
Notes on missionary subjects ...

Cust Robert Needham

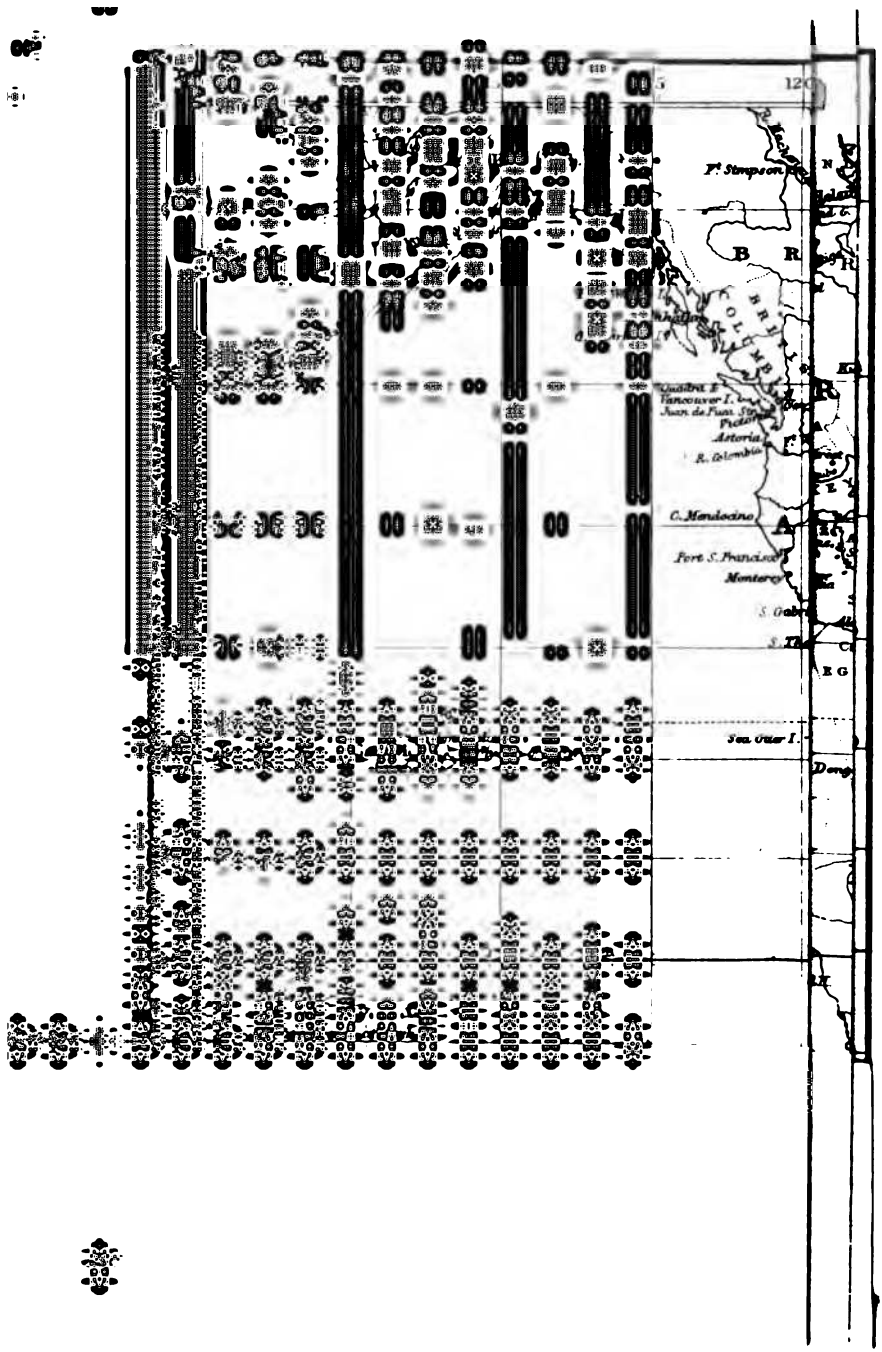
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Notes on Missionary Subjects.

Part I.

- (I.) OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON MISSIONARY SOCIETIES.
- (II.) LANGUAGE ILLUSTRATED BY BIBLE-TRANSLATION.

Part II.

THE GREAT PROBLEMS OUTSIDE THE ORBIT OF PURE EVANGELISTIC WORK, BUT WHICH THE MISSIONARY HAS TO FACE.

Part III.

RELATION OF MISSIONARIES TO THE OUTER WORLD.

Part IV.

MISSIONARY ADDRESSES, PICTURES, AND NOTICES.

BY

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Μεγάλη ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὑπερισχύει.

LONDON :

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1889.

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INTRODUCTION.

I PUT forth in a collective volume the Four Parts of my Notes on Missionary Subjects; but each Part is complete in itself, and as each treats upon a special portion of the subject, may be acceptable in that form to persons, who do not require the whole work. There is a full Index to each Part.

