

to the people of the plains south of the Himalayas. The wall of mountains encircling the Vale has not only made invasion a rare occurrence, but has restricted external trade and migration. Hence the Kashmiris, as the inhabitants are called, have been left largely to work out their own destiny undisturbed by outside influences. Three religions have prevailed successively, — Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Mohammedanism; and each has doubtless had its appropriate effect. Nevertheless, according to Stein, the chief authority on the history of Kashmir, the character of the mass of the people seems to have changed but little since the Buddhist days, thirteen centuries ago, when the keen Chinese pilgrim, Hwen Tsiang, described the Kashmiris as "light and frivolous, and of a weak, pusillanimous disposition; handsome in appearance, given to cunning, fond of learning, and well instructed." Apparently, the character of the Kashmiris of to-day is largely the result of modifications produced by physical environment upon the racial traits which the original settlers brought with them.

Because of the difficulty of crossing the mountain passes, Kashmir has always been isolated; strangers have rarely visited the country; the natives have not often gone out. Hence, as has been often said, the Kashmiri has become cowardly, exclusive, and suspicious. Until lately he has hated and feared the few foreigners whom he has seen, has suspected them of designing evil against himself, and, naturally, has tried to keep them out. The cowardice of the Kashmiri outside Kashmir is proverbial; and at home it is laughable. Several times in the street, when I met men and unexpectedly turned on them, or asked them questions,