

THE GOSPEL FOR TIBET.

By Mr. Claude Bald, Darjeeling.

AT the present moment, when the British Government has determined to force a way for commerce into Tibet, it is the duty of all who pray, "Thy Kingdom come," to unite specially in supplication that the messengers of the Gospel may speedily be enabled to enter through the door which is at length to be opened. Tibet is one of the countries which have been fast closed against Christian missionaries up to the present time; though many prayers have already ascended from the earnest hearts of Christians who have longed to extend the blessings of the Gospel to that spiritually dark land of Buddhism and priestcraft.

For many years Christian missionaries have been knocking at the gates of Tibet, and have been demanding admittance at all available points. Probably the first of these were the Moravians, who established themselves on the north-west confines of India, at the extreme limit of the semi-civilized country of Cashmere, in the heart of the Himalayan Mountains, where there is one of the principal passes into Tibet. Here they studied the language, translated the Scriptures, and gave the Good News to the Tibetan traders who kept coming and going through the passes. One of these missionaries, Mr. Heyde, after spending uninterruptedly upwards of forty years at that bleak spot, moved to the neighbourhood of Darjeeling, where he and his wife spent about six years revising and completing the New Testament in Tibetan.

Members of the China Inland Mission have for many years been striving to enter the country from the border next China, at a point which can be reached only after an arduous journey of five months from the sea-coast. Some of these noble and faithful men and women have passed through much tribulation, and have suffered violence at the hands of the fanatical Chinese from time to time. One of them, Miss Annie Taylor, felt that some effort should be made to enter from the border near Darjeeling; so she went to the La-Chong Valley, within the independent territory of Sikkim, and remained for some two years, studying the language and customs of the Tibetans. Then, finding that an entrance from that point was absolutely denied her, she went again to China, and, traversing the old ground,

entered the forbidden country from that side, and so made her famous journey almost to the very gates of Lhasa. After incredible hardships, she was compelled by military force to retrace her steps, although almost at the goal of her journey.

Immediately after this journey, she returned to England, and raised a band of men who proceeded to Darjeeling, with the object of preparing to enter the closed land as soon as the way might be opened. This company, after a time, became scattered, some going round to the Chinese border of Tibet; one died in harness; some joined other missions, while one or two returned home. Undismayed by the apparent hopelessness of the outlook, when the British Government subsequently arranged a commercial treaty with Tibet, and a nominal trading station was opened on the borders of that country and Sikkim, Miss Taylor applied for permission to settle as a trader at the new station, named Yatong. After much difficulty this was granted, and for the past eight or nine years she has stuck to her post in that wild and almost desolate spot, absolutely alone, being the only European there, with the exception of an official who represents Tibet. She sells a few useful things to the traders who pass to and fro, dispenses medicine to the sick, and above all, preaches the Gospel and distributes portions of Scripture to all who pass through.

Among the other bands which are preparing to enter Tibet, the strongest is that of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, which was organized some ten or twelve years ago, by certain Scandinavians who had settled in America; hence this is practically an American mission, though most of the members are from Norway and Sweden. These made their headquarters at a village near Darjeeling, named Ghoom, which is occupied almost entirely by people from Tibet. There they set up a printing press, from which was issued the revised edition of the New Testament in Tibetan, also much Gospel literature in the language. The missionaries themselves are scattered at various points along the borders of Tibet and Bhotan, many living in the most frugal manner, while teaching and preaching to the people, and at the same time helping them by introducing better systems of weaving and other industries.

These different agencies are now prepared to enter the "Great Closed Land." They are furnished with the Scriptures in the language