

THE PREACHING OF BUDDHA.

The following fragments are extracts from one of the religious books of the Buddhists of Nepal, entitled the

"WHITE LOTUS OF THE GOOD LAW."

THE original work, which is written in Sanskrit, makes part of the numerous collection of Buddhist books, discovered by M. Hodgson, the English resident at the Court of Katmandou, and sent by him to the Asiatic Society of Paris. M. Burnouf examined, some years since, this collection, which includes a great part of the canonical books of the Buddhists, and of which translations are found in all the nations which are Buddhists, (the people of Thibet, China, and the Moguls.) The book, from which the following extracts are taken, is one of the most venerated, by all the nations, which worship Buddha, and shows very clearly the method followed by the Sage who bears this name. The work is in prose and verse. The versified part is only the reproduction in a metrical rather than a poetical form of the part written in prose. We prefix an extract from the article of M. Eugene Burnouf, on the *origin* of Buddhism.

"The privileged caste of the Brahmins reserved to itself the exclusive monopoly of science and of religion; their morals were relaxed; ignorance, cupidity, and the crimes which it induces, had already deeply changed the ancient society described in the Laws of Menu. In the midst of these disorders, (about six centuries before Christ,) in the north of Bengal, a young Prince born into the military caste, renounced the throne, became a *religious*, and took the name of Buddha. His doctrine, which was more moral than metaphysical, at least in principle, reposed on an opinion admitted as a fact, and upon a hope presented as a certainty. This opinion is, that the visible world is in a perpetual change; that death proceeds to life, and life to death; that man, like all the living beings who surround him, revolves in the eternally moving circle of transmigration; that he passes successively through all the forms of life, from the most elementary up to the most perfect; that the place, which he occupies in the vast scale of living beings, depends on the merit of the actions which he performs in this world, and that thus the virtuous man ought, after this life, to be born again with a divine body, and the guilty with a body accursed; that the rewards of heaven and the pains of hell, like all which this world contains, have only a limited duration; that time exhausts the merit of virtuous actions, and effaces the evil of bad ones; and that the fatal law of change brings back to the earth both the god and the devil, to put both again on trial, and cause them to run a new course of transmigration. The hope, which the Buddha came to bring to men, was the possibility of escaping from the law of transmigration by entering that which he calls enfranchisement; that is to say, according to one of the oldest schools, the annihilation of the thinking principle as well as of the material principle. That annihilation was not entire until death; but he who was destined to attain to it, possessed during his life an unlimited science, which gave him the pure view of the world as it is, that is, the knowledge of the physical and intellectual laws, and the practice of the six transcendent perfections, of alms, of morality, of science, of energy, of patience, and of charity. The authority, on which the votary rested his teaching, was wholly personal; it was formed of two

elements, one real, the other ideal. The one was regularity and sanctity of conduct, of which chastity and patience formed the principal traits. The second was the pretension that he had to be Buddha, that is, illuminated, and as such, to possess a supernatural power and science. With his power he resisted the attacks of vice; with his science he represented to himself, under a clear and complete form, the past and the future. Hence he could recount all which he had done in his former existences, and he affirmed thus, that an incalculable number of beings had already attained, like himself, by the practice of the same virtues, to the dignity of Buddha. He offered himself, in short, to men as their Saviour, and he promised them that his death should not destroy his doctrine, but that this doctrine should endure after him for many ages, and that when its salutary action should have ceased, there would appear to the world a new Buddha, whom he would announce by his own name; and the legends say that before descending on earth, he had been consecrated in Heaven in the quality of the future Buddha.

