

THE MISSION FIELD.

DAK BUNGALOW AT HATTI. (ON THE ROAD BETWEEN MUREE AND KASHMIR.)

A TOUR OF AN OLD MONTREALER, AND A GRADUATE OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY, ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS.

(Continued.)

There is a certain class of criminals spoken of by the Town Clerk of Ephesus, in the Acts of the Apostles, as "robbers of churches." I am afraid I must now number myself in their ranks, for the temptation was irresistible, of surreptitiously pocketing two specimens. With one feature of Bhuddism I was much disappointed. Of course I heard this faith praised as being a Reformed Hinduism. This being so, I expected to find the idols abolished, but Thibet is full of huge images carved on every rock and crag; some of them twenty feet high, and before them the lamas (or monks) blow huge brazen instruments. These lamas all own allegiance to the Grand Lama, a sort of Pope who lives at Lassa, the capital of Thibet. This is a mysterious place, where no European can go, for the Thibetans have forestalled the Irish in the art of Boycotting. Directly you cross the frontier, the people refuse to sell you food, neither will they hire your ponies for the transport of your camp, and so a masterly retreat has to be beaten in the face of passive obstructions. When the Grand Lama dies, he proves the sincerity of his belief in the transmigration of souls by telling his monks the spot where he is to be born again. To this place they go as soon as he is gone and lay hold on the baby which happens to be born nearest the hour of the Grand Lama's departure. Professing to recognise the boy as none other than their chief revived, they enthrone the infant forthwith as head of their order. Of course business has to be carried on by guardians till the child comes of age, but he then assumes the reins of government in his own proper person. It is a great matter of regret that the Christian Church is not strongly represented by missions in Ladak. Bhuddism is steadily dying out. Whole villages are turning Mahomedan. The people are therefore in a state of transition. Now is the time when it would be comparatively easy to convert them to the faith of Christ. But once let them become Mussulmans and then the golden opportunity will have gone, and will have gone for ever. It is a well known fact that the Mahomedan is of all men the hardest to convince, probably because his creed has so great a proportion of truth intermingled with its errors, being as it is a caricature of Christianity and Judaism. It is sad to think of those trans-Himalaya regions with their rugged splendour, their bracing atmosphere and their historic rivers, the Indus, the Sutledge, and the Bramapootra, only occupied by one or two Moravian outposts. What is to be done? England's Church has her hands full, and more than full, with British India and its teeming millions. The only English missionary who can cross the Snowy Range is Dr. Neve,

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and he can only go by devoting his well-earned yearly holiday month to this work and labor of love. To any missionaries who might go to Ladak, I could promise, even in the subtropical latitude of South Carolina, a climate like that of Quebec or Montreal. No panting under the monotonous swing of the punkah in that invigorating air. No fever or cholera "up above the world so high." No scoundrels there like the plausible Hindoo. No fanatics there like the Mussulman of the plains of India.

A word on the scenery of Thibet. As already noted, Kashmir, and indeed the whole western or Indian slope of the Himalaya is clad with deodar and pine, fruit trees, flowers, and verdure, but as soon as you cross the Snowy Range, you pass from the land of life to a veritable land of the shadow of death, for Thibet is rainless as the Sahara by reason of the cause noted above. To get an adequate idea of the natural features of this rainless region, read Mr. Proctor's vivid description of the scenery in the Moon—a landscape gigantic and innocent of moisture. To get an idea of the fantastic reds and greens and drabs of those barren crags, read Dean Stanley's Sinai. To gauge those gorges and deep valleys, read what the canons of Mexico are like. Then to all these three ingredients, viz, the moon, Mount Sinai, and Mexico, add two more. Firstly, The snow capped hill tops of Switzerland, and, in consequence of these, secondly, roaring torrents of snow-water in the valleys, fringed with emerald patches of variegated Oasis. This water supply from the melting snow is scanty. It is hoarded as treasure, beyond that of anything else. The frugal population irrigate their fields herewith, and so this water is their very life. Every ten miles or so the weary traveller, after traversing a land of rocks and sand, comes suddenly on a rich and fertile scene. Here grows the willow, the poplar, and apricot, as trees planted by the waterside, which bring forth their fruit in due season, behind these stretch fields of barley, while, nestled on the rocks beyond, may be seen the humble huts of the cultivators. The ceaseless roar of the infant Indus or other stream "goes on forever." Magpies fluttered in the air, and the queer half-starved cattle of the country work in the farrows. The whole of Thibet, extensive though it be, is a mere repetition of this sort of scenery.

The only features we did not see are its vast inland salt lakes and the still vaster desert plains which lie beyond. In a region such as this it is no wonder that eye diseases are common. The torturing glare from those naked rocks in summer and the dazzling reflection from the snow in winter is unbearable—added to this, the houses being innocent of chimneys are always full of smoke. Every one has experienced the smarting in the eyes that smoke produces. All these things being so, Dr. Neve drove a brisk trade in the oculist line. At Leb, during the week of our sojourn, operations formed the great event of the day. The operating table was placed in the open verandah of the Post-office in full view of the public. Front seats were set for the Governor of Leb, and for the principal residents—a crowd of the common sort gathered in front—the roofs of all the neighbouring houses were thronged. The administration of chloroform was evidently regarded as being a great function, and then the excised cataract would be triumphantly handed round from hand to hand, in admiration of the Doctor Sahib's skill. The doctor had good reason for thus courting publicity. He is not only a medical man but also a missionary, and as such his practice is subordinate to his evangelistic work.

(To be Continued.)

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