

this is true of almost all the five million Laos people. God has made and kept the majority of the Siamese and almost all the Laos people free from the influence of immoral foreigners ; all are free from caste ; there is no seclusion of women except among the royal families ; there are no strong nationalities, and hence no pride which despises foreigners or is restive under foreign teaching and direction ; polygamy prevails only among certain classes in Lower Siam, and there is almost none among the Laos people. God's preparation is shown,

*Second, in the favor of the rulers.* With few exceptions the kings, governors, and their subordinates have not only offered no open or secret opposition to the work of the missionaries, but they have been positively friendly, and in many cases have aided by grants of money, land, and influence. The few who have offered decided opposition have been provisionally removed. Grants of land and of money for educational and medical purposes are still occasionally obtained in Lower Siam. Among the Laos the government favor is still more marked. For the last fifteen years there has been a government proclamation of absolute religious toleration in Siam. And, with the possible exception of the Laos who are under the French, the same favor to missionaries is found among all the Laos officials outside as well as inside of the kingdom of Siam. In every station and prospective station of the North Laos Mission, ground has been leased to the mission to hold "so long as used for the purposes of healing" (by foreign medicine), "and of teaching the Christian religion." As Dr. McGilvary once said, "That means until the millennium." And this by a government in which Buddhism is the State religion ! The finger of God is here. But among the Laos people at least the most important preparation is what we may call,

*Third, the preparation of Buddhism.* The Siamese and the Laos people have this in common—viz., that, unlike most countries of Eastern Asia, their nominal religion is Southern Buddhism unmixed with Hinduism, Confucianism, or any other of the ethnic religions. And Buddhism, by its failure to satisfy the head with its puerile and fantastic stories, and also because of its thousands of self-conflicting teachings and by its failure to satisfy the heart with its lifeless pantheism or its agnosticism, and its meaningless ritual in an unknown tongue (the Pali), has paved the way for a religion that can satisfy both head and heart.

Both the Siamese and the Laos people differ in this, that the weak moral nature of the former contents itself with the empty forms. Buddhism retains a strong hold and has a strong outward following in Lower Siam, while it has only a nominal following among the warmer moral natures of the Laos people. So, to its failure to satisfy the Laos head and heart, must be added, as a second negative sort of preparation for Christianity, its failure to keep its own votaries from demon-worship. Although it denounces demonolatry in terms as strong as any in our own Bible, yet its hold is too weak to keep these children of nature from seeking the sup-