The philosophic opinion, by which he justified his mission, was shared by all classes, Brahmins, warriors, farmers, merchants, all believed equally in the fatality of transmigration, in the retribution of rewards and pains, in the necessity of escaping in a decisive manner the perpetually changing condition of a merely relative existence. He believed in the truths admitted by the Brahmins. His disciples lived like them, and like them imposed stern penances, bending under that ancient sentence of reprobation fulminated against the body by oriental asceticism. It does not appear that Buddha laid any claim himself to miraculous power. In fact, in one of his discourses, occur these remarkable words. A king urged him to confound his adversaries by the exhibition of that superhuman force, which is made to reduce incredulity to silence: "O king!" replied the Buddha, "I do not teach the law to my disciples by saying to them, Go work miracles before the Brahmins and the masters of houses whom you meet, but I teach them in this wise, Live, O holy one, by concealing your good works, and by exposing your sins." This profound humility, this entire renunciation is the characteristic trait of primitive Buddhism, and was one of the most powerful instruments of its success with the people."

THE Tathāgata* is equal and not unequal towards all beings, when it is the question to convert them: "He is, O Kaçyapa,† as the rays of the sun and moon, which shine alike upon the virtuous and the wicked, the high and the low; on those who have a good odor, and those who have a bad; on all these the rays fall equally and not unequally at one and the same time. So, O Kaçyapa, the rays of intelligence, endowed with the knowledge of omnipotence, make the Tathāgatas venerable. Complete instruction in the good law is equally necessary for all beings, for those who have

* Tathāgata means, he who has come like Anterior Buddha, and is synonymous with Buddha.

† Kaçyapa was of the Brahminical caste, one of the first disciples of Buddha.

entered into the five roads of existence, for those, who according to their inclination have taken the great vehicle, or the vehicle of Pratyeka-Buddha,* or that of the auditors. And there is neither diminution or augmentation of absolute wisdom in such or such a Tathâgata. On the contrary, all equally exist, and are equally born to unite science and virtue. There are not, O Kaçyapa three vehicles; there are only beings who act differently from each other; it is on account of that we discriminate three vehicles.†

This said, the respectable Kâçyapa spoke thus to Bhagavat: † “If there are not, O Bhagavat! three different vehicles, why employ in the present world the distinct denominations of Auditors, Pratyêkabuddhas and Bodhisattvas?” ‡ This said, Bhagavat spoke thus to the respectable Kaçyapa: “It is, O Kaçyapa, as when a potter makes different pots of the same clay. Some become vases to contain molasses, others are for clarified butter, others for milk, others for curds, others inferior and impure vases. The variety does not belong to the clay, it is only the difference of the substance that we put in them, whence comes the diversity of the vases. So there is really only one vehicle, which is the vehicle of Buddha; there is no second, no third vehicle.” This said, the respectable Kaçyapa spoke thus to Bhagavat: “If beings, arising from this union of three worlds, have different inclinations, is there for them a single annihilation, or two, or three?” Bhagavat said, “Annihilation, O Kaçyapa, results from the comprehension of the equality of all laws; there is only one, and not two or three. Therefore, O Kaçyapa, I will propose to thee a parable; for penetrating men know through parables the sense of what is said.”

* Pratyeka-Buddhas is a kind of selfish Buddha, who possesses science without endeavoring to spread it, for the sake of saving others. The *great vehicle*, is a figurative expression, designating the state of Buddha, which is the first of the three means that the Buddhist doctrine furnishes to man, whereby to escape the conditions of actual existence.

† Bhagavat means he who is perfect in virtue and happiness, and is the most honorary title applied to Buddha.

‡ The Bodhisattva is a potential Buddha, a Buddha not yet completely developed, but sure of being so, when he shall have finished his *last* mortal existence.

