

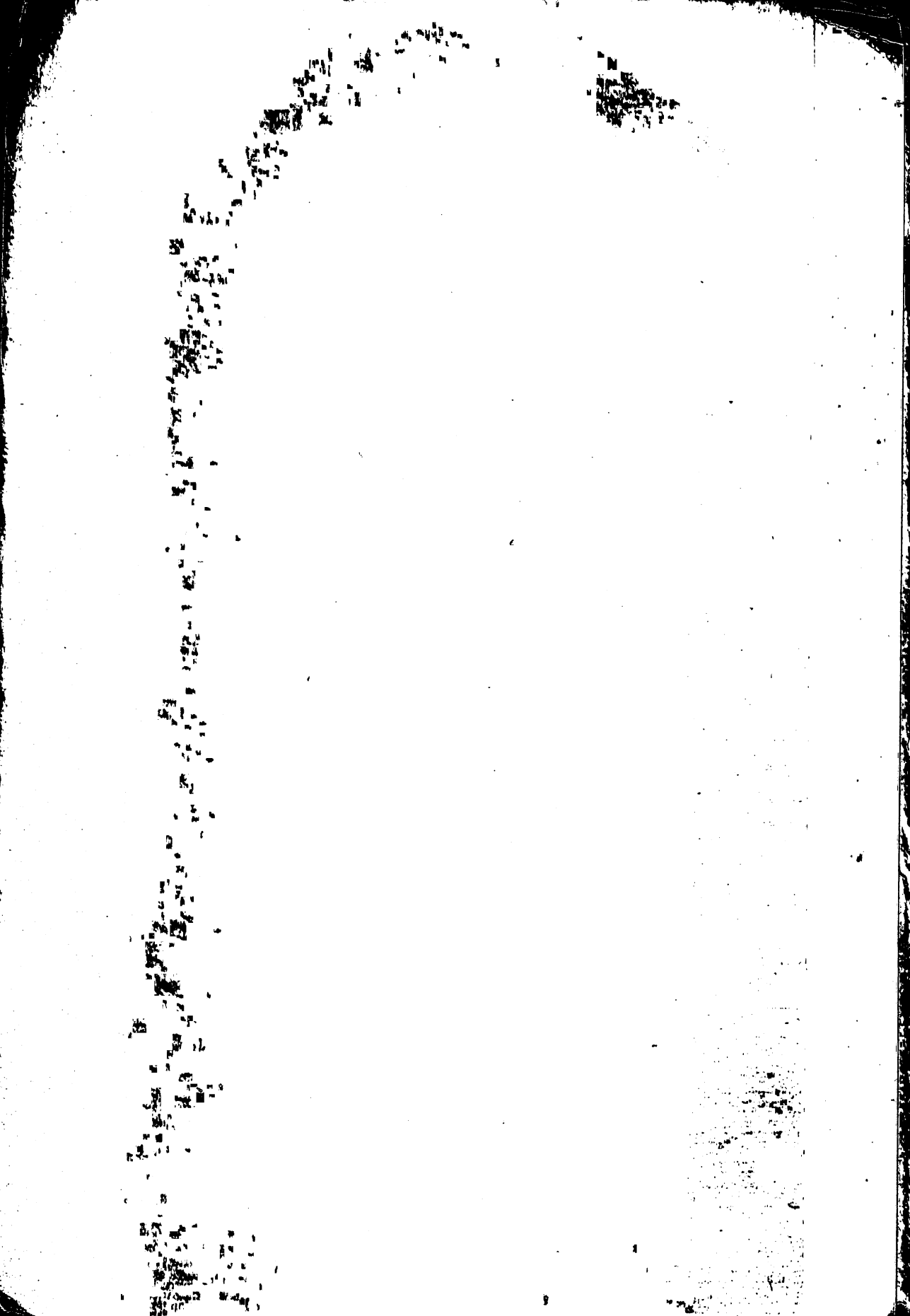
Missionary Work in the East

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