# THE ENGLISH IN TIBET· A RUSSIAN VIEW.

BY PRINCE ESPER OUKHTOMSKY.

WE Russians are late! The English are ready to stretch forth the hand of power to the realm of the Dalai-Lama. At the present moment, there can be no doubt that the Calcutta authorities will soon have entered into close relations with the majority of Trans-Himalayan rulers, will open for themselves a free trade route to Lhasa, and beyond to interior China, and will forthwith change the entire character of Central-Asian politics. As a rule, Russians are completely ignorant of this region; and the Russian press gives voice to the most astonishing opinions regarding Tibet in general, the Dalai-Lama and such subjects; and, in consequence, somewhat confused and cloudy views have been entertained in Russia regarding the true position of things in the centres of the Lamaist East, not the least singular of these being the baseless illusion that the Russians are there playing the rôle of pioneers of civilization, and that new, easily gained and brilliant results await them there.

Unfortunately, this is far from being the case, and every one who is familiar with the historic process by which Western travellers have become acquainted with Tibet, must confess that the knowledge possessed by Russians and the vagueness of their aims seem rather pitiful by comparison. Among the subjects of the Russian Empire there have been included for more than two centuries several hundred thousand Lamaists, spiritually united to the millions of their co-religionists within the bounds of the Chinese Empire, and yet Russians have long entirely ignored the results obtained by European explorations of Tibet.

As early as 1816, the English planted their Resident in Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal. The Orientalist, Bryan Hodgson, gained undying glory by his observations of commercial condi-

tions in Central Asia, and his study of local life and religion through intercourse with the natives; he was the first to discover among the Himalayans the literary monuments of Buddhism in the Sanskrit language, copies of which he supplied to the learned societies of London and Paris. Entering into correspondence with the Dalai-Lama, the English Resident received from him the books and papers left by a former Capuchin Mission, as well as a full collection of the most sacred Tibetan writings.

Wishing to gain a firm foothold near the religious centres of Tibet, the British Government, shortly after 1830, decided to build an important outpost at Darjeeling, in the territory of the weak Sikkim Raja, which was considered to be only a few days' journey from Teshu-Lumpo. In 1835 this place was ceded to the English, who undertook to pay a certain fixed amount yearly for it. Dr. Campbell was instructed to take measures for the development of Darjeeling. From 1840 to 1862 he watched over this district, which was important from a sanitary, commercial and political point of view alike. A variegated population streamed thither from the hills; thousands of people settled there. Tea gardens were planted; a market for the Trans-Himalayan tribes was opened. The English had already gained control of the people of Sikkim at a favorable juncture, and had bought them over to their interests. The importance of Darjeeling was immensely increased when the railroad uniting it with Calcutta was built. Little by little, the Europeans became acquainted with the character of the borderland between India and Tibet. Engineers made and maintained a good road to the mountains, and noted the Jelap-la Pass, which leads to the Chumba Valley, as the most convenient road. By a treaty with the Raja, the Calcutta Government has the right to expel from Sikkim all disaffected inhabitants. The native prince has already visited Darjeeling to become acquainted with European habits.

Every day the walls of conservatism and the artificial barrier of exclusion were undermined and became ready to fall. The Tibetans were undecided, awaiting the future with uncertainty, not unwilling to be rid of the Chinese, and at the same time regarding the decisive action of the English with the utmost apprehension. Some of them, especially the Lamas, visited Calcutta, which is only a day's journey from Darjeeling, the fare by rail being only seven rupees (about two dollars). Caravans of

merchants passing through Tibet from Nepal scatter as many Indian newspapers as possible. As the populace is pre-eminently commercial, the subjects of the Dalai-Lama and Banchen-Bogdo are greatly disposed to favor the further extension of commercial relations. The Chinese are no longer able to sell their products in Tibet, because the natives themselves go west for them, finding this much more profitable. Every autumn more than a thousand Tibetans visit Calcutta for this purpose, and stay there for weeks at a time. The road from India to Lhasa through Nepal is twice as long and twice as difficult as the way over the Jelap-la Pass. From Sikkim caravans take a week to reach Teshu-Lumpo and arrive thence at the capital in an even shorter time.

The English, owing to the considerable import duties imposed by Russia, no longer find as good a market as before for Indian teas in western Turkestan. Russian merchandise competes quite successfully with British goods in Kashgar. Investigations carried on by Carey regarding the possibility of sending goods from India to the localities to the east of Yarkand, met with a negative result. The deserts there are so inhospitable that no cultivation is practicable. There remains the best and shortest road through the Chumba Valley from Darjeeling. Trade by that route is already of some importance and promises to grow to considerable proportions. It is not for nothing that in Teshu-Lumpo and Lhasa are gathered so many threads uniting the Lamaists of Russia, Mongolia and the mountain regions with their chief religious centres. The most indispensable and expensive import from China is brick tea. It costs so much that, although it is used in great quantities, it is out of the reach of the common people. This exactly suits the English. The planters of Assam and Darjeeling think that, by saving up the leavings and fragments of their tea, they can provide exactly what the Tibetans require and at a low price, which at once undersells the Chinese product and makes it possible for all the natives to secure the favorite delicacy of Central Asia. There is also a great demand for Indian rice, which will likewise be much cheaper than Chinese, for tobacco, for the most varied European productions and for precious stones. Tibet in its turn pays with its natural treasures, gold, silver and other metals, of which there is still an abundance in the country; rock-salt, pure musk, very cheap cattle and extremely valuable wool, medicinal herbs and so forth. As soon as relations are estab-

lished, the natives and the English will rapidly understand in what ways they can be profitable and agreeable to each other. Ultimately, of course, the newcomers from the West, from being friends on an equal footing will turn into masters, and with iron will compel acquiescence to their every wish.

