

ART. III.—*The Nirvana of the Northern Buddhists.* By the
Rev. J. EDKINS, D.D., of Peking.

THE word "Nirvana" expresses the doctrine of immortal hope as held by the ten Buddhist nations; the Singhalese of Ceylon, the Ghoorkas of Nepaul, the Tibetans, Mongols, Chinese, Coreans, Japanese, Cochin Chinese, Siamese, and Birmese.

The happiness they are looking for beyond this life, according to the teaching of Shakyamuni, is the Nirvana. Very interesting it is to inquire what all these races think of the future existence of the soul and of the real nature of death.

The religious thinker in all lands meditates much on death, and assigns to it according to his idea its own special significance. Death is to all men the inevitable end of their bodily activity, and presents in all countries to every reflective observer the same phenomena. But the metaphysical Hindoo, the believer in the necessary evil attaching to matter, will not look on death in the same way as the singer of some Scandinavian "Saga," or as the hunter in the primeval forests of America.

What more natural, then, that the meditative Buddhist in his cloister erected on the banks of some ancient Hindoo river, accustomed as he was to look on human life as utterly bad and delusive, should learn to regard death as the joyful enfranchisement of the captive soul, a rest from the weary longings and disappointments of poor human nature?

Those men among the contemplative monks of Hindoo antiquity who had the sharpest intellects and the highest spiritual development became the leaders of the multitude. What they said was truth and law. It was accepted by inferior men, who taught it as authoritative. The Nirvana is a doctrine of death suited to a monkish system which declares all the joy of life to be deception, and looks with philo-

sophical pity on the grandeur of kings and the glory of heroes. Life is to them a painful struggle with Mara, the chief of demons. All things are born but to suffer and to die. Even death does not, without the aid of Buddha's wisdom, extricate them from the wheel of successive births and deaths in the wider world, of which this world forms a part. From this evil destiny, the Nirvana sets them free for ever. The wise course for a man to take is to aim at the attainment of the Nirvana during his present life by moral and monastic methods, so as to be extricated now from the "Samsara" or world of delusions.

The northern Buddhist nations are seven, and the southern three. The Tibetans and Mongols gave up their old religion when they became Buddhists. The worship of non-Buddhist divinities, and the faith of wizards, which they formerly had, was exchanged for Buddhism, with its hope of the Western Paradise and its Nirvana. The most educated amongst these nations are the Lamas; and it is their duty to read the Buddhist metaphysics. They accept the Buddhist denial of the reality of the world, and with it they receive the Nirvana, its proper accompaniment. The inferior Lamas and the common Tibetans and Mongols believe in the metempsychosis, and in the heavens and hells, and other states required to complete the retribution which attends all human actions according to that doctrine. The belief in the souls of faithful worshippers being conveyed at death to the Paradise of "Amitabha" in the extreme west is very widely spread among these classes, and this doctrine tends very much to keep the Nirvana out of sight. The same is true of the Ghoorkas.

The Chinese faith in Buddhism has been very much kept in check by Confucianism. The spirit of that religion is highly sceptical. So also is the Buddhist metaphysical philosophy. Buddhism adapts itself with great readiness to this state of things. It has fictitious worlds of joy and misery for the credulous, and a series of bold negations for those who are fond of nihilism. On the whole the balance is on the side of unbelief. The deniers of the Buddhist hope

are in China bolder than its defenders. Still it is professed. The Chinese Buddhist looks for the Nirvana or for the western Paradise as the goal of his efforts. But he is rather shy of a controversy with the Confucianists, because they have on their side position, confidence, learning and imperial decrees. On his tombstone he does, however, express hope of the "Nirvana" or of the heaven of "Omito fo." At least his friends do so for him in monumental inscriptions. The rich Confucianist also after his death has priests invited by his family to perform funeral prayers for his quick release from the sufferings to which he may be subjected by the order of "Yama," king of death, in the prisons of the Buddhist purgatory. As to the Nirvana, no Confucianist hopes for it.

