fellow westerners, frequently unhappy with himself, and often despairing of the role he felt compelled to play. In reading this journal we become acquainted with a man who was sometimes brilliant, usually neurotic, but able despite his eccentricity to accomplish more of positive value than perhaps any of his contemporaries. We learn through his record that others who were stereotyped as uninteresting do-gooders were people often overwhelmed by passions inflamed by the lush climate of the tropics. Through his eyes we see not merely the Bangkok of the official histories, but a young city wherein groups and individuals were seeking to accommodate themselves to the dynamic circumstances of social change. Because Bradley's diary resembles a Confession rather than a Quarterly Report we get considerable understanding of a group of people who in many ways resemble overseas Americans of the present time.

II

Bradley's life-long companion was Guilt. In his New York Bowery garret where he studied medicine, he wrote, "A tempestuous night indeed has this afternoon been to my soul. The lusts of the flesh ... have rushed in upon me and lifted up as it were waves of black pollution. Such was the wild fury of the tornado that all my hopes of salvation were well nigh extinguished... The cause of missions to which I have dedicated myself was all shrouded in gloom. Every word of tenderness and compassion for the souls of the heathen seemed either to have been broken by the storm or buried in the flood mood of mire and sin."⁹ This young man in his late twenties

⁹ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Dec. 22, 1832.

had only recently been appointed a missionary-physician to Southeast Asia. Ten days previously he had written a letter to his Cousin Jane, a girl much younger than he, undoubtedly asking her to accompany him as his spouse. He was soon to receive his M.D. degree from the University of the State of New York. But now he was overcome with the remorse of an adolescent because he could not suppress the passions of his vile humanity.

For all his life, it seems, Dan Bradley experienced the conflicting emotions of guilt and self-pity for his mother's death in child-birth. In a journal extending over a period of forty years he refers to his stepmother only once or twice, and with monotonous recurrence on his birth date recalls the misfortune of his having been a "motherless child" — this despite the fact that his father had remarried within seven months of his first wife's death. Whatever his father's expectations for Dan, they were not fulfilled when the son married "beneath his class"; for clearly Phineas Royce was not the squire in Clinton that Judge Bradley was in Marcellus. "I am as it were an exile from my father's house," wrote Dan at the time.¹⁰ There must have been something of his ambivalent love-dread of his father in Dan's attitude toward God, whom he was ever fearful of offending and from whom he constantly besought forgiveness. The failure of Protestant missions to convert more than a handful of Siamese to Christianity during Bradley's entire career in Bangkok made more acute his conviction that he had failed God in this, the most important aspect of his vocation. Only toward the end of his life does he appear to have found spiritual peace when he discovered that "it is all in vain and wicked to look for peace of conscience and full assurance from emotions, or purposes or experiences or anything else within myself... I have almost always been seeking to find rest within myself."¹¹ Rest he could not find, and little rest he granted others accordingly.

Judging by the autobiographical sketch which accompanied his application to the American Board, Bradley must have been hypersensitive even as a child. His ability to adjust normally to his environment became a serious problem during adolescence. His first crisis began with a fit of stammering in school. He so magnified this defect that he dared not speak in public for fear of causing

¹⁰ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, May 19, 1833.

¹¹ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Dec. 18, 1869.

ridicule. This led him to cut his formal education and to abandon hopes for a college education. Apparently he was never free from the fear of stammering, for he recorded in his diary in 1849 that during a fund-raising speech in America he was seized by "one of my fits of nervous stammering" that lasted half a minute.¹²

While still an adolescent, young Dan suffered for a week or so from deafness which he feared would isolate him further from his fellow men. More pious than most, he sought desperately to experience the actual presence of God within his heart, believing that otherwise his soul would suffer eternal punishment in hell. On one occasion when working in his father's fields he blurted out a profanity, and this filled him with consternation lest he had committed the unpardonable sin.