“It is as if, O Kaçyapa, a man born blind should say, ‘there are no forms, of which some have beautiful and some ugly colors; no spectators of these different forms; there is no sun, nor moon, nor constellations, nor stars; and no spectators who see stars.’ And when other men reply to the man born blind, there are diversities of color and spectators of these diverse colors; there is a sun and a moon, and constellations and stars, and spectators who see the stars, the man born blind believes them not, and wishes to have no relations with them. Then there comes a physician who knows all maladies; he looks on this man born blind, and this reflection comes into his mind: it is for the guilty conduct of this man in an anterior life, that he is born blind. All the maladies which appear in this world, whatever they are, are in four classes; those produced by wind, those produced by bile, those produced by phlegm, and those which come by the morbid state of the three principles united. This physician reflected much upon the means of curing this malady, and this reflection came into his mind: the substances which are in use here, are not capable of destroying this evil; but there exist in Himavat, king of mountains, four medicinal plants, and what are they? The first is named *that which possesses all savors and all colors*; the second, *that which delivers from all maladies*; the third, *that which neutralizes all poisons*; the fourth, *that which procures well-being in whatsoever situation it may be*. These are the four medicinal plants. Then the physician, feeling touched with compassion for the man born blind, thought on the means of going to Himavat, king of mountains, and having gone thither, he mounted to the summit, he descended into the valley, he traversed the mountain in his search, and having sought he discovered these four medicinal plants, and having discovered them, he gave them to the blind man to take, one after having masticated it with the teeth, another after having pounded it, this after having cooked it with other substances, that after mingling it with other raw substances, another by introducing it into a given part of the body with a needle, another after having consumed it in the fire, the last, after having employed it, mingled with other substances as food or as drink.

Then the man born blind, in consequence of having em-

ployed these means, recovered his sight, and having recovered it he looked above, below, far and near; he saw the rays of the sun, and moon, the constellations, the stars, and all forms; and thus he spoke: "Certainly I was a fool in that I never would believe those who saw and reported to me these things. Now I see every thing, I am delivered from my blindness; I have recovered sight, and there is no one in the world who is in any thing above me."

But at this moment the Sages endowed with the five kinds of supernatural knowledge present themselves; these Sages who have divine sight, divine hearing, knowledge of the thoughts of others, the memory of their anterior existences, and of a supernatural power, speak thus to this man: "Thou hast only recovered sight, O man, and still thou knowest nothing. Whence comes then this pride? Thou hast not wisdom and thou art not instructed." Then they speak to him thus: "When thou art seated in the interiors of thy house, O man, thou seest not, thou knowest not other forms which are without; thou distinguishest not in beings whether their thoughts are benevolent or hostile to thee; thou perceivest not, thou understandest not at the distance of five yôdjanas the sound of the conch, of the tambour, and of the human voice; thou canst not transport thyself even to the distance of a kroçã, without making use of thy feet; thou hast been engendered and developed in the body of thy mother, and thou dost not even remember that. How then art thou learned, and how knowest thou everything, and how canst thou say, I see everything? Know, O man, that that which is clearness is obscurity; know also that that which is obscurity is clearness."

Then this man speaks thus to the sages: What means must I employ, or what good work must I do to acquire an equal wisdom? I can by your favor obtain these qualities. Then these Sages say thus to the man: If thou desirest wisdom, contemplate the law, seated in the desert, or in the forest, or in the caverns of the mountains, and free thyself from the corruption of evil. Then, endowed with purified qualities, thou shalt obtain supernatural knowledge. Then this man, following this counsel, entering into the religious life, living in the desert, his thought fixed upon a single object, was freed from that of the world, and

acquired these five kinds of supernatural knowledge; and having acquired them, he reflected thus; The conduct which I pursued before, put me in possession of no law, and of no quality. Now, on the contrary, I go wherever my thought goes; before I had only little wisdom, little judgment, I was blind.

Behold, O Kâçyapa! the parable that I would propose to thee to make thee comprehend the sense of my discourse. See now what is in it. The man blind from his birth, O Kâçyapa! designates those beings who are shut up in the revolution of the world, into which is entrance by five roads; they are those who know not the excellent law, and who accumulate upon themselves the obscurity and the thick darkness of the corruption of evil. They are blinded by ignorance, and in this state of blindness they collect the conceptions, under the name and the form which are the effect of the conceptions, until at last there takes place the production of what is a great mass of miseries.* Thus are blind beings shut up by ignorance in the revolution of the world.