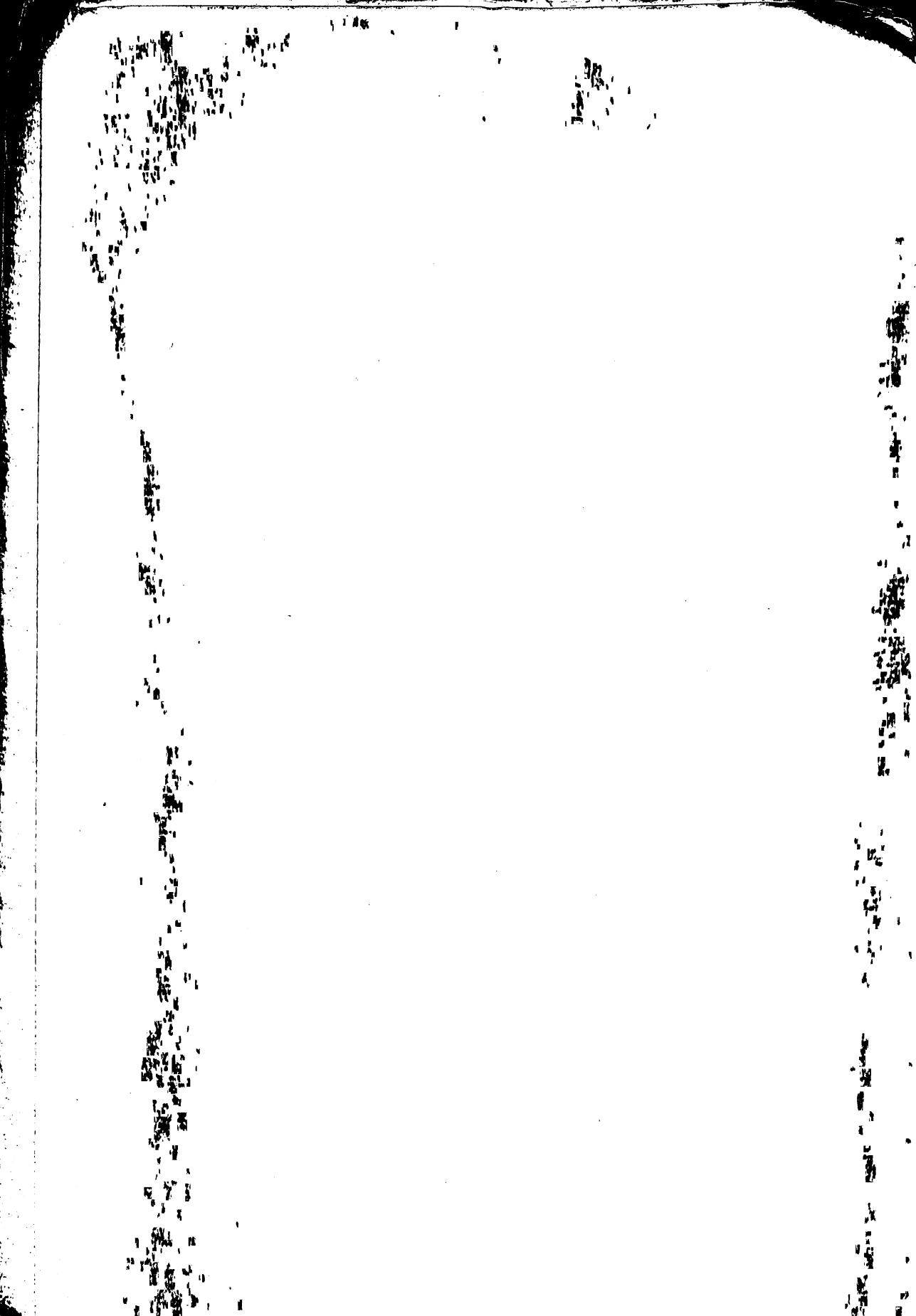
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