

HOW MONGOLIANS PRAY.

Almost nine out of every ten Mongols you meet will have rosaries in their hands, and be rapidly repeating prayers, keeping count of them by passing the beads through their fingers.

They don't know the meaning of their prayers.—One of the prayers most commonly used consists of six syllables. Ask one man what these six syllables mean, and he will tell you one thing; ask another, and he will have another version of the meaning; ask a third, and he will most likely give an answer which all will agree in—namely, that it does not matter what they mean; the efficacy depends, not on the meaning, but on the repetition of the prayer. Acting on this belief, the Mongols rattle away at their prayers, hoping thereby to make merit which will, among other things, cancel their sins.

The Hand Praying-wheel.—But mouth repetition is a slow process, and, to expedite matters, a praying-wheel has been invented, into which are put a large number of printed prayers; the wheel is turned round, and by this simple act all the prayers contained in the machine are supposed to be repeated.

The Family Praying-wheel.—In some tents there is a stand on which is placed a large wheel, bearing about the same relation to the hand-wheel as a family Bible bears to a pocket Bible. A thong is fixed to a crank; the inmates take their turn in pulling it; but the aged grandmother, as having most leisure, usually spends most time over it; and the grandchildren keep a sharp lookout, and raise an outcry when, from inadvertence, a wrongly-timed pull sends the cylinder turning backwards, and, according to the Mongol idea, makes sin in place of merit.

The Roasting-jack Praying-wheel.—In one house I saw a wheel placed over the fire, and driven by the upward current of hot air, after the manner of a roasting-jack!

The Clockwork Praying-wheel.—Sitting in a tent once, I heard behind me a curious clicking noise, and looking round, found a praying-wheel going by machinery. The master of the house, being a mechanical genius, had bought an old clock in a Chinese town, taken out and re-arranged the spring and wheels, and made them drive a cylinder filled with prayers. When he got up in the morning,

he simply took the key, wound up the clockwork, and then the thing made prayers for the whole establishment.

The Praying-flag.—He that is too poor to buy a hand-wheel gets a praying-flag—a piece of common Chinese cotton cloth printed over with Tibetan characters—fastens it to a pole, and sets it up near his tent, believing that every time it flutters in the wind all the prayers on it are repeated.

The whole thing would be laughable were it not too serious a matter by far for laughter. The deluded worshippers really believe that this charm-repeating, and wheel-turning, and flag-fluttering makes merit which cancels sin. They live in this belief, and they die with this lie in their right hand. This idea, too, is the cause of much sin. Believing, as he does, that this merit cancels sin, a Mongol aims not at leaving sin and being holy, but at providing for plenty of merit to counter-balance his sin, and thinks that the more religious he is, he can afford to sin the more—just as the man who has most money can afford to spend the most!

“When ye pray, ye shall not be as the heathen.” Are we not sometimes a little like them? During prayer do not our thoughts sometimes wander so much that when the prayer is over we could, if asked, hardly tell what we had been praying for? Again, is it not sometimes the case that so-called Christians, when asked what they do for Christ, say they attend church or chapel, and all that; evidently implying that they think such service has in itself a meritorious value—an idea that comes somewhat near the Buddhist's notion of his temple services?

WHAT time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.

IT is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

WHAT the Scripture forbids, avoid; what it affirms, believe; what it commands, do.

THE CANADIAN INDEPENDENT, Rev. J. Burton, B.D., Editor, will be published D. V. on the first and fifteenth of each month, and will be sent free to any part of Canada or the United States for one-dollar per annum. Published solely in the interests of the Congregational churches of the Dominion. Pastors of churches, and friends in general, are earnestly requested to send promptly local items of church news, or communications of general interest. To ensure insertion send early, the news column will be kept open till the tenth and twenty-fifth of each month.

All communications, editorial, business, or otherwise, will be addressed simply “CANADIAN INDEPENDENT, P.O. 2618, Toronto.”