

later, as optimistic, and the subsequent history has borne out his opinion.

A mission was established by the American Baptist Missionary Union in 1842; but their work has been carried on mainly among the Chinese residents, who constitute an important element. The American Board established a mission soon after, but mainly with the view to gaining, through the Chinese residents, ultimate access to China; and after the opening of the Chinese ports, the Congregational missions were abandoned. The mission of the Presbyterian Board was begun in 1840; but the missionary, Rev. Mr. Buel, having soon died, the field was abandoned till 1847. As late as 1857 only two or three converts were reported. Both the late king, who came to the throne in 1851, and his son, the present king, have been friendly to the missionaries and their work, and in recent years a very gratifying degree of success has been attained both in Siam and Laos.

#### RELIGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

The religious developments in Siam have been greatly diversified. The original faith of the people was spirit-worship; and this has there, as elsewhere in the East, taken a great variety of forms. Very extensively evil spirits are supposed to be incarnate in serpents and uncanny brutes. They also take possession of men and women who are supposed to bewitch and torment the sick, orent off the crops, or create pestilence. The world becomes a haunted world; everywhere the presence and influence of evil spirits are suspected, and a host of devil priests or jugglers, scarcely less troublesome than the devils themselves, are employed to appease, or cajole, or circumvent the unseen foes who afflict the people.

In the general prevalence of these superstitions Siam, Burmah, and Ceylon are much alike. There is no greater error than to suppose that Buddhism is the chief and every-day religion of the masses in these countries. It is, indeed, the faith of the monastic orders,

and ostensibly of all the more intelligent class (though these also, in an emergency, resort to the devil priests; and even the Buddhist ascetics do the same); but the common people are spirit-worshippers under various visible forms of idolatry or fetishism.

Buddhism was introduced into Siam about the seventh century of our era, or a thousand years after the death of Gautama. Transplanted from Ceylon by way of Burmah, it had undergone transformations, but not to so great a degree as the types of the same system which had been developed in Northern India, Nepal, Cashmere, and Thibet. There the base admixtures of Siva-worship, known as Saktism or Tantrism had so corrupted the early faith that it had wholly lost its power in India proper, and was soon after wholly uprooted and banished from the country. But in Siam, Buddhism gained a peculiar hold upon the Government at an early day, and from that time to the present each has yielded a degree of support to the other. This relation cannot be fully understood without a moment's reference to the origin of the peculiar superstition of the white elephant. This animal has more than an emblematic significance like that of the lion on the shield of Britain, or the eagle of America. It is, in effect, the guardian divinity of Siam.

To trace the myth to its beginning, when Gautama died, he left his disciples to understand that he had become extinct in Nirvana. They had unconsciously come to worship him as the source of all wisdom and help. Now they were disconsolate. But he had told them that another Buddha would appear after a period of four thousand years, and that he was even then living in one of the four heavens. Meanwhile legends of Gautama's pre-existent states had been multiplied. It was alleged that he had passed through five hundred and thirty transmigrations, in the last of which he had appeared in a dream to Queen Maya, before Gautama's birth, in the form of a white elephant. Was it