The state of things in regard to hope of the future life is much the same in Corea and Japan. In Corea Confucianism is strong, as strong perhaps as in China, at least among the upper classes. Buddhism is there despised by the educated. In Japan, Buddhism is stronger because it was the favourite religion of the Sioguns. The Paradise of the Western Heaven was very much thought of in the time of their domination. It has influenced not a little the religious life of the people, who seem to look for future happiness in this form as a certainty. This at least is implied by inscriptions to be seen on many graves. Just as this hope has become definite, the expectation of the Nirvana has become dim. The Western Heaven once accepted, there was not much hope for the colder and more abstruse idea of the Nirvana. The Nirvana is a heaven devised by metaphysicians, the result of logical necessity, and the expectation of it, and the striving after it, are very much limited to metaphysical logicians.

Neither in China nor in Japan is the transmigration of the soul into an animal body at death entertained much as a serious article of faith. The flesh of animals is used for food commonly in both these countries with as little scruple as amongst ourselves. This is the case outside of the monastery. Some of the examples of the opinions held on this and other

connected subjects by monks themselves at the present time will be given further on.

The way is left open for a belief in heaven and hell in a manner more like the Christian doctrine. It is not difficult to observe, in the popular way of thinking on this subject, an approximation to the idea of a single abode of joy for the good, and a single abode of punishment for the wicked. The popular consciousness has shaped out a niche into which the Western Paradise of "Amitabha" fits aptly. Among the Buddhist hells the eighteenth is the most spoken of. The Buddhism of Cochin China may be looked on as an offshoot of Chinese Buddhism. Amongst the three Southern Buddhist nations the transmigration of souls is probably much more believed among the people than in the north. The Buddhists of Ceylon, Birman, and Siam have this doctrine as an article of faith and universal education. With it is joined the Nirvana. There is no Western Paradise. They have not among them the same appetite for the sensuous that is found among the nations of more temperate climates. They are more readily content with annihilation. This is perhaps a result of listlessness of nature. More sinewy and vigorous races are not so pleased, as they are, to be extinguished in the Nirvana. Hence, the effort of the Northern Buddhists to attain a Paradise where a certain conscious existence is enjoyed, need not surprise us.

From this brief statement of the different views held on the immortality of the soul by the Buddhist nations it plainly appears that the treatment of the immortal hope that ever springs up freshly in the human soul by a mode of argument mainly metaphysical has been to a large extent suicidal. The hope itself has become in many cases suffocated by dry discussion respecting it. Unless the argumentative faculties are in a most vigorous condition, the hope expressed by the doctrine of Nirvana becomes nothing better than passive resignation to be extinguished. Those, also, who are by their natural gifts and metaphysical training able to enter with any sort of zeal into the attempt at reaching the Nirvana, are so few, that this form of the hope

of immortality becomes useless as a stimulus to virtue on any large scale, nor does it afford any adequate satisfaction to the human soul in its longings after higher life and knowledge. The Nirvana is essentially abstruse and unreal, and not adapted to become a powerful element in a popular religion.

Yet it should not be inferred that the Buddhists of any of the ten nations have entirely abandoned it, even in those lands where it has the least practical influence. Some account will now be given of the way in which it is talked of by the Chinese Buddhists in their books still reprinted, and in the modern life of the monastery.

In "the Sutra of the Diamond and of the Good Law," the term "Nirvana" is explained as meaning destruction and salvation combined. The translator Hiuen Tsang further explains it as "round and still." This is still further described as complete in virtue and freedom from all checks to progress. Another writer adds that the Nirvana consists, not in the removal of entanglements only, but in final exit from the world of transmigrations. Another writer explains it as "joy and peace." This is a destiny, it is added, which the holy man and the common man may each share if they follow Buddha's method. He who enters the Nirvana is said to "arrive at the shore." "That" is in antithesis to my personality. "I" becomes lost in the objective. In this way of speaking, the moral Nirvana is exchanged for that of extinction of individuality and absorption in the universe. When this modification of the doctrine assumes definite shape, Buddhist writers like to introduce statements of reservation. For example, while the body of Buddha was consumed in flames, his doctrinal self (*fa shen*) exists for ever, and his wisdom and efficacious power cannot cease to be.

They also divide the limited Nirvana from the absolute Nirvana, or as they say, the Nirvana with a remainder, and the Parinirvana without a remainder. The former of these is realized in the cessation of all the entanglements and annoyances of the three worlds, and this is during the present life. The absolute Nirvana (Parinirvana) follows cremation and the loss of consciousness. The Nirvana

of present attainment has a knowledge of misery without being quite rid of it, breaks away from many evils without entire enfranchisement. The final Nirvana is that form which is preferred by the Mahayana school, so much favoured by the Northern Buddhists; and it follows the attainment of all kinds of merit and of wisdom, such as are illustrated in the actions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattwas.