While dreading the ridicule of men, he needed desperately to receive their praise and recognition. And so, after he finally felt adequate to make at least a tentative witness to God's presence in his heart, he joined the temperance movement in his county and soon became an Agent for the Temperance Society. This gave him confidence to speak in public without stammering. Twice he began a course of private medical study, then spent a winter term of classes in Boston. Finally he determined to complete his education in New York City, and during those months decided — against the advice of his father — to volunteer his services to the American Board as a foreign missionary. The choice of medicine was based on his desire for a vocation of service. The ministry was closed to him because he was too old to enroll in college by the time he had resolved his emotional problems. He studied theology while attending medical school, however, and three years after his arrival in Bangkok was ordained by his Congregational colleagues to the Christian ministry. From the very beginning of his work as a physician, Bradley believed that health of the soul took priority over that of the body, and even in his year's residency in New York he combined bedside evangelism with medical care. This unfortunate combination of prescriptions contributed to his enforced resignation as resident physician at the Lying-in-Asylum only three months after his appointment.

For most of his adult life Bradley managed to live with his neuroses. He was comforted in times of loneliness by his wife and

¹² Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Mar. 19, 1849.

children; and the praise denied him by his colleagues was showered on him by many Siamese. Certain periods of crisis in his life seem to have set him off once more on curious excursions into fantasy, however. It was during the extensive period of his first wife's terminal illness that he became embroiled in a theological battle with his more orthodox colleagues. So tenacious was he in his arguments that the dispute could only be settled by termination of the entire Congregational mission. After Emilie Bradley's death he tried to carry on his regular duties and manage his household. For the year that he tried it, he referred increasingly to himself in his diary as a bride of Christ. Many years thereafter, when his second wife, Sarah, and then his youngest daughter, Irene, were seriously ill with dysentery he spent an inordinate amount of time in the examination and description of their stools. If this were all we knew of Dr. Bradley we'd be inclined to write him off as a slightly unbalanced individual.

Unbalanced in many ways he must have been. We know of his strangeness because he committed his inner thoughts to the written word. Not only did he keep his journal, but he often poured over earlier years in retrospect. One almost wonders if he did not hope some day to see it published, so seriously did he peruse it! But this was not simply a diary of the inner life. He transcribed events and conversations with colleagues indicating that they, too, were beset with problems magnified by the environment.

Bradley could not have been alone in shouldering a heavy sense of guilt (perhaps the greatest of the white man's burdens). Emilie frequently berated herself for her sense of humor. One night she wrote, "I have yielded much, quite too much to my easily besetting sin, levity, today. Tonight while attempting to sing I made a remark which unexpectedly (caused) others to sin with myself. I had just prayed in my heart that the Lord would humble me and he left me to myself and I deeply wounded his cause and the hearts of my Christian friends. Like Peter I went out and wept bitterly, like him may I find pardon and justification through the blood of him against whom I have so grievously sinned. But can I forgive myself? I cannot even meet the eye of my Christian friends. O that I might have grace given me to forsake this sin that meets me at every turn."¹³ And Lucia Hemenway wrote woefully of herself:

¹³ Emilie Royce Bradley's Journal, Dec. 18, 1834.

"O my wicked heart! I almost sink under it so deceitfully wicked it is, will the Lord grant pardon and help to forsake every sin."¹⁴ Others manifested symptoms of anxiety that suggest a veiled sense of guilt. Dr. Samuel House was overcome by violent fits of temper against colleagues who learned that he had shrewdly bilked the Widow Caswell of a portion of a gift of money House conveyed to her from King Mongkut. And J. H. Chandler, a most pious layman, displayed excessive moralism against a Brooklyn creditor when the latter pressed charges for unpaid bills.

For most members of the American community one can only speculate about the part guilt played in their sometimes aberrant behavior. Such is not the case with Bradley, who committed to his diary a variety of inward doubts which others must also have experienced. Through his recorded moods and fantasies we learn that behind the acknowledged pride, arrogance, and conceit of the unswerving crusader there lay a timid man, very much uncertain of his capacity to fulfill the tasks he felt constrained to undertake, deeply troubled by what others might be thinking of him, often wounded by harsh but honest judgments made against him, contrite because his words and actions had brought pain to others. He believed that he had a course to follow no matter what the cost, and realized that the biggest loser might be Dan Bradley himself; but he was convinced that God required him to pursue his goal in this single-minded way.