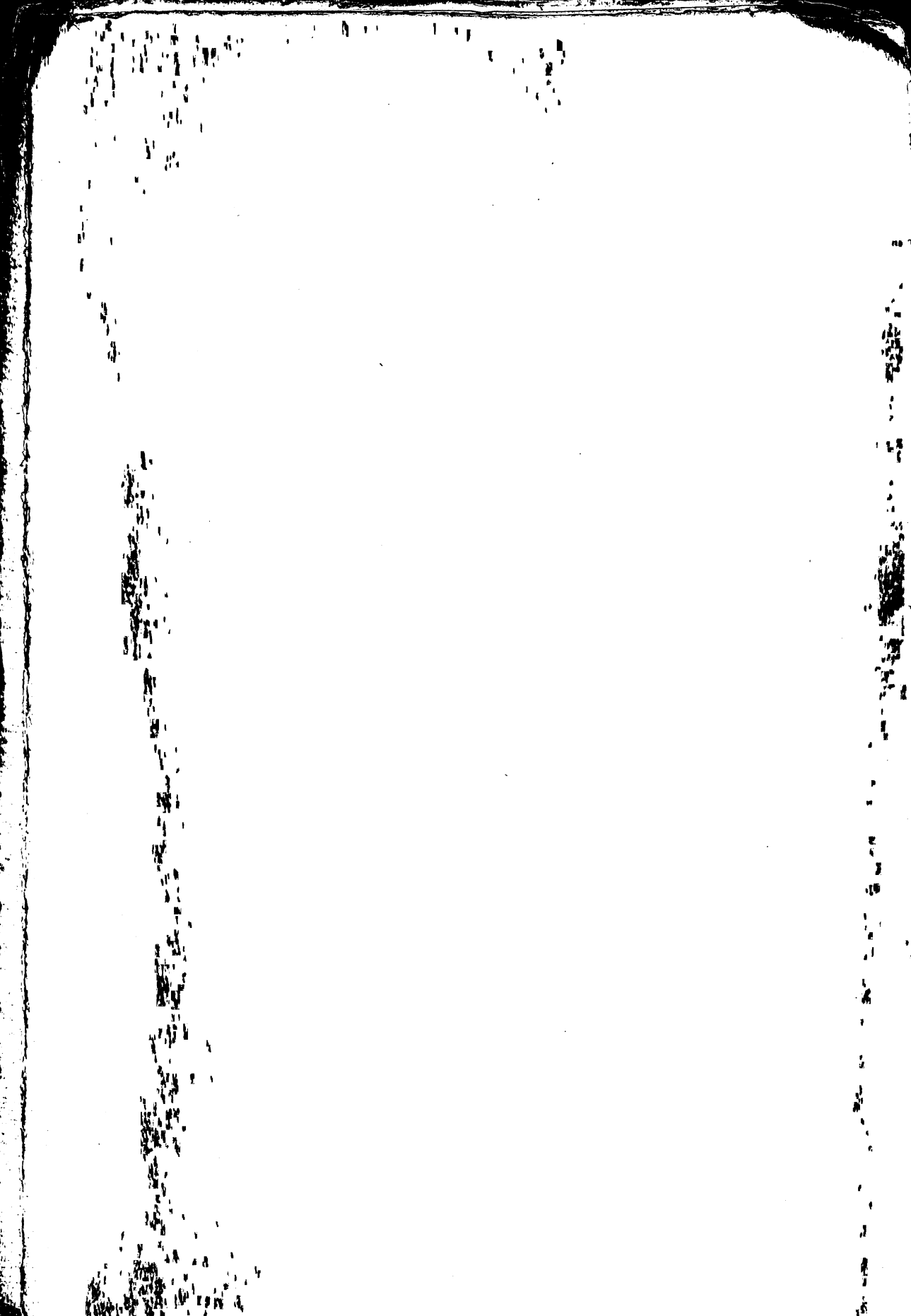
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IN THE EAST



