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MODERN MISSIONARY EFFORT NOT FRUITLESS

Objections have been, at different times, raised against missionary efforts, or rather excuses have been offered for not contributing to the support of missions, on the ground that they have not been productive of any benefit, or of benefit corresponding in any degree to the means employed. It would be easy to show that such an objection is altogether untenable. Even were it true, that we saw in our day no adequate results from missionary effort, as long as the Scripture sets forth the duty of missions, our obligation to prosecute the work would be in no respect diminished. But it is not true that missionary efforts have been without success. We admit at once that, compared with the success of the apostle Paul and of his fellow labourers, and with the rapid progress made by the Gospel in the first few centuries, the success of modern missions has been slow and partial, though we are not sure that the contrast would really be so striking as is generally supposed. We believe, too, that the success of missions might have been much greater had there been on the part of the church greater zeal, and faith, and prayer, and effort. But it is not by any means true that missionary labour has been in vain. For upwards of half a century the churches have been engaged in the work of carrying the Gospel to the heathen, and we may affirm that in no single case has the work been carried on in vain. The measure of success may have been varied. In some instances, as in some of the South Sea Islands, the entire community has been brought under the influence of the Gospel. In others, the effects have been of a less decided character. In some parts of the field the thorns and briars of heathenism have been swept away, and the ground covered with fragrant and fruitful trees of righteousness. In other places the spiritual change is less marked. The spiritual labourers have only succeeded in scattering here and there the good seed of the kingdom in a hard and ungenial soil. But rarely has the seed been sown without, in some cases at least, taking root and bearing fruit to the praise and glory of God; while, on the whole, it may be affirmed, with confidence, that there is abundant reason to thank God on account of past success, and to take courage in looking to the future. In not