Probably the most perplexing burden — and one from which the missionaries seldom found relief — was the yoke of a religion which demanded humorless obedience and offered little payment in return. "The Lord has been very kind in helping us into the field," wrote Mrs. Hemenway after an anxious voyage of months across the seas from Boston, "and we feel that he will take some of us hereafter if we trust him and obey his commandments."¹⁵ She had forsaken family and friends in response to an inward call to serve an unknown people thousands of miles from home. She knew that her chances of eventual return to Vermont were slight at best. The voyage had been rough and the quarters cramped. In addition to the ordinary discomforts of such a trip, the passengers had been entrusted with the care of an epileptic son of the Treasurer

¹⁴ Lucia Hemenway's Journal, Feb. 1840

¹⁵ Lucia Hemenway's Journal, Feb. 26, 1840.

of the American Board. His parents hoped that such a voyage might contribute to his health, but he was frequently overcome by violent fits. And now Lucia fervently thanked God for delivering them safely to do His work, and hoped as earnestly that they might all find acceptance by this stern, demanding ruler of their destinies.

One other reward there was — and when it was withheld the missionaries despaired. Somehow, in ways appearing strange to us, they believed they could collectively discern the presence of the Holy Spirit at their prayer meetings. Such occasions filled them with confidence and joy. When they found that the Spirit had been absent, on the other hand, they worried mightily. One day on board the *Cashmere* Bradley noted in his diary, "Find myself sadly shorn of my spiritual strength by having grieved the Holy Spirit last evening. The Lord has been far off from my soul. O why did I wound the sweet messenger of rest?"¹⁶ A month later he recorded that "There was reason to fear the Blessed Spirit was grieved by our levity yesterday. God's children seem to have become fearful of this and I trust they have humbled themselves and sought with much importunity pardon. Brother Dean had the exercises this evening. The Spirit of the Lord was present."¹⁷

This humorless inability to take life simply as it came, accompanied by the need to seek continually God's forgiveness for spontaneous outbursts of passionate joy or rage, led to a severity of style which amused the Siamese but often infuriated other westerners. In his introduction to the *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam* — 1828-1928, Prince Damrong recalls his first meeting with an American missionary, "a tall spare man with a beard similar to the traditional Uncle Sam himself. He wore a grey helmet with a chimney-looking means of ventilation, a long black alpaca coat reaching almost to his knees, a pair of duck trousers, with an umbrella in one hand and a number of books in the other." In reply to the young prince's question, "Why did he always wear the same clothes?" the missionary responded, "I have used this hat more than ten years. This coat also has been in use for nearly ten years, and this umbrella is older than the two."¹⁸

¹⁶ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Aug. 30, 1834.

¹⁷ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Sept. 30, 1834.

¹⁸ George B. McFarland, ed., *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam* — 1828-1928, Bangkok, 1928, pp. 3-4.

Members of the foreign community considered missionaries to be prigs and hypocrites. The officers of the British brig *Sparta* addressed a derisive poem to J. T. Jones as "President of the Squab" after the missionaries had declined an invitation to a New Year's party. Bradley's letter of apology intended as a gracious but forthright response to a generous invitation, sounds sanctimonious and bigoted. Bradley stated that "we have long had the impression that dinner parties conducted after the manner of Europeans in the East are not calculated to benefit the host, the guest or the community; but that they are too often powerfully efficient in fostering intemperance both in eating and drinking and a host of consecutive evils."¹⁹

The frugality and drabness of the missionaries' dress seem nonetheless to have been at variance with their stylé of life in general. While these Yankees never threw away anything of even doubtful value, they accumulated much in the way of comfortable belongings. J. H. Chandler's sixteen-room house was valued at \$13,000 when put up for auction to pay for business debts. Mr. S. C. George constructed a home so far beyond the budgetary limitations of the Presbyterian mission that after George's dismissal on the advice of his arch-rival and antagonist, Dr. House, the building was taken over by Mrs. House as a school for girls. D. B. Bradley landscaped his compound, which was rented from the Foreign Minister at a very reasonable rate — with croquet and tennis courts, and he furnished his home with melodeon, piano, and sewing machine. Life in Bangkok, while difficult at the beginning, later became as it is today a kind of paradise for the *farang*.

