

The intensity of the Ladakh's superstition may perhaps be connected with the impenetrability of his great mountains, fit homes for millions of demons, and to the suddenness of the disasters which overtake him. On a clear day, a storm may gather on one of the snowy passes and in an hour or two overwhelm a whole caravan. Under the influence of a mild drizzle or of a bit of melting snow, the soil may be loosened so that avalanches of rock suddenly sweep down the steep mountain sides to block the roads, kill travelers, and bury villages. At other times, as happened at Leh a few years ago, a flood of accumulated snow-water may burst out of an apparently dry valley, and destroy houses, fields, and villages. When he sees so many evidences of what he supposes to be the activity of demons, small wonder that the Ladakhi becomes nervous, and thinks it wise to save his crops from drought and frost by hiring a red lama to sit beside his field while it is being sown, and read all day from a leaf of the holy book. And it is equally wise to keep demons out of the house by smearing the lintels, doorposts, and corners with blood or red paint, a custom curiously suggestive of that of the ancient Israelites.

In spite of his fears, the Ladakhi is famous for his good humor, partly, perhaps, because of the clearness and invigorating quality of the mountain air, which undeniably tends to put the traveler in high spirits. I had an illustration of the good temper of the Ladakhis during a two weeks' trip from Leh to Lake Pangong, sixty miles to the east, on the border of Tibet. On the way it was necessary to use coolies in crossing the pass of Chang La, 18,400 feet high, over the most remote and lofty of the three ranges of the