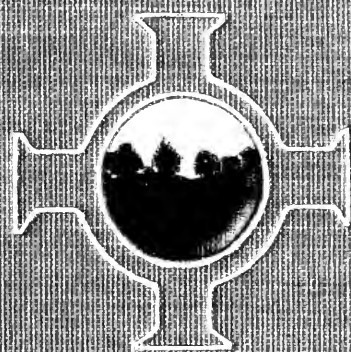


*The Sign of the
Cross in Madagascar*



J • J • KILPIN • FLETCHER

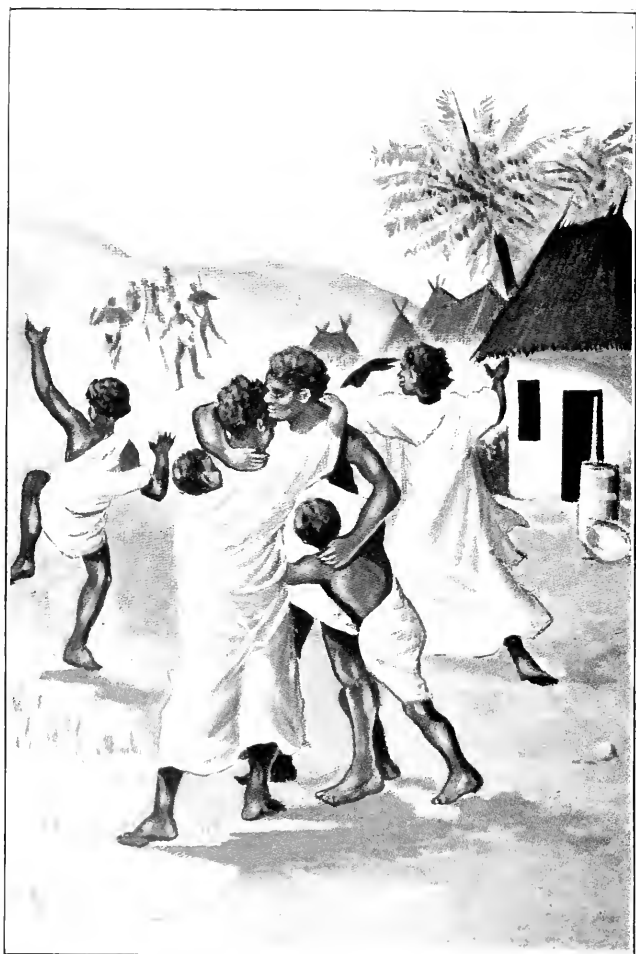
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The sign of the cross in
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The Sign of the Cross
in Madagascar



“BACK FROM THE LAND OF BONDAGE.”

The Sign of the Cross in Madagascar ; or, From Darkness to Light ❧ ❧

BY

J. J. KILPIN FLETCHER



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

Publishers of Evangelical Literature

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PREFACE

IN 1895, when the London Missionary Society of England was celebrating the centenary of its existence and work, I was laboring as pastor of one of the churches formed by missionaries of that society in the island of Jamaica, West Indies.

In connection with our local celebration of the event, it fell to my lot to be appointed a deputation to visit all the Congregational churches in the island, and lecture on the hundred years' work. To me, personally, the task was a most pleasant one, since, through my father and a great many personal friends, I was related to the mission field; and had for many years tried to keep myself in touch with the progress of the Kingdom of Christ in the world.

That portion of my lectures which seemed always to make the deepest impression, was the story of the planting of Christianity in Madagascar; the season of fierce persecution endured and outlived; and the wondrous growth which followed.

Since residing in Pittston, I have several times

been asked to give the story of Madagascar in neighboring churches; and the story has been listened to with strange interest.

By these steps it has developed, until it appeared to me that the story of that work, if told with a somewhat free hand, while adhering to facts in so far as they are known to be historical, should prove as interesting as, and more inspiring than, most works of fiction. There are master hands which might have made the story more thrilling in its influence. But few, I think, would have written it with a sense of more genuine sympathy. With such a record, the difficulty is always to find reliable data. Here we have a considerable number of works; yet not one of them the story of an eye witness. For such was the condition of affairs that no European was present to record the events as they transpired.

Still, we have the geographical knowledge of the country; insight into the customs of the people; the traditional, and later the written, history of the country; the statements made by the persecuted themselves, and by those natives who, in the dark days, were eye-witnesses of the trials and sufferings of the church; and, in post-persecution days, the official reports of the societies whose missionaries have labored in Madagascar. From such materials all the stories of the Malagasy Martyr Church have been compiled. Naturally there are many gaps, with only a few verbal statements to fill them; many incidents, only a sum-

mary of which could be given by those who took part in them.

Let it be frankly said, that in such cases, a sympathetic heart has sought to make vivid the scenes and facts, based upon the meagre statements on record. An illustration of this may be found in the scene in the Judgment Hall—where we have authentic information as to the pith of the defence made by the Christians, but no verbatim, or even full, reports.

Here, a free but loving hand has endeavored to carefully weave these scattered fragments into a connected and living story.

The names of thousands who suffered, of hundreds who died, are not known to day; and yet the facts of their sufferings and deaths, the spirit they manifested before their judges and persecutors, and their loyalty to Christ, are abundantly vouched for by the testimony of friends and foes, given immediately after the dark days. In two cases names have been supplied to designate persecuted ones, whose names are unrecorded.

Kelazapa is framed as a representative character—expressing the feelings, spirit, actions, of the idol party. Otherwise the characters are historical, and the story, beginning with the days of Radama, and the arrival of the first missionaries, down to the Great Emancipation, is based clearly on historical facts. The remainder of the story, bringing it down to this date, is gleaned from the later official reports of the various missionary so-

cieties, and a number of published works, such as Cousin's "Madagascar of To day."

My aim has been so to tell the story as to awaken as deep interest as if it were a work of fiction, while keeping in the realm of realities. He who reads this book may safely say that he knows the wonderful story of the work of God in Madagascar. That it may be owned of God to the stimulation of a deeper interest in the service of His kingdom, and as an inspiration to greater earnestness in the prosecution of that work and a more vital faith in the power of the Gospel, on the part of all who read, is my sincere prayer.

J. J. KILPIN FLETCHER.

Pittston, Pa., October 1st, 1900.

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INTRODUCTION

WITH A PURPOSE

“IN the days of Nero.” With such a customary phrase does the record of many an example of the heroism revealed in the history of the Christian church begin. To those days it seems natural to turn when illustrations are wanted of the quickening power of the Christian faith, of the meekness, the courage, the faithfulness, even unto death, of those who had found in Christ their life and their eternal hope. The love, courage and fidelity of those who, in the days of the Cæsars, sealed with their blood their testimony to the saving power of Jesus, will ever prove an inspiration to the Church of Christ in days of trial and persecution—will shine as a beacon-light to the followers of the Nazarene, in the periods of darkness and gloom through which the full-day splendor of His kingdom must come on earth.

It is well it should be so. For where will be found so favorable a spot at which to study the simple, yet profound and mighty principles, on which that kingdom is to be finally established, and which, all through the centuries have been the

strength and consolation of the church, as here, at the fountain head?

Love to God; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the assurance that He who died, rose again and lives; the sense of the ever-living Christ, always present with them; the hope of righteousness, the certain looking for the overthrow of sin, and the bringing of all the nations under the sovereign sway of Divine grace; love to man, and fellowship with Jesus in the toil and suffering by which the world will be redeemed—were not these the truths, the facts, the impulses, which inspired and sustained the martyrs of the cross?

It will be difficult to discover finer examples, calculated to inspire the faith of the disciples of Christ to-day, than may be discovered by going back to those early days, and witnessing the calm faith and triumphant joy with which the first martyrs

“Met the tyrant’s brandished steel,
The lion’s gory mane.”

The noble matron, with gentle mien; the pure virgin, with radiant face; the tender youth, with clear and sparkling eye; the mature man, with weather-beaten brow; the father, the wife, the bride, the child—gaze upon them, as they fearlessly bend their knee upon the arena floor, and lift their eyes upward toward heaven’s throne; and listen to their prayers—gaze upon them as the iron gates fly back, and the ravenous lions spring forward and tear them limb from limb; and say if their

calmness and faith and joy be not a heritage, which, to the end of the ages, will prove the inspiration of the saints of God, whenever and wherever trial and persecution for the sake of Christ shall overtake them.

Where may we witness more clearly the remarkable effects which have always followed the efforts of the enemies of Christ to exterminate His church than there, where, under the eyes of the bloody Cæsars, the very witnesses of the sufferings of the martyrs became their immediate successors in the service and travail of His kingdom?

Yet we shall do well to remember that these principles and facts, on which the Christian faith was founded, and in the strength of which the martyrs suffered, are eternal. Wherever they are firmly grasped, the same wondrous results follow—the weak are made strong; the cowards brave; the unlearned become wise; the dark are enlightened; and a love of Christ—strong as death, aye stronger—is begotten in the hearts of those who have once realized that He loved them and gave Himself for them.

Our own century has furnished abundant evidence that these things are so; and thus these pages seek to set forth a latter-day testimony to the power of the gospel of Christ. To show the effects of the gospel of redeeming love upon the heathen hearts; to reveal the power of the gospel of Christ in the face of nineteenth century unbelief

and scorn; to manifest the steadfast love and Christliness, in deepest sufferings, of heathen converts; to present the unchanging presence of Christ and His power to sustain His followers in times of trouble; and by displaying the triumphs of His kingdom over all the power of sin and darkness, to lead many to feel the worth of Christ, to awaken the enthusiasm of faith and consecration in thousands of young hearts, and to summon them to the great work of spreading the knowledge of Christ and His salvation to earth's remotest bounds—this is the purpose of the story “The Sign of the Cross in Madagascar.”

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IN MADAGASCAR

CHAPTER I

HEATHEN HOME LIFE

IN a heathen island, a thousand miles long and two hundred and fifty miles broad, and separated from the dark continent of Africa by two hundred and sixty miles of water, would have been found, ninety years ago, the homes of those who, in the days to which our story refers, were to become the heroes and heroines of the Cross in Madagascar. The derivation of the name of the island is considered uncertain. But it is generally thought to signify either "The country of the hill men," or "The country of the Madai"—an African tribe. We shall better realize their surroundings, and the events which form some of their life-experiences, if we here pause to obtain some knowledge of the country in which they lived. Lying almost entirely in the tropics, and enjoying a tropical climate, Madagascar presented commercial prospects which, centuries ago,

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led several European nations to attempt its colonization. Charmed by its natural beauties, allured by its supposed mineral wealth, and attracted by the wondrous fertility of its valleys, persistent efforts were made to establish and sustain colonies. Surely a foreseeing and farseeing Providence formed this island with fullest knowledge of what would transpire within its borders in this nineteenth century of ours. All around the coast and extending inland, runs a vast stretch of comparatively level country, studded in many places with dense swamps and lagoons, and scarcely attaining an elevation of more than five hundred feet above the level of the sea. For a distance of some three hundred miles the lagoons add to the charm of the scenery; and it is noteworthy, as evidence of the alertness of the heathen king, Radama I, that he realized their value and began the construction of short canals, so as to provide this stretch of country with an unbroken water-way. The whole interior of the country forms one great mountain region, many parts of which reach an elevation of five thousand feet; while the Ankaratra range rises nine thousand feet above the sea. Between these mountain ranges lie widespreading and fruitful valleys—the rice-fields of the highlands. Through these mountain regions run narrow paths, sometimes fairly level and smooth, but at others ascending the faces of what seem almost perpendicular rocks. Over these mountain paths and passes the peo-

ple journeyed from tribe to tribe, bearing with them loads of produce, or wares for barter. Through a long stretch of this mountain land reaches a chain of extinct volcanic crater, while following the coast line of the island it is almost girdled with a dense forest, which in some places is twenty-five miles wide.

Several lakes—the largest being Alaotra—are also found in the highlands, while the grandeur of the scenery is often enhanced by the rivers which cut their ways down the mountain sides and through the dense forest, and so come leaping and rolling and sparkling to the sea.

Large tracts of fertile land are devoted to the cultivation of rice; and on the rich pasture lands of the wild plains many herds of cattle are reared.

Throughout the island one language, though having several dialects, is spoken.

It was in this country—a country devoted to idolatry and to most of the abominable practices of heathenism, that there were to be discovered men and women, who should prove themselves worthy to take their places side by side with the earliest martyrs of the Christian church.

It is true that, at this time, some in Madagascar had risen to a level of social comfort and of intellectual power far above the standard of general heathenism; and as several of those, whose acquaintance we shall presently make, belonged to the more well-to-do classes, we will try to fa-

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miliarize ourselves with some of their probable surroundings. We must form some idea of a heathen home, and the manners amid which they who were to suffer for Christ had been trained, if we are to rightly appreciate the power of the gospel, or to realize what it meant for them to separate themselves from the worship of their ancestors.

Very few facts are known regarding the life of the individuals, with whom much of our story is concerned, prior to the period at which the story opens. We do, however, know the positions in life in which some of them moved, and so can form a fairly accurate impression of the influences which moulded their characters before coming under the power of the gospel.

We also know that, at the time of the introduction of Christianity, Rafaravavy, who became such a leader of its followers, was living in her own comfortable heathen home in the city. This position furnished her with the opportunity, so well used, for making her home a center for Christian teaching and prayer.

Let us then picture such a home, situated in Antananarivo, the capital of the island. In this home we discover a typical heathen family, consisting of a father and mother, with their daughter and her adopted sister—who, for the sake of narrative, we will call Rafaravavy and Fantaka.

As they belonged to the well-to-do class of the community, they were surrounded by a full reti-

nue of slaves. Human flesh and blood were of small value then ; and not only did many heathen themselves purchase and possess slaves, but also engaged in a slave traffic with other countries, selling their own kinsmen into the misery of bondage. High on the mountain range, some fifty miles above the city, is a point called still "The Weeping Place of the Hovas." And why? Because the slaves sold in the market were usually driven along this mountain track on their way to the coast. As the weary, sad, and sometimes sick and wounded slaves, chained together for the march down country, reached this spot, they caught the first glimpse of the sea across which they were to be transported, and, turning their heads for a moment, they cast a brief and pitiful last glance at the city they loved, and the home of their childhood. The slaves in Rafaravavy's home were better cared for than in most other homes, for both her parents were remarkable alike for their supreme devotion to their idol worship and for a gentleness of disposition most rare in heathendom. But their devotion to the idols did not enable them to train their children on a higher moral level than others around them ; so that, in many respects, the girls grew up with only the loose rules of heathenism for their guide. Take, for example, the matters of theft, deceit and lying. They were taught that the only bad thing about these habits consisted in being found out ; and children were often punished, not because

they had done wrong, but because they had not been shrewd enough to conceal their acts.

As girls, Rafaravavy and Fantaka spent much of their time in spinning silks; and as they belonged to the wealthier class, they were frequently arrayed in silken robes of splendid texture and design, which their own hands had manufactured.

Their father being a devout heathen, it was natural the family should develop a sincere regard for the idols. According to the custom of the Hova tribe, the head of each family served as priest for his own household. Thus from her earliest years, Rafaravavy had been accustomed to seeing her father bring forth the ancestral charms, and at their shrines burn fragrant gums and offer prayer; and so, early taught the ways of idolatry and initiated into the rites and ceremonies of heathenism, she and her sister became very deeply attached to the worship of the kings, ancestors and idols. While only a girl, Rafaravavy's mother was seized with a fatal sickness, and the child never forgot the scenes she witnessed then. Each day brought its company of visitors to discuss the condition of the sick and dying mother; each day the diviners and fetishes joined with the priests in elaborate ceremonies to bring about a recovery. But all their charms and incantations proved unavailing, and, while mere girls, Rafaravavy and Fantaka were left motherless. In accordance with Malagasy cus-

tom her mother had a large number of charms which were worn continually, and one of these which she coveted greatly—a fine specimen of a crocodile's tooth, covered with a small piece of scarlet cloth, came into Rafaravavy's possession, and, for the next few years of her life, formed her chief treasure.

At the burial of her mother numerous sacrifices were offered to the various charms which had been worn by the deceased, and prayers and offerings presented at the shrine of the idol Keli-malaza.

The scenes of the day on which the building of her mother's tomb was completed were those which clung to the mind of young Rafaravavy, and in days to come often caused her to question what must be the character of their idols, since they reveled in such scenes of debauchery. Copious libations were poured upon the large slabs of rock which formed the vault, and charms were attached at various points to ward off evil spirits. Two richly carved posts were erected in front of the vault; and these were intended to protect against every evil influence those who should come to worship at the tomb. Then followed a feast and dancing, in which full vent was given to the licentious nature of the people; and the scene of debauchery and drunkenness was prolonged far into the night, even her father and the priests who had assembled for the special occasion being the leaders in the revelry. Had they

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belonged to the poorer people, she would probably have been buried when the moon was dead. The dead body would have been wrapped in hide and tied to a post. Then twice each day, the corpse would have been taken down and the cords drawn tighter—until at last all but the bones had decayed and been squeezed into the soil; when the skeleton would have been placed in a rude coffin and buried.

In consequence of her mother's death, Rafaravavy was, at an early age, compelled to take up the duties of the household; and naturally her position brought her into frequent contact with the practices of sorcery and witchcraft. Often was the young girl kept from sleep almost the whole night, that she might preside over the arrangements for the entertainment of her father's guests. The strange thing was that, accustomed as she was to hearing the immoral conversation, to witnessing the indecent gestures, and to enduring the drunken folly of these occasions, Rafaravavy should have been able to retain even a moderate measure of decency and self-respect.

But she did more than this, for she grew more and more disgusted with the practices she witnessed; and as her father became increasingly addicted to the extreme customs of heathenism, she grew to loathe many of them. Often would she and her sister withdraw from feasts, and seek to console one another at the fate that compelled

them, without the possibility of choice, to be participants in such scenes.

At length arrived at woman's estate, Rafaravavy came into possession of the wealth which belonged to her by inheritance; and then it was that the first opportunity presented itself for her escape from the surroundings she loathed. It was not that she had knowledge of any higher religion than the heathen customs amid which she had been brought up. But as in every land there have always been a few who have seemed to be possessed of finer traits and nobler instincts than the multitudes around them, so Rafaravavy's nature shrank from many of the common customs which could not be separated from the idolatrous beliefs of her people. The opportunity now presented was speedily taken advantage of. Rafaravavy purchased a home for herself, and thus was enabled to escape, in a large measure, from those practices which, even in her heathen condition, were distasteful to her. Fantaka was of a different temperament to Rafaravavy—bright and clever, yet lacking the more generous sympathies, and the quicker appreciation of higher qualities in men and things which belonged to Rafaravavy. Her nature was tinged with selfishness—largely the result of the circumstances in which she lived—and a greater love of gaiety; and thus, while her devotion to the idol worship of her country may have been no

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more sincere, she was more ardent in her expressions of reverence and less tolerant of any suggestion hostile to their influence, than Rafaravavy. Still, a very sincere attachment existed between these two—perhaps as strong an affection as in the great majority of cases would have been found in real sisters.

So it came to pass that Fantaka spent a great portion of her time in the home of Rafaravavy. Thither would she often escape from the feasts at which her father entertained his friends, and there would she always find a haven of comparative rest. Intelligent, shrewd and loving as Rafaravavy was; possessed also of a fine physical frame, and of strength and courage; it was most natural that Fantaka should learn to lean largely on her for guidance and help in her seasons of difficulty. Thus Rafaravavy's home gradually became, more and more, the home of Fantaka.

CHAPTER II

A REMARKABLE GROUP

It is necessary that we should make the acquaintance of some of the friends of Rafaravavy, in order that we may understand the ties that bound them together when, years afterwards, they had been brought out of the darkness of the heathenism in which they were brought up, and were called upon to wear the sign of the cross for the sake of Christ and their country. Every life is susceptible to the influences which surround it, and, perhaps, especially to the personal influences of those who are chosen as the intimate companions of life. There is no standard by which to measure the influence of companionship or the far-reaching potency that flows from one life into another.

Rafaravavy was to become the remarkable center of a remarkable group, and already, although a heathen woman, the ascendancy of her character was beginning to make itself felt.

Amongst the distant relatives of Rafaravavy was one who was destined to occupy a large place in her heart and home, and, ultimately, to display a courage and fidelity to sincere conviction and heaven-born love, which should prove

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an example to all who, in coming dark days, should be compelled to prove their loyalty to Christ.

In another part of the city was another home, which was adorned with evidences of heathen luxury and wealth. And here, surrounded by the best society that a heathen city could supply, was brought up Rasalama, kins-woman of Rafaravavy.

Probably some twelve years younger than her relative, Rasalama was but a girl at this time. But already a strong attachment had grown up between them. They constantly met in ancestral worship at the same shrines; frequent visits were paid by the young girl to the home of her relative, and so their friendship ripened—the elder drawn to the younger by the brightness and gentleness of her disposition; the younger attached to the elder because of her wisdom, strength of character and kindliness of heart. Who could fail to be attracted toward the young girl, Rasalama? Possessed of a happy, smiling face, and beautiful withal; physically vigorous and active; free from many of the darker traits of character which marked so many of her companions; with clear eyes and honest face, with merry laugh and ringing voice, and elastic step; what wonder that her friends were legion, and that Rafaravavy should desire much of her companionship?

So little is known of the life of some of the most faithful Christians, before their confession

of their faith in Christ, that not even their heathen names have been recorded. In other cases, owing to the enforced absence of the missionaries during the years of fierce persecution, the names of many who suffered even unto death have no place in the written annals of the Church; although the testimony of their friends, and of their heathen persecutors, completely establishes the purity of their faith, the beauty of their lives, and the steadfastness of their loyalty to Christ. There was one such young woman among those who frequently came to Rafaravavy's home—and of whom we know little save that she was constant in her loving co-operation with her husband when, a few years later, he was a mainstay of many poor and suffering Christians; and that she herself endured stripes and bruises for the sake of her Lord and of His people.

To that home frequently came another visitor—a youth of good family, and of bright and generous disposition. He bore his father's name—Rafaralahy—and was held in esteem for his father's sake and the position he filled.

At this period there were a few men in Madagascar who seemed to be many years in advance of their generation, and foremost amongst these was the elder Rafaralahy. Sagacious, enlightened, and possessed of unusual executive ability, he had been appointed to a responsible governorship, which demanded such qualities in its chief magis-

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trate, and he enjoyed the full confidence of King Radama.

Watchful as to the interests of his people, he was equally mindful of the necessity of giving his children every assistance which could be obtained in a heathen country for advancing them in life, and young Rafaralahy, placed by his father at the capital, that he might be trained to fill a government position, availed himself of every advantage that came in his way.

Among those advantages, and not the least in his opinion, was the kindly interest that Rafaravavy took in him, and the friendship she showed him. Ere long he became an ever welcome guest, and in her home he made a number of acquaintances and friendships which would last while life lasted, and the memory of which would prove to be cherished with fragrance after his life should close.

Nearly of the same age, and thrown much into one another's company at the home of Rafaravavy, a warm friendship gradually sprang up between Rafaralahy and the un-named heathen damsel whom he there met.

Often the friendships of youth and maidenhood have in them the germs of unchanging love, and it would not be surprising if, in this heathen home, there should be found that which would correspond with what has often taken place in civilized and Christian countries. But at present their friendship was that of two young people

in similar stations of life—both intelligent, constantly thrown together in the home of a mutual friend, and each of whom felt the attractiveness of the other's person and disposition.

Amongst other welcome friends of Rafaravavy was one who belonged to the ranks of the Malagasy nobility—aye, royalty—Prince Ramonja. Sometimes in palanquin, sometimes on foot, he was one of those who most frequently bestowed his presence and company upon our heroine and friends, and certainly none received warmer welcome than did he.

Ramonja was possessed of a somewhat striking personality. Slightly above the average height, with intelligent eyes, features unusually clear-cut, and a certain stateliness of carriage, there was that about him that suggested something of the rank to which he belonged. Of vigorous constitution and active step, having a well modulated voice and gentle manner, Prince Ramonja approached very nearly to the ideal of a Malagasy prince. Of course, he was a heathen, and firmly wedded to the worship and superstitions of his country and people. Indeed, he was one of the pillars of idolatry, on whom the hopes of the idol-keepers were built, and few, if any, at this time gave greater promise of being a brave and strong champion of their heathen customs; and this, notwithstanding the fact that he often absented himself from the coarser and more degrading features of the idol-worship,

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and did not hesitate even to rebuke some for their utter licentiousness and brutishness.

There were some busybodies who, before long, began to link together the names of Ramonja and Rafaravavy, evidently satisfied, in their own minds, that his frequent visits to her home signified that she was destined one day to attain to even higher rank than she already held.

This thought of many minds was productive of one result, at least. It tended to create still deeper respect for her and to enlarge her influence over her neighbors. The conclusion of the people was one which, under the circumstances, was natural, for Rafaravavy herself had such a dignified bearing, and was of such character and abilities, that it might well be thought she was fitted to be the wife of a prince. Yet Rafaravavy was not at all deceived. For some time she had noticed that while the friendship of Ramonja toward herself was most cordial and respectful, it was only to Fantaka he gave any sign of special friendship or marks of distinction. And Rafaravavy was quite satisfied that matters should be so. She loved Fantaka, and, at that time, could conceive of no higher ambition for her foster-sister; while, for herself, it was high enough honor that she was the intimate friend of Ramonja, and would one day claim a closer family connection with him.

There are at least two individuals who may here be mentioned; for, although not just at this

time numbered amongst Rafaravavy's personal friends, they presently came to be not only recognized, but also loved and honored by her and by all who met at her home. One was Ratsilaingia. Brought up, as others, in heathen darkness, a remarkable change manifested itself in him under the influence of the gospel. When the dark days of persecution came, a letter, written by him to one of the missionaries, revealed the spirit that dwelt in him. After stating the death of his father, his wife's father and his uncle, he bewailed the desecration of the Sabbath by the heathen of the capital. Then he added: "All the missionaries are gone, for their work is ended! Oh, when shall we behold a new day? Make haste the promise which says, 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea'; that the broken heart, which is now too heavy, may be bound up; and may the power of Jehovah quickly appear, that all may see it and be astonished thereat! Do not forget to pray for us."

The other was Raintsiheva, at this time not only a heathen but a diviner, and highly esteemed by the people around the city for his supposed supernatural power. It was he who, when baptized in the name of Jesus, received the name of Paul—a name which he bore worthily, so that as the moment of martyrdom approached, he could say, like his prototype, "I am now ready to be

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offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

There is yet another person who should be mentioned here—not because he was so frequent a visitor at Rafaravavy's home, or even a friend of hers, as were others, but because she had frequent occasion for intercourse with him, and subsequently he held an important place in some of the events narrated in our story.

All through this period, Rafaravavy was an earnest heathen, and worshiped the idols as devoutly as any, and believed in the practices which form a part of idolatry, wherever it exists. Idolatry and divination are never separated. They are twin sisters, and the more degraded the form of idolatry, the more complete the subjection of the people to the diviner's power.

Again and again, at important moments in her life, Rafaravavy had had recourse to a diviner. From him she had sought to learn the best days for feasts, the most auspicious times for starting on her journeys, entering her new home, and other such events. The name of this diviner we give as Bezanozano—a man of medium height, strongly built and well on toward middle life.

While there was nothing attractive about his person, there was not, on the other hand, anything repellant; and, at least, he had a great reputation as being amongst the most skillful and de-

vout of the diviners. In this way it happened that, at this stage, Rafaravavy and Bezanozano were well known to one another, and often, in connection with his profession, Bezanozano was a visitor at her home.

CHAPTER III

A HEATHEN COURT

PROBABLY no better site could have been found than that chosen by the Hovas for the location of Antananarivo, the capital of the province of Imerina, and the seat of government for the greater part of the island.

The province of Imerina occupies, approximately, the central portion of the island; and, while its boundaries are not very clearly marked, its extreme length would probably be ninety-five miles, and its width seventy-five miles.

An ancient custom prevailed in Madagascar of locating a certain number of settlers in a district, so forming small townships. This custom probably indicates the meaning of the name of the capital, Antananarivo—viz., “The Town of a Thousand.”

The whole population of the island had formerly been divided into numerous independent tribes, sometimes widely separated from one another by stretches of unappropriated country, but each tribe subject to its own chief, and retaining in large measure its own customs. The inhabitants of the land were of several mixed races, and with the growth of tribes and the desire for ex-



MEMBERS OF THE BARA TRIBE.

pansion of territory began to arise feuds and intertribal warfare. In addition to the tribes about to be referred to, may be mentioned the Taimoro, occupying a portion of the coast lands, and of Arabian descent; the Antsihanaka, living to the northeast of Imerina; the Betsileo and Bara tribes, occupying, respectively, the south central and southern parts of the island; and the Tankarana, occupying the northern end of the island.

About one hundred years before the time at which our story opens, there was one very warlike and powerful (though small) tribe, called the Sakalava, dwelling in the southwest of the island. Filled with a desire for conquest, they attacked their nearest neighbors on the west of the island, and conquered them. Pressing forward they spread their conquests northward, until all the western side of the country and some of the interior tribes were subject to their sway. Ultimately another tribe, called the Hovas, who occupied the central province of the island, gained the ascendancy over the Sakalava and other tribes, and, with European aid, succeeded in establishing a sovereignty over almost the whole land; and their chiefs became recognized as the kings of Madagascar.

The more intelligent character of the Hovas, their natural aptitude for commerce and government, and their lighter color, would indicate that they are of Malayan, rather than Ethiopian origin.

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At this time the palace at Antananarivo was occupied by Radama I. Compared with the palaces of European countries this royal home might have appeared a veritable barn. But, contrasted with the huts occupied by the ancestors of the Hova and other Malagasy tribes, the outward structure gave evidence of great development, and showed these people to be possessed of natural powers which were capable of culture, and might one day place them high amongst civilized nations.

Whatever might be thought of the exterior of Radama's palace there were some features of its interior which might have provoked the jealousy of other rulers—especially such were the lavish hangings or curtains of silk. A large variety of the curtains were manufactured by the people; and, since the king had power to command the best labor of the most skilled men and women in the island, it was to be expected that the best specimens would be found in the palace.

King Radama was a man far in advance of former rulers, and of the people over whom he ruled. But a young man when he became king, the opening years of his reign gave promise of great growth and improvement throughout the country. He speedily organized a government, which, in its administration, conferred much greater liberties on the people, and aimed more directly at the improvement of their social conditions. While not relaxing the supreme authority, which

had always centered in the person of the chief or king, Radama generally contrived to use that authority for the welfare of the tribes subject to his control. Long before the days of Radama, repeated attempts to establish one kingdom in the place of the many independent tribes and chieftaincies had failed, and while Radama's father had so far succeeded in his purposes as to consolidate the government of the whole Hova tribe under his own authority, he left to his son the larger task of subduing the surrounding tribes to Hova rule. To this end the young man had devoted all his energy and courage, and had carried his warfare to a successful issue.

Radama was a soldier, as his father, Impoina, had been; and, having gained for the Hova tribe the ascendancy they enjoyed, as the result of fierce and bloody struggles, it was natural he should feel that he must secure the stability of his throne, and be safe from reconquest by other tribes, by raising an army. This he did; and so became not only the king of the country, but also general of a well-trained and well-disciplined military force.