Another peculiar contradiction is the difference between love manifested as an abstract principle and as an unself-conscious way of life. Many European and American men in Bangkok married Siamese women and raised children by them. One of the best examples is that of the English Consul-General, Thomas Knox. The missionaries, on the other hand, for all the respect and compassion they showered on the Siamese and Chinese, did not marry them — not even those who joined the church. Nor did even missionary children born in Siam marry amongst the Siamese, as might have been expected. The "white racism" characteristic of modern Ame-

¹⁹ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Jan. 4, 1836; also Emilie Bradley's Journal same date.

rica seems to have been present amongst the Protestant missionaries then, not only in Siam but in other fields of foreign service also.

The missionaries even frowned on marriages between "God's children" and fringe white members of their little closed-in church. Better that a twice-born Christian remain miserably single than marry outside the clan. The marriage of the widowed Mrs. Slafter to Capt. Brown was celebrated at Hunter's British Factory rather than at the church because of missionary approbation. "The astounding fact came out on Wednesday," wrote Bradley in his journal in 1841, "that our Sister Slafter was going to marry Capt. Brown the ungodly man. This together with the cases of alarming sickness we have among us and the speedy embarkation of Sister French has constituted a flood of trial for proving our faith."²⁰ Although an "ungodly man," Brown did not sever relations with the missionaries until two years later. "Capt. Brown has broken with the missionaries," Bradley wrote, "because he hears that when the natives enquire whether himself and Mr. Hunter are good Christians or not, that the missionaries answer in the negative. He has been exceedingly angry, taken the name of God in vain and cursed the missionaries. How must his wife feel. She was once the wife of a missionary and she thought she could mould her husband's views and feelings on religious subjects as well as on others."²¹ The missionaries took a patronizing view toward those they considered less pious than themselves. This included not only nationals, but also Roman Catholics (whom they did not consider Christians), foreigners other than Anglo-Saxons, and of course Americans whose habits included the use of alcohol.

III

These complicated, opinionated, strong-willed people, for all their obvious weaknesses of character — for their often having, as it were, *too much* character — lived interesting and exciting lives which equipped them poorly for existence in America whenever they returned to their homeland. Many of them remained briefly in the States, only to return once more to Bangkok. In part this must have been due to the phenomenal changes which made America less and less familiar to them. But more importantly, perhaps, these Americans found personal fulfillment in a place which permitted them to

²⁰ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Nov. 4, 1843.

²¹ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, Jan. 3, 1846.

stand out, no matter how eccentrically, as leaders to whom many looked for counsel. They had unwittingly found their way into a culture which highly valued interpersonal relationships and gave high status to the foreigner. Their longing for personal recognition and prestige, so apparent in the journals which they kept, was nourished by the Siamese as it could not have been at home. Fulfillment of the need outweighed the disadvantages of separation from family ties, exposure to physical distress and danger, and gradual alienation from their own culture. Despite their unwillingness to accept the cultural values of Siam, theirs was a style of life which was contributory rather than parasitical. Nearly all of them identified themselves with the true interests of their second home.

It took physical courage for these young people to make the voyage to Siam. In the early years little was known about this country, which the mission boards expected to serve as a point of entry into China. Until the middle of the century no steamship had assayed the long and dangerous journey around the Cape to the Indian Ocean. The journey by sail from Boston or New York could take as long as six months, much of it spent in the sun-drenched doldrums of the South Atlantic. During Bradley's first voyage to Singapore, the rations of the crew ran low and the sailors came down with scurvy. At such times the superstitious crew blamed their bad fortune on a missionary "Jonah" in their midst. Bradley characteristically believed that he was the one on whom they fixed their blame on this occasion.

Most young missionaries were in their early twenties and had barely finished their education when they left the security of village life to face an unknown future. The mission boards strongly urged each man to find himself a wife. This he did, either by inducing a childhood sweetheart to share the dangers with him, or by being directed by ministers and knowledgeable members of the board to young ladies with a missionary inclination. When Dan Bradley had exhausted the possibility of one and possibly another cousin, he was given the name of Miss Emilie Royce by two of his former pastors. A long journey by steamboat, carriage, barge, and stagecoach took him from New York to Clinton, where he requested Miss Royce's permission "to take tea with her at 6 o'clock and spend a part of the evening in her society. The evening having gone well, Emilie's brother contributed to misinform the visitor of the departure of the

stage to Utica; and so Bradley was invited to stay over the Royces. Two weeks later, following a solemn day of prayer and fasting, the beautiful Emilie received a letter "which could not but excite much feeling. The question now comes will you go to a heathen land soon? But not as before will you leave every individual that you have ever called friend? But will you go with one who is interesting and whom you can confide in."²² Her decision was confirmed by prayer, and a year thereafter they married and set off on the *Cashmere* as members of a missionary company that included two Burmese converts returning from a fund-raising and recruiting tour of the United States.

