

service of spirits, and for the most part malignant spirits, to whose superior power mortals are subject. Every conspicuous object in nature is haunted by ghosts. Disease is the result of the bewitching influence of these evil spirits acting either directly upon the patient or through the personality or unseen agency of some man or woman who, in case the patient dies, is accused and arraigned as a witch, and who must pay a severe penalty for his misdeeds. In severe cases where delirium occurs, as in typhoid-fever, the priests of devil worship are often summoned for the purpose of ascertaining who has bewitched the patient, or if the spirit is acting directly and is supposed to be lurking in the patient's body, an effort is made to ascertain at what precise point it is lodged, and frequently the sufferer is prodded in different parts of the body with some blunt instrument until by an outcry of distress the precise location is revealed. One sad instance is recorded as having fallen under the observation of the late Dr. Cheek, of the Presbyterian Mission. The patient who suffered torture was a young girl of sixteen.

In cases of witchcraft the person accused of the offense is banished from the community with his entire family, and as other communities would dread his approach, he has no resource but to betake himself with his household to the wilderness. This is scarcely better than the sentence of death which is inflicted in Central Africa.

A few years ago a returned missionary of the Presbyterian Board conceived the plan of purchasing land for a refuge colony in which this unfortunate class could be settled, and where, by tilling the soil, they might find support for their families. These superstitions seem to disappear wherever missionary work has found its way. The present King of Siam has on one or two occasions issued proclamations designed to turn the minds of the people from childish and cruel superstitions which were doing injury to the public welfare. The enormities of the system of devil worship may be greatly mitigated, but the deep foundations of it still exist; they underlie the whole superstructure of the popular religion both in Laos and in Siam, and especially in the rural districts. The mere every-day routine of Buddhistic merit making does not satisfy the religious wants or religious fears of the masses of the people. The overshadowing presence of disembodied spirits weighs upon them, and its pall of darkness cannot be broken by anything short of the truth as it is in Jesus and the liberty with which He sets men free.

In sickness, on occasion of blighted crops, or in times of disaster, the people resort to the devil priests to learn if possible the cause, and to appease the spirits. The sense of the power of the unseen world is too deep to be removed by the cold, ethical maxims of the Buddhists. We are often told in these times that Buddhism is a religion quite sufficient for the countries in which it bears sway; that its great teacher is to be classed with Jesus of Nazareth, and that its high ethics and its sublime philosophy challenge the admiration of all thoughtful men. But even if we were