

population. But probably in Siam and the Laos country there are not far from eight millions. In other words, with an area six times as great as the State of New York, Siam has a population about equal to that empire state. Its capital, Bangkok, the Venice of the Orient, contains itself probably half a million.

We smile at the homage there paid to the "strange colored" elephant, which ranks among the nobility, has titles, gold bands on his tusks, is served by kneeling attendants with trays of silver, and is sprinkled with sacred water by obsequious priests, and attended by court physicians. But we must not judge the Siamese, by this homage to a beast, to be simply a degraded and superstitious nation of elephant worshipers; nor, by the shoe-brush top-knot, or tuft of coarse black hair on the crown of the head, must we infer that they have neither taste nor manners nor æsthetic notions. They are gentle, amiable, respectful to parents and to old age, kind to children, urbane and polite to strangers, above the average in cleanliness and intelligence, and capable of high culture and refinement. They are untruthful and conceited, polygamy prevails among them, gambling houses abound, and men have been known to sell their own wives and children to pay debts incurred in this fascinating "vice of risk." But not even in China and India have women such freedom and intelligence and ability; and in few countries do wider doors to mission efforts present themselves. Buddhism is here found in its purest and most unmixed state, with its virtual atheism, and materialism, and wheel of endless transmigrations, with *Nepon*, like the Brahmanistic Nirvana, the goal of all desire, annihilation of all individual being. Idols abound everywhere. In one temple as many as 14,000 may be found; and in Bangkok alone are 200 temples with 10,000 yellow-robed lazy priests supported by charity.

The conditions were not inviting to missionary labor; and to complicate the question still more, the papal church had carried its corrupted form of Christianity into Müang Ti, "The Land of the Free," as early as 1662, and had lowered even the Romish standard of the gospel to a level scarce above that of heathenism itself, seeking to win converts by accommodating, if not assimilating, Christianity to the native prejudices and customs.

It is now some seventy years ago since the first Protestant approaches were made to that shrine of Buddhism; and, curiously enough, it was *woman's hand*, as in the zenana work in India and the evangelistic work in Mexico, that put the gospel's golden key in the door that opened into Siam. While living at Rangoon, in Burmah, Mrs. Ann Hasseltine Judson became deeply interested in the Siamese residents in that city. On the last day of April, 1818, she wrote to a friend in this country as follows:

"Accompanying is a catechism in Siamese which I have just copied for