In character Radama differed widely from those who had hitherto ruled over the Malagasy. He was humane and enlightened, and blessed with a gift of foresight. Added to this, he took a strong personal interest in the welfare of his people, and was constant in his efforts for their betterment. Keeping himself well informed as to

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their condition, planning methods for their help, and ready to adopt such measures as seemed to promise well, Radama easily earned the claim to be regarded as the foremost ruler the Malagasy had ever had. Capable of appreciating the advantages of being connected with the powerful governments of other, and especially European countries, Radama courted the friendship of England, and entered into commercial treaties with that country. One result of these relations which was also an indication of the progressive character of the king, was that by treaty the exportation of slaves was abolished. It is true the British government gave him considerable compensation, as an inducement to this step—annual grants of money and arms, and assistance in training his army, yet the more enlightened spirit, and the alertness to obtain whatever might tend to the development of his country, were clearly revealed in his conduct.

He also maintained relations with the government of France; and though in later years these French relations have proved an almost unmingled curse to Radama's country, yet he was not to be blamed for his efforts to bring his people into a healthy connection with the most civilized nations of the earth.

Had Madagascar since his day been favored with an unbroken succession of rulers as enlightened as Radama, she would not to-day occupy the humiliating position she does in having been con-

quered by the army of France—largely, it is to be feared, at the instigation of the hidden hand of Rome. This, however, does not belong to the present portion of our story.

While thus enlightened and humane, Radama was a heathen king, and maintained the customs of heathenism. In his personal habits he was to be distinguished from the more humble of his people only by the greater lengths to which he went in evil and licentiousness. In these practices he was encouraged by many of the gay young Malagasy nobles who formed his friends and companions. It was to be expected that one in his position and of his disposition would make and retain many friendships. So it was that both the young men and women of the nobility were his constant guests. Some of these, who entertained hopes of possibly securing the throne, encouraged his course, expecting that a vicious life would speedily destroy Radama. Others, who desired his favor, or who feared to incur his disapproval, connived at the recklessness which marked his life, and even became the instruments of evil to him.

In this way the palace frequently became the seat of lewdness and debauchery; and from the heathen court went forth an example calculated to degrade more and more utterly the already low morals of the people. On many of these festive occasions drink would flow freely; naked slave girls would dance for the amusement of the com-

pany; obscene conversation would be indulged in, and, under the influence of intoxication and inflamed passions, the company, led by the king, would give themselves up to forms of revelry and licentiousness too vile to utter. Such, in part, was the strange and evil contrast presented by the character of Radama. The king adhered strongly to the worship of ancestors and kings, and attached the highest importance to the erection and maintenance of the tomb of the late king. Indeed, his superior intelligence inspired him the more elaborately to celebrate his memory.

A magnificent tomb was erected by the king's command, he himself preparing the design. A large variety of charms surrounded the great vault, and others were raised at the entrance; all of them being designed either as objects for worship or as a protection for worshippers. Radama himself, as chief of his tribe, filled the priestly office, and at the dedication of the tomb of his predecessor, it was he who presided over the ceremonies, and offered the sacrifices incident to the occasion. Repeatedly, at state affairs, Radama would present offerings, and burn the fragrant gum at this tomb; and here he observed the regular seasons for ancestral worship.

The king still claimed, and at times exercised, the extreme power of life and death over his subjects. The slightest offence was sometimes visited with the death penalty. Indeed, instances are on record, such as the strangling of the cook

because by accident a few drops of soup had been spilled on the queen's dress, showing that even Radama set but small value on the lives of slaves and lower subjects. If further evidence of his loyalty to the customs of heathenism were needed, it would be found in the fact that he had twelve wives; and often the inner rooms—or woman's portion—of the palace became the scene of quarrels and intrigues. Little else could be expected than these continual manifestations of jealousy and ill-feeling among his wives. The peace that usually seemed to reign in the king's harem was not the peace of concord, but of a deep-seated fear of the king's anger in case the strifes should become too bitter or too loud. The lives of these wives were but a form of slavery, as exhausting and bitter as, and probably more degrading than, the life of the most despised manual slave on the cotton plantations of the country.

There was in those days a semblance of law and justice; but the law was that of chance, and the justice that of the poison cups. Trial by ordeal, or tangena, was the usual mode of deciding the guilt or the innocence of any person accused of either of a large variety of crimes. It has been estimated that ten per cent. of the population submitted to the ordeal in the course of their lives, and that five per cent. of the entire population died from the effects of the tangena cup. Upon an accusation being made against a person, and the king's authority for trial being given, the di-

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viners prepared the poison cup. There was opportunity given here for bribery, so that really the will of the diviners, or the gifts of the accused or his friends, usually decided the fate of such an one.

Standing in the courtyard, surrounded by soldiers, friends and public spectators, the accused was handed the poison cup, and required to drink its contents. In almost every case it produced violent vomiting and great discomfort. In some cases nothing more serious happened, the accused recovered, and was declared innocent. Probably in the majority of cases intense pains followed the drinking of the potion, and these increased until, in bitterest agony, the accused either swooned and died, or was more mercifully and speedily dispatched with a spear—the effects of the cup being accepted as evidence of guilt. Such was Radama, the brave and enlightened Malagasy king; and such his court in a heathen country and in heathen times. Such ever is heathenism! Such ever is human life, apart from the purifying and sanctifying influences of Jesus of Nazareth, and of the religion He gave to men.

PART II

STREAKS OF LIGHT

CHAPTER

IV. STRANGE MESSENGERS AND A STRANGE
MESSAGE.

V. IN A MIGHTY FAITH.

VI. LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

VII. THE IDOL MAKER.

VIII. THIS NEW SECT.

CHAPTER IV

STRANGE MESSENGERS AND A STRANGE MESSAGE

THE passing years brought changes and developments in those with whom we have already become acquainted. That friendship which sprang up so naturally between Rafaravavy and Rasalama, had deepened with the flight of time. In the meantime Rasalama had suffered the loss of both of her parents. Her father first squandered almost all his wealth on heathen vices, and then died, leaving Rasalama and her mother but meanly provided for. Shortly afterward, her mother died, and Rasalama, reduced in circumstances, and bereft of the affection of both parents, was cast upon the world. In this time of trial she learned to know the depth of the affection cherished for her by Rafaravavy. Calling her to her side, Rafaravavy sought to comfort her with such consolations as her heathen faith afforded. But the best comfort, at this time, was yielded by the love of her womanly heart toward the orphan girl. In Rasalama's loss, she found an opportunity for gratifying her own sense of joy in the presence of her young friend; and the friendship between these two deepened, so that they sustained toward each other much of the relation of

mother and daughter. All the brightness of disposition and attractiveness of person which had marked the girl became more fully developed as she grew toward the period of maturity. Such was the thought of, at least, one of the young men who was early to come under the influence of the gospel; one who had been her friend and associate for several years, and to whom her company was now even more acceptable than when, as a girl, he had first been introduced to her. He had marked, with growing interest and appreciation, the changes which manifested themselves in her as she approached the threshold of womanhood; and for some time had regarded her with feelings different to those of mere friendship. Nor had there been wanting signs, on her part, which could scarcely be explained on the grounds of friendship alone. Without betraying any idea of immodesty, Rasalama had made it plain to all her associates that this companion was regarded by her with special favor; and this state of affairs had come to be recognized as giving him a particular right to her friendship and company.

Another change had reference to Rafaralahy, who had been making progress with his duties, and already stood high in the esteem of the officials. Since his position seemed fairly assured, it did not appear strange that he should seek to establish a home of his own. Quietly the friendship between himself and one of those to whom we have referred, as amongst the remark-

able group who rallied to the house of Rafaravavy, had been growing.

Meanwhile Rafaralahy had been securing land, building and furnishing a house, and establishing his rice fields, so that, when the heathen rites of marriage made them one, it was to a home of comfort, if not of luxury, he took his youthful bride.

Such was the state of things when a new hope began to dawn, and the first rays of a new light to shine, for Madagascar—a hope old, yet ever new; light, pure, radiant and strong, yet at present, for this land, only pale as the streaks of dawn.

Across the channel, human hearts had become filled with a yearning to help this dark land. Toward it eyes were being strained. Ears had caught the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us." Minds were awakening to a sense of duty; and lives were being consecrated to the effort to introduce amongst those benighted people the one uplifting influence for the nations, the one gospel of glad tidings, the one sure source of peace and joy and life—the message of the love of God. Merchant vessels had come to this shore, representing the trade of almost every nation. Ships had arrived from so-called civilized lands, for the vile and degrading purpose of transporting human flesh and blood to other countries, that their demands for labor might be supplied by the unrequited toil of heartbroken, oppressed and defenseless slaves.

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But one morning, toward the end of 1818 A. D., the watchers along the shores of the dark island saw at daybreak the sails of an approaching ship, which brought to their country messengers who came on a different errand.

Quietly the vessel entered the port of Tamatave, and dropped her anchor. Presently one of her boats was lowered, a party entered it, and when it was rowed into shore, there stepped forth a man with his wife and child. The name of Jones will remain forever enshrined in the hearts of the Malagasy. Many curious eyes were fixed upon them, and many eager speculations were made as to the purpose of their coming. But, perhaps, the greatest surprise of all was created when it became known that they had come as the bearers of a message from the living and true God—a message of His love for the Malagasy; a message of peace and goodwill for their country; a message of hope and deliverance for all its people.

It did not take long to convince the people that these messengers had come to them as friends, and everything about them, and their message, seemed to arouse the interest of the Malagasy in their errand. Gathering companies of people around them daily, they began to gradually unfold to them the strange and wondrous message they had come to teach. Such was the character of that teaching that each day witnessed a deepening interest, on the part of the people, in the

things spoken; each day marked more and more clearly the astonishment with which the superstitious heathen heard the wonderful tidings proclaimed by these messengers. The people had a conception of a Supreme Being, but only vague ideas of His relationship to them, or of theirs to Him. That fact is clearly indicated in many of their proverbs, in which the Malagasy are rich. For example, one of their proverbs, antedating the commencement of Christian work in the Island, utters this warning: "Sin not in the silent valley, for God is there."—a beautiful commentary, surely, on the statement of Hagar, when in the wilderness: "Thou God seest me."

When these teachers told them that the Being they feared—of whom they almost dreaded to speak—was the Father of men, the friend of men; that He loved all men and would be loved of them, their hearts were amazed. The nearest approach to the Supreme One which they had deemed possible was to come before a charm, or idol form, and offer sacrifices and petitions. But now they were told there was a living God to whom they could draw near in prayer, and who, although they could not see Him, could see and hear them, and would surely answer their requests. Nay! they even heard these messengers speaking reverently to their God, and expecting help from Him in answer to their prayers. All the message was strange and new. To be told that they might become the friends of God—

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sons of God; that all the evil of their past lives could be blotted out, not by the sacrifices they offered to the idols, but by the mercy of the Supreme God, because a sacrifice had been offered for them which He had accepted; that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," this seemed to them beyond belief.

The story of the life and sufferings of this Jesus, the Son of God, and the call to follow Him, presented to them a new and higher ideal than they had ever before conceived or heard of. The doctrine that there is a day coming when all the dead shall rise, and that in another great day all men shall stand before the judgment bar of this Jesus, were ideas that filled many of their minds with alarm. Had not many of them slain some of their fellowmen? And would those murdered ones arise again to confront them? Had they not been guilty of drunkenness and theft, of fornication and idolatry? And was the great God going to call them into His presence to answer to all these things? Yet, amid their fears and wonder, they also heard words of hope and comfort; for did not these messengers tell that "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved"? Did not they announce that whoever, even of the Malagasy, would accept these tidings of salvation would be forgiven and re-

ceive a life that could not perish? And did not they tell of a land far fairer than Madagascar; of a city, grander far, than any in their country; of a home that should last forever; and of joy and brightness and glory, unending?

It is impossible to conceive of the wonder with which these strange tidings fell on the ears of men and women who knew, or understood, but little of love, friendship, liberty, joy—whose whole lives were spent in fear and devoted to the gratification of selfishness and passion.

What wonder that they who heard these messages from day to day talked freely about them? And so, swiftly, and often with gross and absurd additions, these tidings spread along through the country, till, far away in the capital it became known that strange messengers with a strange message had reached the land.

Away in Antananarivo rumors of the teaching began to circulate; and one of the first to hear of them was Rafaravavy. For a time she held her peace that she might learn more.

But it was not many days before confirmation was brought her that the rumors were all too true.

About a week after the news began to circulate in the capital, a deputation of idol priests arrived from Tamatave, and made their way straight to the palace, where they sought an immediate private audience with the king and his council. The audience was granted, and before long the priests were on their way back to Tamatave. So great

was the secrecy preserved regarding this visit of the priests, that, outside the palace walls, little or nothing could be gleaned. That morning, as it happened, Rasalama had gone forth early to spend the day at the home of a friend. There she had heard many of the rumors spoken of, and had herself seen the deputation of priests depart. So that, when she returned in the evening, she rushed into the inner apartment with the cry, "Oh! Rafaravavy, have you heard the news?" "What news, my child?" asked the elder woman. "Why, the strange rumors that are being circulated all about the city. Do you not know that every one is speaking of some men who have come to our country and are setting forth new doctrines? It is said they denounce all our idols saying they are not gods; and are calling on men to repent and to return to another God, whom they declare to be the living and true God. There are also many other strange things, which, it is said, they teach."

"Well," answered Rafaravavy, "we do not need to be excited or alarmed in regard to these matters. Are not our idols able to protect themselves? Who is able to harm our god, Kelemalaza? Who can hope to share the power of Manjakatsira? They who have cared so long for this, our country, can surely care for themselves."

"But," replied Rasalama, "it really seems to me there is some cause for alarm; for some of our idol-keepers from Tamatave, have arrived and

had a private audience with the king and council, and this evening they returned in haste. What can it mean?"

"Well," said Rafaravavy, "we will wait patiently till to-night. The Prince Ramonja will be here, and whatever is to be known we shall hear from him, and whatever he may tell us we can rely upon."

So that, notwithstanding her great excitement, Rasalama was compelled to wait as patiently as she could until after supper had been served that night, and the slaves had retired, when at length it became possible to open the subject and ask Prince Ramonja what truth there was in the strange rumor.

Rafaravavy introduced the matter by reporting to the prince the statements Rasalama had brought in earlier in the evening, and asking if he could give them any information. "Yes, indeed," replied the prince, "there is all too much ground for the rumors that have been circulating in the city." "Why did the priests attend the palace and return in such haste to-night?" asked Rasalama. "They came to represent matters to the king's council, and to invoke the advice and help of the king in regard to suppressing the messages these strangers are proclaiming." "But what *are* the statements they are making?" inquired Rafaravavy. "Well, the priests informed the council that these men are setting forth that the gods we worship are helpless idols, which

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can neither see, nor hear, nor smell, nor walk, nor handle; that the Being they speak of is the only living and true God; that they know His will, and possess a book in which He has caused His will to be written; and that they wish to teach our people how to worship Him in spirit and truth. They proclaim that this God is not to be feared as we now dread His presence; but that He is to be loved and trusted, and that we may call Him our Father. They declare that God loves the whole world, and sent His Son long ago to save the world, and to make men know His Father's will and help them do it. And they teach that our worship of the idols, and sacrifices to them, cannot in any way assist us; that only as men believe in this Jesus as their friend and Saviour, and strive to please Him, is there help and hope for them. They teach, further, that men are to be pure, kind, forgiving, temperate; that no man should have more than one wife, and that the name of God's Son, whom they call Jesus, is above every name, and in that name alone men are to worship. There are a great many other truths of this kind that they appear to be teaching—indeed, they are setting forth strange doctrines, which, if received, must lead to the utter abolition of all our idols.” “But,” asked Rasalama, “why did the priests want advice and help? Have any of the people believed these tidings?” “That is the danger,” replied Ramonja. “The priests have seen that very many are strangely

taken with this new teaching, and inclined to believe in it. They seem to be drawn by its doctrine of love, and their religion seems to promise so much of comfort and peace, after which so many have been vainly seeking, that they seem as if they would accept it. Moreover, these messengers speak of filling the whole land with the sound of this name Jesus; and the priests hastened to advise the king of these things and urge him to see to it that the tidings spread no farther."

"And what has the king done for them?" asked Rafaravavy. "Oh," said the prince, "the king and his council seemed little disturbed by the news the priests brought. He told them that if these men had come as friends, and have no hostile intentions toward the country, he was not willing to interfere with them. For, said he, 'I would my people should learn all there is to be known from all kinds of teachers. And as for the idols, while I myself believe in them, and still mean to reverence them wholly, if they cannot take care of themselves in these times of upheaval, I am not going to lay hands upon any man for their help.' Upon these words the priests withdrew, that they might speedily return to their company. But I understand they had another source of hope. For they said that, before they left Tamatave, they were told sickness had already visited these messengers, and evidently the idols were going to be avenged upon them."

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At length Rafaravavy counseled that none of them should be over-alarmed, but that they should await patiently the development of affairs. Surely the idols will be able to defend themselves! She, at least, had no fears of the issue of the struggle between the gods of the country and the God of the strangers. In this manner were the first tidings of these strange messengers and their strange message received by those to whom, in days to come, that same message would become the sweetest sound on earth.

CHAPTER V

IN A MIGHTY FAITH.

It was not long before the heathen priests had grounds for rejoicing. In the wide belt of lowlands that extended around the island were many swamps. The arrival of the rainy season soon caused these swamp holes to be filled with stagnant pools of green, slimy water. And as the blazing tropical sun streamed down on masses of decaying vegetable matter, the air became charged with malaria; and the sickness laid hold with a fatal grip upon the teachers.

Eagerly the priests listened from day to day to hear of the effects of the sickness; and when, one morning, news went forth that one of their number was dead, the breasts of the heathen swelled with triumph. Here was the trial between Jehovah and their gods, and Jehovah was being beaten! Again, during the next few weeks, the same tidings were circulated; and as one by one the messengers sank, and were laid to rest on a heathen shore, the confidence of the priests in the power of their gods grew. They began to congratulate themselves, that even if the king would not exert himself to help the gods, the gods were well able to take care of themselves and of

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the country. For a moment their exultations were checked, when, just as they thought the last of these visitors was about to die, another vessel arrived, bringing some of his friends—Mr. and Mrs. Bevan and child. Thus did it seem as if Jehovah not only knew what was transpiring at Tamatave, but was also able, in the nick of time, to fill the places of the fallen.

But soon their feelings experienced another change. For, in less than four weeks three new graves were made, and the earth seemed to have opened her mouth and swallowed up the reinforcements so lately arrived; and again, they believed, the idols were victorious.

In the course of a few weeks only one of these messengers remained to tell the story of God's love to the dark and needy souls around. Friends, wives, children, were sleeping in Jesus, and he was so overcome by sickness and the repeated blows of sorrow that had fallen upon his heart, that at last, as the only hope of saving his life and making it possible he should again proclaim the glad news of salvation in that country, he decided to leave the island for a time.

As the vessel that bore Mr. Jones away to the Mauritius sailed out of port some of the people who had begun to feel that these men were their true friends looked on with sad hearts, and wrung their hands in grief. But to the majority of the heathen, and especially to the priests, that day was one of rejoicing and victory. And with

feasts and sacrifices they honored anew the idols who had exerted their power, and driven the last messenger of Jehovah from the island.

This good news for the heathen was soon carried up country, and reached the palace. Radama showed no signs of special pleasure at the news. In truth, he was rather disappointed; for he had hoped for some temporal good to accrue to his people through the coming of these men to teach them. He was not quite sure that, since so many good things came from Europe, there might not also be something good in the religion that came from that part of the world.

To the great majority in the capital the tidings brought feelings of gratitude, and a new confidence in their gods; while to Rafaravavy and her friends there came, if not actual rejoicing, a great sense of relief. There had been in their minds some misgivings as to what might be the result of the message these men had to proclaim, and it was a relief to them to know that their voices were no longer to be heard calling on the people to turn from their idols and worship the Jehovah they proclaimed. So for the moment idolatry seemed triumphant. Jehovah was vanquished!

But that sad and lonely messenger retreating from the island was not cast down—he was not despairing. In his heart there was no sense of defeat, and no thought of failure in the great work he had undertaken; but rather a faith, a

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mighty faith—even the faith that leads to victory and overcomes the world.

The heathen might pride themselves in their confidence in their idols, and encourage themselves as they thought of what their gods had done. But little did they conceive of the faith that dwelt in the heart of the lonely messenger; little did they know of the mighty acts of the Lord which formed the foundation of hope on which he built. Those mighty acts had not yet been uttered in the hearing of the Malagasy. That Christian faith has been the marvel of the ages; and, again and again, its marvelous manifestations have struck awe and wonder to the hearts of heathen and unbelievers. What was the faith that supported this messenger? It was unconquerable trust in God—trust based upon experience, and which could not be shaken; which would not yield or be dismayed in presence of any circumstances, however adverse or overwhelming they might appear. It was inexhaustible patience in God's work—a spirit that would watch, wait, pray, even though blessing should tarry and discouragements gather thick; patience that could endure anything, save to utterly relinquish a duty undertaken. It was an unquenchable hope—a hope that, through the darkest night, the bitterest sorrow, the keenest disappointments still dared to look for the day. It was an irrepressible zeal for the service of Jehovah—a zeal that consumed, so that the messenger

could cheerfully say, "Let me burn out for God."

Given these qualities, and a God who is worthy of such trust and patience, such hope and zeal, and you have the elements of a mighty faith.

In that faith the lonely messenger would yet return to claim Madagascar for Jehovah. That faith in heathen lands has repeatedly overcome prejudice, and awakened admiration and trust, and ultimately the barriers of suspicion and superstition have gone down, and faith has gained the victory. The faith-filled teacher seemed for a time defeated. But as the repulsed general, whose army still lies around the besieged city, sometimes retires with his staff to the hills, that from a distant vantage ground he may watch the city and detect the first sign of weakness, or the first breach made by his artillery in the walls of the citadel; so was it with the messenger of the cross to Madagascar.

Month after month passed along, and the messengers with the strange message had become almost forgotten. The silent graves by the sea-shore were covered with the rank growth of grass and weeds, and the idol priests had almost ceased to speak of the grand victory of their gods over Jehovah. But all this time the spirit of that repulsed messenger was brooding over Madagascar, and from the Mauritius a lonely watch was being kept for the first breach in the citadel—for the first opportunity of again en-

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tering the country. And plans were being formed which, when they came to be carried out, would fill the hearts of the rejoicing idolators with consternation and dismay.

In a mighty faith the effort was to be renewed!

CHAPTER VI

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

AFTER many months of waiting and preparation, the long-looked-for breach appeared, and early one morning, in the autumn of 1820, Tamatave awoke to a state of excitement; for again that lonely, yet no longer sad but hopeful, messenger stepped ashore, and once again that strange message began to be heard.

A hastily summoned meeting of the idol-keepers was held to decide what should be done. And it was agreed upon that no time should be lost in appealing to the gods to defend themselves once more. Already some of the people had shown clear signs of pleasure at having this teacher again among them. Some had welcomed him gladly; some had brought him presents, and not a few had repeated the messages which they had heard from him on his previous visit, having treasured them carefully in their minds all the time. And so it became evident that, if the mouth of this messenger was to be stopped at all, and if Madagascar was not to be turned upside down, the gods must bestir themselves.

Special feasts were proclaimed and sacrifices offered; and day and night, before the idols, did

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their keepers chant their prayers: "O, Kelimalaza, save the country! O, Ramakavaly, avenge thyself upon thy foes! O, Fantaka, exert thy magic power and slay this deceiver! O, Manjakatsirva, keep thy throne and let not thy kingdom be divided with Jehovah!" But the idols were sleeping or journeying in a far country; for though the priests became more and more vehement in their prayers, there was none to hear or to answer. This time the charms failed; the teacher lived. And what was more, it began to be rumored that this messenger had grown bolder, and now talked of marching up the country, of entering the capital, of meeting the king, and there, in the very heart of idolatry, of claiming the whole land for his God. Nor were the rumors without good foundation. In a few days, accompanied by guides and bearers, who had cheerfully agreed to convey him thither, the teacher had started for Antananarivo.

For a second time a deputation was despatched to the capital. This time they went, not to the royal palace, but to the keepers of the national idols, to warn them of the approaching danger, and to urge every effort for the safety of the city and people in view of the evil which threatened.

Great was the excitement awakened by this news, and great the preparations made to secure the protection of the idols and to defend the city from the pollution which must surround it should the enemy of the gods succeed in entering its

gates. Charms were erected at every point, and special honors conferred on the idols to induce them to put forth their utmost strength in this moment of peril. Yet charms and sacrifices and prayers were unavailing. A Mr. Hastie had been appointed to proceed to Antananarivo, to act as British Resident, and early in September, 1820, his party, accompanied by Mr. Jones, left Tamatave for the capital.

For some sixty miles, as far as Andovoranto, their route lay almost along the seashore; and day after day, they heard the waves of the Indian ocean as they rolled upon the beach.

Presently they turned off, to climb the mountain side; and for some two weeks, their paths led them upward and forward through ever changing scenery. At some spots, beautiful flowers grew in wild luxuriance. At times they seemed to be passing through parks which reminded them of other lands. Fruit trees abounded, and much of the soil appeared to be very fertile.

As they entered the province of Imerina they were struck with the contrast it presented. Barren looking hills, on whose crests were often planted little villages, the houses being built of mud made of the red soil, constrained them to wonder how the people of the interior could be supported. But they soon found that the valleys, carefully tilled, were capable of yielding a supply of rice equal to the support of an even larger population. So they pressed forward.

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On the afternoon of October 3, as the sun was slowly declining in the west, this group of travelers steadily climbed the hill on which the city stood, and, passing through the gate, this strange messenger at length stood in their midst, fearless, unawed, and unharmed. The city was filled with wonder, for it had been known for some days past what unprecedented efforts had been put forth in order to bring disaster upon this teacher of new doctrines; and many minds were filled with misgivings as they witnessed the utter failure of all these efforts, and realized that their citadel had been entered and that the servant of this new god stood, as it were, face to face with the gods of the nation and demanded their renunciation. Before nightfall it became known that on the morrow this teacher would enter the palace, and state his mission to the king. All the hopes of the heathen party were now centered on Radama; and that night, throughout the city, special petitions were made that the morrow might witness a signal victory for the idols over Jehovah! That evening, while Rafaravavy and some of her friends were engaged in eager conversation over the events of the day, a special messenger from the palace arrived, bearing a summons to Prince Ramonja to be at the Royal Court at the rising of the sun next day, in order to take part with the king and his council in the reception of this messenger.

With a promise to bring next night a full re-

port of how matters should go on the morrow, Ramonja withdrew, returned to his home and retired for a few hours' rest. The following morning at the time appointed the momentous event took place. Seated upon the raised dais in the throne room, and surrounded by his council, Radama received the messenger of Jehovah, and received him not merely with respect, but with evident cordiality. For the first time in the midst of his council the king had revealed that he felt himself to be in the presence of one who was the equal of Radama, king of Madagascar.

After introductions and the exchange of mutual courtesies, Radama invited the teacher to state the object of his visit. This was done with freedom and at considerable length, the main purpose set forth being that the teacher came to bring to Radama and his people the knowledge of the living and true God, who alone was able to save men, who alone was worthy of the worship and service of mankind. The messenger set forth the wonderful love of God toward man; the story of the life and sufferings of Jesus, the friend and Saviour; and appealed to the king not to oppose his mission, but rather to further it, and himself to learn, and to permit his people freely to learn of, and accept, the glad tidings he came to proclaim.

In reply to the king's question as to how he intended to perform the work of which he spoke, the teacher explained that he, and others who

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would shortly join him, would go all about preaching these truths to the people, setting forth the folly of idolatry and teaching them to worship the God whom he served. He also intended to master the language of the land so as to be able to speak intelligently to the people, and expected to conduct himself as a loyal citizen, striving by his life and example to give the people even a higher, purer, nobler ideal of life and manhood. He also spoke of translating the word of Jehovah into the language of Madagascar, of opening schools to teach the people to read and write, and so fit them to become better citizens and subjects; and went so far as to hope that in future days men might come to join him who would be able to teach the arts of Western civilization, and so give a further uplift to the people.

Radama and his council had listened with a somewhat languid interest while the teacher spoke of the special message he had come to deliver, and of the worship of Jehovah. But when he began to speak of schools and teachers, of arts and civilization, the whole council waked up and the king manifested a degree of enthusiasm. So that when, as Radama was promising his support to the messenger in prosecuting his mission, one of the more determined of the heathen party reminded him that he was the one to whom the people looked as the champion of their ancestral worship, which seemed to be threatened by these new tidings, "Yes," replied Radama, "I am

king, and I am also defender of the ancestral worship. But am I not also the father of my country? And must not my great care be to seek in every way the progress and enlightenment of my people? I am loyal to our national gods and religion. But gods must defend themselves against gods. Here is the promise of knowledge and of advancement and prosperity for my country and my loved children, and I am not going to allow a mere question of religious forms or worship to stand in the way of a nation's progress. I will, therefore, encourage this man in the work he comes to do. I will welcome others like him who may come to seek the welfare of my people; I will protect them even as my own children, and I will proclaim that my people shall be free to choose for themselves how far they will accept their teachings and worship their Jehovah."

Radama went even farther. For, on October 29th he sent a letter to England, to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, making the following appeal: "I request you to send me, if convenient, as many missionaries as you may deem proper, together with their families, if they desire it; provided, you send skilful artizans to make my people workmen as well as good Christians."

So was a rift opened in the dark clouds of heathenism, which for centuries had hovered over the life of this country, and at length light began

to arise in darkness. Naturally the idol-keepers were greatly incensed at the results of this audience with the king, and the liberty given this strange messenger to go through the land, proclaiming another religion and seeking to turn the people from the idols. Yet they could not take any active steps to oppose the work, for the king's authority was absolute. And while Radama himself remained a heathen and loyal to the gods, it was impossible to attempt to excite the popular feeling against the king or his decree.

When Prince Ramonja visited Rafaravavy later in the day he found quite a large and eager company waiting to hear what had transpired at the council. As he carefully rehearsed matters point by point various emotions moved his hearers, and when at last he told them of the king's resolve, it was evident that some of them felt as angry as the priests.

To them it appeared as if the flood-gates had been opened, through which a tiny stream would flow—the stream which, though small at first, would grow stronger and wider, till it would become a mighty power, sweeping away before it every vestige of the ancestral worship, drowning all the idols and utterly changing all the customs of the land.

Even when Prince Ramonja spoke in rather favorable terms of the appearance of the messenger, and of his conduct at the council, their minds were not set at ease. Ramonja, of course,

assured them that he was in no way affected by the new religion, but that, as a matter of policy, he could not object to the king's action. As for the gods, they knew their worth and power, and the impossibility of uprooting the faith of the people in their ancient religion. Why, then, should they fear to accept so slight a religious risk for the sake of so large temporal and political advantage? Those who did not agree with Ramonja's opinion at least did not venture to dispute it, and there the matter was allowed to rest for the time.

But it soon became manifest that a greater issue than most were aware of had been joined. Very shortly other messengers of this strange religion began to arrive, and many signs to appear that they intended to make the influence of their God felt in the life of the country.

Not many weeks had passed away before it was announced that two schools would be opened in the city for the education of boys and girls. Preaching of doctrines was constantly engaged in publicly and privately. Every opportunity for setting forth the message of divine love and mercy and of the life of Jesus was seized, and so amazed were the people at the zeal, the kindness, the joyousness of this messenger, as compared with the spirit of their own idol-keepers, that very soon both schools were filled with eager scholars. Schools were opened in the villages near the capital, and almost before the priests

had come to realize the true state of affairs, it was reported that as many as two thousand young people were under instruction.

