

UNEVANGELIZED CENTRAL ASIA.*

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Tibet is sometimes spoken of as the only part of Asia in which the Gospel is not being preached. One side of Exeter Hall might be papered with maps of unevangelized countries at the scale of one inch to a mile. A great statesman once advised politicians to study *large scale* maps. The advice may be tendered to *Mission* politicians. How many ill-planned efforts have ended in failure for want of geographical knowledge and forethought. Why are bands of fifteen or twenty missionaries sent to sit outside the closed doors of Tibet, while other great regions need evangelists, and have *open* doors? Why do Mission agencies jostle one another in Jerusalem or in Calcutta, when there are vast tracts to which no messengers go? Of the thousands now working in most parts of the globe, Central Asia owns scarcely one.

From Teheran in Persia to Bathang in China, a distance of over three thousand miles, there is *no European Protestant missionary*. A modern Marco Polo might travel right across the continent, and find even less Christianity than in the twelfth century. In India this is the time of boundary commissions to map out the frontiers, east, west, and north. Is it not time for the Church of Christ to appoint boundary commissions, not as in politics to mark off the limits of the sphere of action, but to ascertain why those limits exist in spite of the marching orders, "Into *all* the world"?

In Kashmir, the northern outpost of Indian Missions, there is a little group of clergy, doctors, zenana workers, and nurses, for a population of 2,000,000—one worker to 250,000. We cannot hope effectively to cover more than one third, or at most one half of our sphere of work. But how can we complain even at such undermanning, when from our watch-tower we look east, west, and north, and see everywhere great regions in which none are witnessing for Christ? Let us study the field, mark off the strategical points, and agree on a concerted line of action.

CENTRAL ASIA may be treated of physiographically, politically, and ethnologically.

1. **PHYSIOGRAPHICALLY.**—There are great stretches of mountains and plateaus to the north of the Himalayas which are very thinly populated, and only accessible for three or four months of the year. Such are the Highlands of Tibet, the mountainous region north of Chinese Turkestan and the vast sandy deserts, such as the Desert of Gobi, between Yarkand and China. But in the intermediate regions are well-watered valleys, and these are well populated; such are the valleys of Eastern Tibet. The snows of the Karakorum, the Mustagh, the Thian Shan, and the Hindu Kush supply streams and canals which fertilize millions of acres of wheat and barley, orchards of apples, pears, pomegranates, peaches, and fine vineyards. There are climates temperate and healthy, neither burning in summer nor frost-bound in winter, tho with marked extremes of heat and cold.

These countries are now *no terra incognita*. They are yearly visited by sportsmen and travelers, and yearly become more accessible. The Russian Turkestan Railway terminates within 500 miles of the great towns of Chinese Turkestan and of the British frontier post at Gilgit. The Brit-

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