The time from Boston to Singapore was six months. Another half year was spent at Singapore before the winds and currents were favorable for the voyage to Bangkok. The staterooms of the *Cashmere* measured slightly under six feet square. This is how Bradley describes the way he fitted up their quarters: "Our berth occupies the back of the room next to the side of the ship. It stretches across the room — is 3 1/2 feet above the floor — 3 1/2 feet wide. In other words it is a wide shelf with a board at the edge for a border 8 inches in width. Into this we have crowded 2 single mattresses. Under this we have most economically arranged one large chest — two trunks — a box of oranges and lemons — two large bags of clothing — a bag of dried apples — a medicine chest — several baskets of small articles of dress — a box of figs and sundry other vessels. The remaining part of the room is furnished with a wash stand in the corner at the left of the door by which we enter the room. Under this we have a trunk. In the corner at the right of the door we have another trunk. And lastly an arm chair having a writing stand on one arm stands a little under the berth facing our door. Our wash stand consists of a shelf fitted in the corner. Under this we have another shelf on which we set our slop bowl pitcher, etc. On the left side of our room above the wash stand and berth we have two shelves extending the whole width of the room. These contain some 30 or 40 volumes for use during the voyage, portable writing desk, bottles of Lemon Syrup, jars of Tartaric Acid and Soda, Loaf Sugar, etc. We have also a few little pigeon holes above the door which contain many little things — and

²² Emilie Royce Bradley's Journal, May 9, 1833.

finally we have the walls of our little parlour decorated with hats, bonnets, dresses of various kinds, brooms and brushes."²³

Most of the passengers spent long nights and days of seasickness in these tiny cubicles. Both Mrs. Dean and Mrs. Bradley were pregnant during most of the voyage. Coupled with the ordinary distress of crowded quarters, heat, and the rolling of the ship were the dangers of mutiny and piracy. Near the end of the voyage, when rations were low and scurvy was breaking out among the crew. Capt. Hallett was barely able to control his ship after a violent battle between himself and a steersman. The Captain's victory over his mutineers may have been due to the fact that eight of the thirteen crew members were too ill even to work the ship. Thereafter the male passengers had to fall to on deck, while the women worked in the galley.

A suspicion of pirates in West Indian waters proved to be unfounded, but Dean and Jones were attacked and almost killed by pirates in Singapore. Their small boat was boarded, Jones was thrown overboard, and Dean was barely able to stave off the pirates by using his umbrella as a weapon. The missionaries were saved only after bargaining with a nearby boatload of Chinese who rowed them back to shore for a price of \$20.00. Dean arrived back home with the barbs of two fish-pears embedded in his skin, while Jones was painfully blistered from the sun.

Not only physical courage, but also moral stamina was required of these early emissaries to Southeast Asia. They had to learn to adapt their puritan ethic to a culture operating under its own quite different set of values. The western preoccupation with punctuality did not fit well with the more casual Siamese sense of pace, and impatience was one of the greatest problems which the Americans had to learn to overcome. Not always was this possible. The band of recruits which arrived in Singapore after six gruelling months at sea must have experienced more than a few doubts about their own ability to preserve their sanity when they were given temporary charge of a spinster lady who had gone completely mad. A few years later in Bangkok a machinist sent out to help the Siamese construct their first steamship went berserk within a week of his arrival.

²³ Dan B. Bradley's Journal, July 31, 1834.

Most often it was not madness which attacked them, but a kind of neurosis which made them hyper-sensitive toward each other in their common work. Ten years after a disagreement between the Robinsons and Bradleys, Mrs. Robinson was still unable to forget the incident or to forgive the Bradleys for their insensitivity. This type of emotional tension must have contributed to the theological battle amongst the Congregationalists that induced a majority of the mission to recommend the dismissal of Caswell and Bradley — a proposal which reached headquarters in Boston when funds were low and confidence in the results of the Siamese venture lower still. The Board voted to disband the mission, send most of its workers to China and the Sandwich Islands, and request the resignation of Caswell and Bradley.