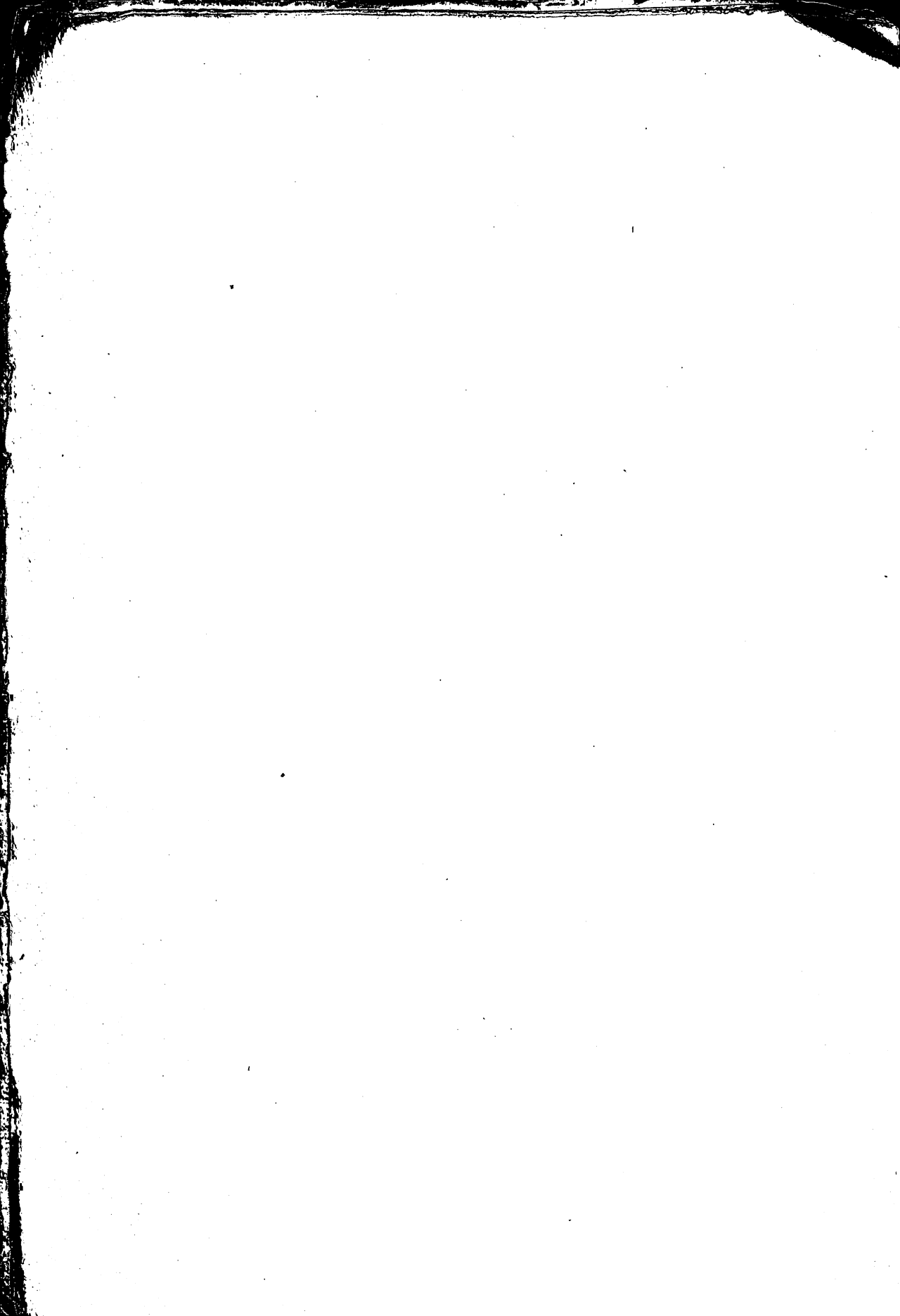
MISSIONARY WORK
IN THE EAST

REGARDED FROM A LAYMAN'S
POINT OF VIEW

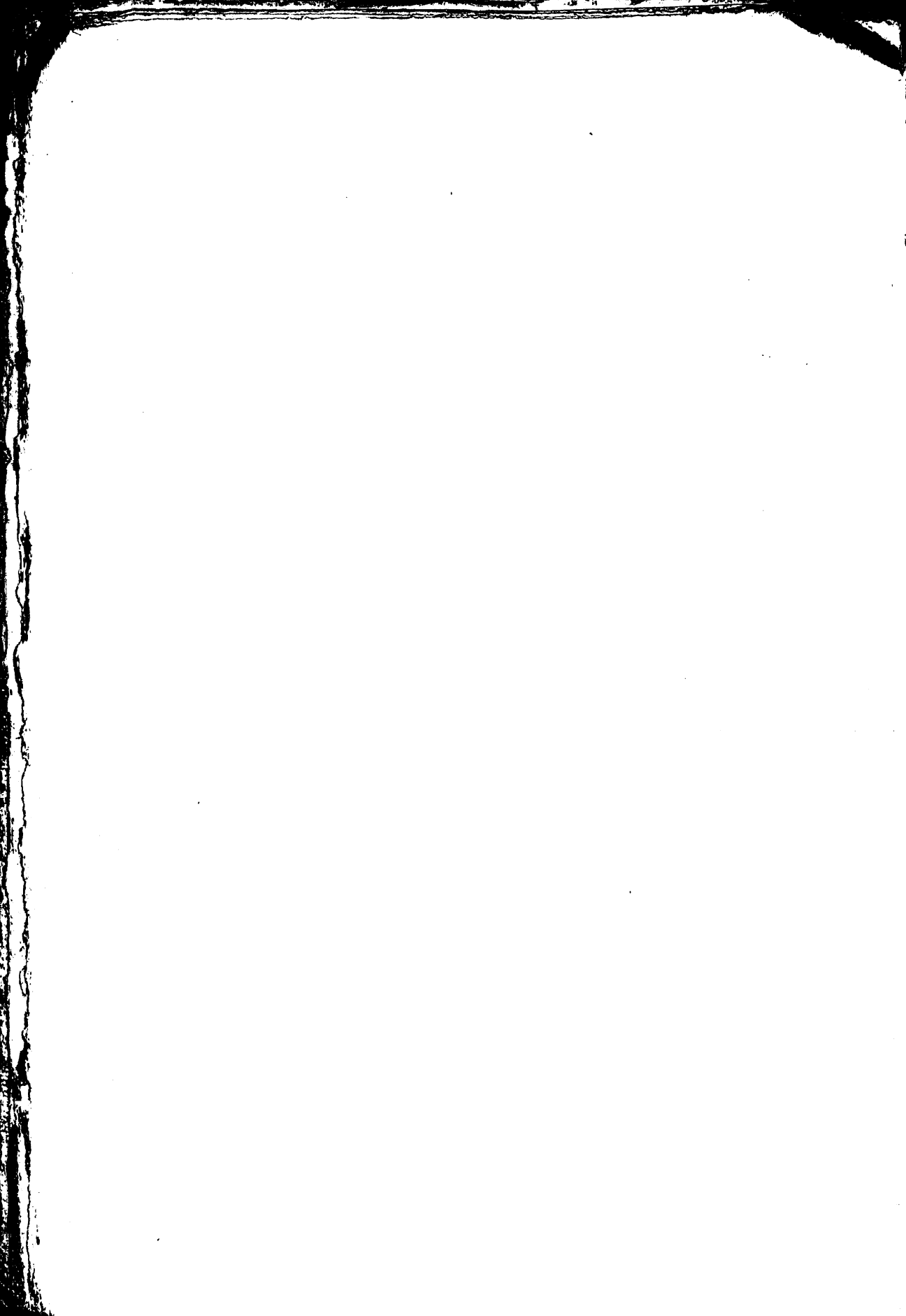
BY
SIR HENRY MORTIMER DURAND
G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.
AMBASSADOR OF GREAT BRITAIN TO
THE UNITED STATES

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MISSIONARY WORK IN THE EAST
REGARDED FROM A LAYMAN'S
POINT OF VIEW

I FEEL that I have been highly honored by the invitation to meet you here, and to address this great gathering.

I will not detain you very long, for I know that there are many here who are far better fitted than I am to speak upon the various subjects you have met to discuss. But, as I understand it, those who invited me wished to have from a layman who has spent five and twenty years of his life in the East some observations upon missionary work in that part of the world, regarded from a layman's point of view. I propose to speak to you for a few minutes on those lines.

I dare say you will not be surprised if I begin by saying that in those parts of the East where I have served, missionaries are not always regarded with favor by the officials, merchants, and others with whom they are brought into contact. I have known many laymen who believed in missionary work and supported it heartily, but I have also known many who did not. I have often heard it argued that missionary work in those regions is at best wasted and is often harmful — that practically no results follow from the expenditure of so many valuable lives, and of so much labor and money, which would be more usefully ex-

pended at home; that the missionaries make few converts, and that those they make cannot be trusted; that by attacking the religion of the people about them the missionaries arouse hostility against all Christians; and that they are, in fact, a perpetual source of embarrassment and anxiety to their Governments. I have heard these things, and things worse than these, said of the missionaries. It must be admitted that they are not universally popular among their countrymen in the East.

Now, I am not going to discuss this subject in detail. In the first place it would be useless and unpractical to do so. The real question involved in it has been settled already by our two Nations. Every one in this hall, or out of it, knows that neither England nor America will take her hand from the plough and abandon the field of foreign missions. And, secondly, if that question were still open, there are many men here immeasurably more competent than I am to examine one by one the statements made, to show how far they are true, and how far they are false, and also to show, if there is a measure of truth in them, to what extent they should be allowed to influence the attitude of Christian people toward foreign missions. For my part I shall not attempt any such comprehensive examination of the subject.

