

religious liberty for the Laos States, and to-day the missionaries are as free to prosecute their work as ministers are at home.

2. *Position of Woman.*—Along with religious toleration, the position of woman in Siam, and particularly Laos, deserves to be mentioned as one of the conditions favorable to the success of missions. There is perhaps no heaten land where women occupy a better position than in the Laos States. Monogamy is the rule among the common people. There are no harems or zenanas. The women wear no veils. They are to be seen everywhere—at their homes, on the streets, in the fields, keeping stalls in the markets, worshipping at the temples. The missionary may address them as freely as he does their husbands, sons, and brothers. Though Buddhism makes no provision for the education of girls, no prejudice is felt against allowing them to attend mission schools, and the Church in Chiang Mai has more than once availed itself of the talents of her native Phœbes and Priscillas, sending them out two and two into the villages to teach the women and children especially, but the men too as they had opportunity.

3. *Spirit-worship Driving People to Christ.*—Buddhism has its weak points; it has even rendered some services to Christianity. Its false cosmogony is easily shown to be false; it was the prediction by Dr. McGilvary of the exact day and hour of a coming eclipse that attracted the attention of the man who became the first convert of the Laos mission. The monasteries and temple schools have made the men a nation of readers, into whose hands Christian books may be put. The burden of maintaining the great hosts of priests in idleness, coupled with the dissolute lives led by some of them, has here and there disgusted a community with the ancient faith. The elaborate system of merit making fails to satisfy the consciences of the really earnest; the vanishing prospect of some time attaining in Nirvana escape from the weary round of birth and death sometimes appears as mere heartless mockery; and thus a man here and a woman there is prepared to welcome the proclamation of a Saviour, and eternal life through Him. And yet, when abatement has been made for all these things, Buddhism must still be pronounced one of Satan's masterpieces for deluding men's souls. But the writer is inclined to raise the question whether in spirit worship, as in the phenomenon of possession by demons in the days of our Lord, the wily Prince of Darkness has not overreached himself. For the worship of evil spirits is wholly a religion of fear. It brings no ease to the conscience; it makes no ground for self-righteousness; it offers no hope for the future, not even such hope as Buddhism gives. "What do you do when any one dies?" the writer once asked of a group of Moo Surs, a mountain tribe whose only religion is spirit worship. "We cry and put him in the ground," was the answer. This faith contains no single element of hope or comfort for this life or the life to come. Incantations, charms, offerings, pilgrimages serve but one end—they make the spirits propitious for the moment, and that is all. We