Two other events presently created great astonishment amongst the heathen. The king, perceiving the advantage to be gained by sound education, determined to make a special effort for the good of the country. Selecting, with the aid of the messenger, twenty of the brightest young men to be found, he sent ten of these to the Mauritius, and the other ten to England, that they might secure a thorough education and become the instructors of their people. One of these young men was Prince Ratefy, who left his son Rakotobe under the care of the teacher. Under the instruction of the messenger it gradually became apparent that young Rakotobe was losing his interest in the idols, and was gaining an interest in the religion of Jesus Christ.

The second event of importance was the establishment of a printing press in the city of Antananarivo. So rapidly did the influence of these messengers and their message grow and spread, that within eight years not only had the language of the country been reduced to writing and printed, but in and around the capital thirty schools had been established, and more than four thousand scholars were being taught; the Gospel of Luke had been translated, and was being printed by trained Malagasy, and so many had come under the influence of the strange message

that already it was becoming the best known teaching in the city, and some were not only forsaking the worship of the idols, but were seeking to live in accordance with the new teaching they had received. Thus the people that sat in darkness saw a great light.

CHAPTER VII

THE IDOL MAKER'S SHOP

PICTURE to yourself, in a suburb of the city, standing back a little way from the road, one of the most frequented spots of the capital—the home of Bezanozano. At the head of a grassy slope stood a house, somewhat superior to the general style in construction and furnishing. Behind the house a good-sized garden, where vegetables of various kinds grew, and where tropical plants abounded. Farther back the ground rose so as to form a knoll, and this little hill covered with a wood piece, contained trees of several varieties. A little way in front of the house, and off to the left, a smaller and rougher building, used by Bezanozano as his workshop. Inside the shop, the furniture consisted of a seat and bench for the workman, and a rather uncomfortable seat for his customers.

Look on the shelves at a number of small and curiously shaped objects, some of them rudely carved to resemble beetles, fish or men; some of them simply the teeth of crocodiles, polished, and in some cases painted. See under the bench, and scattered about the floor, small blocks of wood and unpolished teeth and bones, awaiting the skill of the workman. Bezanozano was an idol maker,

and this his workshop. As such he occupied an influential position in the community, many of the poor people having a wholesome dread of the man who made gods ; while even the better classes counted it a privilege to spend a while in conversation with the man whose work was so essential to their peace of mind and sense of security.

Just at the time when the strange messengers were filling the whole city with their doctrines, Rafaravavy seized the opportunity to secure an idol much larger than those usually made, and one manufactured from a tree that would not rot.

Arriving in the early morning, she found Bezanozano alone in his shop, seated at his bench and just putting the finishing touches to a charm he was preparing for one of the nobles.

Greeting the idol maker cordially, and receiving in response a respectful welcome, Rafaravavy congratulated him on the beauty of the piece of workmanship he was completing, and then made known her errand. A hurried search through the material at hand showed Bezanozano that he had not in his shop a piece of wood sufficiently large and sound to enable him to meet Rafaravavy's requirements. But he promised, if she could wait a short time, to go up to his knoll and select a kind of tree that should be in every way suitable. Taking his axe he went forth, and in a short time returned, bearing on his shoulder that which would amply suffice for his purpose.

Rafaravavy watched with much interest the gradual development of the idol that was to become her possession, and which she expected would prove a powerful protector of her person and home. She saw Bezanozano trim the branch he had brought from his wood piece. Cutting from the thick end of the limb a piece sufficient for the work in hand, he chopped up the smaller pieces of the thin end, and threw them in a heap by themselves. Then, taking his seat, he began the task of shaping the rude block of wood.

Occasional remarks were passed between Rafaravavy and the idol maker on matters connected with his trade and the skill required for its successful conduct.

At length Rafaravavy touched upon the subject which was so much in her mind by the question: "Have you been unusually busy, or have you had less demand for your services, of late, Bezanozano?"

"Well," replied he, "I think I have found trade rather more brisk than usual. But why do you raise the question?"

"You cannot be a stranger, Bezanozano, to the strange tidings which are being everywhere proclaimed in and around our city, or to the large interest which many seem to take in the messages spoken; and I was anxious to know if these things had in any way affected your craft, or interfered with the demand for idols."

"Well, no! if anything, these strange events

seem to have increased the anxiety of the people to possess Ody (charms) for their protection, and business has been good for a considerable time."

"Then, you do not think much is being done by these strangers to unsettle the faith of our people in our gods?"

"I have not yet ventured an opinion on that subject, but if I must be candid, my impression is, that the increased demand for my services is evidence of the progress being made in undermining our national worship."

"But how? Explain what you mean, Bezanozano, for I thought many had done, or would do, as I myself am doing. As for me, have not I come to purchase this mighty idol for the express purpose of safeguarding my home against the inroads of this false teaching? Surely this is what others are also doing, and with an increase of devotion and reverence for the gods, how will it be possible for those who oppose them to prosper?"

"Ah! but your words only seem to confirm my theory. For, do you not see that the very deepened spirit of devotion to our idols is token of a widespread fear that our gods are not themselves awake to their danger, and so is a concession that it may be possible for these new teachers to circumvent the gods in whom we trust? Not only so, but, as I said, the increased demand does not come from those young men and women who are

reaching years of maturity, and, therefore, might be expected to want household gods and charms, but rather from parents, and such as have long been loyal to our worship, and who seem impelled by some secret fear of these doctrines which are being spread abroad to seek for new, and, if possible, stronger powers to guard their homes from the evils likely to follow upon their dissemination. In truth, it seems to me these strange messengers are already captivating the minds and winning the confidence of our young people; and you know that if the young people of our country go over to Christianity, our ancestral worship is doomed."

"But, Bezanozano, what exactly are the truths these teachers set forth?"

"Well, I have heard a good deal, from many sources, of their teaching, and I find that these men act as wisely as serpents. They point the young people to the idols they have been accustomed to worship, and ask them what those idols represent. When they have drawn from the young an admission that these images, as they call them, represent the Supreme God, and have proved that the people know little, or nothing, of the Supreme God, then, say they, the very god whom you are ignorantly worshiping is the god we declare unto you. To us He has revealed Himself, and it is His word, and will, and teaching, we proclaim."

"And can it be, think you, Bezanozano, that they have really received any revelation from the

Supreme God? Can He have given to any people larger knowledge of His will than to us?"

"Of that, in truth, I cannot speak with certainty; but these teachers say so, and they seem to believe them. Then they point to the idols, which, they say, can neither see, nor hear, nor speak, and which do not move about among their worshipers as friends. And when this has taken hold of the people's minds, they begin to tell of one Jesus, whom they call the Son of God, and say that He, in infinite love, came down to this earth to live with men; that He saw and spake to men; that He was known as the friend of men; that He worked mighty miracles for the help and comfort of even the poorest and most despised; and all this because of the love He had for men. Nay, more, they speak of Him as having laid down His life to deliver all men from the bondage of evil, in which they were held; and that, though He is not now on earth, but living again in His Father's home, He still loves all men, and is able and willing to save all who look to Him and follow His teachings."

"Well," said Rafaravavy, "that certainly seems an attractive way of putting forth their doctrines. But do you think such things can be true?"

"On that point, Rafaravavy, I do not care now to venture an opinion. But it certainly makes their Jehovah a powerful antagonist of our idol gods, when they set Him forth as One who loves

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everybody, whereas our gods, all of them, seek to maintain their influence by filling their worshipers with fear of them. Beyond this, I understand they point to what they call the licentiousness not only permitted, but encouraged, by our religion—to the gross and open drunkenness and immorality of its devotees ; and then they draw a picture of the purity and temperance, the gentleness and love, the meekness and truth, which form the character of their God, their Jesus, and which mark the lives of all who live by His teaching ; and I fear the contrast presented to the minds of our people is not favorable to our worship.

Thus, while Bezanozano worked, he and Rafaravavy talked on this subject that was stirring all hearts, and so the time passed away and evening drew on.

While he completed the work, the idol maker put on the evening meal to cook, and Rafaravavy noticed that, in kindling the fire, he used for that purpose the branches and remaining portion of the limb from which he was making the idol.

When the meal was ready she partook of it, and then, paying the idol maker for his work, took her idol, and departed homeward. But Rafaravavy carried away with her more than the image she had purchased—she carried food for long and earnest thought from the day's conversation.

It was not, therefore, surprising that, before retiring to rest that night, she rehearsed with Rasalama most of the things to which she had

listened. Was it that she was unusually wearied with the day's exercise and excitement? Was it that the things she had heard from Bezanozano concerning this new teaching were even now beginning to affect her mind toward her own religion? In any case, Rafaravavy became conscious of a marked loss of interest in the new god she had been so eager that day to obtain; and, with very limited devotions at the shrine, she betook herself to rest.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW SECT

It was not long before evidence began to be furnished of the inroads the new faith was making on the worship and superstitions of the people. Very soon rumors went abroad that one and another had ceased to worship the idols, and had placed themselves entirely under the instruction of the teachers.

In the schools many were learning not only to read, but by their reading to understand more fully the truths of the religion called Christianity. And so in homes throughout the capital parents discovered that their boys and girls were becoming indifferent to the customs which they themselves deemed so sacred.

Yet it seemed unwise, and indeed impossible, to prevent the children from taking advantage of the opportunities for self-improvement thus prepared for them. In many homes the risk of the children joining the new sect, and forsaking altogether the worship of their fathers, was accepted in the same spirit in which the king had welcomed the teacher—for the sake of the undoubted advantages which the school teaching would yield to those who received it. These

teachers had mastered the Malagasy language, and were able to speak so that all the people could clearly understand their message.

The immediate effect was an increasingly widespread interest in all they said or did. It was now no uncommon thing to see hundreds of old and young alike gathered to listen to their words. Some were visibly affected, not only by the beauty and purity of their teaching, but by some mysterious power which the heathen could not understand, but which the teachers had said they would surely sooner or later feel, because it was the power of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus had promised to send abroad with His messengers to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. It was noticed that this strange influence was felt by the listeners, especially after the teachers had been upon their knees engaged in prayer to Jehovah. And so convinced at last did the heathen become that the success attending the teaching was connected with these prayers—prayers withal so full of fervor, of joy, and of expectancy, and in so marked contrast to the cold petitions offered to the idols—that at length they began to call the new sect by a new but significantly beautiful name, viz.: the “praying ones.”

With this deepened interest in the new message, which now began to be known by the term, the gospel, came a corresponding decrease of interest in the former worship and practices; and

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it became indeed evident how much power the new sect was gathering, when, shortly, some of the heathen resolved to publicly repudiate their idols, acknowledge their faith in Jehovah, and receive in the presence of a great multitude the rite of baptism, which they had come to understand was the sign by which they should confess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and their loyalty to Him as their Master and Lord.

Now a definite opportunity was afforded for contrasting the fruits of idolatry with the fruits of this gospel and the worship of Jehovah; and as weeks and months passed by even the most prejudiced were compelled to admit that the contrast was altogether in favor of the Christians.

The changed disposition, the joyousness, truthfulness, honesty, the purity of speech and life, soon began to proclaim the absolute superiority of the Christian faith over idolatry. And many, even of those who had no intention of renouncing their idolatry, were constrained to admire the wonderful change in the character that had been wrought by this new faith, and to modify their hostility toward a religion that could so change men's hearts; for that was the truth that forced itself upon the heathen minds—that in some way these Christians had got new hearts.

As might be expected, Radama was highly pleased with the results which had followed his reception of the teachers. Even if the idol makers were chagrined, and a number of his

people had fully embraced the new faith, were not singular benefits being conferred upon the country by the schools? And was there not here the promise of a day of generous enlightenment for the land? And would not his name go down to future generations surrounded with a halo of glory as the one who introduced this era of light and civilization? So Radama was satisfied, and the influence of Christianity grew, making headway and gaining friends even at court.

Well was it that for a season Christianity flourished thus. Such friends would yet be needed for dark days.

One of the first to make an open confession of the Christian faith was a young man named Ramaka. Naturally bright and clever, he had made the most of the advantages offered by the schools, and acquitted himself as one of the best scholars connected with the Christian faith. Added to his enthusiastic disposition was a passionate love for Christ, and very soon, in Ramaka, the heathen began to discover a hitherto unexpected quality in this new faith.

Accustomed, as they were, to the apathy engendered by their own superstitions, they imagined Christianity would prove itself an easy-going opponent. But Ramaka soon undeceived them on this point.

His heart had laid hold on one fact—namely, that his new Master, Jesus Christ, expected every one who loved Him to become a messenger for

Him. And so it was that, in the aggressive efforts of the young disciple to bring others to the service and love of Jesus, the heathen found they had a new force—and one difficult to estimate—to reckon with. If every Christian was going to be a Ramaka, then what power would stem the tide of this religion that it should not overflow the whole land and sweep the idols into the deep?

Even if Rafaravavy had so wished, it would not have been possible for her to avoid coming into closer contact with Christianity. The gospel message, the spread of the new faith, and the character of its converts, were constant themes of conversation at her home. Often the discussion of some doctrine was animated. Often the admiration of the heathen for some of the truths they heard, and the practices they witnessed, was expressed in almost unguarded terms; and when, one day, Ranivo proposed that out of curiosity Rafaravavy and some few friends should go and hear one of these teachers publish the gospel, she yielded with something more than a formal assent—with something of warmth and earnestness. It caused no slight astonishment when Rafaravavy, accompanied by Ranivo, Rasalama and Prince Ramonja entered the place of worship, and at once the question began to be asked: Is Rafaravavy also among the Christians? Though no visible effect was then produced, yet the Christians had noticed the manifestation of

a preparedness to listen. Accordingly, the next day Ramaka made his way to the home of Rafaravavy, and after some time spent in conversation, asked her that he might read her something from his Bible on the subject of idolatry. Being permitted to do so, he turned to the prophecies of Isaiah, and read thence a description of the idol maker and the idol worshiper. The actions of Bezanozano were fresh in the mind of Rafaravavy, and it was with feelings of wonder she heard Ramaka read from his book so exact a description of what she had seen: "He planteth a fir tree, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for man to burn; and he taketh thereof and warmeth himself; yea, he kindleth and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god and worshipeth it." At that moment a strange light broke in upon Rafaravavy's mind, revealing to her much of the folly and shame of idolatry. She requested Ramaka to come often and read to her from this wonderful book. Gradually her mind opened to receive the truth, until shortly afterwards she renounced the idols she had so long worshiped, accepted the Christian's God as her God, and, casting in her lot with the new sect, publicly confessed her faith in Jesus as her Saviour.

Rafaravavy at once became the center of an interested group. Rasalama was in a state of great indecision as to the new religion; Ranivo, who had gone to hear the gospel out of mere

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curiosity, had since then seemed much more thoughtful; Ramonja and Rafaralahy were both of them much less zealous in their devotions to the idols, and seemed desirous of affording countenance to the Christians.

Probably in this desire they were strengthened by the knowledge that there was in the palace one powerful friend of that faith. Ratefy had returned from England with clear and strong impressions as to the greatness of that country, and the help that must come to Madagascar through her friendship; and, although not a Christian, he was most favorably disposed toward the faith, for he had seen that the Christian faith was at the foundation of England's prosperity.

Thus, when on his return to Antananarivo, he discovered that his son Rakotobe had become a Christian, and was openly recognized as such, instead of feeling angry he was conscious of a sense of relief and joy. If such were his feelings, what must have been those of the Christians in this matter, for, notwithstanding his youth, Rakotobe was at present the most influential person at court. He was nephew to the king, and it was well known that Radama had designated the young man as his successor. Ratefy, therefore, was filled with hope that when his son should come to the throne he would build his kingdom on the same foundation as that on which England's greatness rested. And yet

higher and more jubilant were the expectations of the Christians as they looked forward to having a Christian king on the throne of the country.

Ratefy was not permitted for long to share the company of Rakotobe. It had been Radama's purpose in sending him to England to have him thoroughly fitted for the discharge of important service to the government; and Ratefy had fulfilled the king's expectations in the liberal views he had imbibed and the knowledge he had gained. Very shortly he was appointed to a large district in the northeast, where there had been some trouble, in the hope that his wisdom and humane policy would restore peace and produce good results for the tribe. Almost at once Ratefy removed to his new sphere of service, again leaving Rakotobe under the watchful protection of the teachers.

The home of Rafaravavy naturally formed a center where she and her friends had much to say regarding the truths she had accepted, and night after night the Christian gospel was read and studied, and prayed over—Ramaka and Rafaravavy always leading. Little by little one and another heart was opening to the knowledge of Jesus. Fantaka alone seemed to be uninfluenced by the teaching. Indeed, for a time she seemed to become almost fanatical in her devotion to the household gods of her father, and she bitterly reproached Rafaravavy for her unfaithfulness to them.

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But her reproaches were received with such a gentleness of spirit that gradually Fantaka was compelled to acknowledge to herself that, after all, the Christian was nobler than the heathen.

Thus the Christian faith was spreading and becoming established, and was already gaining favor and converts even in the royal palace. But the same events which brought such joy and hope to the hearts of the Christians served to quicken the anger and arouse the jealousy of the heathen party, and especially the idol keepers and priests; and many and deep were the mutterings against these "praying ones"—the new sect.

PART III

DAYBREAK THROUGH CLOUDS

CHAPTER

- IX. A WOMAN'S INTRIGUE.
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- XX. A QUEEN'S INFATUATION.
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CHAPTER IX

A WOMAN'S INTRIGUE.

THOSE who have lived in a tropical country, such as Madagascar, are familiar with the struggles through which the day often seems to dawn. In its earliest stages thin forks of light gleam across the night sky, cleaving it north and south and pointing toward the meridian.

But for a time, dark, gloomy, inky clouds float hither and thither over the horizon, and creep along the tops of the Eastern hills, as if they would stay the sun in his course and turn back those streaks of dawning day.

Ultimately the clouds depart, or are burst asunder by the rising sun; and over and under, and through the clouds, the day breaks.

The phenomena of nature might illustrate, in measure, the phenomena which accompanied the passing of the dark night of superstition and idolatry in Madagascar, and the dawn of spiritual light and life—daybreak through the clouds.

In the midst of the dawn of promise, a dark cloud overcast the sky. Radama, as we have seen, while possessed of many traits of character which separated him from the majority of heathen around, still adhered to the ancient cus-

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toms and faith, and, without restraint, gave himself up to the licentiousness which prevailed amongst his people. It could scarcely be expected that one who seemed to turn his whole life into one long day of indulgence and excess, should attain a great age. In 1828 it became known that the king was sick, and as the weeks passed away it became a matter of certainty that his enfeebled constitution could not for long resist the inroads of disease. Conscious that the end was drawing near, Radama one day summoned his council and his nephew Rakotobe as his successor on the throne, taking an oath of the council that they would faithfully execute his will and loyally support the young king. Turning to Rakotobe he reminded him of all that he had done for the teachers and the Christian faith, and expressed his gladness that, though he himself was passing away in the darkness of idolatry, Rakotobe had embraced the new faith and rejoiced in the light it had brought; and urged him to be the friend and protector of all the Christians, and to seek to spread the light and increase the blessings which had begun to uplift the country. With the utmost heartiness Rakotobe promised all this, at the same time expressing his own sorrow that Radama should only have seen the light, and not have walked in it; so that, while the star of hope was rising, with bright promise for his country, he who had prepared the way for that light was now passing

out into a darkness, awful and mysterious. Nothing, however, could change the position of Radama.

Intellectually and politically he admired Christ and His religion. But he had not, and sought not, the power to break away from his evil life, and morally and spiritually he remained a heathen.

When the council retired, Radama's mother and sister came to take a last farewell of the king; and while they stood around his bed, heart-broken with grief, just as the sun went down, Radama's spirit fled—the most enlightened heathen ruler of Madagascar had passed to his account.

Later in the evening the council assembled and arranged to keep secret the death of the king until all the plans were completed for proclaiming Rakotobe the successor of Radama I. Little did they anticipate the awful consequences that followed this decision. The council separated to meet again the next afternoon to complete the preparations for the coronation of the new king.

That same night another council was held in the capital. The late king had had twelve wives, and his harem had been full of intrigues; so that some of these heathen women were adepts in the art. One of them, named Ranavalona, had at present no child of her own, whose claim to the throne she could set forth; but, being a woman of unscrupulous character and cruel disposition, she

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aspired to something higher. Her purpose was already formed—to try and secure the royal power for herself. She was fierce in her support of the idols, and hoped on this account to receive help from the idol keepers. She was also wealthy, and hoped to be able to bribe others to support her claims. Accordingly, she summoned Kelazapa, the chief keeper of the national gods, and with him the commander of the army. After taking from them an oath of secrecy she began to unfold her plans. To the commander of the royal army she appealed by a heavy bribe—urging him to put forth earnest efforts, and to use such sums of money as might be necessary to gain the army to her side. By this means, coupled with promises of promotion and power, she secured the promise of the commander to use his influence in the direction desired. In seeking to gain the hearty support of the idol keepers she not only used bribes, but also sought to arouse their zeal in her cause by pointing out that Rakotobe had professed Christianity, and that others, who might claim the throne in opposition to him, were also favorably inclined to the new faith; while she had always been loyal to the national worship, was the friend of the idols, and was prepared to exert all the royal influence against Christianity. She then went on to show that, by supporting her cause, Kelazapa could not only obtain wealth, but also secure a most

powerful ally in his efforts to oppose the spread of the new faith.

This council separated, to meet at noon next day, that reports might be given as to the prospect of securing the support of the army and the idol keepers in the attempt in which Ranavalona was now determined.

The following day, at noon, this council of conspirators assembled; and one hour later the government council met for the purpose of putting into effect the will of the late king.

Ranavalona presided at her council, and was encouraged, when, on asking what reports had been brought back, she was assured of the absolute support of the army and the priests. At the same time the commander pointed out the grave risks involved in her attempt. If by any means it should fail, or if subsequently any of the several claimants for the throne, apart from Rakotobe, should become sufficiently powerful to successfully contend with her, it would mean instant death for her and for all who united in her plot.

The priests also pointed out that they would depend on her to protect them from the anger of the late king's council; and they warned her of the difficulty of accomplishing her purpose unless in some way the people could be induced to believe that this was not a contest between human beings alone, but between the national gods and Jehovah. Then she might hope to have the multitude on her side.

Perhaps their own proverb did not occur to their minds—one which might have made them pause and consider that perhaps Jehovah was, for the moment, winking at their plottings: “There is nothing unknown to God, but He intentionally bows down His head.” To their credit, be it said, the commander and Kelazapa had not till that time entertained the idea of destroying the claimants who might oppose Ranavalona’s accession to the throne; and, perhaps for this reason the chances of success seemed to them the more remote.

Not so, however, with Ranavalona. Strong in her ambitions, and unscrupulous in her acts, she was ready for all that might be involved in the conspiracy. Speedily she unfolded her plans, which were that the commander, with several companies of soldiers, should seize Rakotobe and put him to death; that any others who sought to interfere with her plans should similarly be put beyond the power to dispute them; and that Kelazapa should make public a proclamation that the national gods had declared Ranavalona should be queen.

The calmness with which Ranavalona set forth her scheme of death surprised even the soldier and the crafty priest. But they had already so far committed themselves that there was no receding with safety, and by the necessity of their position they were now compelled to become the tools in the hands of an inhuman woman, by

which she would accomplish a diabolical crime, and seize a throne.

No time was to be lost, for at any moment the palace gates might be thrown open, and the accession of Rakotobe be proclaimed to the people. Immediately a proclamation was made ready and posted at the entrance to the palace courtyard, announcing that the idols had nominated Ranavalona for queen. At the same time several companies of soldiers surrounded the courtyard and the council meeting within the palace was summoned to surrender. When the chief of the army appeared at the council door, the president asked for an explanation of the intrusion. He was informed that the priests and the army had recognized and proclaimed Ranavalona as queen, and in the queen's name he called upon them all to take the oath of allegiance.

For a moment they hesitated. But on coming out into the courtyard and finding the palace in the hands of the soldiers and the queen, all of them, save four, accepted the situation. These four were faithful to their oath to the late king, and declared in favor of Rakotobe. Immediately they were dragged forth and speared to death, while Rakotobe was sought for. So sudden and unexpected had this movement been that he had no opportunity of escaping or of concealing himself. In a short time Rakotobe had lost not only a throne, but his life also, through a cruel woman's intrigue.

Having seized the crown with blood-stained hands, Ranavalona soon discovered that she must stain those hands again and again in the blood of the innocent ere she could feel secure in her position.

Selecting several of the swiftest officers and soldiers, they were despatched in different directions for the purpose of getting rid of those relatives of the late king who might possibly dispute her title to reign. The eldest sister of the king was cast into prison; her mother, with her brother and a son, were also cast into cells; and these four were left to a lingering death by starvation. We have seen that shortly before Radama's death, Ratefy had been appointed to an important governorship. So rapidly did the queen's messengers travel that they reached the coast almost as early as the proclamation that announced Ranavalona's accession. Ratefy was perplexed by this announcement, but the full truth dawned upon him when, a few hours later, he received news of the death of Rakotobe. Ratefy would have boldly demanded redress for this wrong had he been allowed opportunity. But so swift were the queen's actions that before he had fully recovered from the shock he was seized, a mock court martial held, and Ratefy slain as a traitor. Even yet the queen did not feel safe. Two cousins of the late king still lived, and such trifling peril must be removed.

By a base act of treachery, secured by a large

bribe from the queen, one of them named Ramanola was assassinated by the hand of a former friend. The last probable claimant to the throne being warned of his danger fled, and the most vigorous search of the soldiers failed to discover his whereabouts.

Several valuable lives had been sacrificed in order that a vain and licentious heathen woman might secure the throne of Madagascar instead of the rightful heir, who was a Christian.

But the first stroke of retribution soon fell. The priests and idol keepers had sold themselves to Ranavalona. But she had, almost as surely, sold herself into their power. And it was not long before she was made to realize this fact. One of the foremost conspirators, whose aid had been invaluable in accomplishing the vile purpose of the queen, was highly objectionable to the heathen party because he had shown a spirit of toleration toward the Christians.

The priests were filled with apprehension lest this man should presently incline the queen's mind to favor the new religion, for should this happen the very object that had weighed so much with them in joining the conspiracy would be frustrated, and the Christians would become the supreme power in the land.

The proclamation of the new queen had not long taken place when Kelazapa, seeking a private audience with her, suggested that the dreaded favorite should be destroyed. The queen in-

dignantly refused to listen to the suggestion, though again and again it was urged with vehemence. But the priests were as crafty as their mistress.

Kelazapa knew the disposition of Ranavalona, and that she was the subject of a strong drink passion. Under cover of a pretended revelation from the gods he secured an invitation to sup at the queen's table. His plan was to secure an interview with her when she was strongly under the influence of liquor, and a small bribe to a slave was sufficient to accomplish this aim. At the supper table Ranavalona drank freely, so that when the slave placed at her hand a draught of stronger potency she did not detect the difference, but drank it. Kelazapa insisted that before he could announce the important message from the gods all the slaves must withdraw—the message was for the queen alone. And she, growing each moment more intoxicated, gave orders for them all to retire. It was then that Kelazapa, producing a warrant for the execution of her favorite, demanded in the name of the idols that she should sign it. And when she hesitated, even in her drunken condition to take the step, threats and bribes were so freely used that presently the priest left the palace armed with the queen's warrant for carrying out the dark deed. That warrant was put into execution at once, and when the queen awoke from her

drunken condition her favorite was slain. Kelazapa and the idol keepers had gained the ascendancy, and through a stream of blood Ranavalona had waded to the throne of Madagascar.

CHAPTER X

EVIL OMENS

THE events connected with the succession to the throne had not passed unnoticed by the Christians, and it is not to be wondered at, that in the minds of some of them there arose anxious forebodings as to the evils that might be involved in the events. They knew well that the idol keepers had been the queen's ablest helpers in her plots, and were convinced that some sort of compact regarding the Christian faith existed between them; and the murder of the queen's favorite at the instigation of Kelazapa, on the ground of his tolerance toward their faith, was an indication to them of the spirit likely now to prevail at court.

A few months after the death of Radama, a son was born to Ranavalona and was named Rakota Radama (the young son of Radama). But the awakening in her heart of the mother-love for her child, did not seem to soften her feelings toward any whom she might regard as enemies or as standing in the way of her avarice and love of power.

Rafaravavy, and those of her friends who frequently assembled at her home, began to be more

watchful, while in no way relaxing their efforts to strengthen one another in their faith or to win new converts to the faith. And in these efforts they became more and more successful. Steadily the little band of Christian converts grew.

Rasalama was another of this group of friends who early accepted the truth proclaimed, and acknowledged herself a follower of Christ. In the cases of Rafaralahy and Ramonja there was a deepening interest in the doctrines of the faith; but still their own personal relations to it were of an indefinite character. Fantaka seemed to become less actively hostile, but apparently the truth made little or no impression on her heart.

One of the company seemed differently affected, but whether from fear of possible consequences, or from fickleness of nature, was not at present manifest. At any rate, Ranivo gradually withdrew herself from the Bible readings, and, though still remaining outwardly friendly toward her old companions, resumed her devotions at the idol shrines.

It was not possible for this state of affairs to continue long. The Christians felt that, in some way, the line of demarkation between them and the heathen was being made more clear; while the heathen party were beginning to realize that if something were not done, and done promptly, the whole city would go after the Christians.

Even now there could be heard the low mutterings of a rising storm. As the rustling leaves

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and the bending treetops, the tiny specks of cloud and the restlessness of the birds and beasts, give certain premonition of the coming tempest, so did the whispered grumbling of court officials, the furtive glances of royal favorites, the ill-concealed elation of the heathen priests, the anxious expressions of friendly heathen and the spontaneous sense of strained relations when Christian and heathen met, seem to imply just that condition which so often precedes, and ushers in, some great upheaval in the social or religious life of a people.

In this case, it was the premonitory sign of a long, dark and cruel life and death struggle between the long-established and well-equipped forces of idolatry, and the new and lightly-established, though infinitely more mighty, force of Christianity. It only remained to be seen how and when the storm would burst. That the Christians, small a body as they formed, were fearless of the consequences was evidenced by the fact that just now they resolved to unite themselves into a Christian community or church. By permission of the queen, two houses had been opened for preaching and teaching near the close of 1830.

In May of the following year, the queen had also given public permission to the natives to receive the rite of baptism, to partake of the Lord's supper, and to be married with the Christian, instead of the heathen, ceremony.

Encouraged by this royal permission, and in fulfilment of their resolve, and acting on the teaching of their Scriptures, in the early part of 1831, twenty-eight of them received public baptism, and the first Christian church was formed. By November 4th the number of those received into membership had grown to be seventy-five, and a second church had been formed.

The heathen party responded to what they considered a challenge by approaching the queen with a request that she would in some way exert her influence to stem the tide of progress of this faith.

Kelazapa sought to awaken the queen's jealousy by pointing to this small community, amongst whom were already to be numbered several of her wealthy subjects, and by suggesting that one day, when those wealthy ones had secured a larger following, they would be likely to raise a sedition and seize the royal power. The queen listened to all he had to say, but, for the present, seemed undecided what steps to take. But soon the priests were roused to still more urgent efforts. Rumors had been circulating for some time past that not only were some of the nobles favorable to this faith, that not only had some of these wealthier persons adopted this new religion, but that at least one notable diviner was showing an interest in the teaching. On the day the first Christian Church was formed, the truth of the rumor was abundantly verified. For there,

in truth, was the notorious diviner, whose influence had for long been most powerful in support of the idol worship, now numbered with the Christians, and receiving in baptism the Christian name of Paul. Publicly he renounced his allegiance to the heathen religion; publicly he exposed the superstitious folly of divination; and in presence of all declared his faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. Such a confession produced a marked effect on the heathen present. It also stirred more deeply the anger and jealousy of the priests, who, in their indignation and fear, wondered whereunto this thing would grow.

