

the sun had set, came down from the snow above. We were entering Ladak, an offshoot of Tibet, and the only redeeming feature in the country was the picturesqueness of its monasteries, perched high upon every prominent rock. As regards its natural scenery, it would be difficult to find any more dreary-looking country than Ladak. Its mountains, though lofty, are not grand or rugged, but resemble a monotonous succession of gigantic cinder-heaps. But the Buddhist monasteries, the fluttering prayer-flags, the chortens, and the many other signs of a religion almost totally unrepresented in India, gave the country a charm which just relieved it from utter condemnation. These signs of Buddhist life have many times before been described, so I need only refer here to the long rows of what appeared to be immense graves, overlaid with hundreds of slabs, each engraved with the formula, "Om mane padme hum" ("Oh! the jewel of the lotus"), the talismanic prayer which the devotees of this religion believe will produce more and more beneficent results the oftener it is repeated; the many-coloured flags fluttering in the breeze inscribed with the same magic formula, and breathing with each new flutter one fresh prayer to heaven; the dirty, yellow-clad monks, with their shaven heads, their string of beads round their necks, and their prayer-wheels reeling off a prayer with each successive revolution. All these are well-known characteristics of Buddhist life, and require only a passing reference here. I admired their picturesqueness and wondered at the quaintness of such superstitions, but had no time to study in detail the particular phase the Buddhist religion has taken in this far-away corner of Tibet.

We travelled rapidly through the country, and on July 31 reached its principal place, Leh. In twenty days our party had travelled just over four hundred miles, and crossed one pass of eleven thousand and three of thirteen thousand feet—all, however, very easy. On entering Leh I was met by old Shukar Ali, the only Ladaki who had come across the Mustagh