The distinction of Nirvana as moral victory, from *Parinirvana* "annihilation," has come partly from a consideration of the need for reconciling the realized perfection found in Buddha and the Bodhisattwas during their life, with the absolute rest of death. Both are perfection, and the annihilation doctrine must not be so held as to endanger the recognition of the complete virtue of the reforming preacher, who has already attained rescue from temptation, and undertakes to show to others how they also may be free. The "Lotus Sutra" states that the Nirvana is not to be sought for myself alone. I must seek the Nirvana in the way that Buddha sought for it. He postponed it till he was a very old man in order that he might first save multitudes by leading the way to ultimate happiness. This is called Showing the Nirvana. So also the Bodhisattwa is represented as first having his mind fixed in contemplation on the Nirvana, and cultivates the virtues which render him successful in this course of benevolence. Then there is a third stage in his progress. He leads disciples on to the perception of the secret doctrine, and deliberately postpones his own entrance into the state of absolute perfection till he has placed them in safety. The fourth stage is his own entrance into the Nirvana after the expiration of the destined time assigned him at his own wish for aiding in the rescue of others from misery.

After this preliminary sketch, I shall proceed to show, from the Northern Buddhist literature, that the Nirvana means death, and that the peculiarity of the expressions made use of by the Buddhists when speaking of it arose from a desire to ennoble and glorify the death of their great religious guide, Shakymuni Buddha.

The doctrine of Nirvana is very much connected in the life of Buddha with the phenomena and experiences of death. Perhaps this circumstance has not been sufficiently kept in view by European students of the Buddhist teaching on the Nirvana.

The usual translation of the Sanskrit word "Nirvana" in the Chinese translations is *mie tu*, "destruction and salvation." The idea is that salvation is found in extinction. Death is viewed as a glorification. Death coming to a good man is looked at with an honorific feeling. Its painful features should be covered over with well-rounded phrases. The frequency with which the term *mie tu* occurs is proof of the correctness of the statement, that the Nirvana is another name for death. It is *εὐθανασία*. It is the triumph of ascetic life over the body. The body, says the Buddhist, is impregnated with the principles of evil, and in the Nirvana evil is finally conquered. The hero who holds the refined doctrines of the Buddhist metaphysics cannot be supposed by any man who is in sympathy with them to be capable of being vanquished in the struggle with matter. The Buddhist ascetic easily subjugates the body. Whatever happens to it, he retains dominion over it. Even when the body dies, the ascetic still triumphs. His confidence in the permanent certainty of the doctrines in which he believes is not weakened by death. Belief in the Nirvana thus seems to be the assurance felt that in death the highest possible condition of the soul is attained.

Here there is need of care in the use of certain terms. In the Nirvana there is no life, no death, no present, no future. We must not then speak of the Nirvana as a higher life, that would be to say that living is a permanent state. This the Buddhist must carefully avoid. Consciousness must not be predicated of the soul, nor must the soul be imagined as having individual existence or any realized independent life. This would be to transgress the fundamental ideas of Buddhism.

In the use of terms we must allow a certain freedom to the Buddhist logician. Then let us judge of the doctrines they

teach, in a perfectly fair and reasonable manner, taking phrases in the sense assigned to them by the Buddhist. But we need not be deterred by his airy metaphysics from the exercise of common sense in judging of the true meaning of the term Nirvana, and of the dogma that the world is unreal. A little actuality, a little realism introduced into the discussion of the true meaning of the Nirvana, and of the dogma of the non-reality of all things, will help us greatly. To understand Buddhism as a religion having popular power, we must remember that the world is real after all, and must also allow ourselves to regard death as the Nirvana. The world must still be to us visible, tangible and audible.

The Buddhist Sutras are intensely realistic. Thus, the great Nirvana Sutra contains in its descriptions of Buddha's death minute details of a material kind. The assembly that gathered to witness the death of Buddha was so deeply moved, it is said, with grief, that all raised their hands and struck their breasts. They wept loudly and bitterly. Their limbs and finger joints all quivered with emotion. They could not contain themselves. All the minute pores of their bodies gave forth blood, which was sprinkled on the ground.