Again, therefore, Kelazapa approached the queen and sought to incite her jealousy and to awaken in her mind a fear for her own safety. This time he was more successful in the effort, and when the queen questioned him as to the possibility of putting down this sect, he cunningly reminded her of what happened when the first teachers landed on her soil. He told of the struggles between the idols and Jehovah, and how, in a few weeks, the idols slew all the band save one, and drove that one from the land. He was shrewd enough to pause there, and Ranavalona, in her excited state of mind, did not pause to consider that the same teacher had returned to the island, and that the very body she was now asked to exterminate was the living proof that the idols had not, even on the first occasion, triumphed over Jehovah. It now became the

settled purpose of the heathen party to work upon the fears and jealousy of the queen until they could move her to lift her hand and strike the blow that should destroy the new religion, and restore to the idols their sole sway over the hearts of the people. After a time the queen so far yielded as to issue a decree prohibiting the educational work of the teachers. In this connection a curious incident happened, which shows upon what seemingly insignificant events mighty results depend.

The queen in condemning the educational work of the missionaries asked if they could not teach something more useful than Greek or Hebrew. For example, could they teach how to make soap?

One of the missionaries asked for a week in which to prepare an answer to the queen's question.

The days of the week were devoted by the theologian to the study of soap manufacture; and at its close a reply to the royal question was sent, in the form of a bar of soap. A new industry was commenced amongst the natives; and this evidence of the usefulness of the teachers led the queen to allow their presence in the capital for several years longer than would otherwise have been permitted. These were the years of most profound importance to the firm planting of the Christian religion in the land. While the educational work was of necessity almost wholly discarded, the gatherings for worship and Bible

study continued. And during the periods of relaxation from school duties the teachers pressed forward the work of translating, printing and circulating thousands of copies of the Scriptures and other books helpful to the Christians.

A partial failure of the crops, and a serious and long-continued drought, were skilfully used by the priests to convince the queen that the gods of the country were angry because she did not adopt some strong measures to uphold their honor and check the spread of Christianity. But it was another event, of an entirely different nature, that really roused Ranavalona to action.

Raindavaka, a Malagasy of superior intellectual power, had received from Paul a certain measure of instruction in the elements of the Christian faith, and seeing, as he thought, an opportunity for making himself famous and powerful, he conceived the idea of forming a sect of his own which should unite in their faith the leading facts of Christianity and the idol customs of the country. He soon secured a following of some two hundred people, and then sought an opportunity of setting forth his teaching before the queen. Reports of his teaching were regularly carried to Ranavalona, who began to be alarmed, and ultimately she issued a command that the entire sect should be arrested.

When they were brought before the queen she herself announced with perfect calmness the awful penalty she intended to inflict. Twelve of

the principal members were selected for special punishment, and all the others were at once publicly sold as slaves. Eight of the reserved ones were ordered to drink the tangena cup, and so were poisoned.

Raindavaka, and the other three, the queen condemned to the most horrible death she could conceive of. "Let their feet and hands be tied," said Ranavalona, "and let them be suspended, head downward, over a rice pit. Then let boiling water be poured over them all, and immediately let the pit be filled with earth."

Forthwith the queen's sentence was carried out, and the Raindavaka sect ceased to exist. Such an act seems to us too inhuman to be possible; and yet, other actions of the queen went to show that her whole nature was steeped in depraved cruelty.

One of the missionaries reports that, at one time, ten thousand natives of other tribes, who had sworn allegiance to the queen, were massacred. On another occasion fifty petty chiefs were crucified and when their wives resisted the doom of slavery they were ruthlessly speared to death. The queen was loudly applauded by Kelazapa and the ultra-heathen party, and her pride was fed by the commendations of her skill in dealing with this sect and by the admiration of her power which had so speedily crushed them.

Still they continued to incite her anger by

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strange reports, brought by spies, as to the teachings of the Christians, all of these reports being calculated in some way to make her believe the Christians were disloyal, and that it was only a question of time when they would surely attempt her overthrow. Shortly after the death of Raindavaka and his friends, it was represented to the queen that one of the Christians, Ramaka, had absolutely refused to obey the law of the land by observing the national idol festival, and she, filled with anger at his defiance of her authority, as she regarded it, ordered his arrest and trial by tangena. Ramaka first declared his innocence of the charge of disloyalty to Ranavalona, and then drank the poison draught. The cup failed to harm him, and the news spread through the city that by the heathen trial Ramaka had been declared innocent and was free. His fellow-Christians were overjoyed at his escape and this public vindication of their loyalty, and as an expression of their joy went to meet Ramaka on his return from court. Dressing in white, as an emblem of the purity of their faith, and singing hymns of Christian love, they marched along the street and brought him home with rejoicing. It was not difficult for Kelazapa, in the present temper of the queen, to convince her that this act of the Christians was a hostile demonstration, aimed at her; and that their joy was not so much on account of Ramaka's deliverance as of her defeat.

He urged her to lift her hand once more, and

as she had so speedily and effectually disposed of Raindavaka, so to exterminate the Christians. Others sought to convince her of the true meaning of the Christians' act. But Ranavalona chose to regard their conduct as a shaft of disloyalty aimed at her; and with an oath she declared she would wipe out the Christian faith with the blood of its followers.

CHAPTER XI

A ROYAL PROCLAMATION

ALREADY we have seen sufficient of the character of Ranavalona to know that, in the fulfilment of any purpose on which her mind was fully resolved, no course or crime, however horrible in its nature, would be allowed to prove itself an obstacle. Now her anger was fully awakened, and the one purpose of her life, the one subject which filled her mind, was to destroy the Christian sect.

If there came to her any moments of relenting all spirit of hesitation was speedily driven forth by the renewed efforts of Kelazapa and his fellows, who, full of craftiness and cruelty, were prepared to compass any crime if only the hated Christians could be destroyed, and the gods be left in undisputed sovereignty over the minds and hearts of the people. Thus it was the heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing. Since Ranavalona had thus placed herself as the champion of the national gods, it was necessary that all her plans should now be governed by an appeal to them, and that on every occasion her actions should be taken in their name.

In this way it came about that the policy of

the government was really controlled by the idol keepers and priests; and Ranavalona, as defender of idolatry, became the willing associate and tool of the heathen leaders, whose every interest was bound up in the destruction of the Christians. There were two other men who took an important part in seeking to arouse the queen to decisive action against the Christians. One of these was an officer whose name was Razakandrianaina; the other, a man named Ratsimanisa.

The former prepared a series of accusations against the Christians, charging them with despising the idols, with desiring to change the customs of the country, and to bring Madagascar under the authority of England.

Ratsimanisa assisted him in his plottings, brought his charges to the notice of the queen and sought to create in her mind a feeling of intense alarm.

They wrought upon her fear of treason against her person and throne. She persuaded herself that her zeal was in the behalf of the national gods and in defence of the national customs and worship. To her superstitious mind all hope of her being able to carry out her terrible oaths depended on her securing the help of the idols and learning from them the most favorable time at which to strike the first blow.

Summoning the prime minister and Kelazapa to the palace, she showed them her deep anxiety not to do anything without the approval of the

gods, and stated that she had invited them to consult with her as to the best and surest mode of securing the favor and guidance of the idols.

The prime minister expressed his conviction that in an enterprise that so deeply concerned the honor of the idols, and which was about to be undertaken for the express purpose of exterminating their foes, there could be no doubt of their readiness to help; and that all that was needed was that the priests at a morning sacrifice should inform the gods of the queen's intentions, and beseech them to be alert and watchful so that none of her plans might fail. But Kelazapa, wishful to bring the queen still more fully under the control of the priests, demurred somewhat to the prime minister's opinion. Said he, "it must be remembered that this work which is now about to be undertaken is one that may involve a long and arduous struggle. Moreover, already the national idols are incensed at the treatment accorded the Christians by Radama, and many of the nobles; and, indeed, at the apparent indifference of the government to the reputation of the gods who have, from time immemorial, been the guardians of the land. So that even now they are so highly offended at the indignities to which they have been subjected, that only the intensest reverence and importunity on our part will secure their attention to our desires. And there is this, farther—the gods will only come to our aid when they see that our plans are such as will convince

all the people that the idols, by their own mysterious power, have vanquished the Christians. They will surely insist that, in all the steps taken, due honor be given to them as the inspirers of our deeds." "What, then, do you advise we should do?" asked Ranavalona. "My advice is, that at the approaching festival, when the royal party is returning from the worship at the tomb of Radama, a special sacrifice be offered at the shrine of the national gods, and such deep homage be rendered to them as shall obtain their favorable regard to our petitions. And if the gods vouchsafe any revelation at this particular time, the people will be more likely to heartily approve the royal decrees, seeing they will connect this revelation of the gods with Radama. Feeling Radama has discovered the mistake he made in receiving the Christians, they will believe that the spirit of Radama is now counseling the queen how to deal with the enemies of her country and the gods. Their reverence for the spirit of Radama will insure greater respect for the acts of the government."

It was, therefore, agreed that, after the presentation of offerings at the tomb of Radama, the queen and her council should halt at the house of the national gods, and join in the special worship and prayers for their help in the effort to uproot Christianity from the land.

On the appointed morning, Ranavalona, with her council, approached the shrine of the idols

in royal state, and immediately Kelazapa and his helpers brought forth the four chief gods. Offerings of the choicest foods were placed on the altar before them; incense was waved and prepared resins burnt; while all the time the priests kept up a monotonous chant, extolling the virtues of the gods and the mighty deeds they had wrought. Then the royal party prostrated themselves at the altar, while Kelazapa presented the special petition. He ascribed to the gods supreme power, so that nothing could withstand their will; he poured out lamentations on account of the dishonor done to them by the permission given the Christians to establish their religion in the country, and especially because so many of the people had ceased to worship the gods of their fathers, and even denounced them as helpless stocks and stones. He reminded them of the loyalty of the queen to their worship and her desire to serve them; informed them of the laudable enterprise on which she was entering to crush their foes and re-establish their authority; and, pointing to the queen, prostrate before their altar, besought them to regard her holy vows, to vouchsafe some token of their favor, and so to direct her actions as that her efforts to vindicate their honor might be conducted to a speedy and complete success. When Kelazapa had finished his incantations, the royal party withdrew and returned to the palace, the priests alone remaining by the altar to learn the will of the gods, having

promised to at once communicate to the queen any answers to her prayers. No sooner had the queen departed than the priests and diviners assembled for the purpose of feasting on the luxuries that day placed upon the altar of the idols; and when the cravings of the animal appetite had been fully satisfied, it took but a short time to prepare the answer Kelazapa should return to the queen in the name of the gods.

The next day the whole city was startled by the issue of a proclamation, which declared that, acting upon the special revelation of the national gods, Ranavalona informed her subjects that the Christian worship must cease throughout the land; and that those who had accepted the teaching of the Christian faith much renounce it and turn again to the worship of their fathers. A letter signed by Ranavalona, was delivered to the missionaries by a deputation of officers, headed by Ratsimanisa, which commanded them to cease their efforts to change the ancient customs and worship of her people. One paragraph from that letter may be quoted, as it reveals the firm tone which the queen had been led to adopt—"And hence, then, with regard to religious worship, whether on the Sunday or not, and the practice of baptism, and the existence of a society (or societies) those things cannot be done by my subjects, in my country." In order that it might be universally known that the queen's determination was to put an end to all Christian teach-

ing and worship, a great kabary, or national assembly, was summoned to meet on Sunday, March 1st, 1835, on the plain of Imahamasina.

There a further proclamation would be made, declaring the queen's intentions. The proclamation required, also, that men, women and children were to be present—all of the height of a cubit and upward.

So unusual was this proceeding, so sudden the action of the queen, and so short the notice (three days) for the great gathering, that at first the minds of the Christians were filled with alarm. That some fearful evil was overhanging them they knew; and their alarm was increased by the very indefiniteness of the threat in the queen's proclamation.

However, they gathered, as usual, each evening for prayer; and under the peaceful influence of their worship their hearts grew more calm. Saturday night came, and for the last time they gathered in their church at Ambotonakanga. The church was filled to overflow by the Christians and friendly heathen; and an address, full of pathos and power, was delivered by the native preacher, who took for the keynote of his address the prayer of another company in time of trouble and despair: "Save, Lord, we perish." Words of consolation and help flowed from his lips—words which had brought comfort and calm to his own heart, and now filled the hearts of the threatened Christians with peace. Thus the

hours of the night passed away in worship and fellowship.

These Christians had drunk deep draughts of the water of life. Christ was the foundation of their life and hope. They had searched the depth, and explored the recesses of the love of God; and so, though babes in the Christian life, they were giants in the faith!

As they saw the storms gather round their heads, they renewed their covenant with Christ; and, as the ivy, clinging to the oak, outlasts the winter's tempests, so did they entwine every clinging tendril of faith and hope and love around the mighty Saviour. And though some of the twigs and leaves were torn from the vine, as blast succeeded blast, the vine, when the last breath of the tempest had swept past, still lived, stronger and more widespread; their faith, made mightier by its trials, still clung to the Christ, whose strength had been its support. At the first gray dawn of day the Christians separated with tears and handshakings. The morning of trial had come; what would the day bring to them? Would they ever meet thus again?

CHAPTER XII

THE KABARY

As the little band of Christians were wending their ways homeward, the booming of guns awoke the city, and announced that the day had come which was to witness the first trial of strength between the heathen and Christian faiths, and the casting down the gauntlet, by the heathen, at the feet of Jehovah. Could the contending parties have seen the final issue of the great conflict opened that day, with what different feelings would they have regarded the first events.

The heathen were jubilant as, secure in their numbers and power, they anticipated a speedy triumph. The Christians were calm, and, though few in number, were not expecting defeat—for even now were they not conscious that they possessed a victory that overcometh the world; even their faith?

Soon the city was all astir and, in a whirl of excitement, crowds were rushing hither and thither. From all sides streams of people were pouring into the city, or skirting its suburbs, as they made their way to the great plain. Very early the steady tramp and the clanking of arms,

told that the soldiers were moving out to the place of assembly. As the hours passed away the crowd steadily grew—tens of thousands, arrayed in holiday attire and overflowing with the excitement of the unusual event, were gathering.

All around could be seen large groups of heathen eagerly discussing the questions concerning the Christian faith, which had led to the calling of the kabary. Here and there could be seen much smaller groups, whose anxious faces, and quiet conversation, marked them as bands of Christians or adherents of the new faith, to whom this day might mean so much. While from many of the heathen groups fierce and vindictive glances were cast at the companies of Christians, when they were recognized, there were not wanting signs that many of the heathen present that day regarded these fearful Christians with feelings of kindness and sympathy. Their glances of compassion or admiration, and many a friendly nod or greeting, revealed the fact that there were many who, at heart, did not sympathize with the avowed purpose of the queen toward the Christians.

As the multitude increased and the sound of their voices swelled, above all the din and noise could be heard the constant roar of artillery, with which it was thought to strike terror to the hearts of the superstitious people. A little before the hour for commencing the proceedings, the officials were seen approaching, and, when at

length the judges and commander of the army, accompanied by Kelazapa and some fellow-priests, took their places on the stand erected for their use, some fifteen thousand soldiers were on the field, and probably one hundred and fifty thousand people were present, waiting to hear their sovereign's decree.

True to the cunning of his nature, Kelazapa had arranged for a good number of heathen, whose services had been made dependable by lavish gifts, to place themselves amongst the great crowd. They had been instructed to carefully notice any Christians whom they could recognize, and try to gather, either from their appearance or any stray words they might catch, just how they regarded the purposes of the queen; and if they could learn any facts that might incriminate any of the Christians, to report them immediately. They were also to watch closely the heathen, and try to form an opinion as to the spirit in which the queen's proclamation was regarded by them.

For the fact was, Ranavalona and Kelazapa were yet anxious as to the probable effects on the heathen party of the persecution and shedding of blood that might be necessary ere the Christian faith could be stamped out. The chief judge bore in his hand the queen's message, and after a heroic discharge of musketry by the soldiers, he stood forth to open the official duties of the day. It was not difficult to secure comparative

silence, seeing that one-tenth of those present were soldiers, detailed for that purpose.

A number of officials had, shortly before, been despatched to the west part of the province to announce the kabary, and make known the queen's intention, and they at once presented a report to the judges. There was little in that report that could encourage the heathen party, for it gave evidence that Christianity was being favorably regarded by the people of the west, and that the queen's intention to maintain the idol-worship had not awakened any enthusiasm even in the heathen mind. The chief judge then stepped forward and delivered a violent harangue, which altogether ignored the question for which they had been called together that day, but was a wonderful setting forth of the value of guns and of the rare qualities of gunpowder. Probably his intention was to make the Christians feel how hopeless was any effort on their part to oppose the will of a queen who could call into her service such a mighty force.

His speech was received with a quietness which seemed to say: If your guns shoot as wide of the mark as your speech has of the question this day, nobody has much to fear from either. The ground in front of the judges' stand was then cleared; a large number of dusky warriors marched forward, and, when they had passed and repassed, halted. At the command of their officers they separated into companies and began to

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execute a rude sort of war dance. Their spears were frequently brought into use, and the principal object of the dance seemed to be to imitate the execution of criminals. These were represented by soldiers whose spears had been wrested from them, and who cringed in well-feigned terror while again and again the soldiers would advance upon them with poised spears and pretend to thrust them through. This also was intended to be an object lesson to the Christians of what some of them might expect to experience in reality, unless they would yield to Ranavalona's demand, and again worship the idols.

When it was thought the multitudes were sufficiently impressed with the queen's power to carry out whatever evil she might threaten, the dancers retired and the royal message was read. The speech opened with an ascription of praise to Andriananahary—the name under which the Malagasy spoke of the Supreme Being. And, although they had no knowledge of His nature or spirit, they felt that on all public occasions He must be acknowledged. Such an appeal to the unknown God to assist in destroying His own true servants, was doomed to disappointment.

The speech appealed also to the great national gods of the country to protect the land against the false teaching that was being spread abroad and to recognize and prosper the efforts put forth by Ranavalona to re-establish the national worship and reverence for the gods. The worship

of the Christians was then described, followed by the queen's declaration of her utter detestation of their practices and her determination that while she ruled over Madagascar, such customs must cease. Then followed a number of charges against the Christians. The queen was shocked to know how utterly these people despised the idols of the land and felt it was no wonder drought and distress had fallen upon the province since the gods were so provoked.

Again, what blessing or prosperity could be hoped for so long as these Christians continued to devote one day a week, and several evenings, to the worship of an unknown God; and avowed their intention of praying to Him alone and of trying to lead the people of the land to acknowledge Him? Indeed, how should the very throne of Madagascar be preserved inviolable if the subjects of the queen were to be taught to submit themselves to the authority of England? But the crimes which the queen and her council detested most of all were these: That the Christians had ceased to swear or to utter low and polluting words, which was absolute proof of their having renounced idolatry; and now these Christian women dared to be chaste, absolutely refusing to surrender their virtue to the vicious appetites of the nobles and court officials. What further evidence could be required of the utter disloyalty of the Christians to customs which had long been established in the country, and which

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were good enough for the queen? What further proof was needed of the rebellious attitude of this sect toward the wishes and demands of the sovereign?

Therefore the queen would use every power at her disposal to destroy the last vestige of Christianity, and all who opposed her will must endure the punitive strength of her arm.

Finally, one month was allowed for all who called themselves Christians, or who had accepted the Christian teaching or been baptized, to accuse themselves to the government.

Those who accused themselves would be dealt with severely. Those who did not accuse themselves would be sought out and their punishment would be instant death. The commander of the army came forward on the platform and pledged the troops to faithfully carry out all the queen's pleasure. The men of sixteen honors, twelve honors, nine honors, down to the sergeants of three honors, and the rank and file, stood ready to obey her commands. After another volley of musketry, the assembly dispersed.

If the excitement had been great in the morning, it was tenfold greater as the people returned home. Few people in and around the capital, save the children, slept that night. Among the heathen speculation was rife as to the effect of the queen's resolve and the possibility of destroying the Christian faith.

Many had seen evidence of its power; and

during the scenes of the day they had noticed the quiet demeanor and calm courage with which the Christians had listened to the queen's charges and denunciations against them. In truth, their purity of speech and virtue of life, which seemed to so enrage the queen, were just some of the characteristics of the Christians which most strongly commended them to many of the heathen.

The Christians retired in groups, and in secret gatherings spent the night in laying their troubles before their God and seeking His guidance as to future action. During the night the spies sent out by Kelazapa were busy bringing in their reports; and such was the character of these reports that it soon began to be felt that a mistake had been made. There were indications that, if a whole month were allowed, very many of the heathen might join the Christians, and so the work of unrooting Christianity would become doubly difficult.

These circumstances were laid before the queen and her council; and early next day a further decree was issued, reducing the month to one week and requiring all Christians to accuse themselves within the seven days.

Did not the Christ whom the Christians loved and served, and who "endured the cross, despising the shame," Himself say "if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you?" And so the sign of the cross descended on Madagascar.

CHAPTER XIII

SUSPENSE

THE new proclamation, reducing the month to one week, was clear evidence to the Christians that the queen meant to strike a swift and decisive blow for their destruction, and they began to realize that the fiery trial that was to prove the constancy of their faith and love toward Christ, and which was to separate the chaff from the wheat, had commenced. When the evening of the first day after the kabary came, and in secret gatherings the little companies assembled to read the Scriptures and pray, it became apparent that many had only received a head knowledge of the truth; that, as yet, its glad tidings had not influenced their hearts.

Many who had regularly met with them walked with them no longer; aye, some of these unstable ones, in their efforts to prove that they were in no way connected with the Christians, denied with oaths that they knew their Christ, and entered with seeming thoroughness and joy into the idol worship. Some even praised in public the loyalty of the queen to the religion of the land, and her firmness in dealing with those who were undermining the influence of the gods.

The first effect of these lapses was to greatly discourage the faithful ones; but when they began to realize how many were still uninfluenced by fear of the threatening evils, and called to mind how clearly Christ had foretold just this effect of persecution, they recovered heart and hope and simply resolved that, though all should deny Christ, they would remain His faithful witnesses.

During the early days of the week there was manifest joy at the palace. As the days passed by and no Christians came forward to make the self-accusation, the queen began to congratulate herself on the success of her scheme, and felt satisfied that these Christians were cowards, however bravely they might at this time seem to bear themselves. But she and her councilors were yet to be undeceived. On several nights of the week lamps were lighted in the vestry of the church, and gatherings for prayer were held; and thus, in waiting upon God, the Christians who had at first felt somewhat weak and fearful, were recovering their strength, and building up a courage which would one day startle the forces of the heathen arrayed against them.

The week was drawing to a close before the Christians gave any indication of their intentions. But then an incident occurred that filled even the judges with astonishment.

One day, toward the end of the week, the judges had not long taken their seats in the court

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room, when a small group of men and women were seen approaching. Among them were several of those whose acquaintance we have made—Rafaravavy, Rasalama and Ramaka. They entered the court with erect heads and firm tread, their whole conduct manifesting a spirit of joy and strength, and even of pride, as they advanced to the platform on which the judges sat.

On being questioned by the judges as to their wishes, Ramaka replied that they had come in obedience to the queen's command, thus to prove their loyalty to her. And, when a further explanation was asked, he answered that they were Christians who were in the habit of meeting for worship, who had utterly renounced the idols of the land, and who prayed, and would still continue to pray, to Jehovah alone. To Ramaka's declaration they all assented, and their names were recorded.

But so astonished was the court at the frankness and fearlessness of the Christians, as contrasted with the cowardice and deceit usually practiced in their presence, that they paused to ask some questions. "How long have you been in the habit of neglecting the idols and praying to your Jehovah?" asked one of the judges. To which Ramaka replied that, as for the others, some for periods varying from five years to a few months; as for himself, he had for nearly four years worshiped Jehovah only.

"How often do you pray to your God?" asked

another. "That I cannot tell you," was the reply; "for many times a day do I come into His presence with my petitions. And sometimes, even the night-watches are prevented with the voice of prayer and supplication. Whenever occasion of need arises, whenever temptation assails, whenever danger threatens, so often do I cry unto God—for He ever listens to the prayers of His children."

"So," said the judge, "may we hear a sample of the prayers you offer to Jehovah?"

For answer Ramaka simply closed his eyes, while he and his companions fell upon their knees; and then, in presence of the hostile judges, Ramaka poured forth a simple, earnest prayer, remembering in his petitions his native land, the queen and her officers, seeking for himself and his fellow Christians a spirit of love toward their enemies, and that, in time of trial, their hearts might be kept in peace, and pleading that the heathen around might come to the knowledge of Jesus, the only Saviour.

So impressed were the judges with the beauty of Ramaka's prayer, that, even before the heathen assembled in court, they were fain to admit it was so good they could not find any fault in it.

As other groups of Christians, or individual followers of Christ, came in succession to accuse themselves, a similar scene was witnessed. And when at length the period for self-accusation had

closed there were some among the judges, and the heathen party, who seemed inclined to call for a stay of proceedings.

So beautiful had been the spirit of these Christians—so fearless and frank, yet utterly free from revenge toward those who threatened them with death—that for a time not a few began to question the wisdom of attempting to exterminate them. Their lives and spirits seemed to form almost the one bright spot amidst all the surrounding heathen darkness.

The first day passed without any official movement being made, and some were beginning to think that perhaps the queen was relenting her threats of coercion. And perhaps if she had heard for herself the confessions of the Christians, or had listened to the counsel of some of her officers, she might have spared her country a quarter of a century of misery and bloodshed, and have saved herself the guilt of many hundreds of murders.

But again the crafty priests were at her side, and Kelazapa had her ear. Listening to his blandishments and threats, the queen resolved to ignore all the milder counsel she had received, and to prosecute her resolve to destroy the Christian faith.

It was announced that the court was considering what penalty should be inflicted upon the Christians whose names were in their possession. The general expectation was that a death pen-

alty would be inflicted on most, if not all, who had dared, in defiance of the queen's decree, to adhere to their faith. Thus, with a refinement of cruelty, day after day was allowed to pass without any decision being announced; and, while the heathen were filled with excitement, and exultant at the prospect of victory, the Christians, who were most concerned, were kept in long and anxious suspense.

This trying experience they bore with great calmness and fortitude. More than once it was rumored that the delay was caused by differences in the council. It was well known that the Christians had powerful friends at court, who, although they had not themselves made a confession of Christ, would not allow those who had to be consigned to destruction, without a strong effort to save them. And the queen, unable to command the unanimous consent of her council to the more extreme measures she was inclined to adopt, feared to go forward in the path to which Kelazapa incessantly urged her. The judgment, when at last it came to be announced, confirmed these suspicions; and, while it thus brought a feeling of disappointment to the heathen, brought a corresponding sense of hope to the Christians. Yet the persecutors were not idle during the week, and the queen made it clear in other ways that her mind was still unchanged toward the Christians.

The hearts of the missionaries were consider-

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ably tried by the hindrances placed in their way, and the increasing fear that at any time their work might be wholly stopped. The queen had laid her interdict upon the Scriptures on March 1st, 1835, and at that time, a part of the book of Job, and the prophecies from Ezekiel to Malachi, were unprinted and partly untranslated. While the missionaries were anxious to complete this work, the natives, who had been taught to print, forsook them. But day and night they worked on, some translating, another setting type, and another toiling at the press.

Thus they succeeded in completing the first issue of the entire Malagasy Bible, by the end of June, 1835, and these were, most of them, at once placed in the hands of the Christians. It is on record that some of the people walked more than 100 miles in order to secure a copy of the Bible.

That the fears of the missionaries were not groundless was presently made abundantly clear.

One night they were disturbed about midnight by a number of soldiers entering their yard and a loud knocking at the door. On the door being opened, the soldiers demanded, by queen's warrant, the surrender of their servants, who were charged with joining in family worship with the teachers. They were conveyed direct to the palace yard, where the judges directed them to at once drink the tangena. Two of them died from the effects. The lives of the teachers were

not endangered; for even if the queen could, in her ignorance, despise the Christians' God, she was not ignorant of the power of England's arm, and knew right well that any injury inflicted on the teachers who were protected by treaty, would have to be answered for to that power.

But a full consideration of the state of affairs made it appear that the persecuted Christian Church would be in a better position if, for a time, the teachers who had led them to know Christ should retire from the country. They were perfectly assured that the moment they departed all the copies of the Scriptures in their possession would be seized by the queen's officers and be destroyed. Therefore, calling together the native teachers, they took counsel together as to what should be done. A number of large holes were secretly dug in the compound belonging to the teachers; boxes of Bibles and books were lowered into them, and buried, in the expectation that a day would come when these books would be wanted. To their faith there was no question that the hour of trial and darkness would pass, and peace and light shine once more. Then, commending all the Christian Church to the care of Jehovah, and with parting words of counsel and love, the teachers turned their backs on the capital and their faces toward the coast. Many of the Christians went some distance with them, weeping together as they

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passed along the hillside upon which the city stood.

Still, for a few days, the suspense was prolonged. But these days were to the Christians a season for refreshment and the girding on of strength. There was no special reason for preserving secrecy concerning their profession, for their names were already in the hands of the judges, and they were prepared for the worst the council might decide. So that they gathered regularly in companies, and they found the Word of God precious in those days.

Meanwhile, in the queen's council, eager, and sometimes heated, discussions were going on as to the fate of the Christians. The priest party continued to urge with much vehemence that an example must at once be made which should so convince the Christians of the hopelessness of resisting the royal power, as that they should yield.

But the state party in the council refused to be drawn over to this view—some of them out of a friendly disposition toward the Christians; some because among the Christians were some of their own friends; and others, because they had more political sagacity, still refused their consent to the infliction of a death penalty. At length the queen realized that on this occasion, at any rate, she must modify the character of the punishments she intended to inflict. Moreover, she felt that by exercising moderation at this

time, she would the more easily gain the consent of the council to harsher measures should the Christians continue obstinate. At the close of the week of suspense, it was announced that the following day the decision of the queen regarding the Christians would be proclaimed, and the judgments would be carried into effect at once.

CHAPTER XIV

BETRAYED

It was an eager assembly that gathered in the courtyard next day to listen to the judgment that the queen had pronounced against the Christians. The public had learned that there were divided opinions as to the wisdom of inflicting the utmost penalty upon them. And it was generally suspected the queen had been compelled to yield to milder counsels, so that the heathen party was not quite so jubilant as it had been earlier in the week, or on the day of the kabary. Neither were the Christians so alarmed as some had expected they would be. That they stood in a solemn position they fully recognized; but they also knew the strength of the arm on which they leaned. And on one thing they were determined—that whether by life or by death, by pain or by joy, they would honor the Saviour they loved.

Again the queen invoked, in her decree, the aid of the national gods, ascribing to them reverence and worship. Her message then went on to announce the fate of the Christians.

Claiming to herself great praise because of her magnanimity toward her foes and the enemies

of her country, she had resolved to give the Christians one more chance of escaping the death penalty. Yet, according to the will of the gods, they could not be allowed to go unpunished, who had defied their authority and repudiated the national worship. It was therefore her intention to place the Christians in the lowest ranks of her subjects, so that all might despise and shun them.

Some officers in the royal army had dared to swear allegiance to one Jesus, and each one of them would pay a heavy fine and be dismissed from his position. Those Christians who belonged to noble or wealthy families would be subjected to public degradation. All others would be made to pay a fine.

Scarcely could the Christians restrain a shout of joy when the judgment was announced, and, had they dared do so, many of the heathen party would have murmured at the queen's leniency. They became more reconciled to the measure of toleration, when, at the close of her message, the queen prescribed a prayer to the idols, which all her subjects, heathen and Christian alike, were to use; and announced that death would be the punishment of any who should disobey this command.

