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978-1-108-00794-8 - Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa

Robert Moffat

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Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa

Robert Moffat, Scottish missionary and linguist, arrived in South Africa in 1817 under the aegis of the London Missionary Society. He pioneered missionary activity among the Tswana people and became deeply influential in South Africa, helping to open up the 'missionary road' north of the Cape and later criticising the Afrikaners and becoming an advocate of British imperial rule in the region. He was also the first transcriber of the Setswana language. *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (1842) is an autobiographical account of Moffat's time as a missionary and contains, as he states in the preface, a 'faithful record of events which have occurred within the range of his experience and observation' that 'supplies much that may serve to illustrate the peculiar attributes of African society'. *Missionary Labours* was hugely popular with the Victorian readership and became a classic narrative of missionary activity in Africa.

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108007948

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2009

This edition first published 1842

This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00794-8 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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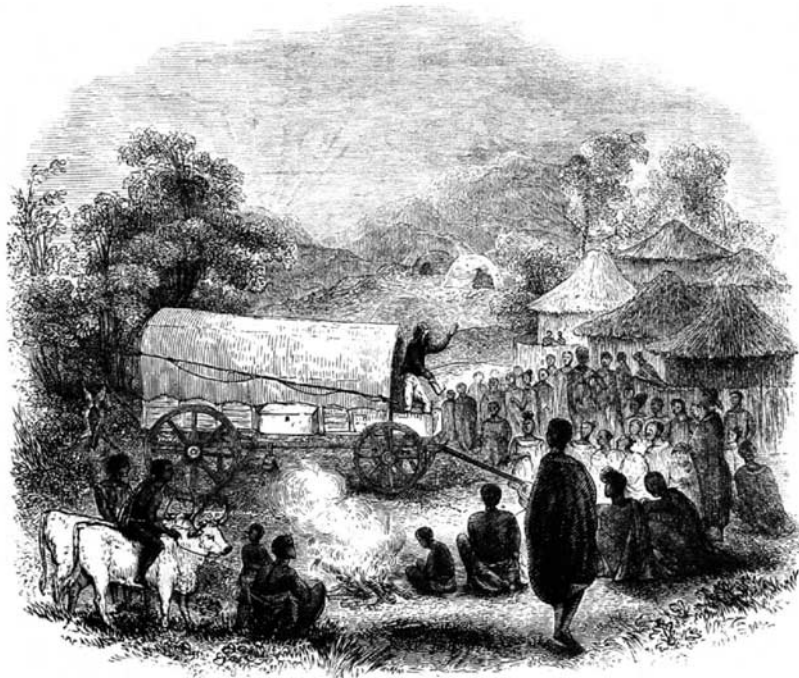
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MISSIONARY
LABOURS AND SCENES
IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA;

BY
ROBERT MOFFAT,

TWENTY-THREE YEARS AN AGENT OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN THAT
CONTINENT.

FOURTH THOUSAND.



Preaching at Mosheu's Village.—(See page 596.)

With Engravings, by G. Barter.

LONDON :
JOHN SNOW, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1842.

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TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

FRANCIS-ALBERT-AUGUSTUS-CHARLES-
EMANUEL,

DUKE OF SAXE, PRINCE OF COBOURG AND GOTHA, ETC.

THE deep interest which your Royal Highness has taken in the Niger Expedition, is not the only reason which prompted the Writer to aspire to the honour of your distinguished patronage. The house of Saxony is pre-eminently identified with the great Reformer; and the protection which it yielded to Luther, against the power of Rome, will, through all ages, redound to its honour. The force of these considerations is still farther augmented by the alliance of your Royal Highness with the British throne; for from the commencement of the London Missionary Society, the kings of England have been the uniform Patrons of its literature. The Narrative of its First Great Missionary Voyage, performed in the years 1796, 1797, and 1798, was dedicated to George III., by whose order the Voyages of Discovery were first

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undertaken, which brought into view the numerous islands of the Pacific Ocean. The Voyages and Travels round the World, made by a Deputation from the same Society, between the years 1821 and 1829, were inscribed to William IV. The same sovereign also graciously accepted the dedication of the Missionary Enterprises in the South Seas, by my late lamented brother, the Rev. John Williams. On these grounds I solicited the permission, which your Royal Highness has so condescendingly granted, of dedicating this volume to the Illustrious Consort of the British Queen.