The last food eaten by Buddha was offered by Chunda, an artisan of Kushinagara. When the assembly knew that Buddha had consented to receive his offering and partake of the food, all were filled with delight. They said to him. "You are like the moon on the fifteenth day when it is full, and the sky is clear without a cloud. Just as all look up at the moon with admiration, so do we look up to you, because Buddha has made his last meal of the food you offered. Honour to you, Chunda, whose body is that of a man, but whose heart is like that of Buddha. You are now a son of Buddha, just as Rahula is his son." Chunda was delighted, and leaped with joy. His feeling was like that of a man, who, his father and mother having died, saw them suddenly restored to life.

When Buddha was about to die, the intelligence was widely spread, and the phrase employed to indicate it was

that he was at once about to enter the Nirvana. Here follows an example of the language made use of. "Joo lai, being about to enter the Nirvana, all the Devas and their companies of followers came to pay their respects and offer gifts. Only Brahma did not come. The assembly was much grieved, and recited Gathas to express their thought. Buddha then, by the exercise of his marvellous power, caused the creation of some of those beings whose nature is hard and indestructible as the diamond. They, revealing their great energy, caused three thousand worlds to shake as they ascended to the palace of Brahma. To him they said, 'How mad and foolish you are! Buddha is about to enter the Nirvana. Why do you not go?' They then made use of their unconquerable strength, symbolized by the name diamond, to point out to him the true state of things. Brahma then went to the place where Buddha and the assembly were gathered.

"Buddha, as he lay, pillowed his head on the north, pointed with his feet to the south, directed his face toward the west, and had his back toward the east. Joo lai, in the middle of the night, quietly, and without a sound, at this hour went into the Nirvana. There were four pairs of the Sara tree growing there. As he entered into the Nirvana, the two pairs of trees on the east and west united and became one tree. So also the two pairs of trees on the north and south became one tree, letting fall a magnificent canopy, which overwhelmed Buddha as he lay. They changed to a white colour to indicate their sorrow, looking white as storks. The great assembly uttered loud sounds of lamentation, which shook the surrounding worlds.

"Then all the people hastened into the city. There they made a gold coffin ornamented with the seven precious things, and also banners and canopies of sandal wood, flowers and other fragrant things. These they brought and presented as their offerings. The multitude after this, weeping, lifted Buddha into the coffin. They then appointed four strong bearers to carry the coffin into the city. They could not lift it. Sixteen were then appointed, but they also

failed to lift it. Then Aniruddha said to the bearers, 'If all the people in the city were to join in the lifting it, they would not succeed, we must obtain the assistance of the Devas.' Before he had finished these words, Indra Shakra appeared, holding a splendid canopy hanging in the air. A multitude of Devas arrived with Indra offering service. Then Buddha felt pity and raised himself in the air in the coffin to the height of a Tala tree.¹ The coffin of itself entered the West Gate, and came out by the East. It then entered the South Gate, and came out by the North. It went round the city seven times, slowly moving in the air, till it reached the place of burial."

"Buddha entered the Nirvana on the 15th of the 2nd month. On the 22nd, when he was about to leave the coffin, the weeping crowd lifted him out and placed him on the couch of the seven precious things. Here he was bathed with fragrant water, and his body wrapped round from head to foot with embroidered cloth, and white satin. He was then replaced in the coffin, which was lifted upon an elevated frame made of fragrant wood. The multitude of those who held fragrant torches and proceeded to stand round the coffin then all entered the state of destruction "

Then follows an account of Buddha raising himself in the coffin on the seventh day after his death to pay respects to his mother. She came from the Tanti Paradise to weep. The coffin was opened. Buddha rose, joined his hands, and said, 'You have come down from a distant Paradise.' He also said to Ananda, 'You should know that it is for an example in after-times to those who are not filial that I have now left my coffin to ask respecting the health and peace of my mother.'

Enough has been given to show the strong realistic form into which the entrance to the Nirvana of Shakyamuni has been worked by the northern school of his disciples. Buddha's resurrection and the performance by him of magical feats after his death may be taken to show that in a certain way

¹ Tala, the palmyra palm. As a measure of length, seventy feet.

he was supposed still to be possessed of consciousness. Realistic views would lead to this. The belief in the universal presence of Buddha in nature as an inherent divinity manifesting himself in the successive phenomena of the physical world would naturally follow such descriptions. To the popular mind of Mongolia Buddha is a powerful divinity who exercises a providence over the world. To the strict Buddhist trained in the metaphysical doctrine of his creed this is an impossibility. Consciousness is lost in the Nirvana. But among the multitude, realism triumphs over metaphysical opinion, and Buddha is regarded as a mighty living power.