The Christians, like their prototypes in earlier ages, departed from the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.

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The government resolved to make use of spies for the detection of any who should violate the queen's instructions, or continue to join in worship or prayer to Jehovah; and as a further means of obtaining information it was proclaimed that all persons who should aid the queen's efforts by informing against such Christians, would be rewarded with a large share of the property forfeited by the accused.

In the minds of the Christians, there was not a moment's hesitation as to their duty or its performance. Ignoring the queen's command they resumed their gatherings for prayer. But knowing that they were now watched by spies and in danger of being caught in their speech, and so betrayed, greater secrecy and circumspection were necessary. For the sake of greater security they adopted secret watchwords, and they assembled in smaller companies so as not to attract so much attention. Some, in order to escape detection by their families, even went out into the forests to engage in worship. There were cave churches and forest temples in Madagascar in those days, and for many days to come. Rafaravavy, finding herself so closely watched and suspected, disposed of her home in the city and secured another in the suburbs, where she herself could live in greater retirement, and where better opportunities were afforded for her friends to see her and join in Bible reading and prayer.

Here for some time she and her companions

enjoyed a large measure of safety, and in daily gatherings were mutually strengthened in their faith. The stories of prophets and martyrs formed for them a source of inspiration and holy comfort.

When Ranivo ceased to attend the Christian worship at the home of her friend, Rafaravavy, it was learned that she had again become a devout worshiper of the idols; and, as if to make amends for her temporary parleying with the religion of Jehovah, had vowed to render to their cause any service in her power.

A few weeks after the kabary two of Rafaravavy's servants left her employ much against her desire, for she had regarded them as among the most faithful of those employed around her. But as they were free, and chose to exercise their liberty, she could not prevent their going. The very day on which they left her they went to the home of Ranivo. After waiting a little she came forward to speak to them, and recognizing them as the servants of her friend, and thinking perhaps they bore some private message from Rafaravavy, she took them to her own apartments.

This was exactly what they desired. When the door was closed Ranivo asked them their errand, to which they replied that they had come in the service of the gods; that they had left Rafaravavy's employ, and were now about to render to the gods a signal service, from which they expected so great a benefit that they would

not again need to be servants to any. But it was soon made plain. They informed her that they knew she had ceased to attend the secret meetings of the Christians at the home of her friend, and had avowed anew her loyalty to the gods of the land; they reminded her of the queen's proclamation, and of the condition announced, that any one who should assist in the discovery of any Christians should receive a large share of the forfeited property. They said further they had come to ask her to take them to Kelazapa, and introduce them to him, as they wished to inform on Rafaravavy, who still continued to hold secret gatherings of Christians; and then they would secure a considerable portion of her property.

Ranivo was filled with surprise and indignation at the conduct of the women, and remonstrated fiercely with them as to their treachery toward one who had always treated them with kindness. She was the more indignant because, though loyal to the idols and quite separated from all Christians, and, as she thought, from all sympathy with them, she herself would scorn thus to betray a friend. She also saw that these women would seek to implicate her in their mean act by informing the priests that they had come with her authority and advice, and Rafaravavy's doom would be laid to her account. Finding they were unmoved by her in-

dignation, or any appeal to their sense of their mistress' kindness toward them—that, in fact, they were going to sell her friend and theirs for money—she determined on one more effort to save her. She would buy her friend's life and give it back to her.

After long efforts she persuaded the women to agree to this, and handed them the price of Rafaravavy's redemption. It was morning still, and, feeling her friend was safe, Ranivo resumed her household duties, intending in the cool of the evening to walk down to Rafaravavy's house, tell her part of what had transpired, and so place her on her guard.

But she had not realized all the meanness or selfishness of these women for she might have judged that they who would betray a kind and worthy mistress, would, without hesitation, deceive her. Almost immediately on leaving her door the women had turned aside and gone direct to Kelazapa, to whom they told a plausible story of Ranivo having set them to watch Rafaravavy; how at length they had sufficient evidence to convict her of having disobeyed the queen's command, and that they had laid this information before Ranivo, who sent them with all speed to him.

Kelazapa was delighted with the news, and especially with what he considered the zeal of Ranivo in the cause of the idols. In a short

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time a queen's order for the arrest of Rafaravavy was issued, and an officer despatched to execute it.

By the early evening it was known all over the city that Rafaravavy was once more lying in prison awaiting trial, and it was stated that she had been entrapped by the skill and loyalty to the idols of one who was in a position to know of her movements—her former friend Ranivo. When Ranivo heard the news she was overwhelmed with grief and indignation. But her indignation did not suffice to lift the cloud that had passed over her friendship. There were two servants who had affirmed that they had acted on her request, and pointed to the money given them to save her friend's life, as proof of her having bribed them to betray their mistress.

Ranivo would probably have gone to the prison to see Rafaravavy and explain the matter, but to have done so might have involved her in serious trouble with the queen and Kelazapa.

Not being a Christian she felt she could not afford to be suspected of sympathy with them. She could only lament alone the shame she felt had fallen upon her, and the terrible fate awaiting her friend, whom she had sought to save. Next day Rafaravavy was brought before the court, and, in her answers to her accusers, admitted frankly that she still worshiped Jehovah, and confessed Christ as her Saviour. Asked for the names of her companions, she firmly refused

to mention one of them. All efforts to induce her to do so were unavailing.

The judge was a friend of her family, and wished to spare her. He therefore sent her back to her cell, and advised her father to see her and try to influence her to yield to the queen's demand. But even a father's pleadings were equally unsuccessful. She would not deny Christ, neither would she betray her friends. The queen was informed of her firm refusal, and, in a fit of passion, ordered her to be executed the next morning.

Rafaravavy received the news of her sentence calmly and peacefully. She laid her down to sleep that night in full expectation of next day seeing her Lord. That night the Christians gathered in fear and trembling; another storm had burst upon them, and they cried for deliverance for their friend.

They were destined the same night to receive another surprise. Ranivo's sleep went from her. She wept over the events of these two days. She recalled the words and looks of the women who had betrayed her friend, and suddenly a sense of deep disgust with her own heathen customs, and with the baseness of a system that could only exist by such foul means filled her heart.

Rising from her couch, and quietly letting herself out of the house, she made her way to a house where she knew some of the Christians were accustomed to meet. As her low tap at the door was heard, the voices inside were hushed,

and no one opened to her. Again she tapped at the door, and presently one of the company drew it ajar, asking who was there.

As Ranivo answered she stepped inside, and the Christians were face to face with the woman who was stated to have betrayed them. Alarm and suspicion were manifest in the glances they cast at her, and some of them covering their faces, rose to leave.

Ranivo knew their feelings toward her, but in a moment she bid them not to fear, and, while they paused, she told them the truth concerning the arrest of Rafaravavy. She also told them of the intense revulsion of her feelings toward the idols, and begged them to pray for her. And as they knelt, she knelt, and her sobs and prayers mingled with theirs.

While the little companies of Christians had been praying for Rafaravavy's deliverance the answers had been vouchsafed in raising up helpers for her. During the night many of her friends came to the palace to intercede for her life, and those nobles who were known to be favorable to the Christians exerted all their influence. When the morning broke the queen had so far changed her purpose as to spare Rafaravavy's life—but for this time only. She might still be set at liberty by paying a heavy fine; the next time nothing could induce Ranavalona to spare her life. Tears of thankfulness and joy filled the eyes of the Christians when the glad news reached them,

although they dared not meet their sister and welcome her with songs.

But no heart was so glad that day, and no eyes shed so many tears of gratitude, as those of Ranivo, the reputed accuser, though really the earnest saviour of her friend.

CHAPTER XV

DIVINE INTERPOSITION

RANIVO lost no time in repairing to Rafaravavy's home. She could not even permit the Christians to explain what they knew of her conduct toward her friend. When she entered the gate of the compound Rafaravavy was seated on the verandah, quietly reading a portion of the Gospels. On seeing her friend, she at once rose and advanced to meet her. And as Ranivo approached with outstretched hands, her voice trembling as she greeted her friend, and her eyes giving evidence of a tearful night, she hushed every feeling of resentment; and, in a tone of love and compassion Rafaravavy only said: "Oh, Ranivo! why did you treat me so? Why should you persecute our Christ?"

For answer Ranivo burst into a flood of tears. When she had recovered sufficient self-control to speak, it was to say: "Then, my dear friend, you believe I acted the part of a traitor."

"That was the statement made, and sworn to, before the judges," Rafaravavy replied.

"Yes," answered Ranivo, "it was. But many a false statement has been sworn to in these recent

days, and many an effort is being made to set friend against friend.

"Rafaravavy, I have often been urged by the priests to betray you, for they hate and suspect you."

"Then was the statement of the servants false? Were not you my accuser?" asked Rafaravavy.

"Listen, while I tell you all," replied the girl. She then told the story right through, and with such genuine emotion that the heart of the elder woman thrilled with joy at the thought of her friend's loyalty. But a yet deeper joy filled her heart when Ranivo went on to tell of her visit to the meeting of the Christians, and their prayers for her, and ended by saying, earnestly, "Rafaravavy, I, too, want to be a Christian."

It was with a glad spirit Rafaravavy set herself to lead her young friend to Christ Himself, that she might find in Him her Saviour. Hour after hour, they remained in fellowship and prayer, and before the day closed it was told to the little band of Christians that Ranivo had taken her place on the Lord's side.

For a few months comparative calm reigned in the city. The Christians were almost free from any molestation, and some of them began to hope that this was indeed the dawn of better days. It was during this time of toleration that another conversion took place, which added considerable vigor and hope to the Christian Church. Rafaralahy, who had for long been halting between

two opinions, came to a full and intelligent decision to renounce the heathen religion of the country and to adopt the Christian faith. It was not long before he lost his position under the government at the instigation of Kelazapa.

But, aside from this, he had a comfortable home, with large lands and fertile rice fields. Thus it was no small gain to the spiritual force, and, indeed, to the material comfort, of the Christians, to have Rafaralahy profess himself one of their number. While for a time there was thus a lull in the storm, the Christians still maintained their secret gatherings for prayer and study of the Scripture, and scarcely ventured to relax their watchfulness. They knew well that a cunning foe was seeking their destruction, and they would not needlessly expose themselves. If they doubted this, they were apprised of the relentlessness of the priest party by the following incident:

One night, when the Christians were secretly assembled for worship, one of their number came, trembling with excitement; and when he had looked around and had seen that Rafaravavy was not there, he began to mourn aloud. When the others sought to know the reason he alarmed them by the question, "Do you not know what has happened? Rafaravavy is slain. She has been executed secretly by the queen's orders." At first they were, all of them, incredulous. But when he told them that he had heard two of the court

officers speaking about her death while he was passing the palace gate, their hearts sank within them, and their praises were turned to lamentations.

However, their feelings were destined to undergo another revulsion that night, for about half an hour later Rafaravavy herself entered the room, and when they saw her, they thanked God and took courage. She had not been slain, or even arrested. But she knew that the question of her arrest had been again discussed at court, and so there was need for greater circumspection than ever on her part and theirs. The wrath of the enemy was brewing, and dark days were once more threatening the little band. Only a few more weeks had passed, when a body of officers set forth from the palace yard with warrants, issued on the information of a woman who had for some time been watching the Christians. That day ten members of the young church—including Rafaravavy—were arrested and placed in cells. When these Christians were brought into court, the first efforts of the judges were directed toward obtaining from them the names of other members of the church, that they also might be arrested. And so anxious were they to accomplish this purpose, that several days were spent in the attempt.

Yet, all the while, it was plain enough the special anger of the queen rested upon Rafaravavy, and if any one should suffer, certainly it

would be she. Some two weeks passed, with but scant success in discovering the Christians.

Rafaravavy was visited by her father in the effort to turn her from her profession, but in vain. Rasalama also visited her in her cell, but to comfort and encourage her. So eager were the heathen party to discover the Christians that one of the officers was instructed to conceal himself in a position where he could overhear the conversation between Rafaravavy and Rasalama. The consequence was that as Rasalama was leaving her friend's cell she was placed under arrest and confined in a cell. At length, wearied of fruitless efforts to change her purpose or compel her to accuse her friends, the queen once more condemned Rafaravavy to death. Again her friends and the friends of the Christians at court put forth strenuous efforts to get the sentence reduced. But their efforts were unavailing. The queen was determined Rafaravavy should die, and, as she would now have no further use for her home and property, they were made a public spoil, and in a few hours all she had possessed was seized by the heathen and carried away. On the evening of that day Rafaravavy was made to walk behind her executioner to the place at which she was to die. There she was placed in irons, and ordered to be ready for death at cock-crow next morning. All hope was past, unless, indeed, the God of Daniel still lived, and could

save not only from fire and the lion's den, but also from chains and the spear of the executioner.

Hour after hour Rafaravavy spent in human loneliness; yet her heart was glad and peaceful. He who walked with His servants in the fiery furnace was near to her, and she feared not the short struggle that lay before her on the morrow. But the hour of midnight brought a strange commotion in the city. Suddenly there rang out upon the stillness of the night the awful cry of "Fire! Fire!" People rushed from their homes to find that already the flames had laid hold upon several buildings. Immediately all who could help were busily engaged in seeking to quench the flames. But, as if to mock their efforts, the wind began to rise, and, while the flames roared the wind howled; and the city was turned into a Babel.

Above the heads of the alarmed heathen, the flames leaped and danced, and the wind bore showers of sparks across the city. The thatched roof of house after house was caught by the fire, in spite of all the efforts to stay its progress. Over the court house, where, a few hours before, the Christians had stood in jeopardy of their lives, and whence one had been led out to await death, the sparks fell, thus threatening its destruction. Something must be done. The people began to whisper, and soon it was spoken openly that the God of the Christians was avenging himself. Even Ranavalona began to wonder if the very

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idols were fighting for the Christians. She issued orders to suspend all government service, and to call out all soldiers and officers to help save the city from the flames.

The night wore away; the hour of cock-crowing came, and Rafaravavy roused and began to prepare herself for death. But no executioner approached her; no sound of preparation for her execution could be heard, and she wondered. In the city the struggle with the flames still went on, and even Rafaravavy and the Christians were for the moment forgotten. When at last the fire was subdued, the time for the execution was several hours past.

What was now to happen? For never before had such a thing occurred as for the executioner to fail to carry out a sentence at the fixed hour. After such a visitation even the queen and the heathen party hesitated to strike the fatal blow; and so hours passed into days, while Rafaravavy expected any moment to be summoned forth to die. During these days Fantaka came frequently to see her. She, too, seemed to be affected by the events which had happened, and still more by the calm faith and courage of Rafaravavy. She listened with evident interest while spoken to of the love and power of Christ; and as gradually it became clear to Rafaravavy that Fantaka was not far from the kingdom, she strove the more earnestly to lead her to a speedy

decision, if so she might have that joy before she died.

But that moment of decision was not yet. After several days of terrible suspense the death sentence on Rafaravavy was once more remitted; but a punishment of a degrading nature was imposed. Her heavy irons having been removed, she was led back into the city, and into the market place, and there Rafaravavy, the gentle and refined Christian woman, was publicly offered for sale as a slave. There were some of her friends, however, who were not ashamed of her even in this position. Indeed, so many were they who felt sympathy for her that the sale was over in a few minutes. Rafaravavy was purchased by one who esteemed her, and while she had to endure for some time a semblance of bondage, in reality she enjoyed a great deal of liberty, and was able, as had been her custom, once again to meet with the little bands of Christians. The faith and teaching of one who had suffered so much, and been almost in sight of the martyr's crown, had a specially inspiring and sustaining influence on the Christians amid the trials to which they were all subjected.

CHAPTER XVI

DECEIVED

BUT we must go back a few days, for during the time that Rafaravavy lay under expectation of death, events had transpired which filled the hearts of the Christians with grief and fear; and in prison, bound and waiting to die, she heard the news that the first Christian martyr from Madagascar had gone home. It will be remembered that, leaving the cell in which Rafaravavy was detained, Rasalama had been arrested and imprisoned. The day following she and the other nine Christians in chains were brought into court. How they had been discovered was a mystery to them and to the public. All that was known was that a low-born woman in some way contrived to secure the names and place of meeting of a number of the Christians, and on her information they had been arrested. When these prisoners again appeared before their judges the court room was crowded. Some of the Christians were present to see what would be done; but most of the people were heathen, and, whatever may have been their inmost feelings, were obliged to outwardly approve of the trial.

As the names of the accused were called over a grim smile overspread the face of Kelazapa. Most of them had already been accused once before, and the queen's promise had been that a second charge should be followed by immediate death. Here, then, thought he, were several of the Christians appointed for the slaughter.

But not quite so quickly, Kelazapa! There is a will stronger than yours to be consulted; there is a power mightier than Ranavalona's which is pledged to their help! The hearts of many in the room were filled with elation, for they seemed to see the triumph of their idols over Jehovah, and those who sympathized with His cause shrink away into the recesses of the forests to save their lives. But in a moment all this was changed, and the proud priests and the court of judges were smitten with astonishment. "Fanivotra," asked the judge, "is it true that you are a Christian; that you have renounced the worship of the idols, and in defiance of the queen's decree do now worship and serve Jehovah?" And a firm voice, that they all recognized, replied: "It is true that I am a Christian, and that, according to the light I have, I follow, serve and worship Jesus Christ." In a moment the eyes of all in the court were turned on Fanivotra, and one of the judges asked her: "What is this, Fanivotra? How do you come to be standing amongst these despised Christians? Say you are a witness against them

to-day, but do not let it be known that you have fallen under this infatuation and have been foolish enough to join yourself to them."

But the reply came steadily and calmly: "I have not fallen under any infatuation, but I have come under conviction of the truth as it is in Jesus, and to-day I rejoice to stand as a witness and confessor for Him." "But, Fanivotra," said the judge, "was it not you who recently enabled us to discover some of these Christians? Nay, was it not you who rendered that signal service to the gods, in betraying your mistress, Rafaravavy, who now lies under sentence of death? Do not now say that you have betrayed the gods of your fathers." "It is true, judge," was the answer, "that I did all that of which you have accused me, and in doing so I knew no better. But I have since learned that in such action I was sinning against the true God and persecuting Christ. By so much the greater as was my crime then, by so much the more is the mercy of the Lord magnified now, in that He has forgiven my sin and made me, the chief of sinners, even the least among His followers. I am a Christian, and for the sake of Christ I stand here before you all for trial this day."

For a space there was a silence in court. Such boldness astonished the judges; and even the priests began to wonder whether they would be able to conquer a faith which made its followers so fearless, and yet so calm and generous.

The judges then returned to their former efforts to discover from those before them the names of their companions, in order to have them arrested, and so, if possible, bring the whole church under one trial and condemnation. "Fanivotra, you have watched the Christians for a long time, and in your mistress's home have had opportunity of knowing them. Tell us, in the queen's name, who are they that have confessed this Christ?" Such was the next demand of the judges.

In a moment a shudder of alarm ran through the hearts of the Christians who were present in the court room as spectators. They knew they were watched, and that all the doors were guarded. If they should now walk out they would be suspected. If they should remain, and the Christians at the bar should mention their names, they would be at once arrested. But before they could decide what to do, Fanivotra's voice relieved their anxiety. Deliberately, yet gently, she replied that she did, indeed, know a great many of the Christians; but she also loved them; yes, loved them more than life, and respected them more than even the judges' demand, and that nothing would induce her to mention the name of one of them.

Each of the prisoners in like manner steadfastly refused. Neither threats nor bribes could move them. Almost in despair the officers consulted together as to what further means might be tried in order to get the information so much desired.

A good deal of attention had been centered upon

Rasalama, because of her youth, beauty and refinement. Moreover, it was known she had strong friends at court, amongst whom was Rafaralahy, who had known her almost from childhood and had often helped her and other Christians. It was also known that she was betrothed to one of the band of Christians, who was putting forth strenuous efforts to secure her release; and her love for him, and the prospect of his efforts to secure her release being successful if she would so far relent as to name her companions, were appealed to, in the hope of accomplishing the purpose. Still she refused. At length the soldier who had charge of her cell, and the cells of several others, undertook to obtain some information.

Repeatedly, during the evening and night, the guard went to Rasalama and used every blandishment, promise and threat he could think of to secure her confession, yet without effect. Then, as a final resort, he thought to deceive her. Opening her cell door he entered and addressed her: "Rasalama, it's no use your longer concealing the names of your companions." "Why is it to no purpose, or why should I betray my friends?" she asked. "Because," said he, "whether or not you name them, they will all be arrested." "No," she replied, "that cannot be, for they will not be known to the government. No Christian will imperil the life of a brother or sister in order to save his own." "Yes," said the guard, "it has already

been done." "Nay, I cannot believe that," replied Rasalama, "for I do not think torture or death could extort their names from our band."

"Listen, Rasalama," was the answer of the guard, "and I will tell you what is for your own welfare. The bond of your brotherhood was very powerful, but it has at length broken. Your friends in the other cells have agreed to name some of their companions. Each one has named seven members of the church, and already those names are in the hands of the officers. There is no chance of escape open to them. Some of your friends will be treated leniently because of the information they have given. But the judges are especially anxious to save you, and I am come with a message from them to tell you that, although they already have the names of most of your companions at large, yet if you will name seven, as the others have done, even though they should be the same names as the judges already have, in consideration of your act they will release you."

Had Rasalama for a moment suspected the truth of this statement, how differently would she have acted. But she was young and hopeful and loved; and when she heard that, through the weakening of her companions in prison, her friends outside could no longer be concealed—that, indeed, even if she should sacrifice herself, it could not save them—she reluctantly consented to name

seven of her friends. The guard assured her that the judges had those names already, yet she had saved herself by mentioning them.

When the guard left her cell, Rasalama sat down again and brooded over the sad lot of the Christians, grieving at the yielding of her friends in prison to the threats of their persecutors, grieving sorely over the fate of those she would have died to shield, could it have availed, and weeping for herself that even by the hopelessness of her resistance to the queen's demand accomplishing any good for her brethren and sisters, she should have been led to acknowledge the names of any.

Little did she suspect with what triumph the guard returned to the court, with what eagerness his report was received by the judges and Kelazapa, or the swiftness with which warrants were issued for the seven persons she had accused, and officers despatched to arrest them. But she was soon to discover the base treachery that had been practiced upon her.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST MARTYR

THE following morning the Christians were brought into court once more, where surprises awaited them all. Great was the wonder of Rasalama's companions when they saw seven other members of the church placed in the docks beside them, and with anxious hearts they sought to imagine by what means their friends had been discovered. But greater still was the awe in Rasalama's heart. She had expected that day to see thirty or forty of her companions arraigned in court. Yet here were only the seven whose names she had admitted to the guard as being amongst the despised sect. Rasalama's face grew pale, and she herself visibly trembled—yet not from fear of anything the judges could do to her, but because of the fears which filled her mind that, in some way, she had been made the victim of a conspiracy on the part of her persecutors. When the judges had taken their seats, and the court opened, the names of the new prisoners were called for identification, and one by one they answered clearly and bravely to their names.

How was it that of all the Christians the judges could get within their grasp, and though they all

realized so clearly the danger that overhung them, not one of them ever showed any sign of fear or weakness in facing their accusers?

When Paul, the diviner, who was one of those mentioned by Rasalama, was called upon, he admitted freely the charge of being a Christian, and spoke of the peace of heart he enjoyed in the sense of sin forgiven. He spoke also of the friendship and love of Christ for His people, and of his own efforts to humbly obey the laws of Christ.

"What are those laws?" cried the judge. "Let us hear them that we may know the nature of the laws you Christians dare to place above the laws of our queen!" "The first great law that Christ has taught us," replied Paul, "is to love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. And the second law is this, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves." If a bomb had been exploded it could scarcely have caused more surprise. The judges thought they were about getting to the roots of disloyalty to Ranavalona, and they found instead that the laws of these Christians were of such a nature as to make them citizens of the noblest type. The men who would do to others as they would others should do to them were not likely to seek any injury to country or queen.

However, recovering from their surprise, the judges questioned Paul on the subject of praying to Jehovah, thinking that here, at any rate, they would find some evidence that the claims of Je-

hovah and Ranavalona were opposed, and that a Christian could not be a loyal subject. But, if anything their surprise was greater than before when Paul, in simple words, told them that amongst other subjects for his constant petition were prayer for the queen and all the officers of the court; for the welfare of all the people of the country; for the cessation of evil and the making all the land full of goodness and truth; and that he himself might be able to lead a peaceable and pure life. It occurred to some of the officers that even Kelazapa himself had never offered better or more loyal prayers to the national gods; and if these were the prayers Jehovah rejoiced to receive and answer, possibly Jehovah was a friend, rather than an enemy, to their land. There was a lull in court while the judges conferred.

Rasalama seized on this moment to turn to her guard and demand where were the Christians accused by the other prisoners. He only shrugged his shoulders and muttered, "There are none." Then did it dawn upon Rasalama that, by a cruel deception, she had been made the only informant against her fellows in the faith. She sank down upon the floor and wept tears of agony and remorse. Presently she was aroused from her remorse by hearing her name called and the demand made by the court that she should testify against Paul and the other six Christians who had been arrested on her information.

Recovering her self-possession, Rasalama

quietly but firmly refused to speak about them. When she was again called upon to give her evidence, and was reminded that they had been arrested on her accusation, at length her spirit was stirred within her, and, standing face to face with her judges, Rasalama denounced with words of indignation the base trick played upon her by her guard and the officers of the court; expressed her regret that she had ever allowed herself to be deceived by the emissaries of idolatry, and, in defiance of all the wrath of court and queen, refused to open her lips to speak one word against those who were placed beside her.

She was cautioned in regard to her language and reminded that she was in the power of the court; also that the queen's decree had stated what should be the penalty of a Christian confession. But Rasalama, filled with an inspiration and courage from heaven, only replied by holding up to scorn the folly and wickedness of idol worship, the sins and superstitions of the people, and condemned especially the conduct of the priests in teaching the people to place confidence in stocks and stones instead of in the living God. She also demanded that the judges should contrast the virtues of the Christians with the vices of the heathen, pointing out that, whereas their Scriptures taught that only the pure in heart should see God, the very teaching and lives of the priests were all calculated to make the people impure and licentious, and such were the results. With

great courage she bore testimony to the power of the Christian faith, and to the purity and loveliness of Christ, and reminded her judges that, though the "kings of the earth should set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed," though all the people should say, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us; He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." Some of them that sat in the council almost gnashed upon her with their teeth; and the judges fearing the power of her testimony, ordered all the Christians to their cells. Later in the day their condemnations were made public. With the exception of Rasalama, all of them were to be sold into an unredeemable slavery. Rasalama, because of her obstinacy, and the courage and vigor with which she had assailed the idolatry of her country, was condemned to die. For several days prior to her execution Rasalama was subjected to stripes and tortures, perhaps in the hope of inducing her to relent. But her suffering seemed only to deepen her joy in her Lord and her patience in enduring for His sake.

The only act of leniency shown her at all, and that on account of the influence of friends at court, was that Rafaralahy and her lover were allowed to visit and comfort her in her cell during the days she lay there awaiting death. These were sacred seasons of fellowship in which was

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begotten a fortitude strong enough to endure the parting worse than death for one, and the brief struggle of death for the other. Strong as was Rasalama's love for her earthly friend, she loved Christ yet better; she could not deny her Lord to live with her lover. Strong and jealous as was his love for her, he could not ask her to deny her Lord and Master for his sake. Since he must give her up for the sake of the Lord they both loved, he would do it generously and freely; so he encouraged and cheered her against the trying hour.

The night before her execution, opportunity was given her lover to say farewell to Rasalama. At first it seemed as if both hearts would break. How could he realize that to-morrow the spear would pierce the heart of his loved one and not weep for her? How could she think of the morrow, and that alone she must face her executioner, while the heathen around would gloat over the sight of her sufferings?

But gradually peace returned to both hearts—the peace that comes when every burden is cast upon the Lord—and with it came a strength that seemed divine. But we will not intrude on that sacred last hour together. Presently the guard informed them that the time was up and they must say farewell.

One lingering grasp of each other's hand, one fond embrace, one more earnest prayer, one more word of comfort and cheer, in which her lover

found voice to say: "Fear not, my beloved one; Christ will be near, and His arms will receive you gently to Himself. I myself would die with you, though I may not. Yet I will be near you at the last, and, maybe, we soon shall meet again. Farewell!" He left her side, the cell door closed and alone Rasalama awaited the dawn of day, the stroke of death, and the welcome home by her Saviour.

But what prompted those words of her lover? Could it be that deep in his heart there was an intuition that the separation would not be for long? Thus she mused for a time, then gave herself to prayer. And was the vague thought that the parting was only for a little while bringing comfort to his heart, and silently preparing him to follow Rasalama in the path which should lead him through the same portal of death to the same bright glory and the martyr's crown? At day-break on August 14th, 1837, Rasalama was led forth from her cell, and, chained and fettered, followed her executioner to the hillside—Ambohipotsy—where she was to die.

On the way to the fatal spot, she was carried past the little church where she had worshiped, and been baptized.

Ceasing, for a moment, the hymn she was singing, she pointed to the place, saying: "It was there I heard the words of the Saviour."

Already a large crowd of heathen had gathered to see the first Christian die; and as they saw the

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lonely maiden step forward peacefully and calmly, and without a blush of shame, to the appointed place, many a heart was filled with secret admiration. As Rasalama took her place she glanced around, and on one side of the hill she saw a small group of Christians, and amongst them Rafaralahy and her lover, who looked at her with eyes full of tenderness and compassion, which looks in themselves were full of comfort and help for her.

She waved her hand to him—that hand heavy with the chains of persecution; and he, regardless of the onlookers, waved back to her. A few moments she stood; then, fearless, kneeled on the green sod. One last glance she took at her lover and the little band of Christians; one last prayer offered for him and for them; then bowed her head and closed her eyes and turned her thoughts to Jesus, to whose arms and embrace she was going. For a moment her voice was heard: “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The next moment the executioner’s spear entered her heart. Rasalama’s eyes saw the King in His beauty, and His hand placed upon her brow the crown of everlasting life.

At that instant Rafaralahy exclaimed: “If I might have so happy and tranquil a death, I would not fear to die for the Saviour too.” The words were too late for her dying ears to hear. Her spirit had taken its flight. But did Rasalama’s glorified spirit catch the words of one who had

ever been a true friend to her and to all the Christians; and was the prayer for his faithfulness unto death the first petition she laid at her Saviour's feet?

Standing among the group of Christians, though not yet one of them, was Fantaka. She made her way to the cell of Rafaravavy, and told her with what calmness and peace of mind, the first Malagasy martyr had gone home.

CHAPTER XVIII

FUGITIVES

THE death of Rasalama had a wonderful effect upon the Christian Church—an effect just the contrary of that which the queen had intended to produce. So peaceful had been her end that they began to realize how completely Christ takes the sting from death; and instead of shrinking from the ordeal, there were hearts which began to desire that they, too, might win the martyr's crown.

They now knew the worst that could happen, and instead of being afraid, their courage was increased, their faith made firm, and their strength to endure abundantly enlarged. We have seen that Rafaravavy, though sold as a slave, still had a large portion of leisure, and that she devoted her opportunities yet more earnestly to comforting and teaching her fellow-Christians. So that the Word of the Lord spread, the number of inquirers grew, and, in secret, many were added to the Church. One Christian had been slain, but as a result, many heathen were born into eternal life and the kingdom of Christ. Rafaralahy, too,

became more bold in his Christian witness. He did not take the trouble to conceal his love for the Christians, his loyalty to Christ, and his abhorrence of all the practices of heathenism.

