

CHAPTER XIII

RELIGION

IN Tibet there are two religious bodies; the Buddhists, whom we now generally call Lamaists, and the Pon-bo. These two have a common basis in the ancient worship of a medley of gods, representing more or less obviously the forces of nature. Connected with this mythology was a burdensome belief in magic. Much of all these tyrannical fears has survived even in Lamaism, while the Pon-bo creed of to-day, which does not profess Buddha at all, is substantially the ancient cult, still held by those whose ancestors, for various reasons, failed to "go over" in the days when the newly imported religion was covering the land. The lower, grosser elements of Lamaism are substantially repeated among the Pon-bo; or rather we may say that the vulgar Lamaist has the Pon-bo creed plus some vague notion of Gautama's high abstractions.

The relation between the two bodies is similar to that which might have been seen in Europe as late as the sixth century A.D., when there still existed communities professing the ancient paganism, while enthroned Christianity had not been able to free itself from a heritage of magic, witch and devil cult, and had shifted the worship of the Finite from demi-gods to saints. But then in Europe, as now in Tibet