This view may throw light on the question raised a few years ago by Professor Max Müller. He stated that the Nirvana means spiritual freedom, and is not inconsistent with a belief in the continued existence of the soul. In the Nirvana we have an esoteric doctrine for the learned who have adopted the opinion that the body and the visible world are delusive, and try to convince themselves that life itself and all its pleasures are not worth having. In the popular belief we have a Nirvana of Victory over moral evil with an esoteric faith in the reality of the world, and of Buddha as a powerful God capable of being addressed in prayer and affording protection to every devotee. But the objection may be raised that the metaphysical view is the only genuine Buddhist orthodoxy. If so, it will be difficult to maintain that Buddha can in any proper sense be said to be living after his entrance into the Nirvana. The Nirvana is "destruction." It is rescue from the state of alternate living and dying to which mortals are exposed. To live is to suffer. Not to live is to be happy. But the belief in metempsychosis makes of death not the extinction of an unhappy existence, but only the door to another form of it. Therefore the Nirvana is made the escape from death as well as life. Death is not a cure for human misery. The Nirvana is so, because it is a permanent state of rest in unconsciousness.

The Hindoo race is fond of metaphysical dogma. The

nations north of India are not so. To them the metempsychosis is not a strongly pronounced belief. To disbelieve in the actuality of the world is against their better judgment. There is not much depth in the convictions, if they are so to be called, of the Northern Buddhist on this point. He is obliged to accept it dogmatically, but in his explanation he shows that his faith is rather in the destructibility of matter, and in its changeableness, than in its non-reality.

So in regard to the present state in which Buddha is believed to be, the Northern Buddhist mind cares little or not at all for the abstract dogma that entire freedom from life and from death is the only perfect condition. The way is open for the belief that he exists. This is specially so in regard to Amitabha, the guiding Buddha, who is represented as residing in the regions of the "pure land," "*tsing too*." The Buddhist does not limit himself to any strictly self-consistent scheme which might require the denial of the existence of the Buddhas because they have entered the Nirvana. He makes a Buddha wherever he pleases, and invents a universe on paper, in which he may display his qualities and powers as a mediator. He regards Buddha as a divinity possessed of power to save. Every invocation "Omīto Fo" is a recognition of the present agency of this Buddha, whose help in saving may be obtained by prayer.

The legend of Omīto melts away indeed under investigation, and is sacrificed by the Buddhist without regret. It is a means to an end. That end is spiritual and moral improvement. Any legend that would help the devotee equally well on the path of progress would be equally welcome. This and every other legend in the Sutras is intended to aid in contemplative devotion.

The early compilers of the Sutras and Shastras made Buddhism abstruse and metaphysical. The promoters of popular Buddhism have made it more like what the part it was to perform as one of the world's great religions required it to be. If the first is orthodox Buddhism, the second is practical Buddhism. The orthodox form is abstruse and dim. It fails in clearness, intelligibility and

impressiveness. The second is suited for the ordinary class of believers. It deals in images of clay, symbols, legends, masses for the dead, and so forth. It is better apprehended by the common mind. Practical Buddhism is found at the present time to be predominantly of this kind. If it be asked whether the common Buddhists of the present day understood by the Nirvana anything else than an honorific description of death, it must be answered that many of them do not. There is need here for some further elucidation of that practical aspect of the Buddhist Nirvana, which is of great importance, and to which the great unrivalled Pali scholar, Mr. R. C. Childers, has drawn attention in a fragmentary note, followed by Mr. Rhys Davids in the *Contemporary Review* of February, 1877. The Nirvana is an ideal moral perfection attained gradually by progressive advance in the Buddhist virtues and steady perseverance in contemplation. The life of the ascetic approaches gradually nearer to the Nirvana.

He makes use of the doctrine of the Nirvana as a means to approximate towards moral perfection, and in doing so he rises upward towards the final Nirvana, his progress being in proportion to his self-knowledge and self-improvement.