His words at the time of Rasalama's death had been duly reported to the government, yet he took no steps to conceal his actions for the help of the Church.

Rather, he sought to do more than ever for the furtherance of the cause he loved. A good deal of his property was freely devoted to the relief of suffering and needy Christians, and these deeds of charity soon caused him to be marked out for punishment and death.

Another way in which his very goodness provoked the anger of the priests was this: Some little distance from the gates of the city a hut had been built for the use of some lepers, who, in Madagascar, as in other countries, were regarded as outcasts and unclean. Heathenism had no compassion for such sufferers; the priests had no hands to help these outcast ones. But Rafaralahy had both. Frequently he would visit and talk with the lepers, cheering and strengthening their hearts; and many a kindly gift did he carry to relieve their sufferings and needs. The heathen were not slow to mark the contrast, and Kelazapa could not brook anything that reflected, even by its own silent merit, upon the spirit of idolatry.

Among those who, on the outbreak of persecution, had gone back from a Christian profession,

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was one to whom Rafaralahy had shown much kindness—helping him in his times of difficulty, so that he was in Rafaralahy's debt.

Unwilling to pay what he owed, he used the knowledge which through friendship he had gained, to secure the arrest of the man who had succored him, thus seeking to destroy the debt by destroying his creditor. Heathenism regarded his treachery as an act of peculiar merit.

One day, as Rafaralahy returned from a visit to the leper's hut, and drew near his door, he saw signs of commotion, and heard the loud lamentations of his wife and relatives. Hastening forward to see what had happened, he had scarcely stepped inside the door when he was seized by two strong arms, and found himself under arrest for having encouraged the Christians to meet for worship at his house. He was allowed but a few moments to say good-by to his weeping wife and relatives. Yet he found time to encourage them with the remembrance that this was a part of the great renunciation which discipleship of Christ involved, and to assure them that he then left them in the hands of Christ, who would never fail nor forsake them. It was a sudden and sharp trial, thus to be wrested from his young wife, who loved him deeply and clung to him, even when the officers would have hastened his departure.

There is no pity in heathenism, no compassion in the heart where superstitious reverence for idols reigns supreme; and the officers found a

grim pleasure in the agonized grief of the young wife, though they marked the heroic courage with which Rafaralahy bore the testing.

When tortures, and other methods, failed to make him confess the names of his co-worshipers, Rafaralahy was led forth to the place of his execution. Surrounded by a great crowd of heathen, who were greatly moved by his calmness and fearlessness, Rafaralahy peacefully lay down on the ground, offered a last short prayer, and received the executioner's spear. Within a year his own prophecy had been fulfilled—Rafaralahy, like Rasalama, had died for the sake of Christ.

Not satisfied with having shed this blood, but rather emboldened thereby to attempt to repeat such acts on a larger scale, further steps were taken to secure the arrest of such Christians as had been accustomed to assemble at Rafaralahy's house.

Having failed to extort these names from him, they seized his widow, and, by torture and cruel scourgings, at last forced from her a confession of the persons who had frequented their place of abode, for religious services; and now the hour of triumph seemed at hand.

There have been noble deeds performed by heathen—deeds which surely will not lose their reward, and the day of Rafaralahy's death witnessed one of them. The queen's council had been sitting, and had resolved on the death of a number of well-known Christians. One of the

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councilors, who was friendly toward these persecuted ones, purposely engaged in conversation concerning this decision in the presence of a heathen woman, of whose friendliness to the Christians he was aware, and significantly indicated the nearness of the peril, since they were to be arrested that night. No sooner had he passed on than the woman sped away, out through the gate of the city to the suburbs, and as the evening drew on, managed to find Rafaravavy and two other Christians. To these she gave the names of those whose destruction had been resolved upon, and telling them that already soldiers had been selected to arrest them, she urged them to escape while yet there was time. Some of the threatened ones were living as slaves inside the city, and the question arose, should these three escape and leave the others unwarned, or should they risk their own lives to help their brethren and sisters?

The choice was soon made. Night had just fallen, and under cover of darkness they all crept round the city till they reached Ambohipotsy. There they paused awhile; then, kneeling on the soil, stained with the blood of their martyred sister and brother, commended themselves to the care of God, praying for help and courage, if needs be, to suffer; or, if He so wished, for deliverance out of the hands of their foes. Then they separated, two of them going off into the

woods to hide, while, alone, Rafaravavy undertook the dangerous task of entering the city to warn the other threatened ones.

Fortunately, the soldiers sent to arrest these three, not finding them at home, concluded they had all gone to a secret meeting of the Christians, and decided that the best thing to do was to wait near at hand, so that as they returned from the meeting they might arrest them, and possibly others too. With beating heart Rafaravavy sped along the dark streets till she found Fantaka and Ramonja.

Here for a brief space her sad and lonely heart was comforted and gladdened. There was a strange kindness in Fantaka's manner—a gentleness Rafaravavy had never seen there before. And soon the secret came out. Fantaka had become a Christian, although she had not yet openly confessed Christ. So that a deep Christian affection, added to her human love, moved her whole energy to secure the safety of the threatened Christians.

She would not allow Rafaravavy to take the risk of going through the city; but she herself sent to call the condemned ones to come with all secrecy to her home.

They came, and were filled with surprise and thankfulness when they saw Rafaravavy, and learned that she had come to seek their deliverance from the death that was so nigh them.

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Having appointed a meeting place outside the city, they crept back to their homes to put together a few things, complete the day's task, place their owner's property in safety, and prepare to flee. At midnight the city was still, and dark clouds overcast the sky. With mingled feelings Rafaravavy took farewell of Fantaka, and then, protected for a time by the presence of Ramonja, walked toward the city gate.

By different routes the other warned Christians sought the place of meeting. They all reached the spot in safety, and at once struck out for the woods. They realized that they must place as great a distance as possible between themselves and their enemies before morning, for next day their flight must be discovered, and they would be known as fugitives. But they were able to endure the fatigue of that night's long journey, for they had eaten heartily before setting out, and were well supplied with food for the first two or three days. Noon the next day found the fugitives some fifty miles away from the capital.

That morning the city awoke to learn that the warrants for the arrest of Rafaravavy and others had not been executed, because the Christians could not be found. This of itself would not have occasioned great surprise. But when it was reported that the slaves inside the city walls, whose arrest had been decided on, were missing, then Ranavalona realized that she had been be-

trayed this time—the Christians had escaped from her snare, and her anger burned within her.

Immediately several companies of soldiers were ordered out to scour the country for the fugitives. It so happened that in the company of soldiers that first discovered the route the fugitives had taken, and so had the advantage in pursuit, were two young men—cousins—who had been taught by the Christians before they entered the army. The effects of that teaching and of recent events had been to lead them to more earnest inquiry, and now they were secret disciples of Christ. The fugitives had fled to the great forest, hoping to reach the inside belt of woodland, between which and the broader outer hill lay the Sihanaka country. If by any means they could cross it, they would then be right above Tamatave, and might possibly find an opportunity to escape from the island.

Traveling mostly by night, and resting and hiding by day, they gradually made their way onward. Often they suffered greatly from thirst and hunger, and sometimes from exposure to the inclement weather. Fortunately, the forest contained a good many trees, from which they secured succor. From the traveler's tree they often obtained plenty of good water; frequently they were fain to stay the pangs of hunger by eating the roots of the lattice-leaf plant.

Gradually the soldiers gained on them, being

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helped by the discovery of spots where they had hidden, and soon the fugitives had to keep as sharp a look-out for the soldiers as the soldiers were keeping for them.

As they pressed forward they found, again and again, real friends in their time of peril. Some for political reasons were glad to do anything to discomfit the queen. But others, out of genuine sympathy for the persecuted Christians, were willing to help them escape from the cruelty of the oppressor. Early one morning, as they were skirting the south end of the Sihanaka province, on coming down a steep track, they were surprised to hear voices near them, and their surprise grew to alarm when they discovered that within a few hundred yards from them, and separated only by a hillock and a clump of trees, was a company of soldiers searching for them. For safety's sake they separated to seek shelter. Some of them, by retreating, got behind the soldiers and hid in a cave. Rafaravavy found a house, whose owner promised, as far as possible, to help her. And the opportunity soon came, for while they stood speaking in the room a group of officers were seen approaching.

Hurriedly, Rafaravavy went into the bedroom, crept under the bed, and was covered with some old garments. There was a demand at the door to know if any of the Christians were in the house.

Prevarication would have been useless. The

officer was simply told that if he suspected such to be the case the door was open and he could search. Two soldiers were ordered to enter the house, and these happened to be the two cousins who were secret disciples of Christ. They made a search of the house, but without prying into places where, possibly, a Christian might have been concealed. As they did not bring forth any prisoner, the whole company turned away and continued the search. After a few days' rest the fugitives again moved on slowly and cautiously. Once again they found themselves almost face to face with their pursuers; but a friend was at hand.

Quickly descending into a rice-pit, the mouth of which the friendly heathen covered with thorn bushes, they lay concealed while the soldiers slowly went past, uttering their names, and expressing their disgust at the difficulty found in capturing them.

But soon their hopes for immediate escape were cut off. The fugitives, to avoid the soldiers, were obliged to retrace their steps. They were actually hunted back to the capital, and for some time, while hundreds of soldiers were scouring the country, seeking to seize and destroy them, they were hiding about the very palace gates and taking final leave of their friends.

Here a new prospect of help and escape opened to them. One of the European teachers, who had left the island for a time, filled with a desire to help the persecuted Christians, succeeded in

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getting a message to them, promising help to escape if they could only reach the coast. Thus encouraged, they set out once more on the long and perilous journey to Tamatave.

Could they reach it?

CHAPTER XIX

OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH

THE second effort to reach the coast was, perhaps, more perilous to the fugitives than the first attempt. Since they had so long eluded their pursuers, the queen's anger had increased. The soldiers were urged to more strenuous efforts to capture the Christians, and instructions were issued that those found by the troops were not to be brought to the capital, but executed just where caught. The execution, too, was to be of a barbarous character. The queen's instructions were to simply dig a hole, to bind the Christians hand and foot, place them in the hole in the ground, pour boiling water over them, and bury them. Probably the search would have been more successful than it was had there not been in the hearts of many of the soldiers a secret admiration of the Christians. Indeed, the very cruelty of the death penalty they were bidden to inflict on any they found made a good many of the soldiers secretly hope they would not find any. For there were qualities displayed by the Christians which compelled their adversaries to respect them; and even in the hearts of many heathen were some glimmerings of light, which made many of them

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hate the foul deeds to which their sovereign's rage was driving them.

In order to render their possibilities of escape more sure, the fugitives decided to separate into several groups, the aim of all being to keep one direction in their flight, and to make for one point—Tamatave.

They felt that, in the event of being surprised by the soldiers, two or three could be more speedily and effectively secreted than a larger number. This plan, while it made the probabilities of escape greater, also made it necessary for some of the fugitives to encounter greater dangers of another kind.

Yet they felt they would rather meet the attacks of the brute creation than to fall into the hands of their heathen brethren.

Some of them were compelled to make wider circuits, and so had to cross deep rivers and mountain torrents, where alligators abounded; others of them went so far round that they were prone to face perils of storm on the lake, and at times had to cross deep ravines and mountain gorges, by narrow and slender paths, where a slip of the foot must have meant instant death.

Added to the danger was the hardship of having to go for long periods without food, or to subsist on the meanest support the forest could afford. Their feet and legs were bruised and lacerated as they climbed over the rocks of the mountain passes, or forced their way through the thick

underbrush that served to conceal them from their pursuers; and they were weary from the constant dread of being seized by unfriendly hands, and marched back to the capital—and death.

At length, after several weeks of such exposure and privation, they drew near to Tamatave, and were filled with thankfulness that, so far, not one of them had been discovered, neither had any evil befallen them.

They found a place of concealment, where they hoped to be able to elude detection for some time, and succeeded in getting a message by a friendly hand to those who were preparing to assist their escape. Great was the joy as, one by one, the various groups came safely to the rendezvous, and rehearsed the gracious help and many deliverances, vouchsafed them by their Lord and Master, amid the perils of their journey.

Though they dared not lift their voices in songs of praise, for fear of being discovered, there was not one of them who did not, in the heart, sing unto the Lord. News soon reached them that their friends were hastening preparations to deliver them; but great watchfulness and care were urged upon them, for the undertaking was surrounded by many difficulties. The queen's hatred was relentless; her orders arbitrary. Their designs were suspected, and the quay at Tamatave seemed to almost swarm with soldiers whose commission was to find, and arrest, the fugitives.

During the days of waiting there came one mo-

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ment in which the hearts of the little band were filled with consternation. Rafaravavy had gone out from the place of concealment for the purpose of seeking food, and thought she had succeeded in evading the watchfulness of the soldiers and of every one else who could have any interest in knowing their whereabouts. She was returning through the forest tracks, and had just reached the foot of the steps leading to the cave in which their hiding place had been made, when there was a crackling in the bush, and on turning her head, she saw a man in the queen's uniform within a few yards.

Their place of concealment was discovered. Rafaravavy ran up quickly, with the intention of at least warning the others, but, calling her name, the man followed, and, close behind her, entered the cave.

It was clearly no use attempting to escape, and the Christians came forward to give themselves up to their pursuer.

But the next moment their dismay was turned to gladness unspeakable. They found themselves in the presence of an officer of the governor of Tamatave, but discovered that he was secretly a friend of the persecuted Christians; and, although endangering his own life thereby, had sought them out for the purpose of helping them in their hour of need. Yet another surprise was in store for them. The cousin of Radama, who had es-

caped the slaughter by which Ranavalona secured the throne, had become a Christian.

By his hand the officer was able, again and again, to send supplies for the necessities of the fugitives, and through him they were enabled to send messages to their friends and to complete preparations for their escape. He succeeded in bringing to them several suits of sailors' clothes. While in conversation with some of the soldiers he did his utmost to throw them off their guard as to the whereabouts of the fugitives, At length plans were perfected, and the evening on which they were to attempt their escape drew on. A ship, flying the British flag, lay peacefully at anchor in the harbor, but some distance away from shore. On board all seemed quiet and free from activity of any kind, although the captain's secret intention was to sail before next day.

As usual, the soldiers were scattered along the quay, but were keeping only a perfunctory look-out. There had been no sign of the fugitives discovered, and no evidence seen of any attempt to rescue any, and after a time the officers had grown careless and unsuspicious, so that their watch had been relaxed.

Night had just fallen on sea and land when, from the ship, a boat was lowered, and swiftly but quietly rowed to one end of the harbor. At the same time Rakotomanga appeared on the quay and, as he had often done before, engaged the

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soldiers, who were straggling around, in conversation.

How calmly, yet how earnestly, did he seek to rivet their whole attention that night, for he knew how much depended on his efforts. Meanwhile, the fugitives had cut their hair short, and, casting off their garments, had donned the sailor suits, and thus prepared, they awaited the dark cover of night.

Presently, while Rakotomanga and the soldiers were still engaged in conversation, their attention was arrested by what appeared to be a party of sailors strolling across the quay.

One of the soldiers raised the question as to whom they might be ; but so deep was the interest in the subject they were discussing that an officer hushed him, remarking that they were evidently some boat's crew, who had been spending the day on shore, going off to their vessel. It was thus, with beating hearts and alternating hopes and fears, our friends reached the shore, stepped down into the boat, and were immediately borne off to the ship anchored in the stream.

Suddenly, while the soldiers were still speaking, there came from over the harbor the sound of Malagasy female voices singing Christian songs of praise and deliverance.

The soldiers paused and listened ; they recognized some of the voices ; they caught the words of triumph and thanksgiving ; they saw the ship's signals lighted, while, mingling with the songs of

the Christians came the "Yo-ho's" of the sailors as they heaved anchor; and before the officers could recover from their surprise, the lights of the ship grew smaller and more distant as she set to sea, and they realized that the fugitives had escaped from the jaws of death.

The governor despatched messengers to the capital to make known the fact that the vigilance of the soldiers had been evaded and that Rafaravavy, with six other fugitives had escaped to a land where the warrants of Ranavalona were impotent.

It may here be stated that the arrival in England of six of the fugitives was the means of bringing home to the Christian Church the importance of the work that had been accomplished in Madagascar; and their presence at a great gathering in Exeter Hall, London, on June 4, 1839, awakened profound interest in the spiritual welfare of the Island.

These fugitives did not, however, spend the years, during which their fellow Christians were suffering for the sake of the Gospel, in the ease and security of life in England.

They wanted to be engaged in the service of Christ; and so in 1842 they returned to the Mauritius, where were large numbers of Malagasy slaves, and there, for many years, they found the opportunity for bringing the joy and love of Christ into the lives of their downtrodden brethren.

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It happened that while these events had been transpiring, Fantaka, who was still unsuspected of sympathy with the Christians, and was thus able to move about freely, became anxious to know the fate of Rafaravavy and her companions, and so had set out, accompanied by some friends and slaves, to learn something concerning them. After traveling several days she met the messengers from Tamatave, who told her of the escape from the country of those who had so long been hunted and persecuted. A great joy welled up in Fantaka's heart as she returned in haste to the city, bearing the news.

Great was the indignation and consternation of the queen when the tidings reached her; while Kelazapa and his fellow-priests became almost frantic with rage. Fiercer, and yet more imperative, were the orders given to the soldiery, so that the deliverance of the first band of fugitives was the signal for the outbreak of a more bitter spirit of hatred toward all the Christians remaining on the island. The command went forth, "No quarter to the Christians!" Scourging and chains, imprisonment, slavery and the tangena ordeal, were now the common lot of all suspected of being Christians who could be caught. Many escaped to the forests, and there, for years to come, lived in volcanic craters, caves and dens, subsisting on such roots or other kinds of food as they could obtain.

Encouraged by the escape of Rafaravavy and

her companions, others made efforts to reach the coast, hoping that some way of deliverance would open to them. But the queen and her officers had learned a lesson and it was scarcely possible. A second such attempt had a disastrous and bitter ending. A company of sixteen Christians were making their way to the coast and had for a long time successfully eluded the soldiers. But through an act of treachery they were surprised while in a place of concealment, and all of them fell into the hands of the captors. They were bound together, and set out to march back to Antananarivo for trial.

Life was dear to them, as to others, and it was not to be expected that any opportunity to save life would be allowed to slip. It so happened that, toward the close of a day's march, one of the prisoners discovered that, in consequence of emaciation resulting from lack of food, the bands upon her wrists were slack. Just at dusk the company were skirting the edge of a forest, and approaching the spot where they were to halt for the night. At a bend of the road, taking advantage of the negligence of the soldiers, she managed to squeeze her shrunken hand through the loop, and, quietly dropping out of the march, fled to the forest and succeeded in making good her escape. The other fifteen were brought to the city, and after trial were placed in prison to await their execution.

Whether by the connivance of a friendly guard,

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or as the consequence of carelessness in the watch, another of the condemned Christians succeeded in escaping from the prison and fled to the forests.

Ultimately, nine of the Christians were selected by the queen for execution, and the time and place were appointed. The old man, Paul, whose testimony had been so powerful, was one of them. Another was Joshua, who had rendered much service to the church as a teacher.

Worn out with their journeyings and their repeated fastings, some of the condemned Christians were unable even to walk to the place of execution. They were, therefore, slung on poles and borne by soldiers to the spot. Once again the heathen crowds gathered to witness the final testimony of the Christians to their faith in their Lord. And once again the hearts of the heathen were filled with admiration at the inward peace and the outward joy revealed by those appointed to death. As the crowd moved forward to the fatal spot—singularly named the “Village of God”—the voices of the condemned ones were heard praying for pardon for their enemies, and pointing their foes and persecutors to the “Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” Then on the “Village of God” they proved themselves faithful unto death, and by angel hands were borne upward to the home of God.

It is recorded, that at the moment of their execution, the hearts of the superstitious around were filled with great alarm.

It had been arranged that, as a signal for the executioner to strike the fatal blow with his spear, a cannon should be fired. This was done! But the charge of powder rent the cannon in pieces, and the man who discharged the gun was seriously injured. Many of the onlookers interpreted this event as a sign of Jehovah's anger, and a prophecy that boded ill to the cause of the idols.

CHAPTER XX

A QUEEN'S INFATUATION

IF the blood already shed, and the sufferings already inflicted, had not served to appease the queen's anger and the thirst for vengeance of the priests, neither had it succeeded in creating fear in the hearts of the Christians; nor even in checking the progress of Christianity in the land. Rather, the fiercer the persecution became, the more numerous and fearless grew the ranks of the Christians.

Two men, whose acquaintance we have already made, must never be forgotten. They were the two soldiers who displayed sympathy with the fugitives, and, by not searching under the bed, permitted Rafaravavy to escape. These men had become outright Christians, and had taken a stand against the idolatrous practices and teaching around them.

In other parts of the island the persecutions of the Christians, and the truths gleaned from occasional fugitives, had been creating an interest in this new religion; and news came that a great tribe—the Sakalava—were earnestly desiring that some would come and instruct them in the Gospel. These soldiers volunteered to go on the mission,

and were sent on their way by the church. After making known Christ to these people, and returning home, news of their action was brought to the queen. Filled with wrath that soldiers in her army should thus challenge her authority, and dare not only to profess, but to preach Christ, she had them arrested and tried. As bravely as they had served her in the past, so bravely did they now confess Christ. The sentence was death! And in order to make their punishment a more effective warning, they were condemned to die in their native village. Thither they were taken, and on a Sunday morning led forth into the market place, and in presence of a great crowd of sorrowing friends and relations, and of sympathetic heathen, they were executed—professing with their dying breath their joyous expectation of being that day with their Lord in Paradise.

Other events also served to show the queen that she had not succeeded in her purpose of exterminating the Christians. It soon became evident that even in the palace, the new doctrine was making rapid headway. Ramaka, fearless of the wrath of the queen, went on in the work of holding Bible readings right in the capital, and it became the more difficult for any to hinder him, because at least two members of the royal family, and others in positions of influence, supported his efforts.

Indeed, such was the influence of his work that under his teaching Prince Ramonja became a

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Christian, and made confession of his faith. Rakota-Radama, the queen's own and only son, also became favorably disposed toward the Christians; while a nephew of the prime minister constituted himself the friend and champion of some of the persecuted ones. It was natural that such events, happening in the palace precincts, should make the queen somewhat careful as to what steps she took. At the same time it seemed to exasperate the feelings of the priests, and to make them the more anxious to hold their ascendancy over the councils and acts of the queen.

During the season of comparative quiet and freedom from persecution, the Christians sought earnestly to strengthen their position. Their numbers were increasing, and calls were coming from many parts for teachers and for copies of the Scriptures. The people wanted to know what was the faith for which men and women were thus dying. At the same time most of their Scriptures and papers had been seized and burnt.

However, they busied themselves in writing out copies of the Gospel, and sending them abroad to enlighten those who were seeking knowledge. And these Scriptures were fondly cherished by those into whose hands they came. Many of them, in after days of darkness, were hidden in the thatch of houses, or buried in holes in the ground, or secured in forest caves; and after many years were once more brought out into the light. The torn leaves of some of them are to be seen to-day,

tied together with cords of bark and stained with the tears which fell from the eyes of the persecuted ones, as they sought to draw comfort from those pages in the solitary dens and caves in which they hid from their pursuers.

But the lull could not last long. Indeed, a few years of such steady effort on the part of the Christians, and all hope of saving idolatry would have been demolished. An occasion soon presented itself for the queen's resolve to be renewed. One morning the people of Antananarivo awoke to find that a placard had been affixed to the palace walls on which was the following passage from the Scriptures, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

That was more than Ranavalona or the priests could endure, and, although they had not any idea who had put up the warning, they ordered the arrest of a young Christian named Raharo, and he was condemned to drink the tangena.

Some of the church members made a strong effort to save him from the ordeal, but they were seized and executed, and their bodies cut up into small pieces of flesh and burnt. Raharo was compelled to drink the poison, and died from the effects. This was sufficient to satisfy the queen and her counsellors that the Christians had determined to defy her to do her worst, and she resolved once again to strike a blow.

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Another great kabary was called, and to the assembled multitudes the queen's proclamation was announced. One sentence in that proclamation revealed alike the bewilderment and the spiritual darkness of the queen: "I have killed some; I have made some slaves till death; I have put some in long and heavy fetters, and still you continue praying. How is it that you cannot give up that?"

The queen did not seem to realize that a more pertinent question would have been: "How is it that I have not succeeded in turning you from your course?" Unintentionally the phrase used correctly expressed the truth which formed the only answer the Christians could give, viz.: "We cannot give up that." As before, the proclamation called upon the Christians to accuse themselves, and, if anything, more terrible were the penalties to attach to any who should still prove obstinate in their refusal to renounce Christianity and return to the worship of the idols.

What now will the Christians do? The die is cast! the queen's speech has been read. Will the Christians dare provoke the anger of the government by confessing Christ? That proclamation of the queen's, which was meant to sound in their ears like a death warrant, seemed to come to them as a trumpet voice from the very gates of heaven:

“Ye that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose!”

This was the spirit displayed by these loyal ones. The enemy had grown bold and determined; jealousy had increased to rage, and rage to mad infatuation. And on the other hand, love had been purified, faith multiplied, and fears wholly vanquished. Firm as the hills that stood around their city were these persecuted, yet not forsaken, servants of Christ. Again they encouraged one another with prayer and testimony, and the Word of God; and thus, though they knew the penalty was death, with boldness and cheerfulness they confessed to the judges that they were followers of Christ. And even the judges and the queen were amazed to find the number of those who thus accused themselves, and braved her anger and power; amazed also at the inroads of the Christian faith in the palace, and the rank of some who now declared themselves on the Lord's side.

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE JUDGMENT HALL

THE scenes which were witnessed in the courtroom of the palace, when the Christians were brought to trial, were such as to fix themselves immortally on the minds of all who were present. Gaze for a moment upon the scene—a scene often enacted in other lands and in other ages; a scene recalling the days of the apostles and the early Christian Church, when the followers of the Nazarene were dragged before magistrates and rulers, were beaten and tortured, and then led out to die.

Rumors had gone abroad that the Christians arrested at this time formed a notable company. And, although the names could not be learned it was whispered that more than one noble family would be represented among those who should stand at the bar of judgment to answer for their lives. This fact alone created universal interest in this trial, and widespread anxiety in many heathen homes. So that, long before the hour for opening the court, the chamber was crowded with all classes of the community. The families of the nobles, dressed in their silk lambas, mixed with the poorer classes and even the slaves; distinctions were for the moment abolished—or rath-

er forgotten—in the all-absorbing anxiety to know just who the accused were, and the eagerness to hear the defence they would make.

Slowly, and with outward show of sternness and dignity, the prime minister and the judges took their seats on the bench, and immediately orders were given to have in the prisoners. While the orders were being executed the judges went aside for a few minutes to settle the course of procedure, and so they did not witness the excitement engendered by the entrance of the accused.

When the procession reached the door, under escort of a company of soldiers, the pent-up feelings of the onlookers found vent in exclamations of surprise and indignation; or in sighs of sympathy.

The expressions of anxiety on many faces inside the court-room turned to looks of consternation, as, in the line of accused Christians, one and another recognized some of their loved ones. Disregarding all semblance of order, or of respect for the legal procedure, many pushed their way to the front and began to weep, and to intercede with their friends to renounce their faith. If for no other reason, than for the sake of their loved ones, let them worship the idols and so save their families the disgrace and sorrow which seemed to threaten them. But bribes, entreaties, tears, were alike unavailing. These noble Christians remained fearless and undaunted—as faithful confessors as ever confronted persecutors.

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The court at length was ready to proceed with the business of the hour. In the centre sat the prime minister; on either side a judge; while the queen herself sat so near as to be able to speak in the ears of the judges. Beside her stood Kelazapa. Suddenly the prime minister was seen to tremble. His face blanched, and he clutched at the parchment that lay on the table before him; for, in casting his eye slowly along the line of Christians, he discovered his own son, Rainiharo, standing at his bar, charged with a capital offence. For a moment it seemed as if he would rise and leave the court-room. But after a few moments' conversation with the judges he seemed to regain control of his feelings; and with a stoicism worthy of the days of old, the order was given to call the roll of the accused and proceed to examine them. One by one the Christians responded to their names, and when called upon to renounce Christ, firmly refused to do so. More than once was the refusal to worship the idols coupled with such passages of Scripture as, "From Heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the sighing of the prisoner; to loose them that are appointed unto death," or "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; let me never be confounded;" or, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." At length, the name of Ranivo was called, and immediately the concourse in the hall was filled with emotion. Ranivo belonged to a noble family and was widely con-

nected. She was, besides, young and beautiful; and many a heathen heart beat rapidly under the emotions awakened by the sight of one so pure, lovely and youthful standing, as it were, under the shadow of the executioner.

Suddenly the queen was seen to lean forward and whisper something to the judges; and at once, making some excuse for her on account of her youthful folly, they were about to order her release. But she was instant with a bold confession of her faith in Jesus.

So strong and invincible was her spirit that the effort to release her was a fruitless one, and her trial went forward. But again the queen, eager to spare the beautiful noblewoman, leaned forward and whispered; and one of the judges, rising, declared her release since it was evident, from her conduct, her reason had become dethroned, so that she was not responsible for her actions.

Standing in the presence of the multitudes, Ranivo resumed her testimony; and so calm and Christ-possessed was her spirit that, when she at last declared, "though I should die with Christ yet will I not deny Him," it was evident the judge's statement was merely a subterfuge to spare her.

The command went forth to bind her, and she was held for sentence. If the queen's heart was filled with pity for Ranivo it was equally stirred with anger and resentment when, presently, the

name of Fantaka was called, and there stood forth the relative of Rafaravavy, who had so successfully evaded the soldiers and escaped to England. And now it fell to the lot of another to try to secure clemency for this accused one. That friend was found in Prince Ramonja, to whom Fantaka was betrothed. The Prince was actuated by a double motive—his own personal love for Fantaka, and his loyalty to the Christ whom he also had begun to serve. All fear forsook him as he sought to withstand the storm breaking over the head of his loved one, and indeed of all the Christians. Yet not till the sentences should be pronounced could he know with what measure of success his intercession would be rewarded. It was not to be expected that testimonies such as were given that day should fail of having some effect on the minds of the heathen. And already, when Rainitraho was called on to declare himself, there were many who looked on the Christians with a kindlier eye than had been their wont of late. Still these feelings were deepened, and something akin to real sympathy was created, by the fervor, the simplicity, the grandeur of his confession. "Where is your God?" asked a judge. "He is in the heavens; and hath done whatsoever He would among the children of men. According to the greatness of His power He is able to preserve them that are appointed unto death." "What is your opinion of the gods of this land?" was asked him. "Their idols are

silver and gold, the work of men's hands." "Why will you not worship the idols of your country?" was then demanded. "Because they can neither see, nor speak, nor hear; neither can they deliver any. *You* may trust in *them*; but *we* will trust in the *Lord* from this time forth for evermore." "But why will not you yield to the queen's command, bow to the idols, and save yourselves from the death that surely awaits you." To which, Rainitraho, recalling the words of the three brave Jews, replied: "We are not concerned to answer you in this matter. Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and if he will not, be it known unto you that we will not serve your gods. Does not our own proverb say, 'It is better to be held guilty by man than to be condemned by God'?" From the crowded court room came sounds and movements which seemed to the judges dangerously near to open approval of the answers of Rainitraho; and even Kelazapa was filled with alarm. Leaning forward he said to the judges: "Take my advice and close this examination. If not, before you have finished all the people will declare for the Christians." Thereupon the course of the examination was hastened; and one by one the Christians, on indicating their confession of loyalty to Christ, were handed over to the guards to await sentence.