But the Tathâgata, who is placed beyond the union of the three worlds, feeling compassion for them, moved with pity, as is a father for his only beloved son, having descended into the union of the three worlds, contemplates beings revolving in the circle of transmigration, and beings who know not the true means of escaping from the world. Then Bhagavat looked on them with the eyes of wisdom, and having seen them, he knew them. "These beings," said he, "after having accomplished, in the first place, the principle of virtue, have feeble hatreds and vivid attachments, or feeble attachments and vivid hatreds and errors. Some have little intelligence; others are wise; these have come to maturity and are pure; those follow false doctrines. Bhagavat, by employing the means he has at his disposal, teaches these beings three vehicles. Then the Bôdhisattvas, like the sages endowed with the five kinds of supernatural knowledge, and who have perfectly clear sight, the Bôdhisattvas, I say, having conceived the thought of the

* The French translator from the Sanscrit, says,—in an explanation of this obscure passage,—See "L'Histoire du Bouddhisme indien," par M. Burnouf.

sees, like the blind man, the differing thoughts and dispositions of all the beings who make up the reunion of the three worlds.

I who am the king of law, I who am born in the world, and who govern existence, I explain the law to creatures, after having recognized their inclinations. Great heroes, whose intelligence is firm, preserve for a long time my word; they guard also my secret, and do not reveal it to creatures. Indeed, from the moment that the ignorant hear this science so difficult to comprehend, immediately conceiving doubts in their madness, they will fall from it, and fall into error. I proportion my language to the subject and the strength of each; and I correct a doctrine by a contrary explication. It is, O Kâçyapa, as if a cloud, raising itself above the universe, covered it entirely, hiding all the earth. Full of water, surrounded with a garland of lightning, this great cloud, which resounds with the noise of thunder, spreads joy over all creatures. Arresting the rays of the sun, refreshing the sphere of the world, descending so near the earth as to be touched with the hand, it pours out water on every side. Spreading in an uniform manner an immense mass of water, and resplendent with the lightnings which escape from its sides, it makes the earth rejoice. And the medicinal plants which have burst from the surface of this earth, the herbs, the bushes, the kings of the forest, little and great trees; the different seeds, and every thing which makes verdure; all the vegetables which are found in the mountains, in the caverns, and in the groves; the herbs, the bushes, the trees, this cloud fills them with joy, it spreads joy upon the dry earth, and it moistens the medicinal plants; and this homogeneous water of the cloud, the herbs and the bushes pump up, every one according to its force and its object. And the different kinds of trees, the great as well as the small, and the middle-sized trees, all drink this water, each one according to its age and its strength; they drink it and grow, each one according to its need. Absorbing the water of the cloud by their trunks, their twigs, their bark, their branches, their boughs, their leaves, the great medicinal plants put forth flowers and fruits. Each one according to its strength, according to its destination, and conformably to the nature of the germ whence it

springs, produces a distinct fruit, and nevertheless there is one homogeneous water like that which fell from the cloud. So, O Kāçyapa, the Buddha comes into the world, like a cloud which covers the universe, and hardly is the chief of the world born, than he speaks and teaches the true doctrine to creatures.

And thus, says the great sage, honored in the world, in union with gods. I am Tathagata, the conqueror, the best of men; I have appeared in the world like a cloud. I will overflow with joy all beings whose limbs are dry, and who are attached to the triple condition of existence. I will establish in happiness those who are consumed with pain, and give to them pleasures and annihilation. — Listen to me, oh ye troops of gods and men! Approach and look upon me. I am Tathagata the blessed, the being without a superior, who is born here in the world to save it. And I preach to thousands of millions of living beings the pure and very beautiful law; its nature is one and homogeneous; it is deliverance and annihilation. — With one and the same voice I explain the law, taking incessantly for my subject the state of Buddha, for this law is uniform; inequality has no place in it, no more than affection or hatred.