The practical use of the doctrine of Nirvana, as of all Buddhist doctrine, is to assist in contemplative moral training. For example, Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood, the Devas, the rules of discipline and alms-giving, are, in the Nirvana Sutra, called the six subjects of meditation. They lead to six different developments, viz. the merciful moral teacher (Buddha), the mother Buddha of the past, present and future (Law), the field of happiness cultivated by men and Devas (Priesthood), long life and great joy (Devas), purity in body and mind (resulting from discipline), and relief to the poor and distressed (alms-giving).

In the course of meditation prescribed by the Nirvana Sutra it is said that there are six things rare to attain. They are, (1) to be born in the age when Buddha appears, (2) to hear the correct doctrine proclaimed, (3) to exhibit the true spirit of almsgiving, (4) to be born in the country

Magadha,¹ (5) to receive at birth a human body, (6) to have the five senses, with the powers of body and mind all complete.

The course of Buddhist thought is marked by a scholastic spirit which delights in numerical categories. Thus, in the Nirvana Sutra, there are six objects that hold certain things. The earth holds living things, and things not living. Mountains hold the earth, and prevent it from falling to ruin. The eyes hold light. Clouds hold water. Men may hold the law. A mother holds a child.

The same Sutra details seven methods of moral improvement. They are the knowledge of the law, embracing the twelve principal sutras. The knowledge of the meaning of terms and doctrines found in Buddhist literature. The knowledge of the times to practise the six means of salvation, viz. alms-giving, monastic rules, patient endurance of insult, zeal in making progress, contemplation (Dhyana), wisdom (Pradjna). The knowledge how to feel content with the food, clothes, and medicines which are supplied. The knowledge of one's self in regard to faith and discipline. The knowledge of companions in reference to sitting, walking, coming, rising, exposition of doctrine, and catechizing. The knowledge of the distinction of high and low among disciples according to their amount of faith and goodness.

The same Sutra also treats of eight contradictions. These are purity, individuality, joy, permanence, and their contradictions, with a repetition of the same in a different order, the contradictions occurring first.

The Nirvana is at the top of an ascent mounted by successive steps. Thus to become a monk and abandon family life is the first step. To practise contemplation is the second step. Moral evil and disorder are thus abandoned. The acquisition of wisdom is the third step, and thus puts a stop to wrong thinking. The entrance to the Nirvana is

¹ Magadha is the modern Behar. It means the "Middle Kingdom." In the old nomenclature, Birmah was eastern India, so that the lands watered by the Ganges, and its tributaries, were considered as Central India. The lands watered by the Indus, and its tributaries, were Northern India.

the fourth step, and thus extricates the ascetic from life and death.

When Childers claims for the word "Nirvana" two distinct meanings, one annihilation and the other moral perfection or sanctification, he perhaps asks too much, for we must find some way to unite them. Metaphysics constitutes the logical framework of Buddhism, and requires the Nirvana to mean annihilation. The ethical element is however its life, and may be called its flesh and blood.

Buddhism is a failure unless there is a victory over the passions. Entrance into the final Nirvana is impossible, its rest can never be attained, except there be first a successful struggle with the world's temptations. Now it is perhaps better to say that Buddhism is one, whether the view we take be predominantly metaphysical or predominantly practical. So of the Nirvana. It is, when described philosophically, a complete release from the whirl of life and death and all the miseries of the Samsara. It is, when described as a life, a gradual process of moral improvement, culminating in a sort of return to the Absolute.

Four methods are mentioned as helping towards the Nirvana. The first is to approximate to virtue by knowledge. The second is to listen to correct instruction. The third is to meditate on that instruction. The fourth is to act in accordance with professions made.

The four virtues of the Nirvana are stated to be permanent tranquillity, joy, entire freedom and purity. By the first of these, viz. tranquillity, change and death are rendered impossible. By the second, joy, outward misery and inward grief are avoided. By the third, self-acting freedom, a really virtuous heart acts spontaneously with no check from without or from within. By the fourth, purity, the three delusions lose their power, and the soul is freed from the tendency to transgress the ten chief prohibitions. The three delusions are, the delusions of the thoughts, of the world, and of ignorance. The ten prohibitions are against killing, stealing, adultery, lying, etc., including the last five of the Ten Commandments of the Bible.