It was near nightfall when the trial ended; and while the crowd of spectators betook them-

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selves homeward with strangely mingled feelings, the Christians returned, under escort of the jailors to spend a night of prayer and patient waiting for the morrow, and sentence, and—death? One night of suspense and the morning would bring their condemnation. That night, in many a lonely spot, little groups of Christians who were still free, gathered to pray for their friends—many of whom, they feared, were soon to pass through the gates of a cruel death to the martyr's crown. And here and there groups of Christians, even in the slavery to which they had been consigned, knelt and prayed for their brethren and sisters who were placed in such deadly peril. To all of these the watches of the night wore wearily away, while yet they would gladly have lengthened that night into years if so be their friends might have been saved.

It was a night of anxious planning and purpose on the part of the queen and her officers. It had not taken long to arrive at the decision as to what penalties should be inflicted. Some must die: others be sentenced to degradation or slavery. The most anxiously discussed question was how to make the infliction of the death penalty so fearful as to strike terror to the hearts of the heathen, and add to the reproach and humiliation of the Christians. The night was far spent ere the ingenuity of the queen and her advisors had devised methods which seemed to them sufficient to accomplish their purpose. But at last these plans

were formed, and a few hours of quiet succeeded the night of anger—or rather preceded the day of doom. So, under the dark mantle of the overhanging night, a short truce separated the Christians and their foes. The former were praying; the latter had despatched soldiers to prepare for the bloody scenes of the day to follow.

CHAPTER XXII

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

THE streaks of early dawn were just appearing across the hill-tops which towered to the eastern horizon, and the soft, low voice of Simeon, the devout, was breathing a prayer for special strength and much of the Saviour's presence to be vouchsafed to those so soon to suffer for His name—a prayer coupled with petitions for protection and grace to their brethren, who, though still at large, were in danger, and for mercy on their foes and persecutors—when a dull, sullen roar resounded over the city and plain; and the mouth of the cannon announced that the most notable day in the history of Madagascar had come.

With the grey dawn the city began to be astir; while inside the prison walls, those who expected that day to enter the joy and glory of their Lord were tenderly encouraging one another; and praise and prayer mingled with the sound of moving soldiers and the increasing hum and buzz of palace officials.

To the condemned Christians the terror of death seemed past, and their demeanor was more like that of men and women who were to be crowned with victors' diadems.

Early in the day the crowds began to gather; and all around the prison courts, and through the streets of the city, were to be seen large groups of eager and excited people. Some were hazard-ing opinions as to the penalties that would be inflicted; others were anxiously questioning the wisdom of the course pursued by the government; some were secretly sorrowing for the persecuted who had been the best friends many of them had possessed; while not a few openly expressed their sympathy with the Christians, their admiration of their spirit and bearing, and their opinion, that the religion that made them so noble must be a purer and grander religion than that which inspired the cruelties of their persecutors.

The sun had not risen high, when a messenger arrived and summoned the Christians to appear before the judges and receive the sentences to be pronounced against them. Hastily preparing to answer the call, the Christians appeared in the courtyard; and while they stood there, carefully guarded by the soldiers, the judges stood up in the porch of the judgment hall and pronounced the final resolve of the queen and her court in regard to them.

Upon eighteen of the Christians the death sentence was passed—the execution of the sentence to take place in a few hours. So that the expectation of many was to be realized. Their last morning on earth had dawned. Before night they would be with their Lord in Paradise. Yet

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was there neither weeping, nor sign of astonishment, nor semblance of fear. Rather, if anything, many of those reserved for milder punishment seemed almost to envy their friends the joy set before them, although it had to be reached by enduring the cross and despising the shame.

The remaining, more than two thousand Christians, were sentenced chiefly in groups. Hundreds of the gentle and refined, irrespective of sex or condition, were doomed to be publicly flogged. Many hundreds more were condemned to life-long labor in chains. Large numbers of those who had means were sentenced to pay heavy fines to the government; while those who had held positions of dignity and influence were severely degraded.

Amongst the latter were Prince Ramonja and Rainiharo. Their positions were so exalted, and their efforts in behalf of the Christians so publicly made, that it was determined to make a special example of them. Upon Ramonja, two of whose houses had already been destroyed by fire, was inflicted a fine that absorbed the greater part of his property; and, in addition, he was deprived of his military rank and compelled to perform the most menial work of a common soldier.

The prime minister having, by his hatred of the Christian faith, become deadened to parental feelings, urged the infliction of the death penalty upon Rainiharo, his son. But the shrewder wit of the queen led her to decide otherwise, and

Rainiharo was banished from home and tribe, to become a wanderer and exile amongst the heathen tribes around.

Amongst those sentenced to slavery was Fantaka. She had looked forward to death, not expecting that any pleadings of her friends could possibly save her from the fierce wrath of the queen. Her escape from death was one of those singular instances where fear, or policy, moderates the hatred of the persecutor, though the reason or the method may never be explained.

To Prince Ramonja the announcement of Fantaka's sentence brought a great relief. Long, and earnestly, had he pled in her behalf; and even the heavy penalty that had fallen upon himself, largely as the result of his intercession, seemed almost a joyous circumstance, since it had saved the life of one who was so dear to him.

The eighteen Christians who were condemned to death were taken back to their chains and firmly secured. Rude placards were posted at the palace gates and in prominent parts of the city, announcing that, in the course of the day, eighteen of the accused Christians would be executed.

The news spread with lightning-speed—"The Christians are to die." Soon the sky became overcast, and rain began to fall. Indeed, all through that eventful and solemn day showers of rain fell at intervals. But the powers of darkness could not tarry for fine weather and brilliant sunshine. Presently the roar of cannon once more called the

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heathen to the scene of execution and gave the signal to prepare the Christians for the final stages of their earthly journey.

Gathered in the court-yard, and surrounded by a half-maddened, half-sympathetic throng, the soldiers quickly made their preparations. The Christians were first stripped of their clothing, and ragged garments placed upon them. Then their hands and feet were bound with cords, and they were slung upon long poles. Soldiers came around and filled their mouths with dirty rags, so as to prevent their speaking or singing. And then, the poles being lifted upon the shoulders of bearing soldiers, the gates of the palace yard were thrown open and the mournful procession set forth. But rags and frowns, and heathen commands, could not prevent the joy in the hearts of those Christians finding expression. Neither could the ragged robes, nor the degrading carriage, detract from the nobility of their bearing as they were carried forward to the place of death.

In the rear of the condemned Christians came the palanquins, in which were borne the judges and officers of state, carrying with them the queen's proclamation and the warrants of execution. The journey to the great plain must have created anxious questionings in the minds of those who were responsible for the day's events. It had been anticipated that the tens of thousands of heathen would pronounce, with loud acclaim, their approval of the rigor with which the Chris-

tian faith was being persecuted ; and it was in the hope of receiving the public applause that the judges had assumed their places at the close of the long procession. But their minds must have been undeceived before they had gone very far. For, instead of signs of eager approval of their course, the heathen multitude allowed the procession of doomed Christians to pass in almost respectful silence—broken perhaps here and there with some expression of contempt ; broken more often by some deep drawn sigh of sympathy ; and marked by the look of pitying admiration.

Arrived at length upon the plain, the Christians were placed upon the ground, while the queen's proclamation was read. That proclamation declared that an express revelation had been made by the gods, and, especially, by the spirit of Radama, to Ranavalona as to the punishment to be inflicted on the Christians. Eighteen had been selected for the severest penalty of death, and the other thousands to fines, banishment or slavery. Of the eighteen who were to die, four were nobles ; and therefore it was becoming that there should be a difference made in the form of the death inflicted on them, and that of the common people.

The will of the gods was, that these four nobles should be burnt at the stake, and the remaining fourteen should be hurled from the hill-top and be broken on the rocks beneath the cliffs. Still no shout of approval burst from the lips of the

heathen, who seemed to be more than equally divided between their pity and admiration for the Christians and their loyalty to a religion that perpetrated such cruelties.

Two of these nobles were husband and wife; and the wife was on the verge of motherhood.

But heathenism knew no compassion, even for such an one.

On a spot at the north end of the hill on which Anatananarivo was built, called Faravohitra, stakes had been driven into the ground and faggots gathered for the "Smithfield" of Madagascar. Forming once more in procession, with the four nobles—three men and one woman—borne as before on poles, the judges moved upward toward this place. But ere they reached the stake, the procession of wretched condemned criminals, as the heathen regarded the Christians, had become the triumphal march of those who had been made "Kings and priests unto God." Nothing could break their spirit, or damp their joy, or cloud their hope, or hush their voices. And when at length the voices of those four martyrs, going forward to the stake, were heard singing grandly: "Grant us, Saviour, royal blessings, now that to our home we go," the heathen crowds were so struck with wonder and sympathy that many could scarce refrain from weeping and approving; and the hearts of the judges must have trembled for fear lest, even now, those heathen should rescue the Christians from their grasp.



THEIR SPIRITS FLED TO THE "LAND OF LIGHT AND REST."

But no! The procession moved onward till Faravohitra was reached, and there a few minutes sufficed to bind the Christians to the stakes and place the faggots around them. Once and again the torch was applied. Once and again the showers of rain extinguished the flames! But at length the fire was kindled; the flames and smoke encircled the martyrs; and their spirits fled to the "Land of Light and Rest." The last words that reached their murderers, from out those consuming flames, were: "Lord, Jesus, receive our spirits. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" At this moment the heathen, thronging around, were thrown into a state of alarm, and many fled at the sight of what they witnessed.

As the dying prayer broke from the lips of the martyrs, the brilliant sunshine burst through the clouds and formed a rainbow, one end of which seemed to light upon the heads of the sufferers; as if the Lord Himself had prepared them a pathway of glory to the skies; or, was it the bow of hope, that promised the coming of a bright and happy day for that priest-ridden country—a day when, from the graves of the martyrs would arise ten thousand witnesses for God; a day when another woman should ascend the throne now defiled by a bloodthirsty queen, and, at her coronation, acknowledge the Christian's Lord as her Saviour?

Returning to the plain, a second procession was formed, and the remaining fourteen Christians

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were borne upward to the cliffs of Ampamari-nana. From the top there was a sheer descent of some hundreds of feet, and then, at the base of the cliffs lay a mass of sharp and jagged rocks.

A rope was tied securely round the waist of one of the Christians and his body swung over the precipice; and while a soldier stood ready with a sharp knife to cut the rope the last chance was given to recant—to renounce Christ and return to idolatry.

A ringing “No” was the answer made; the knife fell; the rope was severed; and—after several seconds, a dull sickening thud told the crowds above that, down below was a mangled body, but that in a higher realm another spirit had been received into the joy of his Lord.

Again and again the act was repeated, until thirteen of the Christians had thus gone down into the Valley of Death, having with them God’s rod and staff, and therefore fearing no evil. The last to be led forward was young Ranivo, and she responded to the call calmly and fearlessly. She had evidently been so reserved in the hope that, when she had witnessed the awful doom of her fellow Christians, her courage would fail and she would yield. But on the contrary her courage seemed to have grown firmer; and with indignation she refused to bow to the idols, and joyously prepared to follow her partners in affliction. But this was not to be. From the beginning the queen’s resolve was to spare Ranivo, and so with

the cry, "Take her away! she is an idiot and does not know what she says," the executioner stayed her sentence; and Ranivo lived to glorify her Lord.

Later in the day soldiers went to the foot of the cliff and carried the mangled bodies of the martyrs up to Faravohitra, where they were consumed to ashes, and the ashes left to be scattered over the land by the winds of heaven. The multitudes returned homeward with feelings akin to those of another multitude—that which beheld a scene of murder eighteen centuries before, on another hill whereon a city was built—that scene when the Saviour of the Martyrs laid down His life a ransom for the world—"the multitudes returned smiting on their breasts."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAST KABARY

ISRAEL was in the wilderness; but the wheels of Egypt's chariots were beginning to drag heavily in the bed of the sea. The Christians were still the objects of hatred and persecution; but it became more and more apparent that their foes were losing ground.

The night of that fatal day brought revelations which astonished and alarmed the queen and her bitterest advisers. The prime minister and judges could not be blind to the influence exerted upon the populace by the scenes of bloodshed they had witnessed, the patient, fearless, forgiving spirit revealed by every one of those noble martyrs, and the contrast furnished in the deliberation, malice and mercilessness, with which the awful tragedies of the day were carried through. It was neither with a very hopeful spirit, nor to confront a very cheerful outlook, that the council gathered that night to try to estimate the relative positions of Christianity and idolatry. True, some thousands of Christians had been severely punished. But how did it come to pass that, after these years of persistent and unscrupulous effort to exterminate the new faith,

there were now ten times as many condemned in one day for adherence to its teaching, as there were believers in the whole island at the beginning of the persecution? Nor was this all; for it was well known that while thousands who still retained their Christian faith were in bondage, there were probably as many more all around on whom the persecutors had not yet been able to lay their hands. Indeed, it began to be known that those who had been scattered abroad by the persecution had gone about preaching the Gospel, and that in distant parts of the island, the ranks of the Christians were being swelled. Reports were brought into the council which showed that the effects of the queen's display of hatred had been just contrary to what had been intended. So convinced did the council become of this fact that policy, and the hope of neutralizing those effects, led to an act that had in it the semblance of mercy.

The next day a proclamation was issued, remitting half the fines that had been inflicted on the Christians; and for the next two years, and more, the policy of making a show of clemency prevailed. Yet the heathen party never lost hope of ultimate success. The army was on their side; the queen's orders had never been rescinded; and every two weeks, when the army was publicly paraded, the proclamation commanding the soldiers to seize and destroy the Christians was read.

During this period two powerful influences

were, more and more, manifesting themselves—one on either side in this great conflict. A new leader arose in the ranks of the idolators, in the person of Ramboasalama. He placed himself at the head of the heathen party and incessantly urged the demand for the resumption of active measures against the Christians. The rapid increase in the number of Christians, and the growth of influences working in their favor, made it clear to him that the next eight or ten years must definitely settle this conflict. On the other hand the Christians found an increasingly powerful protector in the person of the prince royal. He was not a Christian—and he never became one. Indeed he led a life such as was common to the wealthy Malagasy. But his sympathies toward the persecuted Christians were rapidly developed, and, moved by a humane spirit, he became the champion of their cause. The commander-in-chief of the army was also beginning to look with kindlier eyes upon the Christians, whose conduct was such as to make plain that they were, after all, the best subjects the queen possessed. These two influences presently came into direct opposition.

Some three years after the great day of martyrdom the sentences, imposed at earlier dates on some of the Christians, expired. Ramboasalama proposed that they should be re-sentenced. When this proposal was made, the commander-in-chief,

who had a larger spirit of fairness than many in the council, arose and demanded to know on what grounds the Christians, who had already served one term of punishment for their conduct, should be condemned a second time for one offence—adding dramatically, “ Even the thunder-bolt does not strike twice.”

His resistance to the course proposed by the heathen, coupled with the influence of the prince royal, was successful in saving the Christians from this plot to fasten their chains upon them for a second period, and great was their rejoicing, and the enlargement of hope to them, on this account. For a season the dark clouds were lifted and the sun shone forth again. Some of the teachers from England were allowed to visit them for a short time; new copies of the Scriptures came into their hands; and once again were their hearts refreshed and their faith strengthened.

But the hour of trial was not wholly past. The priests were ever on the alert to turn every event against the Christians, hoping to involve them, and even yet to secure their destruction; and after several years of watchfulness the longed-for season came. There had been a growing spirit of dissatisfaction with the queen's rule, and the impediments in the way of the country's progress which her reactionary policy created. This led at length to the formation of a plot for her deposition. The plot originated with a Frenchman—a Roman

Catholic—named Lambert. He proposed to place the prince royal upon the throne, and, for this purpose, sought to draw the prince into a conspiracy. To the honor of the young man, be it said, he steadfastly resisted the proposal. But the plot was discovered and reported to the queen; who immediately expelled the leaders from the country.

Now came the opportunity for which the heathen had been waiting. It was not a very difficult matter to persuade the queen that the Christians were the real originators of this plot, and that their crime was one of high treason. Although the prince royal affirmed repeatedly that the Christians were no party to the scheme, the queen's anger was once more kindled, and another Kabary was convened. The fires of persecution were once again lighted, and fifteen days were given the Christians to accuse themselves. But few did so. Then the queen resolved to scour the country with her soldiers, and cleanse the land of Christians. So great was the terror awakened in the minds of the heathen by the queen's fury that, in many cases, where villages were known to contain one or two Christians the whole population fled at the approach of the soldiers, choosing rather to suffer hunger and peril in the forests than to be charged before the queen with tolerating the new faith. Wherever the Christians were captured, they were at once destroyed—speared, stoned, burned alive. In one instance twenty-

one Christians were secured, and these were at once stoned to death and their dead bodies beheaded.

Some were hurled headlong from the Ampamarinana cliffs; the dead bodies of others were cut into small pieces and scattered over the earth; and many were compelled to drink the tangena cup and died from the effects. Many more were banished to distant points, so heavily laden with iron chains, and so cruelly treated by their captors, that after having suffered great torture, they died in their exile.

The storm of persecution was sharp, but it was also short: and while many suffered, the great majority of the Christians succeeded in evading the queen's forces and so escaped from her power. How rich would have been their consolation, and how strong would it have made their hope, could they have known that this was the last storm of persecution to which they would be subjected, and that when the calm came, it was because the storm had spent itself; and the tree planted by the right hand of the Lord had not been uprooted.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN THE CHAMBER OF DEATH

It was not to be wondered at that the queen who was becoming advanced in years, should begin to feel discouraged, and to think that perhaps the work of stamping out the Christian faith could be better discharged by younger and stronger hands. Whether this was her feeling or not, certainly it so happened that, while there was no change in the spirit entertained by Ranavalona toward the Christians, she forebore to engage in further measures against them.

It was possible that she was feeling less confident of the ultimate success of her plans; and for this there was some reason. She had lost by death one of her most cruel ministers and strongest supporters in her policy; and he had been succeeded in office by his son, who was in sympathy with the more liberal policy of the prince royal; and in a short time it became apparent that Ranavalona's opportunities for further injuring the new religion would be few.

Tidings began to be spread all over the land which filled the hearts of the heathen leaders with despondency, but inspired the Christians with hope. Ranavalona was sick, and her sickness

seemed unto death. It may easily be imagined that earnest efforts were put forth for her recovery, and the help of the priests and diviners was constantly sought for this purpose.

They were the more powerfully urged to these efforts by the knowledge of two facts. They were fully acquainted with the feelings entertained by the prince royal, and many of the nobles, toward the Christians. Their attitude, not merely of tolerance but of active sympathy, had been again and again demonstrated. Thus it was clear that, if the Christians were not destroyed by Ranavalona, there was little hope of her work of blood being carried on by the government and army after her death.

They knew also the spirit of the people, and the marked change that was taking place in the attitude of the idolators toward the new religion. It had become increasingly clear that the old barriers were giving way. Kindly feelings were beginning to be openly displayed by the heathen toward the Christians. Sons and daughters who had been exiled, had in many cases been invited and welcomed home; liberty being given them to worship Jehovah according to conscience. Many of the heathen also gathered to listen to the preaching of the Gospel; and altogether a new and deepening interest was being awakened in its truths. The faith of the heathen in their idols had received many a rude shock; and their admiration had been called forth by the brave,

patient and forgiving spirit manifested by the Christians. Thus it became clear that if, in this struggle, Christianity should outlive its persecutor, the hold of idolatry and the power of the priests were doomed.

But the arm of the oppressor was already broken; for a stronger hand than her's was arresting her power. Every breath she breathed, laden with angry threats against the Christians, was but lessening her power to harm them and bringing nearer the moment of their emancipation. Every diviner was pressed into the service of the gods; every known, or supposed charm was used for the purpose of driving away the evil spirits which were afflicting the queen. Carefully compounded medicines, according to the skill of the native doctors, were administered, and the most constant efforts bestowed on her, in the vain hope to bring back the ebbing tide of strength. The altars were daily laden with sacrifices, while an unfailing succession of priests presented unceasing petitions to the great gods of the country, to spare the queen—if not for her own sake, then for the sake of the land and in return for the signal services she had rendered the idols, in seeking to stem the tide of reformation and to maintain the honor and stability of the ancestral worship; but once again the idols were sleeping, or feasting, or on a far journey; so that the cries of the suppliants reached them not.

When the host of Pharaoh pursued the people

of Israel, we are told that, "it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and discomfited them." In Madagascar the morning watch had come after a long, dark night; and the Lord had looked forth upon the host that oppressed His people, and discomfited them.

Nor were the moments unconnected with signs and rumors. There was no pillar of fire and cloud; but the imagination of the heathen, or, maybe, the actual deeds of some of the fugitive Christians, gave rise to strange stories.

To the bedside of the dying queen were brought startling statements to the effect that on the hill-tops around the city mysterious fires were being kindled; and from the ground seemed to rise the strains of music.

Different interpretations were put upon these strange sights; and many looked upon them as the signs of Jehovah, portending evil to the queen; while others, who seemed to have caught the prophetic instinct, suggested that these fires were the beacons of liberty, and these strains the first low tones of the coming song of jubilee.

The feet of the oppressor were already slipping in the river of death. A little longer, and the dark flood would overwhelm her; and once again would there be heard the glad song of the ransomed: "Sing ye unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!"

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Slowly, but surely, the queen's strength failed, her sickness being probably increased by the impotent rage she still displayed against the Christians; yet no power could arrest the arm of the destroyer. The sixteenth of July, eighteen hundred and sixty-one, brought the end. The hands which for twenty-six years had been stretched forth to destroy the gospel were clasped in the silence of death; and, as the news spread over the land, it seemed to the Christians as if the bars of their prison were burst asunder, and the Lord Himself was preparing to bid His people go free. Amid the wildest heathen ceremonies, and accompanied to the grave by multitudes of her idolatrous subjects, the dead queen was buried; and then the populace turned to welcome the prince royal, and acknowledge him as king.

The relief felt by the Christians in the death of Ranavalona was shared by the whole land, for the country was weary of the strife and bloodshed she had caused. The nobles were convinced of the uselessness of the struggle; and many of them were already in secret sympathy with the new faith. The character and testimony of the Christians had awakened interest and sympathy all through the land, and the heathen welcomed the dawn of brighter and more peaceful days.

CHAPTER XXV

OUT OF BONDAGE

THOUGH Radama II. came to the throne, welcomed by an enthusiastic people, it was not without desire and effort on the part of the priests to supplant him. Immediately on the queen's death a heathen council was called, and, during the next few days, repeated consultations were held, having for their object the possible seizing of the throne for one who would carry on the work of the late ruler.

Every possible plan was discussed; details outlined; and the priests were congratulating themselves that they could successfully carry out their plot, by proclaiming the anger of the gods against Radama, because of his sympathy toward the Christians; and then proceed to arrest him, and, by bribery, secure his banishment into exile; but their plottings were doomed to failure. The people had suffered for the crimes committed at the instigation of the priests and Ranavalona, at the time of her succession, and did not propose to be again subjected to such inflictions. The idol-party had therefore to accept the inevitable and Radama peacefully succeeded to the throne, amidst much popular rejoicing. The first day of

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Radama's reign revealed something of the reality of his friendliness toward the Christians. It also manifested the influence which the teachings of the Gospel had exerted over his mind. He lived a heathen, and a heathen he died; yet, in the matters of religious freedom and equality, he had advanced beyond many who have had greater light and education, and a civilization to which his was not comparable.

The new king's first proclamation was at once issued to the city and country; and it seemed to bring to the suffering people of God almost a millennial blessing. The key-note of the proclamation was "Liberty"—the freedom of every man to worship whomsoever he would, and in accordance with the dictates of conscience, choice, or custom. The ban was removed from the worship of Jehovah, and the fear of man was lifted from the hearts of those who were loyal to His claims. The penalties inflicted on the Christians by Ranavalona were revoked, and those who had been made slaves for the love of Christ were delivered from their bondage.

Many had already been released from their captivity by the merciful hand of death; and surely to them had been given the martyr's crown. But, while many had thus died in their chains, others in those dark days, and in the land whither the persecutors had driven them, had found opportunities to gather souls into the Kingdom of God. Away on the plantations they had

taught their friends and fellow-slaves the truths which cheered and supported them in the times of sore trouble. Thus, in the land of their exile, heathen communities had been leavened with the gospel of the love of God.

Amongst those who died in slavery, one deserves special mention—Rabodo. When a price had been set upon her husband's head, and he had succeeded in escaping, she was seized, and again and again flogged in order to compel her to divulge the names of her companions. As she still refused, she was condemned to exile, and, heavily chained, was marched with a company of Christians away to the west—torn from children and home. Her children were also sold into bondage; and for ten years she lingered on, faithfully serving her taskmaster, but hearing nothing of her loved ones; until at length, worn out with toil, heart-broken with grieving for her husband and children, yet still trusting in her Saviour, Rabodo sank to sleep and was gathered into the land of eternal day.

It is impossible for us to realize what that day, and that proclamation, meant to the poor, despised and hunted Christians. Ponder it! All over the land the tidings fly—Freedom! Freedom!! Freedom!!!

The cry is thundered in the forests, and its echoes are heard in the mountain caves; and weak, emaciated, starving, trembling Christians creep forth to seek some friendly hand, and to ask, “are

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the tidings really true?" Over the plantations the news spreads quickly; and they who slept last night in the shadows of slavery, awoke this morning in the light of liberty.

Off with the fetters! Break the chains! Cast away the tools of slavery! The Christians are free. There are thousands of them scattered all over the land, but especially in the north-west portion of the island; and as the tidings of deliverance reach them, the almost universal instinct is, to return to the capital and seek their friends.

From district to district the watchword is passed—Home! As the word is pronounced, new hopes and sacred memories are awakened; and, as with one heart, the Christians prepare for the return. Groups are formed and begin to retrace their way across the mountain tracks and through forest thicknesses—not captives now, but free men! They went forth with weeping; they are returning with joy.

Yet as they return, they leave behind them many a hallowed spot, where they have raised a little cross to mark the resting place of some of their friends who sank beneath the severity of bondage and their cruel treatment, and who are lying in slumber until the last trump shall sound and the dead in Christ shall rise. As these groups pass along they are constantly joined by solitary companions, who, as fugitives, have been hiding in pits and forest recesses, but who have heard the tidings of liberty and have come to unite with

the throng who, with singing and gladness are moving homeward.

What emotions thrill their breasts, as these separate companies march forward. Memory brings back the faces and forms of the loved ones of twenty years ago. Memory recalls the trials since endured. Mothers think of their children, snatched from their arms and sent away in other directions—shall they meet again? Husbands think of wives, and wives of husbands torn from their embrace—shall they see one another again? Children, who have forgotten their parents' faces, are wondering if they shall find, and be restored to, their loved ones?

Presently, as they go forward, signs begin to reveal that many groups of Christians are gradually converging on their loved city. One company, as they are skirting the edge of the forest with singing and gladness, hear the strains of Christian song wafted down the mountain side. They pause, and presently catch glimpses of a company dressed in white; and farther on, where the paths unite, they meet. So group joins group, and the glad throng grows; while at the sound of those songs the weak and lonely creep from their caves, and wait by the roadside till their friends come along; and they fall into line. What mutual recognitions! What recounting of experiences! What testimonies to the goodness of God!

From all sides, but especially from the north-

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west, in ever-increasing numbers, the redeemed ones of the Lord are returning to their Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. Day after day they press onward, till at length the companies begin to assemble on the hills that overlook Antananarivo.

They come as conquerors; and conquerors they are! They have conquered by love; they have overcome by faith! A few hours and they will see their city. Onward through the day-blaze; on into the early evening hours; and they have gained the mountain pass from which they will descend to-morrow and enter through the gate into the city. To-night, the city is all commotion. Many groups of the returning exiles have already arrived, and all is excitement and eager expectation. Hungry eyes and longing hearts scan the faces of every group, as long-separated friends and relatives seek for some mark of their loved ones—some token of recognition.

In not a few homes there is joy unbounded; for the long lost have been found. The excitement has increased; for just before night-fall, those in the city have seen a great company gathered on the mountain, encamping for the night. Which of their hearts, which of their homes, will be made glad to-morrow? There is little sleep for the city to-night, and there is no time to think of the chagrin of the priest party: for preparations are going forward to receive the ransomed ones.

Before day-break a long stream of eager, ex-

pectant, rejoicing people issue from their homes; and, as the sun rises, they see that already their friends on the hills are moving forward. Listen! Songs break forth on all sides; and hills and vales echo and re-echo with the strains of gladness:

“ They come! they come! Thine exiled bands.
Where'er they rest or roam,
Have heard Thy voice, in distant lands,
And hasten to their home.”

Down from the mountain comes the plaintive chant: “ By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” And from the plains below goes back the inspiring response: “ I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.” Again, there floats downward the chant: “ Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men; for He hath broken the gates of brass, and smitten the bars of iron asunder.” And so response succeeds response, as the wondering and rejoicing companies approach each other. Suddenly the descending singers are lost sight of as they wind around the base of a hillock, surmounted by a heavy forest growth. A moment more, and the returning captives march forth into full view. And now, on the very spot where, many years before, they had stood, while their best friends were slain, and from which they had been banished into bondage, loving hands are

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stretched forth to welcome them, and friendly arms embrace them.

As by sudden instinct, there is a pause; and a spell of awful silence falls upon the throng. They are standing on holy ground—ground sanctified by the blood of their martyred companions, and God's saints. A great sound of weeping goes up—tears of mourning and tears of joy mingle; for a day has come for which they had scarce dared to hope. But again their songs break forth: "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand and His holy arm hath wrought salvation."

Even while they sing, their famished hearts and eager eyes are strained in the longing to discover some loved face—some dear friend; and again and again, a wild shout of joy, rising high above the songs of gladness, tells that some have found their lost ones.

Hours pass by, while still the voices of prayer and praise mingle on that holy place. But now, the united companies, and re-united loved ones, turn their faces in the direction of the city. What hath God wrought!

There is only one way in which the pent-up feelings can find relief and the air is rent with the shout of Christian praise. As they enter through the city gates, the loudest song of joy ascends, as from thousands of hearts, and by thousands of voices, the old psalm of Israel is chanted: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we

were like unto them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Thus the exiles came back from the land of bondage.

PART IV

A MORNING WITH
SHADOWS

CHAPTER

XXVI. CHANGES.

XXVII. A CORONATION.

XXVIII. EXPANSION.

XXIX. WAR AND CONQUEST.

XXX. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS AGAIN.

XXXI. LOOKING TOWARD THE NOONDAY.

CHAPTER XXVI

CHANGES

WHILE such a complete change had been wrought in the condition of the Christians, and their hearts were filled to overflowing with the gladness of deliverance, very different emotions were filling the minds of the leaders of the idol party. To say that a sense of consternation came upon them would be to use a mild term. They were amazed at the numerical strength attained by the Christians, and at the discovery that twenty-six years of fierce and relentless persecution, instead of wiping out the new religion, had served rather to multiply the number of its professors. They were also alarmed at their own loss of influence over the heathen party. Remonstrances to Radama were powerless to modify his proclamation of liberty. Wherever they turned, it seemed as if the very heathen were mocking them, because, at the end of the long struggle Ranavalona was dead, the Christians had conquered, and the new religion had, by royal decree, been placed on an equality with the old idolatry.

