

and hearts in Syria, and that he may give liberty of conscience and of profession of faith to all; that, as through the influence of the many schools in the land, readers are multiplying by thousands from all sects, and as, by the

Press, copies of the Scriptures are also multiplying by thousands, so by the influence of the Holy Spirit may be multiplied the numbers of those who believe in the truth to the saving of their souls."

V.—THE MONTHLY CONCERT OF MISSIONS.

BY REV. F. F. ELLINWOOD, D.D.

Buddhism and Christianity in Burmah and Siam.

There are three great religious forces now contending for supremacy in Ceylon, Burmah, and Siam. These are Ateism, or Devil Worship, Buddhism, and Christianity. The above named are all known as Buddhist countries. There is no such mingling of religions as in China or Japan, and the type of Buddhism which they present corresponds most nearly to the original teachings of Gautama. The old Ateism is retained. No personal God is recognized, and there is no such thing as a human soul; there is only a succession of thoughts and conscious emotions. Continuity of the ego after death is treated as an illusion; only karma, or character, remains, and that becomes the inheritance of an entirely different being.

Southern Buddhism is a purely ethical system; it regards the Buddha as dead—his conscious existence extinct. He is not a source of strength and help except by his example, his sacred Law, and the Sangha or Monastic Order which he established. There is, therefore, no trust in supernatural powers, and consequently no real prayer; there are only liturgical formularies, or the expressions of aspiration and desire. There is no doctrine of sin in the proper sense; instead of sin there is only an unfortunate entanglement of soul with matter, an inheritance of "consequences" which have come down from former existences. There is throughout the universe a fatal disorder for which nobody in particular is responsible, and gods and men and beasts are simply victims of misfortune. There is, of course, no doctrine of Providence, no conception of a divine

Father, no helper in this world, no Saviour for the world to come. Existence is an evil to be gotten rid of. All desire, the purest as well as the lowest, is to be suppressed. The ideal life is that which withdraws from mankind and suppresses all sympathy and shrivels and destroys the noblest impulses of life. Buddha enjoined upon his "mendicants" to "wander apart like a rhinoceros," and to abide in silence "as a broken gong;" thus they should attain Nirvana.

This ancient system has certainly enjoyed fair opportunities in all the countries above named. It was introduced into Ceylon at least two centuries before Christ under the auspices of royal authority. A son and a daughter of the Indian king Ashoka were its first missionaries. It was never crushed out there as in India by an overpowering Brahmanism, nor confronted by elaborate philosophies such as it encountered in China. It was transplanted into Burmah in the fifth century, A.D., and into Siam and Cambodia in the seventh century. It became the state religion in Siam and Burmah. It has for ages dominated all educational ideas, such as they were, and regulated the national customs.

Every youth in Siam is supposed to spend a certain time in a monastery under priestly instruction. Princes have sometimes given years to monastic life, and notably the father of the present king. In Burmah, children of the better class are sent to the monasteries for day-school instruction. In one sense Buddhism impresses itself upon all things, upon customs and the national thought, and even upon the scenery. The architectural curves of the pagodas seem as