All I wish to say, and what I feel bound to say, is this, that in so far as my personal experience goes the charges brought against missionaries and their work

are many of them untrue or exaggerated, and that the amount of good they do is greatly in excess of the alleged harm. I have, it is true, met injudicious missionaries, and I have known Christian converts of a very undesirable type, and I have been saddened at times by seeing devoted men and women apparently throwing away their health and their lives with no result. There are shadows to the picture. But the picture, on the whole, is very far from being a dark one.

As to the good done by missionaries, will you excuse me if, before speaking of my personal experience, I mention my father's? He was a soldier, one of the group of soldier statesmen who did so much during the last century to build up our Indian Empire. Sixty years ago he was governing British Burmah, and there he became acquainted with the American Baptist missionary, Judson. I have here a book containing an article on Judson's life, which was contributed by my father to the *Calcutta Review* in 1850. It speaks of the Baptist missionary as a man of unconquerable spirit, entirely free from selfishness, from avarice, from all the meaner passions, above all as a man of real humility. Judson's labors and sufferings are described, his twenty-seven years' toil over his Burmese translation of the Bible, his long imprisonment in fetters by the Burman King, his struggle against failing health, finally his death. The article ends by telling of the "very important services he ren-

dered to the British Government," of the "information and advice" given by him to successive administrators of the province, of his coming forward as "a powerful auxiliary to a diplomatic mission" ready to "devote his great ability and thorough acquaintance with Burmah, its Princes and its people to aid in the conduct of negotiations." Finally the article dwells on the fact that, though the Burmese were his particular charge, the British soldiers shared his love and sympathy, and that many an officer and man of our army had cause to bless his name.

I find this article between one upon the British administration of Central India and one describing the battles of the second Sikh war, in both of which spheres of action the writer had served. It is written not by a missionary, but by a soldier and administrator, who had ruled British Burmah itself, and had the best means of knowing whether Judson did good or harm. May not this testimony be taken as some set-off against the criticisms I have mentioned?

No doubt it would be said that there are not many Judsons, and that is true. But I have seen enough of the work of the missionaries to know that there are among them a very great number of devoted and able men whose work it is a shame to disparage and decry. The lives of those I have known have been almost without exception an example to all about them — an example which some of their detractors would do well to follow. Many of them have been men of the

highest culture. I have never known any class of men in the East who had such knowledge of the native languages. This point has often been made the subject of remark. It stands to reason that the command of language needed to enable a man to argue upon religious and metaphysical questions is far greater than that required for the discharge of ordinary official or military duties. Further, I have found that in knowledge of the people, of their customs and feelings, the missionaries were as a rule far ahead of the officials. That fact also is easy to understand. And it enables the judicious missionary to afford at times, as Judson did, the most valuable aid to the official who will consult him.

Of course, as I have said before, all missionaries are not judicious. I have known some who were most injudicious, and an injudicious missionary can at times be as powerful for mischief as an injudicious diplomatist — if, indeed, there can be an injudicious diplomatist. I trust there is no such person in existence, though I confess that when I find myself addressing a missionary conference I have some doubts on the subject.

Altogether, so far as my experience goes, missionaries who obey the laws of the country in which they reside and who are gentle and considerate and courteous to all about them, very rarely get into trouble, and are a help, not a hindrance, to their countrymen. Of course they do get into trouble occasionally, and

deplorable outrages occur, for some of the heathen are as fanatical as some professing Christians, and Oriental Governments are not always strong enough to keep their fanatics in order, as we now, to some extent at least, manage to keep ours. But there is much religious toleration among Orientals in general, for people who behave properly. Indeed, the spirit of religious toleration is at times one of the difficulties with which the missionary has to contend. I remember, for example, talking one moonlight night in India to a high caste Brahmin and trying to get at his real views. The upshot of it was that he said: "Sahib, all religions are good. The Mohammedans turn to Mecca when they pray, and the Hindus pray to Vishnu and Shiva and other gods, and the Sahib-lok pray to Christ, but over all is the Great Narayan, the Lord, to whom all these differences are nothing." It is not easy, I imagine, to argue with a man who holds that comprehensive faith.

