



MAGIC AND MYSTERY

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POPULAR HISTORY

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contracted and useless, to the ground. It is only in recent years that the British Government has put a stop to such religious practices as the throwing of children into the Ganges, the burning of old women, the *suttee* or custom of a widow cremating herself on the funeral pile of her husband, and the festival of Juggernaut, which was an idol-car dragged along, its path being marked by the bodies of mangled victims, who voluntarily threw themselves before the wheels to be crushed to death.

Buddhism, the religion of Buddh, prevails in Burmah, China, and such districts, and is the most prevalent form of religion upon earth, some 400 million people following it. It is curious in this connection that the Chinese Government once threatened a certain god with deposition if he should fail to fulfil the prayers of the people.¹⁰

It is the purest form of paganism, has only one idol, and is distinguished by the peculiarity that it lacks any existing god. Adoration is paid to the image of Bood, or Gautama, who was a god at a former period, having lived through 400 millions of worlds, and in every sort of shape and form. The *Dzat* and *Bedagat* are the sacred books of this superstition, and the legends contained in them are a fruitful source of designs for Burmah paintings and carvings, which can be seen in the London bazaars or arcades any day. The Buddh who is now worshipped became "nic-banned," or annihilated, over 2,000 years ago; and the next Buddh is to appear in about 7,000 years from the present time. Lamaism is a branch of Buddhism observed in Central Asia and some parts of Russia. When the Grand Lama expires one of his priests, who conveniently becomes inspired, succeeds him. Pilgrimages are paid to worship the Grand Lama in the flesh, and he sometimes distributes as charms gilt balls of consecrated dough, which the Tartars use in many superstitious practices, otherwise described as pellets made from his excrement.

"There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet," is the creed of those who profess Mohammedanism—or, to speak more correctly, Islamism. Islam means submission to the will of God, and every man who makes this profession in Arabia, Egypt, Africa, and the Moorish States is a

¹⁰ Confucianism and Taoism, with their sacred books of *Kings* and *Tao-te-King*, are the religions of the Chinese.