You may be converted; there is never in me any preference or aversion for any, whosoever he may be. It is the same law that I explain to all beings, the same for one as for another.

Exclusively occupied with this work, I explain the law; whether I rest, or remain standing, whether I lie upon my bed or am seated upon my seat, I never experience fatigue. I fill the whole universe with joy, like a cloud which pours everywhere a homogeneous water, always equally well disposed towards respectable men, as towards the lowest, towards virtuous men as towards the wicked; towards abandoned men as towards those who have conducted most regularly; towards those who follow heterodox doctrines and false opinions, as towards those whose doctrines are sound and perfect.

Finally, I explain to little as well as to great minds, and to those whose organs have a supernatural power; inaccessible to fatigue, I spread everywhere, in a suitable manner, the rain of the law.

After having heard my voice, according to the measure

of their strength, beings are established in different situations, among the gods, among men, in beautiful bodies, among the Cakras, the Brahmas, and the Tchakravartins.

Listen. I am going to explain to you what the humble and small plants are, which are found in the world; what the plants of middle size are; and what the trees of great height. Those men who live with a knowledge of the law exempt from imperfections, who have obtained annihilation, who have the six kinds of supernatural knowledge, and the three sciences, these men are named the small plants. The men who live in the caverns of the mountains, and who aspire to the state of Pratyekâbuddha, men whose minds are half purified, are the plants of middle size. Those who solicit the rank of heroes, saying, I will be a Buddha, I will be the chief of gods and men, and who cultivate energy and contemplation, these are the most elevated plants. And the sons of Buddha, who quietly, and full of reserve, cultivate charity, and conceive no doubt concerning the rank of heroes among men, these are named trees. Those who turn the wheel and look not backward, the strong men who possess the power of supernatural faculties, and who deliver millions of living beings, these are named great trees.

It is, however, one and the same law which is preached by the conqueror, even as it is one homogeneous water which is poured out by the cloud, those men who possess as I have just said, the different faculties, are as the different plants which burst from the surface of the earth.

Thou mayst know by this example and this explanation the means of which Tathagaka makes use; thou knowest how he preaches a single law, whose different developments resemble drops of rain. As to me, I will pour out the rain of the law, and the whole world shall be filled with satisfaction, and men shall meditate, each one according to his strength upon this homogeneous law which I explain. So that while the rain falls, the herbs and the bushes, as well as the plants of middle size, the trees of all sizes, shall shine in the ten points of space.

This instruction, which exists always for the happiness of the world, gives joy by different laws to the whole universe; the whole world is overflowed with joy as plants are covered with flowers. The plants of middle size, which

grow upon the earth, and the venerable sages, who are firm in the destruction of faults, and running over immense forests, show the well-taught law to the Bodhisattvas. The numerous Bodhisattvas, endowed with memory and fortitude, who having an exact idea of the three worlds, seeking the supreme state of Buddha, eminently grow like the trees. Those who possess supernatural faculties, and the four contemplations, who having heard of void, experience joy therein, and who emit from their bodies millions of rays, are called great trees.

This teaching of the law, O Kâçyapa, is like the water which the cloud pours out over all, and by whose action the great plants produce in abundance mortal flowers. I explain the law which is the cause of itself; I tried, in its time, the state of Buddha, which belongs to the great sage; behold my skilfulness in the use of means; it is that of all the guides of the world.

What I have said is the supreme truth; may my auditors arrive at complete annihilation; may they follow the excellent way which conducts to the state of Buddha; may all the auditors, who hear me, become Buddhas.

EROS.

THE sense of the world is short,
Long and various the report, —
To love and be beloved;—
Men and gods have not outlearned it,
And how oft so e'er they've turned it,
Tis not to be improved.