

inaccessible as the North Pole ; and about as self-centred and exclusive as the gods of Epicurus. Besides being the metropolis of Buddhism in the form of Lamaism, it is a position of peculiar strategic importance, the fate of which must tell on the fortunes of the Buddhist system throughout all China beyond the Wall. Taking all this into account, many think to-day of Thibet as of a land marked off from the rest of creation, lifted by geographical position and Mahatmic prestige to a higher plane, looking down from her proud eminence, as from a home in the skies, on the dwellers that grovel on the earth beneath.

It is with no small shock that one finds these rose tints vanish before the sober prose of authenticated travel. Distance lends enchantment to the view, and the fairy bubble bursts at the first puncture of realistic description. Intellectually Thibet, instead of being another Olympus, is pretty much fallow ground. Childishness rules, combined with animal impulsiveness and the play of emotions that lie on the merest surface of being. "The Thibetans," says Bonvalot, "shift from the most abject submission to the most audacious insolence ; one moment with their foreheads on the ground, the next they are standing erect sword in hand. It would seem as though fear were at the bottom of all their emotions. One alarm sets them in one direction, then another cause of fear sets them off in another, and so their feeble will vacillates, shifting like a needle between two poles. They prefer, before everything else, relaxation and sleep ; and whether in order to be left quiet, or because they are put out by those who disturb them, they have outbursts of passion, like the man who killed the wolf by day because it frightened him by night."

The Thibetans are much more what they are in virtue of climatic than religious conditions. Lamaism is a tinkling cymbal, a corpse of ceremony, a thoughtless void. Its aim, as set forth in the beginning, is to empty consciousness of contents, to resolve personality into abstraction. Hence there is no foothold for thought in the system, and the round of religious activity has no more significance as regards progress than the marking of time by soldiers who have been gathered for review. But if the religion of the land does nothing to stir the stagnant pool of the national intellect, climatic conditions are pronounced enough to yield both physical and intellectual imprint, and to constitute a training school of their own, often rigorous and unceremonious to the last degree. In this school, as in our own land under the inflexible dominies of a past age, the scholar is often marred in the making. Over-rigor has stunted the type, and the law of adaptation asserted her authority at the cost of losing much to gain a little. This applies especially to the colder, loftier, and more unproductive regions ; for "in proportion as the land is more generous, the inhabitants take more care of themselves and have stronger frames" (Bonvalot's "Across Thibet," vol. ii., p. 114). The race somewhat varies in type, but probably climatic conditions have to do with the greater part of the variations. Throughout by far the larger portion of Thibe-