Even Mohammedans, whom many Christians regard as specially fanatical, can show much toleration to a man who treats their religion with respect, and asks only for an opportunity of temperately explaining his own. There is a missionary now present who is a striking example of this. Not long ago he was invited by an influential Mullah or priest to speak in one of the largest and oldest mosques in Persia. The day was Friday, and the people had come together for the regular Mohamme-

dan service. After offering prayer and reading the story of the Prodigal Son, the missionary preached to them about "Repentance." He was treated with much kindness, and after the service the Mohammedan priest took the missionary home with him to tea, with a number of other priests and chief men of the town. If I did not know that story to be true it would seem to me incredible. Any ordinary white man who had found his way uninvited into that mosque would hardly have escaped with his life. But the missionary in question was Mr. Louis Esselstyn, of the American Presbyterian Mission in Teheran, a body which to my knowledge has earned the respect and good-will of the Persians about them to a very remarkable degree.

As to the sincerity of Christian converts in the East, let me cite one instance out of many I have known. A few years ago I was traveling in the mountains of Western Persia when a man came to see me in the suite of a Persian official. After our business was over this man spoke to me and told me that he was a Christian. He said he had been in training for the Mohammedan priesthood, but that a chance meeting with a Nestorian on the frontier had led to his reading the Nestorian Bible. Gradually it had dawned upon him that the religion it disclosed might be the true one, and after a visit to some missionaries he had been confirmed in this belief. He had then openly embraced Christianity. He was, when I saw

him, living among the Mohammedans, and though he assured me he was not ill-treated on account of his change of faith, his position can hardly have been a pleasant one. It is not easy to see what reason he could have had except sincere conviction for acting as he did.

I should like, by the way, to take this opportunity of expressing publicly my gratitude toward the Teheran mission for their unvarying kindness to our people. We have a large legation there and about a hundred British subjects, but we are entirely dependent upon the American mission for all religious offices. Our people turn to them for every kind of help, and always with the certainty of receiving it. I can hardly exaggerate the debt of gratitude we owe them. This, however, is another story.

To sum up, the fact is, I think, that it lies in great measure with the people who choose and send out men to mission work whether the missionaries do harm or good. Missionary work is difficult and delicate work, and in fairness to governments, as well as individuals, hot-headed and tactless men, however devoted, should not be sent out to do it. May I quote to you on this point the words of Judson himself?

“In encouraging young men to come out as missionaries do use the greatest caution. One wrong-headed, conscientiously obstinate man would ruin us. Humble, quiet, persevering men; men of sound, sterling talents, of decent accomplishments and some nat-

ural aptitude to acquire a language; men of an amiable, yielding temper, willing to take the lowest place, to be the last of all and the servants of all; men who live near to God and are willing to suffer all things for Christ's sake, without being proud of it; these are the men we need."

Provided that missionaries are of that stamp, and many of those whom I have known in Persia and elsewhere were of that stamp, then I can only repeat, in words I have used before to-day, that if I were ever again an administrator or a diplomatist in a non-Christian country, I would from a purely business point of view, as a Government official, far sooner have them than not have them within the limits of my charge. And I believe from what I have seen that the people of the country, too, would far sooner have them than not have them.

May I say one word to the young men, if there are any here, who contemplate going out as missionaries to the East? I do not wish to discourage you, but I beg you to consider earnestly before you go whether you are really fitted for the task before you. Do not be misled by love of excitement or adventure, or by the glamour of the East. It has a wonderful glamour, and any man of thought and feeling who has been out there will "hear the East a-calling" for many a year. But a great part of a missionary's work, as indeed a great part of the work of every profession, is hard drudgery. To master an Oriental language as

you must master it, if you are to be of any use, is itself a labor of years. Judson used often to sit and study his Burmese for twelve hours out of the twenty-four, and as I have said, it took him twenty-seven years to complete his translation of the Bible. That is the kind of toil you must be ready to face. I once saw a missionary attempt to convert an Afghan. His manner of doing so was to walk up to the Afghan on the road and say in very bad Persian, which was not really the Afghan's language, "Christ is the Son of God." He repeated the remark twice, receiving each time a monosyllabic answer, which I will not translate, and then he sheered off, having apparently no more Persian at his command. This is the sort of thing which causes the enemy to blaspheme. And remember Judson's warning. Do not be tempted to spiritual pride. Do not stand aloof and condemn the diplomatist or the administrator or the soldier, because their lives and their views are not what yours are. They too know some things — some things which you cannot know — and they too are trying to do their duty. Above all, never look down upon the soldier. He may be rough and reckless at times, but he is always ready to lay down his life for his country, and every good missionary should honor the soldier's uniform.

If you are ready to go out in that spirit, in the spirit of Judson, then go, and God be with you. That He will be with you I have not the shadow of a doubt.