The British Government is not advancing into Tibet alone. The British missionaries are acting in perfect accord with it. While Russia does not accomplish what might be wished, even in the outlying parts where Russian blood is mixed with the native races, the West has sent its pioneers of Christian culture into the heart of Asia. The Moravian Brothers who formerly lived in Tsaritzin seeking to convert the Kalmucks, and whom the Russians expelled, have found a warm welcome in India, settling in the Himalayas; they have not only penetrated Lamaism, but have perfectly mastered the Tibetan language. The Calcutta Government has taken advantage of this to publish an excellent dictionary and grammar, compiled by Jaeschke, one of the missionaries. The Holy Scriptures in the Mongolian language are likewise distributed by the English amongst the nomads. The natives who are free from fanaticism willingly buy them. Not long ago, a zealous worker along these lines, Gilmore by name, traversed the Buddhist steppe to the region beyond Lake Baikal, to build a monument to certain English missionaries who had worked for thirty years amongst the Buriats. The Belgian propagandists are allowed to attempt to establish the influence of the Vatican in Mongolia. Catholic missionaries are directing their efforts towards Tibet from two sides, and have already had martyrs in this sufficiently thankless task. They come first from the eastern frontier, through China, and secondly from Sikkim.

In the wilderness, the Catholic missionaries work exactly as did the ever-memorable apostle of Siberia, the Metropolitan Innocent: they occupy themselves with the civilization of the natives, bring the surrounding regions into a flourishing condition and enter into friendly relations with the pagans. Understanding that Buddhism is a religion of the thoughtful, not of the ignorant, and consequently contains absolutely no democratic elements, the preachers from the West buy slaves, gather round them the downtrodden and educate children. From the moment when the pagans see the principles of the New Testament put into practice (so far as this is possible for fallible mortals), a reverence

for the pioneers of Christian civilization must grow and increase. Though the missionaries regard Lamaism with certain easily understood prejudices, and have even suffered some persecution, yet they ultimately come to respect the religious toleration of the Buddhist priesthood and the kindness of the simple monks and "twice born," and they have more than once been indebted to their rivals, the Lamas, for assistance.

It is important to notice that England has always come to the help of the missionaries in Tibet. When they have been oppressed, word has found its way to Calcutta through the Nepalese. In Teshu-Lumpo and Lhasa the people are greatly afraid of the natives of Nepal, and are willing to pay dearly to avoid a contest of arms with the terrible Goorkas. The English have long understood this peculiarity, and artfully take advantage of it.

They have sent Hindoos to interior Asia to explore, paying them well for their information. Russia has far larger numbers of people adapted for relations with Tibet, and even now many Buriats live there without breaking their relations with their native land (in Russian Siberia). But Russia has been indifferent to all this. For two centuries our native races have had an opportunity of proving themselves excellent and faithful subjects. Among them are found many, to a large extent Russianized, who are fully qualified and well suited to represent us. Is it not time for Russia at last to take advantage of this circumstance? Is it possible that the first educated Russian traveller will reach Lhasa through Darjeeling, under the protection and by the permission of the English Government?

What is the chief danger of the movement of the English armies to "the land of the Lamas"? The Tibetan monasteries are exceedingly rich, and form real treasure-houses of ancient culture; they contain religious objects of the highest artistic value, and the rarest literary memorials. If the Sepoys reach Teshu-Lumpo and Lhasa, with their fanatical passion for loot, which was so signally exhibited in the recent Boxer campaign, it is beyond all doubt that the most precious treasures on the altars and in the libraries of the Lamas will be in danger. It is impossible even to tell approximately how great an injury may thus be caused to Orientalism, how the solution of many scientific problems may be put off, problems which are closely bound up with the gradual revelation of the secrets of Tibet. The vandalism which was a

disgrace to our age, when Pekin was recently ransacked and looted, will pale before what the English will probably do by the hands of their dusky mercenaries. The temptation will be too great. Only zealous students of this particular department of knowledge could save everything which is rare and worthy of special attention.

Therefore, we face the critical moment, when the best monuments, the last fragments, of ancient Buddhist creative genius are in danger of falling into the gulf of oblivion. What even the hordes of Genghis Khan guarded and reverently preserved will be trampled under foot by the invading "*Pax Britannica.*" Russia has been too late, with her obscurely felt inclination to enter into closer relations with the realm of the Dalai-Lama. Russia, which had every reason to be the first in this field, thanks to its Buddhist Buriats and Kalmucks, thanks to its students of Mongolia and its Central-Asian travellers; Russia, which possesses such well-known students of Buddhism as Oldenburg, such world-famous ethnographists as Clements, will now receive from the hands of strangers the most important facts concerning Tibet, which is bound to Russia by so many ties. But there remains the distant hope that the free spirit of the great Reincarnating Lamas will, under pressure of the political domination of England, sooner or later take a new direction, seeking for itself a fit terrestrial embodiment, and that some fine day we shall see the Dalai-Lama and the Banchen-Bogdo reincarnated within the sphere of Russian influence. England may gain territorial control of the Lamaist world, but to win it spiritually and to bring it closer to them will be given only to those who will not raise a destroying hand against the shrines of Buddhism.

ESPER OUKHTOMSKY.