The approach to the Nirvana is made by moral improvement. This may be illustrated by the following extract from the great Nirvana Sutra: "If a thievish dog entered a man's house by night, the servants of the house on becoming aware would drive him out, scold him and say, 'Go quickly out, or we will take your life.' The dog hearing will run away and not return. So should you treat the devil. Say to him, 'Do not put on this appearance any longer, for if you do you shall be bound with five ropes.' The devil hearing this will go away as the dog did and not return." Kashiapa replied to this speech of Buddha in the words, "If any one can in this way subdue the devil, he will come near to the Parinirvana." See Chapter vi. page 3.

So it appears that to gain conquests over the evil one is to approach the Nirvana. He who conquers resolutely and persistently arrives at a higher point in the road to perfection than others.

Sometimes the three virtues are spoken of; the words *mahaparinirvana* are explained, *maha* great, *pari* destroy, *nirvana* salvation. The first is the embodiment of the law, the second is the wisdom of the "Pradjna Paramita." The third is liberation. Elsewhere these three virtues are assigned to Buddha.

Nothing is omitted from the Nirvana. It is conceived of as perfect, and not only must fortitude, watchfulness, and constancy in the victory over evil be embraced in its circle of perfection, but it must also include the immense knowledge and beauty of complete wisdom supposed to inhere in the Buddha and Bodhisattwa.

The personal embodiment of the law in the moral character, and in the teaching of Buddha, his perfect wisdom, and his liberation of himself and his disciples from the clogs and bonds of a worldly spirit, are also, as in this instance, predicated of the Nirvana.

It may be well asked what could prevent the assignment of the same perfections to the Nirvana that are represented as belonging to Buddha. The Buddhist writers of the period when these views were taking form strove to exalt

the character of Buddha till it lost its personality and consisted of general characteristics. This was represented as taking place when he entered the Nirvana. The word "Buddha" is a state rather than a person. He who shows the way to the Nirvana is himself possessed ultimately of the same characteristics as is the Nirvana itself. Buddha is a hero with lion-like strength and bravery, who in an instant snaps the bonds that entangle him, and tramples over the most powerful temptations of the world. The goal of his victories is the Nirvana. The description then of the Nirvana, which is the state at which Buddha ultimately arrives, cannot essentially differ from that of Buddha when liberated at length at death from every bond of individuality. Terminating his material and mental existence, he becomes lost in the absolute state which is accounted the only real salvation.

The Nirvana then may be identified with Buddha. This can be seen in the *Kiau cheng fa shu*, chap. iii. p. 32. I say "may be," because I cannot point to the assertion in a Buddhist work that they are identical. In the criticism of an outsider they may be conveniently identified. In speaking of the death of a distinguished Buddhist, remarkable for a pure contemplative life, the Chinese would say indifferently that he has become Buddha, or that he has realized or entered the Nirvana. Such modes of speaking are used only of men who are noteworthy for Buddhist sanctity.

While considering the subject of the Nirvana, I have asked many priests in and out of Peking what they understood by it. While many somewhat ignorant priests have told me the Nirvana means death, or at best Buddha's death, a very learned priest said it is not death, but the state of non-existence and absolute deliverance from life and death. I reminded him that in China much is said of the peaceful land in the west, the world of supreme joy, and asked him, in the case of a priest who constantly meditated on this legend, if there was a greater probability of his going to that heaven in the west, than into the Nirvana. He refused to

admit that there was any such probability. I then asked him if some men would really become horses or donkeys in a future state. He would not consent to this, nor admit that there was any reality in Buddhist descriptions of metempsychosis. Yet he avoided saying absolutely that there is no reality in them, and added that the essential point in all religions is virtuous conduct. As to dogmatic views on any subject, they are all very well for those who accept them, but they do not hold the same important place that is held by practical morality. He would not allow that he has any distinct faith in a future state, for himself or for his friends. He looked on any definite confidence of this kind as "sticking to form," which means clogged by material considerations, and corresponds to the use of the phrase "the letter" in St. Paul's writings, at least to some extent, as in 2 Cor. iii. 6, "not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." In the idealism of the Northern Buddhists, things are represented as "forms" *siang*. The phrase "sticking to forms" means to be under the controlling influence of things as they appear. Those who stick to form, therefore, are in a state of delusion, caused by the devil who leads us to believe that the phenomena produced by his magical power are real. Such is the clinging nature of this tendency to be deluded that it does not easily leave even the man who is engaged in contemplations on the Nirvana.

