

not likely, therefore, that the coming Buddha also might be incarnate in a white elephant? In the absence of the dead Buddha, his prospective successor began to be worshipped in Ceylon under the name of Maitreych. And this idea of Bodisats, or coming Buddhas, became greatly developed in the northern types of the system, so that by the seventh century A.D. there was in Nepaul and Thibet a trinity of Bodisats. One of these is supposed to be incarnate in the Grand Llama of Thibet, and also in the goddess Quanyin, of China; and another in the Celestial Buddha, known in Japan as Amitabu.

But Siam was more fortunate. In the depths of her forests a veritable white elephant was found—an unmistakable incarnation of the Buddha to come. At various times more than one were captured, and of course the country which enjoyed so distinguished a guest deemed itself prosperous before all lands. That this was no mere matter of sentiment is sufficiently proven by the fact stated above, that neighboring Buddhist nations engaged in long and bloody wars for the possession of these real divinities.

When one of these sacred beasts is found in the forests, the king and his court proceed to meet and escort him to the capital, shaded by silken canopies and umbrellas. There a costly abode is prepared within the palace grounds. High officials are appointed to attend to his every want, and they must always enter his presence with tokens of reverence.

In a letter of welcome, written by the late king to Sir John Bowring, British Plenipotentiary, March 18th, 1855, this postscript is added :

“ P.S.—I have just returned from the old city Ayuthia, of Siam, fifteen days ago, with the beautiful she elephant, which your excellency will witness here on your excellency's arrival.

“ S. P. P. McMOUGERT (*The King*.)”

Whether the Buddhism of Siam is an idolatrous system each reader must

judge from the above statements, and also from the kind of reverence paid to the Emerald or Jasper Image of Buddha mentioned above, which has more than once been the apparent occasion of bloody wars. In a written account of this image, given by the late king to Sir John Bowring, he says : “ His majesty reverences and worships this Jasper image the same as if Budh Gotam (Gautama Buddha) were yet alive.”

### The Present Outlook.

Twenty years ago a Laos king sorely persecuted the native churches in his dominions, and martyrs' blood was shed; but since that time entire freedom of worship has everywhere been granted, and the only limit to the prosecution of successful missionary work is the lack of laborers and of means. It must not be supposed that the present king and his court are disposed to change their religion, or that they have any great apprehension that their country will become other than Buddhist. The king, in an autograph letter, thanked Sir Edwin Arnold for “*The Light of Asia*,” as a grand defence of Buddhism; and yet it is not likely that the enlightened sovereign accepts all the nonsense which that poem contains. The late king, his father, left memoranda which gave a history of Gautama far enough from the absurd legends which Mr. Arnold clothes with so much fascination.

The present ruler has shown the manifest effects of modern enlightenment in certain edicts which he has issued against the low and enthralling superstitions of his people, and also by his liberal treatment of missionaries. He has placed one missionary at the head of his royal university, and another has been called to assume direction of the Government hospitals.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that the Government of Siam may find, ere long, that Western civilization is not an unmixed good. Already a godless and unscrupulous commerce is bringing evil influences. It is said that such is the influx of corrupt literature in cheap form, especially translations of low French novels, that fathers are beginning to prevent their daughters from learning to read, as the only means of safety. The battle in Siam is not yet won.