These Notes come from the pen of a sincere, and experienced, friend. Their object is to lay down first principles, point out serious errors of practice, denounce what is positively wrong, and suggest what appears to be the better way.

Free from any bias of Nationality, Denomination, or shade of Religious thought, the Author is entirely fearless of criticism, and welcomes all honest differences of opinion. If the errors described can be proved never to have existed, so much the better. If a better way can be indicated, it is well. If a bad policy is abandoned, it is a subject of congratulation. The human side of Mission-work is peculiarly human. In secular administration the strong hand of the Governor at once puts a stop to the extravagancies of a subordinate. But the powers of a Bishop are constitutionally limited. The authority of a

Committee, based on a democratic electorate, is singularly weak. The credit of the great cause of Missions is exposed to obloquy, or is misunderstood, on account of the folly, or weakness, of the weakest section of supporters, or of the least wise agent in the Field.

My book was not published for profit, and the large free distribution prevents even the expense of printing being recouped; but I have received my reward in letters from young and old, laymen and ordained men, British and foreigners, not agreeing in everything (for that were impossible), but telling me, that my labour had not been in vain, that I had those who sympathized with me, though personally unknown to me; and some young men have told me, that they had been helped in their decision to go forth by my words: and this alone is an exceeding great reward.

Some of the Essays have been reprinted in American Missionary Journals, in the China Inland *Evangelization of the World*, and, as a separate pamphlet, by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; some have been translated into German, have been reviewed and quoted in periodicals, secular and religious. One Society has taken fifty copies of the first Essay of Part I., but the whole ought to be taken together; the plums of praise must not be picked out, and be unduly dwelt on; the sharp condemnations, and notice of sad failures, must not be separated from the context. We have no reason to be surprised at such failures. What St. Paul says of the Church of Corinth in its first decade ought to prepare us. My last words were:

“ It cannot now be said, that we must travel onward, as if in a mist, and that, as nobody criticized, there was no error.”

Unpalatable truths are unpleasant to all corporate bodies, whether Religious, or Secular, when they have got out of the right groove. All I ask is, that the advice of a tried friend may be impartially considered. Already the Conference of one great Mission Field has met to discuss my Essay XI. of Part IV., the most trenchant of all, reprinted in an Indian Missionary Periodical, and my last word on a subject, which has exercised my thoughts and pen for the last forty years. The convener of that Conference, an entire stranger, has expressed to me by letter the value, which the Conference placed upon it. They did not admit all the facts; they did not agree in all the conclusions, but they recognized the thoroughly friendly spirit of my criticisms, and declared, that in that part of the Field the tide was setting “in the direction of “common sense and economy,” that they thoroughly welcomed criticisms from a man like myself, who knew the country (India) and the conditions of life there. He concludes, “We inherit “some foolish traditions, which it is rather hard to break “through, but we are learning to do it, and such words as “yours are distinctly a help. We recognize the true ring of “Missionary sympathy, even when we think that you are not “perfectly just.”

The condemnation of Anti-Opium-Trade zealots; of officials unable to free themselves (though often desirous, and personally clean-handed) from the toils of a system, which consumes unprofitably an unduly large proportion of the sacred funds,

collected under the influence of prayer to convert the heathen ; of good easy men, who know nothing of the development and Phenomena of this Great Power all over the world, and treat a Mission-Committee as a kind of Clerical Club ; weigh little in the minds of those, who see nothing before them, day and night, but *the necessity of the extension of the Lord's Kingdom* as speedily as possible : who will call a "spade a spade," whether the offender be called a Missionary or an official of the Government of British India. This independence of opinion and utterance comes from a life-training in a School, where the good, material and spiritual, of the oppressed, and so-called inferior, races of the world, has been the one great object, to which talents, time, and thought, have been devoted.

A friend in Committee told me, that he had read every line of this book, and could wish for me no better memorial of a life's work, when I was called away. So let it be.

Studying the lives of Carey and Martyn, Judson and John Williams, Steere and Patteson, and the Moravian Brotherhood, I try to place before the Missionaries of the rising generation the law of

Self-abnegation and Self-consecration.

19 FEB. 1889.

P.S.—In *Central Africa*, the organ of the Universities Mission, for November, 1888, appear the following words :

"There is very much that is most valuable to all, who have
"the progress of the Kingdom of God at heart, and these

“pamphlets should certainly find a place on the Mission shelf
“of every Parish Priest’s Library.”

The Editor of the *Missionary Review of the World* has written me a letter, which has just reached me from New York, U.S. :

“Allow me to express my great appreciation of your contributions to the Missionary literature of the day. I have repeatedly reproduced your thoughts in the *Missionary Review of the World*. While not agreeing with *all* your views, I yet find them so fresh, so original, and independent, and so forcibly and fearlessly expressed, as greatly to charm and impress me.”

NOTE.

“The Missions of the Roman Church” will appear as a separate volume.