The moment he comes to have views too definite on what the Nirvana is, he may be said to be "sticking to form." Our delusion is great in proportion to the definiteness of our conceptions. This is how, as I think, the opinions of this priest, who is still living near Peking, should be explained. He has a great local reputation for Buddhist wisdom, but will not allow that he has written a book. On his table were piled several works, written by Chinese Buddhists once well known. He came back again and again to morality as the basis of the Buddhist system, and I left him with the feeling that his view of the reality of a future state is very dim indeed, amounting almost to entire scepticism. One thing he

said was, "The soul is without form or substance. How can it be said to have a future state? How can anything distinct be affirmed of it after death?"

He declines therefore to say whether there is a future life or not.

The Chinese Buddhist monks read in childhood the Confucian books as well as their own. This may account for the prominence assigned to morality by this priest.

Another priest I lately conversed with was less combative in argument than this priest, and less sceptical with regard to dogma. He is fifty-five years of age, and was received into the priesthood with eighty others when a youth, at a temple near the northern west gate of Peking. In that temple he says there was a very unworldly ascetic old man, who had risen so entirely above the world that he was quite sure of entering the Nirvana. As to ordinary priests, he thought they will have to go through the long purifying process of the metempsychosis first. The ascetic he referred to as not needing any further trial or purification was occupied with the thought of Buddha, and so entirely devoted to his contemplations that there could be no doubt with regard to him.

I asked this priest, "Will you be burnt after death, or buried without burning?" He replied that it was his own wish to be burnt, and consequently it will be done. This is the case usually. The dying priest himself decides if he shall be burnt or not. I asked him what was the Nirvana. He replied, "It is neither life nor destruction." "Will you after death see the Shakyamuni Buddha?" He replied, "Yes, certainly, but not with the body. It will be by means of the 'Buddha nature' that I shall be able to see his Buddha nature." "But," I asked, "is not the metempsychosis real?" "Yes," he answered, "certainly it is. There can be no doubt about it. The calamities and good fortune that fall to the lot of men are proof of it. Why should some men be rich and others poor? It can only be from the secret operation of causes originating in the acts of former lives." He added that a rich man if he act ill will lose his riches in the next life,

and that if a man had in a former life mixed elements in the quality of his actions, some being good and others evil, he will in the present life have a corresponding character, and be upon the whole a man of mild and moderate temper.

From this instance it appears that moral goodness is that which prepares men for the Nirvana, and that the ascent to that highest state is accomplished by first proceeding through the lower in the path of progress. These lower steps are in this world or in other parts of the metempsychosis, which it will be remembered extends over the six regions of life known as Devas, men, animals, giants, hungry ghosts, and hell.

On the whole it may be said respecting the views held on the Nirvana by the Northern Buddhists that they comprehend all varieties. They have a popular teaching, and a higher Gnosis. They teach the metempsychosis, but do not insist on it. If it suits your state of mind, well. They will show you how by Buddha's wisdom you may reach the final escape from the delusion of existence in which you are enthralled, and leaving the sea of misery arrive at the Nirvana's peaceful shore. The means are found in moral reformation and contemplative devotion.

But if you are sceptical, they have a higher Gnosis, the Mahayana. You must submit to a pitiless argument to prove that nothing exists which men think exists, and that annihilation is desirable. You must learn to look on life itself as painful. The moral feelings and convictions are founded on an intellectual weakness. Love, piety, and benevolence are but delusive elements in the great delusive whole to which the unenlightened at present belong. In proportion as you can recognize this, do you approximate to the Nirvana, for in that there is no distinction of life and death, or of good and evil.

But then comes again the inextinguishable consciousness of future existence. The disciple will not be content with this pitiless logic, and the Mahayana finds for him a suitable doctrine, that of the western Paradise. The Buddhist teacher will not allow that imperfection exists in Buddha's teaching.

Those who long for heaven have a heaven provided for them. This is, however, only a means to an end. The higher Gnosis knows only annihilation, and bases it only on what is held by its advocates to be metaphysical necessity. Should another objector appear and say that the Nirvana is attainable now, and that not only did Buddha himself reach this state, but that all those who give themselves to a life of pure devotion and fixed contemplation may attain it, the upholders of the Mahayana consent to this, but add that it is merely a temporary and limited Nirvana, which is preliminary to that which they hold to be final.