Your Royal Highness is well aware that all methods of effecting the civilization of Africa, apart from the Gospel of Christ, have hitherto proved abortive; but it is presumed that the present Narrative will demonstrate, that, in every instance where the Gospel has been introduced, it has effected a complete revolution in the character and habits of its people. Philosophy must eventually confess her impotence; the pride of Science be humbled; and the fact be universally acknowledged, that the Gospel of Christ is the only instrument which can civilize and save all kindreds and nations of the earth. This has been verified by the labours of Missionaries in South Africa, and we have only to publish it through the length and breadth of that great Continent, in order to elevate and cheer its degraded and sorrowing inhabitants, and introduce them to the fellowship

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of civilized Nations. To those who sincerely desire to prove benefactors to that afflicted land, nothing remains but to apply the means already at our disposal. In this high enterprise of religion and humanity all may share, and it is surely worthy the combined efforts of all classes of all countries. Nor is there, I humbly conceive, any other undertaking among men, so deserving the patronage of Princes and the smile of Kings. In this great work, Merchants, Politicians, Philosophers, Philanthropists, and Statesmen,—all may find an appropriate place and perform a laudable service.

To this stupendous enterprise your Royal Highness enjoys the means of rendering signal benefit. A lively interest on the part of your Royal Highness, in the different Christian Missions which have been, or which may yet be, established in Africa, would be attended with consequences of incalculable value. Of the influence which may be exerted on a whole nation by a single Prince, enlightened by Philosophy and animated by Piety, Don Henry, Duke of Viseo, the fifth son of John I., as your Royal Highness will remember, has left an illustrious example. This distinguished Personage was the first royal European friend to Africa. He to whom the School of Modern Navigation owes its origin, and to whom Portugal is indebted for all the glory of her discoveries, was impelled, in all his projects, through a long life, by the spirit of Missions. His achievements, in relation

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to Africa, have immortalized his name; but a work immeasurably greater still remains to be accomplished, on its behalf. The honour of this work, I would fondly hope, is reserved for my beloved country; and that the historians of future times will record that Prince Henry of Portugal found a successor and superior in Prince Albert of England.

May that gracious Providence, to whose protecting power the Writer owes so much, preserve your Royal Highness, and your Royal Consort, our Illustrious Queen, through many years, to promote the glory of God and the welfare of mankind!

I have the honour to remain

Your Royal Highness's

Most humble, most obliged, and

Most grateful Servant,

ROBERT MOFFAT.

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PREFACE.

THE writer offers the following pages to the churches of his country as an humble contribution to their stock of knowledge relative to heathen lands. It contains a faithful record of events which have occurred within the range of his experience and observation, and supplies much that may serve to illustrate the peculiar attributes of African society. It may, he ventures to hope, tend materially to promote the study of the philosophy of missions. It will furnish both the Sage and the Divine with facts for which perhaps they were not prepared, and exhibit phases of humanity which they have not hitherto observed. It will further show that, amid circumstantial differences there is a radical identity in the operations of human depravity, in Asia, in Polynesia, and in Africa; and that while the Gospel is the only, it is also the uniform remedy for the distress of a world convulsed by sin, and writhing with anguish. It will present striking examples of the complete subjugation of some of the fiercest spirits that ever trod the burning sands of Africa, or shed the blood of her sable offspring.

