

selves, when the sun shines and all goes well with them, will make jokes about the spirits somewhat as the children of America do about the "brownies;" but let the night fall, let misfortune overtake them, and all doubts vanish. Ignorant of the laws of nature, knowing nothing of Providence, rebelling unconsciously against the Buddhist dogma that the experiences of this life are the resultant of conduct in some previous state of existence, the Laos finds in the activity of these spirits his easiest explanation of all the ills that overtake him. And thus this belief and worship roots itself in every event and relation of his life, and constitutes, like the idolatry prevalent in the Roman world in the first century, at once one chief difficulty in the way of his accepting the Gospel, and when he has accepted it, one chief source of temptation to apostasy.

3. *Buddhism*.—Buddhism is in Siam and Laos the most obtrusive of all facts. The missionary, as he enters the mouth of the Meinam, gets at the same moment his first sight of the red flag with the white elephant flying over a frowning fort, and of the glittering roof and spires of a Buddhist temple; and every day he spends in the land through whose gate his steamer is passing will teach him more clearly the significance of the scene that lies before him. And, first of all, Buddhism bars the way to the entrance of the Gospel into men's hearts because it is a religion of self-righteousness. Buddhism has three keywords—misery, transmigration, merit—and the greatest of these, the one most often uttered, is merit. Existence is essentially wretched, but there is no escape from it; nothing can stop the endless revolution of the wheel of birth and death; all that can be done is to make future existence less wretched than the present; and this can be accomplished only by personal merit. What we are is the result of what we have done, and what we shall be depends upon what we are doing now—this is the short creed of the Buddhist. There lies before the writer some rough memoranda of a conversation with a brother of the King of Siam. He had read the Bible, he said, in English and in Siamese, and always kept it by him. He admired much that was in it; he believed Christ to have been a good, wise, far-seeing man, and a great teacher, though not divine; he regarded Christianity and Buddhism as far superior to Mohammedanism, because the former appeal, as the latter does not, to directly religious motives; but there was one thing in Christianity that he could never be brought to believe—it is that there can be any way of escape from the consequences of our own actions. "There can be no Saviour," said he, "except as every man can save himself by doing good deeds. If any man can believe Christianity, he will no doubt be happy. I would be glad if I could believe it myself; but I and all the higher classes of Siam hold firmly to the belief that every man must receive according to his deeds. We cannot believe that God can be bribed to release any one from his responsibility." And in deference to this conviction the Siamese have made a vast investment in what they regard as works of merit. They have covered their land with temples and pagodas