Religious scruples protected the missionaries from the temptations of alcohol, which proved to be the undoing of many another in Siam. Bradley's journal records the cases of many eminent victims of delirium tremens amongst the colony of business, professional, and diplomatic men in Bangkok.

Only years of experience, punctuated by untimely deaths, taught the foreign community how to maintain health in a tropical climate. In reminiscing about the high rate of infant mortality in the earliest years, Dr. Bradley attributed this primarily to bad food and too liberal a resort to drugs. Every symptom had a separate treatment. Bradley surmised that the drugs may often have poisoned rather than cured the patient. All were prey to tropical diseases. Sometimes a husband or wife would be dead within the first few months of arrival. Emilie Bradley, on the other hand, suffered for eight years from tuberculosis, and during most of that time was also ill of prolapsus of the uterus, neuralgia, and diarrhea.

Those who survived the first disappointing years of their life abroad learned for the most part to adjust their vision to the practicalities of the situation. They learned that much of their impatience was due to their own ignorant blunders rather than to deceptions practiced on them by malicious heathen. "I recall with pain the blunders I have formerly made," wrote Mrs. Bradley to a brother in America. "I used to be much vexed with a boy who often laughed in the midst of what I meant for a very serious reproof. I laugh now when I think of what I said to him. It is provoking, when ordering your dinner, to see the cook laughing heartily, while

you need to be composed to think first of anything you can eat, and secondly of words enough to communicate the result of your cogitation to him. But he must be a grave man to keep his countenance as you tell him to buy, or boil 'the doctor.' Yet in Siamese the difference between a doctor and an article which might be bought and boiled for dinner, is very slight."²⁴

The missionaries found also that although their dreams of the conversion of Siam to Christianity were impossible, their personal contribution to the well-being of a people they had come to respect was significant. Believing that the most fruitful means of evangelism would be the printed word, the missionaries established printing in Siam and initiated the production of a typescript in the Siamese language. They published not only their translations of the Bible, but also the royal edict prohibiting the sale of opium in 1839, as well as books on vaccination, midwifery, and astronomy. They spent hours working as machinists with the two princes who were to become the Kings of the Fourth Reign, and as physicians with the Siamese doctors of the Royal Court. It was a missionary who performed the first surgical operation in the country, introduced small-pox vaccination, and helped enlightened noblemen rid the upper classes of the practice of "lying-by-the-fire" in maternity cases. The primary schools, established by the missionaries for evangelistic purposes, became models in part for the educational system developed by Prince Damrong during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

Missionaries often took the side of the Siamese in international disputes which sometimes seemed to threaten the sovereignty of the country. In his weekly *Bangkok Recorder*, Bradley published vivid accounts of alleged French designs upon the territory of Siam — stories which he received from Anna Leonowens and other foreign advisors working in the Grand Palace. King Mongkut refused to allow the British witnesses to testify in behalf of Bradley in the libel suit prosecuted by the French Consul-General, but American and British dispatches indicated that the facts were as Bradley stated them, and that Bradley had served the interests of the King in publicizing them. Later the King privately sent money to his American friend to pay the costs of the suit. American missionaries even made known to Washington the activities of their own consuls that seemed

²⁴ Nancy Royce, ed., *A Sketch of the Life and Character of Mrs. Emilie Royce Bradley*, New York, n.d., p. 154.

contrary to the best interest of Siam, as in the case of Consul Hood, who sold immunity cards to Chinese residents thereby enabling them to evade taxes under his protection.

Life in the foreign community in Bangkok was often stormy. Thrown together by a commonality of language, culture, and nationality, were a small company of saints and scoundrels — real and imagined — very much as in the villages of the American frontier. The rulers of Siam were right in according Britain and France much greater respect than they did America in the nineteenth century. The United States showed neither the sophistication in the conduct of its foreign relations in Asia, nor maturity in those who represented it officially and otherwise, to deserve the consideration of a major power. These vigorous, angular people did mirror well the nation that had given birth to them, however, both in their virtues and their faults. They believed unashamedly that it was their destiny as Americans to take up the white man's burden in behalf of their less fortunate brothers in Southeast Asia, whatever the cost to themselves or those they came to serve.