

places, till we reach the top, and at last, the dome of the Golden Pagoda bursts on our vision.

We expected to find rather cramped quarters up here, since all this elevation has been built, but instead, we find the space on the top quite large and airy.

A great many statues of Buddha, some of them eight or ten times larger than life size, are to be seen here and there, and everywhere, beneath trees, under arches, or in the temples.

A band is playing that strange, tuneless minor music that seems to appeal so strongly to the Oriental mind. The sight is gay beyond description. Flower-bedecked women, smoking large gaily-colored cigarettes, laugh and joke with each other, or join in a pretty tripping dance about some favorite statue, while in the background the sun-bathed Golden Pagoda rears its dome against a cloudless sky.

"Oh, what is going on over there?" eagerly asks one of our party; and we hurry Dr. Armstrong along to a group seated about the "Little Golden Lady." A small child, or dwarf rather, robed in green and pink with a strangely made gold gauze over-dress, that stands out round her waist, like wings. She is performing a queer sort of dance, twisting her body and hands, but scarcely moving her feet.

"Now, what does that mean? Is there any religious significance in this performance?" someone asks. Dr. Armstrong answers, "It is beyond me. But who can tell?"

This ceremony being over, a large bell is sending its sweet tinkling music upon the morning air, and the crowd is pressing forward to pray, make an offering to the priest, or place a garland upon a shrine.

"Do the followers of Buddha really pray?" we ask.

"No, in this religion there is not a thought of a Higher Power," said Dr. Armstrong, "not so much that they deny God, as that they know nothing about Him. It has adopted the word 'pray,' but only with the meaning of inner, self-communion. Let us go and see this service."

We find the priest clothed in a handsome yellow plush garment all patched together of small pieces.

"How strange," we say, "the cloth is fresh and new, yet patched!"

"You see," our guide explains, "it is turned in the wheel of the Laws that the priests are to be dressed in rags. Yet they naturally like rich, gay clothing; so they cut up good cloth and piece it together, thus fulfilling the letter of the Law. Is not this very like poor human nature everywhere? You notice that phrase, 'Turned in the wheel of the laws?' It is from this expression that the prayer-wheels have had their origin.

The people are arranging themselves on the floor in front of the priest and seem quite serious and well behaved. This priestly dignitary is seated behind a huge palm-leaf fan, the handle being placed in a triangular piece of wood, the fan is kept in an upright position. He seems to take things quite calmly; just now he is preparing himself a quid of betel to chew. This is a kind of nut that stains the lips and teeth a bright, yellowish-red. He seems quite intent on his occupation. First he chops the betel with a silver instrument that looks like our old candle snuffers, then dips his fingers into a little saucer of oil, and smears a large green leaf, in which he places the minced betel nut, rolls it up, sticks it into his mouth, and begins to suck and chew as if no eager congregation were waiting for him to conduct the service. When his simple refreshment is finished, he begins to chant, the people devoutly following, until the murmur of many voices rises up to the golden dome.

The service is soon finished and the people press forward to put their offerings in a wooden bowl that is placed by the side of the priest. Dr. Armstrong remarks: "The wheels of the law enact that priests shall carry a wooden bowl from door to door, and beg their food; but this custom has changed."

Two little boys come forward and want to show us all the many sights of the gay pageant. They can speak English fairly well, and are full of life and good spirits. We notice that they speak of all the doings at the Golden Pagoda as if they only take an outside interest in them. For instance, one of them says:

"These people think that Buddha can cure them."