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DAVID ABEEL, PIONEER MISSIONARY TO CHINA.

A Chinese house under a wide-spreading banyan on the island of Kolangsu, opposite Amoy, still stands a landmark of the labors of godly David Abeel. He was the first foreign missionary sent out by the American Reformed Church, and was the pioneer of the Amoy mission.

He was born June 12th, 1804, at New Brunswick, New Jersey, and at the age of nineteen entered New Brunswick Theological Seminary. It was not long before the question forced itself upon him, "Where shall be my sphere of labor?" Near his home was a grove where he made a bower to which he resorted for prayer and meditation. There he heard the voice of the Lord calling him to the regions beyond. He was at that time the only surviving son of his parents. They were advanced in years. To go to a foreign land in those days signified to most men life-long exile. Under these circumstances it is not strange that he found it difficult to come to a decision.

Finally, in September, 1829, after a pastorate at Athens, N. Y. of two and a half years, he received a call from the American Seamen's Friend Society to undertake work on behalf of seamen at Canton. About the same time the American Board extended a call to Dr. Elijah Coleman Bridgman, then a student at Andover, to proceed by the same ship to China. Abeel was given three days to decide whether he would accompany him. He had decided within the next twenty-four hours.

The ship *Roman*, in which Abeel and Bridgman sailed, was owned by D. W. C. Olyphant, a distinguished Christian merchant and friend of missions. It was in response to his earnest efforts that these first American missionaries were sent out. He gave them free passage and promised to provide them a home free of cost for a year after their arrival. After a year of service, under the Seamen's Friend Society at Canton, Abeel joined the American Board.

He was forthwith commissioned to make an exploring tour to Malacca, Siam, Java, and the other larger islands of the East Indies. He was to ascertain the character of the people, their number, their religion, and the practicability of establishing missions among them. He visited Batavia, Singapore and Bangkok, and spent a year in Siam.

But failing health compelled him in May, 1833, to take ship for England. While in London, in 1834, Dr. Abeel was instrumental in organizing the first Woman's Missionary Society, called "The Society for Female Education in China and the East." The first appeal was drawn up by him, and the profits of the sale of his "Missionary Narrative" were devoted to its support.

His extraordinary piety impressed people wherever he went. A lady in London says: "There was nothing austere, narrow-minded or extravagant in his religion. There was a beautiful symmetry, a holiness, refinement and tenderness about it which struck the most ungodly. Though so weak physically that he scarcely expected to reach America he addressed a meeting in Exeter Hall and challenged young men in the colleges to join the missionary ranks." Said he, with unusual energy: "And who has given you a dispensation to remain at home when the whole world is calling so loudly for assistance?"

Arriving in America Dr. Abeel made a missionary tour through nearly all the Reformed Churches in New York and New Jersey. He addressed Congregational Churches in the principal cities of New England. His appeals to the students at Andover, Princeton and New Brunswick were a bugle-call to many a young man to join the Lord's advance-guard in the distant East.

He once more set sail for Canton in the autumn of 1838, and arrived at Canton on the eve of the first war between England and China. The universal unrest made direct missionary work impossible. The American Board commissioned him to make another voyage of investigation through the East Indies, and during his absence the treaty of 1842, which declared Amoy one of the five open ports, was signed.

Amoy was no sooner opened than Dr. Abeel hastened thither. He arrived there February 23, 1842. Though he had but a limited knowledge of the Amoy dialect he began work immediately. Throngs of curious onlookers, as well as interested hearers, crowded the little worship-room from dawn to dark. The courtesies of the highest officials were extended to him,

In 1844 Messrs. Pohlman and Doty, from the Borneo mission, joined him as co-laborers. But he was not to enjoy their fellowship very long. Disease was making deeper and deeper inroads upon his constitution. He had but barely entered upon the realization of many hopes and prayers, in working for the Chinese in China, when the summons came to lay down his armor. He labored faithfully to the very last, and his work was not in vain. The first two converts at Amoy, baptized in 1846, ascribed their earliest impressions to his preaching. In January, 1845, he sailed for New York, "doubtful," as he says, "which home I should reach first." He survived a little over a year, dying at Albany, New York, September 4th, 1846.

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