

exist. They are literally religious beyond measure. Every house has its shelf of gods and table of offerings; and, except among the very poor, each family, at certain intervals, has religious readings by the Lamas. Rockhill says that, in some parts, public worship is usual morning and evening. The chief characteristic of the Tibetan's devotion, the point he excels every other devotee, is the countless number of his prayers. Every sort of device is used in multiplying these "vain repetitions." He prays not only with his lips, but with wheels, with machinery turned by hand and by water, by means of smoke, and by means of petitions printed on strips of calico streaming and flapping in the wind. And what is the substance of his supplication? The sole prayer of the vast majority is simply this: "*Om mani pad-me hum.*" The words seem to be a prayer to the extinct Buddha; but what they really mean neither priest nor people can clearly tell. But this sense of mystery only gives the words added charm. Zealots send out parties to engrave this prayer on the rocks of mountain, plain and valley. It is engraved on stones, and exhibited for merit on the house tops. Printed on paper or calico, it is attached to prayer-strings and stretched across valleys. It flaps in the winds from top of every tent and roof of every house. It is almost the first sentence learned by the tender child, and it is the last utterance of the dying. Two other features of worship ought to be mentioned. One is the practice of circumambulation. Sometimes a whole village will turn out in a body and march round a sacred mountain, camping out at night and spending weeks in the undertaking. Occasionally their devotions assume a ludicrous aspect when religious games are held. The actors are Lamas, disguised as Boars, Hugs, Hobgoblins, etc. Wild excitement, music and dancing—these things actually pass for pious exercises.

We come now to speak of missionary effort in connection with this interesting people.

From an early date Christianity in some form has existed at least at intervals in or upon the borders of Tibet. Oderic Fonaljuliensis found missionaries there in 1330. From 1715 to 1729 a Jesuit lived at L'hasa, and about the same time some Capuchin friars made a somewhat longer stay. At present the Roman Catholic communion has no church in Tibet proper, but it has a number of stations upon the border.

The honor of being the first Protestant missionaries to Tibet belongs to the Moravians, who began work in 1854. At present their headquarters is at Leh, where they have a medical dispensary and a well-attended school. The force consists of three stations manned by ten workers.

The London Missionary Society has done more or less itinerant work among the agricultural and trading tribes on the Indian border. They purpose establishing a station at Almora.

About five hundred miles south-east of Almora is Darjiling, a station of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission of the United States. This was opened in 1892, and here nine workers are learning the language.

At least one station has been established on the Chinese border. On the boundary between Tibet and Sz-Chuan, the China Inland Mission has a station and two workers at Sung-pan, at which place Mr. and Mrs. Polhill Turner narrowly escaped martyrdom in 1892.

Since 1892 the International Missionary Alliance has had two men studying Tibetan at Pekin, preparatory to work in North-eastern Tibet, and it is highly probable that by this time four or five other workers belonging to the same society have reached Darjiling.

The latest effort on behalf of Tibet is the Tibetan Pioneer Mission, organized by Miss Annie Taylor. Under its auspices in February last a party of fifteen sailed for India, *en route* to Darjiling, where they will endeavor to master the native tongue.

It should be added here, that the Church of Scotland has done good service by sending Christian literature into the country.

To sum up, there is now upon the borders of Tibet a force of forty-three workers, under the direction of five missionary societies.

I cannot better close this paper than by giving a brief

summary of the helps and hindrances to Missionary Endeavor.

The chief hindrance comes from the ruling classes. On the one hand the Chinese officials regard Tibet as a buffer State between China and India, and so they spare no effort to save it from foreign influences. On the other hand, the Lamas tremble for their religious system. In the one case, the feeling is chiefly anti-English; in the other, anti-Christian; in both, anti-missionary.

Turning to the people, we find that the chief hindrance is the natural dislike of heart religion. Buddhism, a religion of works and merit, is far more to their taste than Christianity. Any new religious ideas are repugnant. For generations the people have allowed others to think for them, and the habit has become inveterate. Further, the work of preaching and teaching must be carried on chiefly among a floating population, where systematic effort is impossible. Evangelistic journeys are attended with pain and danger. To go any distance one must ascend passes higher than Mount Blanc, where man and beast suffer acutest agony, and sometimes dies from the dreadful "pass sickness." Then, too, native help is wanting. The missionaries seldom master the idiom of the language, and as yet there is not enough converts to furnish preachers who might teach the people, in their own vernacular, the wonderful works of God.

Turning to the bright side of the outlook, we find not a few encouraging circumstances. Much of the preliminary work has already been done. The Word of God is cordially received, and has been more or less circulated among priests and people. Thus the way has been, in some degree, prepared for future ambassadors when the country is thrown fully open. No open position is shown by the laity; indeed, the attitude of the masses is steadily becoming more favorable. Instead of being regarded with suspicion or contempt, the missionaries, in many places, are now welcomed, respected and loved as benefactors and friends. Moreover, among the people a very significant feeling is observed concerning their own religion. There is an impression abroad that the days of Buddhism are almost numbered and, consequently, that some new system must some day take its place. May we not venture to say that, in this case, "coming events" have "cast their shadows before." Let the country but be thrown open to the light of the Gospel and Buddhism must vanish before our conquering Christianity. In the meantime, the missionaries before Tibet wait and watch and pray for the full opening of her gates, and throughout the Christian Church prayer circles are being organized to plead with God for this "consummation so devoutly to be wished."

Indian Work.

WALPOLE ISLAND.

BY the blessing of God our people are completing the payment of the debt incurred by church improvements a year ago. The young people have stood by us nobly in the undertaking, and we are now praying for a revival of God's love in the hearts of the people. A ladies' aid society was organized lately, and already they have got out twenty-five cords of church wood for next winter's use. A branch of the W.C.T.U. has also been organized by Mrs. Middleton and Mrs. Hazlewood, of Wallaceburg, and some thirty persons have signed the pledge. In our Sunday School we have a staff of good teachers, and the school is well supplied with Sunday School papers through the kindness of Methodist friends in Dresden, Chatham and St. Thomas. The day-school, in charge of Arthur Muskoman, is steadily improving; teacher and children are working together in great harmony. The children have undertaken to raise \$20 for a school-bell, and have already raised \$5 by a concert. I wish to express our thanks to the Mission Band of Toronto Junction who so kindly sent us toys for a Christmas-tree. We had a very pleasant time in the church when the toys were distributed. Death is busy among us; five of our members have been taken from us, but they died in the Lord, therefore we take courage.

W. A. ELIAS.