The Writer has indulged but slightly in philosophical disquisition, as he deemed it his province principally to supply facts. He leaves it with men of leisure and reflecting habits to analyze, compare, and deduce from those facts such doctrines as they supply. Indeed, little in this way can be added to the luminous works of Drs. Campbell and

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Harris, and Messrs. Hamilton, Noel, and others, by whom the subject of Missions has been so learnedly and eloquently illustrated. He hopes no apology will be deemed necessary for any imperfections which may appear in the preparation of his Narrative. The collocation of terms, and the polish of periods have made but a small part of his studies. Such pursuits, he conceives, were not the objects for which he was sent to Africa, and they would have but ill comported with the circumstances in which he spent a large portion of his arduous life on that benighted continent. He feels confident that lettered men will look into the pages of an African Evangelist for things far more substantial and important than the graces of composition—an accomplishment which the Author much admires, but to which he makes no pretension. He makes his present appearance before the British public less in the capacity of an Author than of a Witness, who most earnestly desires to establish and to enforce the claims of perishing, and helpless, and all but friendless millions, for whom he has hitherto lived and laboured—whom he ardently loves, and with whom—all black, barbarous, and benighted as they are—he hopes to live, labour, and die!

Inured to active habits, and unaccustomed to sedentary pursuits as the Writer has been, he has found the preparation of the present volume, in addition to the translation of the Scriptures and of other books, and the almost unremitting labours of the pulpit and the platform, an arduous undertaking. This task has been attended with a multiplicity of mental exercises of a very diversified character. Some of these exercises have been solemn and painful, others sweet and soothing. He has been led to retrace the windings of a long and chequered pilgrimage, and to live over again much of his by-gone life. The review has, in many parts, been deeply humbling, but in all highly profitable. It

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has been refreshing to recount the mercies of the God whom he serves, which have been abundantly vouchsafed to him and his household in distant climes, and amid savage men. He has also oftentimes rejoiced in spirit, when he called to mind the displays of Divine grace, which have attended his very imperfect efforts to save the lost, and to benefit those who had no benefactor. Of time, however, he has often been reminded, that, as much is gone, little remains; while even that little trembles in the balance of an awful uncertainty. Of those who began at the same period with himself the career of missionary toil, the greater number have sunk into the grave; and not a few of those who followed long after, have also been gathered to their fathers. He is especially reminded of one, much honoured and endeared, whose tragical death, of all others, has most affected him. John Williams and he were accepted by the Directors at the same time, and designated to the work of God, at Surrey Chapel, on the same occasion. The fields of their service were both arduous, although of a widely different character. After much trial and many dangers, both have been permitted to return to their native land, and to publish narratives of their respective labours. Thus far they run parallel; but here they part company. "The Martyr of Erromanga" has finished his course, and rests from his labours; while his early friend still lives amidst the conflict. The Writer now feels that his work in England is done, and that the spirit of the stranger and the pilgrim is stealing powerfully over him. He longs once more to brave the mighty ocean; and eagerly anticipates the hour when he shall again reach the shores of his adopted country, and appear in the midst of the children of the Wilderness.

Amidst the dangers of the Deep, and the trials of the Desert, the Author will reflect with satisfaction upon the

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testimony he has left behind him to the condition and claims of the far distant tribes of South Africa. He is not without hope that it will, in some measure, serve to give him an interest in the sympathies and prayers of the Christian public when he will be “far hence among the Gentiles.” He leaves it to the churches of Britain as a memento of poor, degraded Africa. He hopes that all who peruse it, reflecting upon that unhappy and much injured region, will feel the urgency of its claims, and fervently supplicate the Throne of Grace on its behalf!

He bequeaths his book as a legacy of grateful affection to the multitudes of all classes, from whom he has received tokens of personal kindness, which, while life lasts, he will ever remember; and as an expression of a deep solicitude to promote the diffusion of the Gospel in that Continent to which his labours have been more especially directed.

R. M.

*Walworth, London,
May 24, 1842.*

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00794-8 - Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa

Robert Moffat

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