Not the least important factor in the changed

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attitude of the heathen populace toward the Christians was the spirit manifested by the latter toward their former foes and persecutors. No talk of revenge; no remonstrances; no display of ill-feeling; but just a glad, peaceful, forgiving spirit toward all. Some of them even sought out those who had been their bitterest enemies in the past, for the purpose of assuring them of forgiveness. When the heathen stood around the worshiping congregations and heard, repeatedly, earnest prayers offered for the mercy and pardon and blessing of their Jehovah upon those who had injured them, the contrast between the spirit of the Christians and that of the priests was so marked, that large numbers desired to know the source of that beautiful spirit; and so became inquirers after the truths of the gospel!

A period of successive changes now followed. While many homes were filled with unspeakable joy, others were overshadowed by dark clouds, as the weeks passed by, and no news reached them of their loved ones. One of the saddest hearts amongst the whole Christian band was Ramonja's. Eagerly had he watched for the return of Fantaka. He had gone out to meet each group that approached the city; but she came not, neither could he gain any news of her. At length, having discovered the locality to which she had been banished, he determined to go forth and search for her.

Accompanied by two faithful servants, he set

forth on his journey of almost two hundred miles ; and after some two weeks of weary traveling, reached the village. He sought out Fantaka's former master, only to find that she had been sick at the time the king's proclamation arrived ; and her master, angry at the loss of his slaves, had put her out on the village street, to do the best she could for herself. Beyond that, he knew nothing of her. But a few hours brought the evidence that, amongst the heathen, there were hearts that had been softened to compassion toward the persecuted ones. An old heathen woman had found Fantaka at the road side, exhausted, and almost at the point of death. She had gently raised her, and, with assistance, taken her to her own hut ; and there had fed and nursed the suffering woman. Unspeakably joyous was the re-union between Ramonja and Fantaka ; and their gratitude to the poor woman who had so cared for an outcast disciple of Christ was overwhelming. Surely that Divine Master, whose servant she had nourished has given her the reward of a righteous man.

Fantaka was too weak to travel ; and so, sending back the servants with the tidings of her welfare, and with instructions to return to meet them, Ramonja decided to remain until his betrothed was sufficiently restored to take the journey. In this way it happened that several months had elapsed, since the dawn of freedom, when Fantaka at last reached her old home.

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In the meantime remarkable events had been transpiring in Antananarivo and elsewhere. Tidings of the changed condition of the Christians speedily reached England; and in a few weeks the missionaries were once more nearing the shores of Madagascar. Rafaravavy, and her fellow-exiles, returned also; and within a short time the Christians were rejoiced at welcoming back their loved teachers, and their old friends who had succeeded in escaping from the island till the persecution was past. Right royal was the welcome they received; encouraging the reports they heard; and inspiring the enthusiasm revealed for the prosecution of the work of the gospel all through the land.

Ever memorable was the first Sabbath after their arrival at the capital. In less than a year the conditions were so utterly changed that, instead of the Christians meeting in small groups for secret worship, at the peril of their lives, they assembled openly and fearlessly in their temporary church, and nearly eight hundred belonging to the city alone, sat down to the Lord's Supper.

At the outbreak of persecution, some twenty-six years before, there were about two hundred Christians in the island. Now, nearly eight hundred united in one service in Antananarivo alone; and it is supposed there were nearly seven thousand in the country. Such was the harvest of a quarter of a century of persecution.

Rafaravavy's first concern was as to the fate of Fantaka; and it was with feelings of devout thankfulness she learned of the steadfastness in suffering she had displayed. Anxiously she awaited her return from the land of bondage. And when at length that moment came, tender, loving, and joyous was the meeting between them.

The task of erecting churches and schools, of teaching and preaching, and of thoroughly re-organizing the work, now proceeded vigorously; and on every hand were evidences that a few years of such labor would alter the character of the entire community around the capital. The priests still lived in hope of a reversal of the new policy toward the Christians; and it was not long before events transpired which at first seemed to justify their hopes.

Radama II was fast becoming imbecile, as the result of his wild and licentious life; dissatisfaction with his government was spreading all abroad; and there were signs of approaching revolution, from the results of which the heathen party expected to gain much.

The conspiracy developed, resulting first in the putting to death of several ministers of state, and ultimately, in the strangling of Radama.

The natural successor to the throne was Rabodo, wife of the late king; and on the fact that she was a devoted idolater, the priests built their expectations for the future. But again they were doomed to disappointment.

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The leaven of Christianity had been working, even amongst the heathen party; and the same desire for peace and stable government, which had led to the destruction of the late king, led the conspirators to take such steps as would make it impossible for his successor to adopt a policy which would defeat their wishes. Before consenting to Rabodo's being proclaimed queen, the leaders required of her the concession of a number of popular demands, and of constitutional liberties and rights. These involved full religious equality, and the rights of the people and nobles, through representatives, to a voice in framing the laws; and especially in those matters which involved interests of life and death. Both these guarantees conceded, Rabodo ascended the throne as queen Rasoherima.

The priest party were once more received with favor at the palace, but the queen remained true to the constitutional guarantees given; and she manifested a friendly disposition toward the Christians, who enjoyed equal liberties with the heathen in matters of religion. Many of the Christians who, in the days of persecution had been despoiled of their property, had considerable portions of their lands restored to them. Rafaravavy enjoyed the special favor of the queen, and was largely reinstated in her former position.

During the short reign of Rasoherima the progress of the people was marked, the enlightening influence of the new faith making itself felt in all

departments of their life. The prime minister took an important public part in at least two ceremonies connected with the Christian churches; and the people manifested a strong desire for education, and for knowledge of the Word of God.

It was when such progress gave promise of a bright and happy future for the kingdom that Rasoherima died; and again the element of doubt entered into the struggle for supremacy. The moment was felt to be a vital one alike to the Christian and heathen parties. A new sovereign, who would hinder the work of the missionaries, might set back the progress already made, and inaugurate a new era of terror for the Christians. A new sovereign, who should favor the Christians, might strike the final blow at idolatry, and shatter forever the hope of the heathen supremacy.

Which should it be?

CHAPTER XXVII

A CORONATION

THE fears and misgivings of both parties were destined to continue for some time. There was no direct descendant of the late king or queen, to assume the throne; so that it passed to another branch of the family.

A conspiracy had been formed having for its object the putting of Rasala, a relative of Radama II., upon the throne; but it failed. Ultimately it was decided that the true successor to royal power was Ramoma, a cousin of the late queen; and, accordingly on April 2nd, 1868, she was proclaimed queen. The heathen party were at first chagrined by this result, for Ramoma, though she had not herself outlined any definite policy favorable to Christianity, was a sister to Prince Ramonja, who was one of the leaders of the new religion who had suffered much for the name of Christ; and she was known to be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of the Scriptures.

At the same time they encouraged their hearts so soon as it became known that Ramoma intended to assume the royal title of her aunt, and to be known as Ranavalona II. They hoped that this might be an indication that she would revive

the policy that queen had pursued, and so complete the work of exterminating Christianity.

The Christians, on the other hand, found their hopes swayed by just the reverse methods of reasoning. To them the title of the new queen seemed an ill-omen; while yet, knowing that the queen was a sister of Ramonja, that she had befriended Rafaravavy, and done many acts of kindness to other members of the churches, and that she had for years studied carefully the tenets of their faith, they could scarcely believe it possible she would, as queen, deny all the hopes they had entertained of her before her accession to the royal power.

Ranavalona II. wisely decided to postpone her coronation until she had had time to thoroughly weigh several important matters of state, and to frame her policy regarding them; so that her proclamation at that period might indicate clearly the mode of government she intended to pursue. Perhaps the question that required most careful consideration was the relation to be sustained by the throne toward the Christians.

There was no denying the immense and rapid progress they had made, the large numbers who had become disciples, nor the fact that nearly all the most loyal, intelligent and progressive citizens, including especially the young people of the capital, were ranking themselves under the leadership of the missionaries.

For some time the queen and prime minister

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seriously discussed this subject with the council. It did not take long to come to the resolution that any attempt to destroy the influence of Christianity, or to root it out, was foredoomed to failure. Eventually, the question resolved itself into one of either remaining neutral and permitting the respective religions to work for the mastery, or accepting the Christian faith and assuming an active part in extending its power. The resolve of the queen, though not yet announced, was to publicly and royally recognize the Christian faith, place herself under the instruction of the teachers, and so take a foremost part in advancing the interests of the new religion. When the queen's policy had been clearly defined, arrangements were made for her coronation to take place on Sept. 3rd, 1868.

In response to the royal proclamation, it is said four hundred thousand people assembled to witness, what proved to be, the most remarkable public event in the history of Madagascar.

It was with difficulty that either the Christians or heathen party could suppress the excitement felt, or allay the alternating hopes and fears which filled them. The thoughts of many went back to the first kabary of Ranavalona I., and all it had been productive of. What would be the effects to follow the first assembly, and the first declaration of Ranavalona II.? The air was full of rumors. But gradually the confidence of the Christians increased as they noticed the arrange-

ments made for the coronation. And when, as the hour drew near, it was seen that the priests were not in evidence, the hope became assurance, that the policy of the government was to be liberal in matters of religion.

As the queen advanced toward the canopy that over-arched her throne, the festoons were drawn aside, and the scene presented sent a thrill of mingled joy, wonder and fear through the whole multitude. In bold letters there shone forth from the canopy these sentences: "Glory to God"—"Peace on earth"—"Good will to men"—"God is with us".

When the people had somewhat recovered from their first astonishment, a mighty cheer arose from the great assembly; and then the Christians, no longer able to restrain their feelings, broke forth into a song of grateful thanksgiving to God.

Before the throne had been placed two tables. On one lay the crown which was presently placed on the queen's head. On the other lay a copy of the Malagasy Bible, which she took to her heart, and for her guide. Repeatedly, as the prime minister read the queen's speech, the Christians were gladdened to hear such quotations from the Scriptures as showed the queen's familiarity with the sacred writings. The speech was printed and circulated amongst the people. One sentence is particularly worthy of unfailing record:—"This is my word to you, ye under heaven, in regard to the praying; it is not enforced; it is not re-

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strained; for God made you." Thus the inauguration of Ranavalona's reign declared the policy of the government to be for the promotion of Christianity in the land; and, while continuing liberty to the idolaters in the matter of accepting the new faith, to encourage them to renounce their idols and turn to the living God.

The national idols had been ignored, and the name of Jehovah exalted in their stead. The effect was mighty. The churches were thronged with worshipers; enquirers multiplied; within a year the queen and prime minister were both baptized and received into the fellowship of the Church; and those who followed the example of royalty began to manifest, at least, an outward interest in this new religion.

Prince Ramonja was appointed to an important office, and many government positions were filled by Christians; so that, all through the central province of Imerina a new cry began to be heard—"God bless the queen."

But the last struggle in connection with this era of persecution, was yet to come. The heathen priests determined to rally their forces once more, and to make a final effort to arrest the progress of Christianity and to assert the supremacy of the idols. The next annual festival of the gods was the season chosen for the attempt. A few days before the occasion, a deputation of priests, led by Kelazapa, sought an audience with the queen. Their request being granted they proceeded to

point out the dishonor which, for the past two years, had been done to the idols, and the disfavor shown to the priests of the national religion; also to foretell the calamities which they were sure must ultimately come upon the land if the course were persisted in; and to demand that the privilege of exemption from punishment and the powers of life and death, of which the idols and priests had been despoiled, be restored to them.

The effect of their request upon the queen was very different to that which they had anticipated. She had almost forgotten the existence of the idols, and had failed altogether to realize that, while she was a Christian queen, the idols still continued in her realms, and she was nominally, and legally, their patron and protector. Dismissing the priests for a time, she summoned a meeting of the Council, at which she explained the situation as it had become apparent to her. How incongruous her position was became at once plain—and in a very short time, a decision was arrived at. Soldiers were immediately despatched to Kelazapa to demand that the idols be given up to the queen. He, divining what her intention might be, hesitated to comply with the demand. But the officers were not to be put off. “Do not the gods belong to the queen?” they demanded; to which the only possible reply was, “Assuredly!” “Then the queen wants her property, and if the idols be not given up, we will search for them.” “Then”, said Kelazapa, “the idols will

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be safe; for they will become invisible, and you will not be able to find them." Again he asked what the queen intended to do with the idols? and on being told she would burn them, he informed the officers that the attempt would be useless as the idols would not burn. "Well, we will take our chances in these things; only, deliver up the idols as the queen demands," replied the officers. At length the idols, both great and small, were brought from their place of hiding; and with deep emotion, and dejection almost pitiful to behold, the priests gave them into the hands of the soldiers.

Then, while the soldiers proceeded to kindle a fire in order to prove the combustibility of the idols, the priests used many charms to save their gods. But when the people realized how utterly helpless their gods were, and how unable to protect themselves, they ceased, very largely, to be concerned for their fate. Through the villages of Imerina the queen's example spread; and soon, from almost every village of the province, the smoke of the burning idols ascended. Not only the public gods, but the family idols also, with charms and other articles of the ancestral worship, were brought together, and publicly destroyed; and in a very short time, so far as the Hovas were concerned, the idols were utterly abolished. Kelazapa was heartbroken—crushed with the weight of the disgrace that had overta-

ken the idols, and the overthrow of the ancient Malagasy idolatry.

Soon after this, Rainiharo was promoted to an official position. Ramaka, too, was given an important office. Rafaravavy, who was advanced in years, settled in her own quiet home; and one of her neighbors and closest friends was Ranivo—who had been falsely accused, in earlier years, of betraying her friend, and was thus led to the Christian worship and life. A great deliverance had come to the people, and the sign of the cross had assumed a new meaning. On every hand the tidings of the Gospel were spreading, and churches being multiplied, while large numbers of the heathen turned unto the Lord. The Cross was victorious! Instead of being any longer the sign of suffering and persecution and death, it became the symbol of salvation, the inspiration of joy, the quickener of hope, the standard of triumph; and from the lips of many thousands, who once gloried in their shame and idolatry, a new song arose:

“ In the Cross of Christ I glory!
Towering o’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

EXPANSION

It remains for us, in these four closing chapters, to rapidly trace the spread of the Christian faith and the growth of mission work, since the close of the long period of persecution under Ranavalona, and the destruction of the idols under Ranavalona II. In so doing, we pass largely from the realm of, what some would call, "the romance of missions"; and yet it is difficult to understand why men should consider the romance to have worn away when the era of suffering for the truth, and the excitement accompanying the long struggle for supremacy, between Christianity and idolatry, came to an end. However, if we pass from the days of romance, we at the same time enter upon a more accurately historical period, which might, perhaps, be fittingly described as a miracle of missions. The destruction of idols throughout the province of Imerina, and the action of the queen and prime minister in openly avowing themselves Christians—while full liberty and protection were guaranteed to those who did not desire to renounce idolatry—led to a very widespread, even if in large measure superficial, interest in Christianity.

The heathen were not indifferent to the example of their royalty; and very soon church-going and the worship of Jehovah became fashionable. Such facts, probably, often caused the new condition of affairs to be painted in too rosy colors, and, in a few years' time, led many to the dim impression that the whole island had been Christianized.

At the same time, let it not be thought that the work was merely superficial. The Malagasy had learnt too dearly the reality of the Christian faith, and the vital effects of a change of heart, to permit of their being mere formalists. Making all allowance for the changed condition, there was an awakening of interest, and an eagerness to learn the truth, which produced a miraculous change in the life of the people of Imerina.

The first missionaries to re-enter the province were soon besieged with requests for teachers—many of these requests coming from distant places, where, without any teachers, the people were beginning to assemble for worship, led only by those who happened to have received a little instruction elsewhere. Immediately plans were framed by the London Missionary Society, whose agents had been used of God to accomplish all the results so far attained, to largely reinforce the missionaries, and to broaden the foundations of the work, with a view to meeting all the claims which the tide of progress made upon them.

One of the first arrivals, the Rev. W. E. Cous-

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ins, who reached Antananarivo in August, 1862, in describing the eagerness of the people to learn and to attend meetings, says: "It seemed as if they could not spend too many hours in the house of God." The new experience of singing, praying and hearing the gospel, without fear of man, thrilled them with joy; and numbers of the people would spend as many as ten hours of Sunday in church. In a few months a large supply of testaments, portions of Scripture, and other books arrived; and so great was the demand for them, that in three days nearly one thousand Testaments and five hundred portions were sold—while, of tracts and other books, thousands were quickly purchased by the people.

Bible classes were widely established and proved one of the wisest methods of missionary labor. New missionaries and teachers arrived; schools were opened all around, and congregations gathered. By the year 1870 there were, in connection with this one society, 621 congregations, with more than 230,000 adherents. It was natural that a new mission field, such as Madagascar was, should arouse the interest of other societies; and that, in view of the widespread sympathy with the persecuted church, all the Christians of England should be stirred with a desire to take a part in sending the gospel through the re-opened doors. Consequently, the next few years witnessed the commencement of work by several societies, much of that work being

undertaken, and performed, in the spirit of Christian love and co-operation with the society which began work in the island; but in some instances, unfortunately, marred by the attempt to establish some particular form of church government.

In 1864, the Church Missionary Society and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (both Episcopalian), began work. The former society had, for two years, been contemplating this work, which had been urged upon them by their supporters; but, moved by a wise and Christian spirit, they did not desire to introduce anything like denominational rivalry.

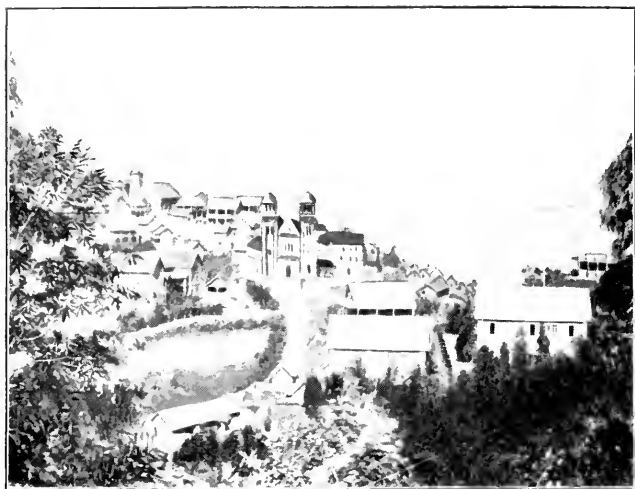
The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was not quite so liberally inclined. However, at a conference of representatives of these societies and the London Missionary Society, held in 1863, at which were present the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishops of London, Oxford and Capetown, it was agreed that the province of Imerina should be left to the care of the London Missionary Society, while the societies representing the two sections of the Church of England should confine their labors to the east coast. These societies, in 1864, established missions on the east coast, and all promised well for the evangelization of Madagascar upon lines which should be free from sectarian differences.

In a few years the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel determined to abolish the agree-

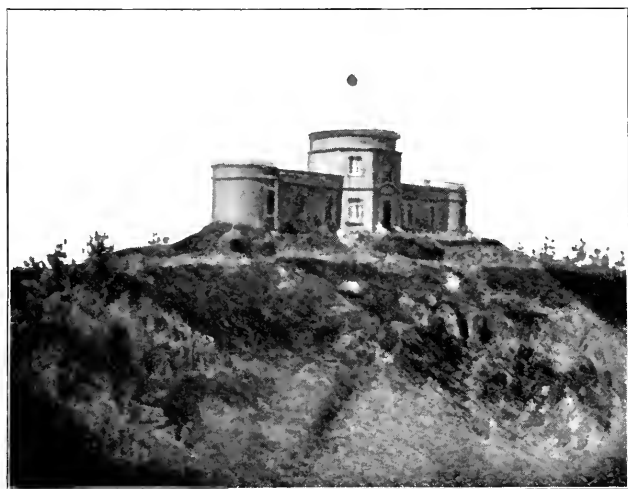
ment of 1863; to enter the territory of the London Missionary Society, and to establish itself at Antananarivo. The reason for so doing is given in an official record of the society thus: "The prayer book was in use on the coast, but it had not reached the capital; and when the coast people went on business to the capital, they found no church services and so were taunted by the ruling people. So it became necessary that the church should extend its mission to the capital." This declaration does not seem quite charitable toward the work of the London Missionary Society, whose agents had been instrumental in laying the foundation of the church of Christ in Madagascar; and is scarcely consistent with another statement in the same official record, where one of its workers is spoken of as finding, at Mahanoro, "a clear field, with no rival teachers, whereas in almost every part of Madagascar, there are too many tokens of a divided Christianity."

For it was the action of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that first introduced those divisions, which its missionaries subsequently found cause to lament.

The Church Missionary Society nobly declined to be a party to this violation of Christian agreement; and, in 1874, altogether withdrew from the island, thus leaving the work of the ritualistic portion of the Episcopal Church to be continued by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. While for a time the action of this society created



FRENCH RESIDENCY, FIANARANTSOA, BETSILEO.



OBSERVATORY, IMERINA.



some heart-burnings, and was productive of some evil to the native Christian communities, the unpleasantness gradually began to subside; and a considerable measure of harmony has for many years prevailed between its agents and those of other societies.

Following the example of the London Missionary Society, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel took steps, in 1876, for the establishment of a college for the training of a native ministry. This was built at Ambatoharanana, twelve miles from the capital, and during its course of service more than fifty students have received training within its walls. The work of this society has developed largely in and around the capital, and in various parts of the country. The Cathedral of St. Lawrence was dedicated on August 10th, 1890. The statistical report for 1899 reveals the results, so far as they can be tabulated in figures, viz., 8 English and 16 native missionaries (ordained); over 100 native catechists; 3 English lady teachers and 14 native school teachers; 14,000 on the roll of church members, and nearly 3,000 communicants.

In 1866, agents of the Norwegian Missionary Society began work in Madagascar. And, although at first some friction arose because they too established themselves at the capital, this presently passed away. A portion of the Betsileo province was placed entirely under their care; kindly relations with other societies were created;

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and here their missionaries have labored with great success. At the end of 1894, there were 44 Norwegian, and 60 native ordained missionaries connected with the society. They had then, under their care, 60,000 adherents, of whom 28,000 were communicants; and in their schools were found 30,000 children.

In 1867, the Friends' Foreign Mission Association, on appeal being made to them to assist in providing for the educational necessities of Madagascar, began work. While this association at first devoted its energies mainly to the work of education, its labors have gradually been developed along other lines as well—establishing congregations and taking an active part in medical work. Throughout the whole period of over thirty years the most harmonious relations have existed between the representatives of this society and those of the others—especially the London and Norwegian Societies.

In much of the hospital and medical training work the doctors of the former two societies have worked in closest co-operation. From the report for 1898, the following statistics of results are gleaned: 178 congregations, with 154 preachers; 2639 church members; 12473 adherents; nearly 18,000 children in schools; and some 9,000 cases of sickness cared for.

So far back as 1648, an attempt was made to establish Roman Catholic Missions in the island. But in a few years the priests, by their violent

and haughty spirit, incurred the hatred of the natives. One priest was murdered and the mission was relinquished. Immediately upon the re-opening of the island to missionary work, in 1861, Roman Catholic priests re-entered the field. At once they denounced the Protestants, notwithstanding it had been the Protestants who had endured the twenty-five years of bitter persecution for the sake of Christ; and without any scruples began the attempt to secure political control. In this effort they failed, and every Christian heart will thank God that it was so.

We shall yet see that Madagascar was to suffer severely at the hands of the Jesuits; but, for a few years, the land was spared that trial. Still their mission work met with considerable success. They built a fine cathedral at Antananarivo, and established several industrial schools, and four dispensaries. At the close of 1895, they could boast of 113 agents, about 100,000 adherents, nearly 600 native teachers, and 15,000 children in their schools.

The multiplication of agencies, and the rapid progress of the work, very soon led to the development of methods for reaching the people and making more effective the efforts of the missionaries. One scheme that has had great influence through the intervening years, and has served as a stronghold to Christianity in the central province of Imerina, was the proposal, gradually carried into effect, to build four memorial churches

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close to the capital. At the request of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society the government set apart, and afterwards transferred to the society, four sites on the spots where the martyrs had suffered. On these sites solid stone churches, capable of seating from 800 to 1,000 people, were built at a cost of some \$90,000—the money being almost all raised by special contributions in England; and now, four spots which are for ever linked with the history of Christianity in Madagascar are marked by splendid buildings devoted to the worship of God, viz.—the spot where the Christians were imprisoned before being taken to death; that on which Rasalama, the first martyr, died; the cliff from which large numbers were hurled to the rocks below; and Faravohitra, where the four nobles were burned at the stake.

The printing press early came into service, and has been largely used by all the societies laboring in the island. During the four years, 1872 to 1876, more than 500,000 copies of hymn books, school books, leaflets and magazines were issued by the Friends' Foreign Mission Association Press; and still they are pouring from the press at the rate of some 45,000 per year. In connection with the press work of the London Missionary Society, during the ten years, 1870 to 1880, 1,500,000 copies of various publications were sent forth. The catalogue of school books, commentaries, books on church history, Bible Dic-

tionary, hymn books, Pilgrim's Progress, magazines, papers, pamphlets, etc., issued by this society, fills nine closely printed pages; and the press has all along been one of the mighty levers to uplift and save Madagascar.

We have already indicated that a vast educational work has been carried on by all the societies laboring among the Malagasy. Not only has the work of elementary education been so thoroughly cared for that there were in 1895 some 120,000 children in Protestant schools; but normal schools, a palace school, and high schools for boys and girls have also been established; and to crown the educational edifice, colleges for the training of native teachers and ministers, and schools for training doctors and nurses, have been created, and have accomplished magnificent results.

From one of these colleges alone, that of the London Missionary Society, some four hundred young men have gone forth to labor for the instruction and salvation of their people. Medical students who successfully complete their course of study receive the degree of Member of the Madagascar Medical Association. The medical work has been most helpful, and in large numbers of cases it has been the means of breaking down prejudice, and opening the way for the entrance of the gospel message, where it seemed impossible to secure it by any other means. In and around the capital are hospitals and dispensaries.

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One of these hospitals cost about \$25,000, and in one recent year cared for 904 in-patients and 6,373 out-patients. In other parts of the island dispensaries have been established, and native medical men and nurses provided; and in recent years, many of the missionaries, before entering on their fields of labor, have taken a short term of instruction in first aid to the sick at some British hospital. There are now three leper settlements in different parts of the island, in which consecrated workers are doing all that skill and Christian sympathy can do to alleviate the intense sufferings of these most miserable and helpless of all afflicted ones.

One very important work should be mentioned as connected with this period—the revision of the translation of the Malagasy Bible. Realizing the need for giving to the people an accurate and perfect version of the Scriptures in their own tongue, a revision committee, consisting of eight Europeans, representing five denominations, and three natives, was appointed on the financial responsibility of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and began its work in December, 1873. Their labors occupied nearly fourteen years, being completed on April 30th, 1887. Then a public thanksgiving service was held, at which the prime minister represented the queen, in order that the Christians might celebrate with joy the placing of a well-nigh perfect version of the Word of God in the hands of the 300,000 Protestant Christians of



ANDRIAN'AVORAVELONA, A NATIVE PASTOR.



DR. RAVELINA AND FAMILY, A NATIVE DOCTOR.



2,000 congregations, and of 120,000 school children in some 2,000 schools.

What results have accompanied all this multiplication of methods and agencies? Already many of the results have been indicated. One or two further statements must suffice.

The churches gathered by the London Missionary Society adopted the Congregational form of government. In 1868, the Madagascar Congregational Union was formed—styled the six-monthly meeting. Twice a year representatives of all the churches gathered for prayer and fellowship, and for conference in regard to the extension of their work. As the years passed, sometimes as many as 1,200 Christian men would assemble thus, to discuss live questions bearing upon the progress of the church of Christ in their country; and, growing out of this, came a native missionary society, formed in 1875.

Such was the spirit of the people that, in addition to what the churches of Imerina did for their own home work, they raised, in the ten years 1880-90, more than \$15,000 for aggressive work in the heathen provinces, and sent forth twenty-three young men to open up fields hitherto untouched. Gradually the work extended and other tribes began to receive the gospel. The Betsileo province was entered in 1870; the Antsihanaka in 1875; the Iboina in 1877; important work was done on the east coast, around Tamatave, in 1861, and 1874-81, and again from 1885-

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94; while on the south coast work was begun in 1887. Recent statistics of all the societies, except the London Missionary Society, have already been given—showing the tabulated results of the work to 1894. In order to complete this view of what has been accomplished it should be stated that, at the end of 1894, this society, which first carried the gospel to Madagascar, had in the field 38 missionaries, with 1,328 congregations under their care; 280,000 adherents, and 63,000 communicants. It had also 1,061 native pastors, and 5,879 local preachers; while 74,000 children were being taught in its nearly 1,000 day schools.

Here, probably, the brightest period in the history of Madagascar, and the most prosperous in the establishment of Christianity in the island, had been reached; and surely the picture is one which should fill the heart of every child of God with great joy and gratitude. Alas! that there should be any need to chronicle any less joyous and hopeful record. Yet faith must wait and weep, and pray and labor, until once again the shadows shall have wholly departed, and over a re-delivered church and a fully redeemed people, the sun of righteousness shall arise and flood the land with the noon-tide glory of Christ's kingdom.

CHAPTER XXIX

WAR AND CONQUEST

ALREADY, in the early eighties, signs had appeared on the horizon indicating that the long period of joy and liberty, and spiritual prosperity, was not to continue unbroken. But the strange aspect of the subject is, that the peril threatening the life of the Christian Church in Madagascar should spring up, not from within the land—as from an uprising of the people, an upheaval of the government, or the accession of a hostile ruler—but from an outside power, a great European nation; and one whose self-estimate has claimed for it a foremost place in the civilization of the nineteenth century. During the period we have just been considering, changes did take place in the sovereignty of the island; yet peacefully, happily, and without any breach in the religious equality enjoyed by all sections of the people.

In 1883 France forced war upon Madagascar, and almost immediately after the outbreak Ranaivalona II. died. The entire Hova people were plunged into deepest grief; for the justness and mildness of her reign, compared with anything they had previously known, and her own stead-

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fast Christian character, had greatly endeared her to her subjects. She was buried at Ambohimanga, the ancient capital of Imerina, some twelve miles from Antananarivo. After a religious service in the chapel roval, the funeral cortège set out; and it is stated that for the entire distance, the miles of road leading to the grave were lined with mourners, who chanted funeral dirges.

On Nov. 22nd, 1883, a niece of the late queen ascended the throne, being 22 years of age that day; and assumed the title of Ranavalona III. Like her predecessor, Ranavalona III. was a Christian woman, deeply interested in every project which would tend to the elevation of her subjects and anxious for the spread of Christianity amongst them. Her spirit was shown at the opening of a new girl's school a few years ago. The queen was present with the prime minister; and just before the meeting closed, rose, and in a few words pressed upon the children the importance of becoming, above all other things, earnest followers of Jesus Christ.

Her reign of thirteen years was a troublous one—made so by the war with France which, in 1895, culminated in the conquest of the island; and, in 1896, in the banishment of the queen. These wars and conquest have been the cause of the shadows which have passed over the island, and the work of the Christian Church therein; and it is necessary we should briefly follow the course of events.

Whatever earlier claims, if any, France may have had to any part of Madagascar, certainly ceased after the Peninsula War ; for in connection with that war, England seized the Mauritius and all its Madagascar rights ; and, after the battle of Waterloo, while by treaty restoring Bourbon to France, retained by treaty and conquest all else. In 1817, England renounced her claims on Madagascar and officially recognized Radama I., as king.

France still held the opinion that since no other power claimed the island, she had some rights ; and on several occasions sought to establish them. At length, to settle all questions, in 1868, Queen Rasoherima paid to the French government \$240,000, as an indemnity for all past claims and treaties ; and a new treaty was formed in which France recognized her as queen of Madagascar. This, according to every principle of justice and honor, was a clear renunciation by France of every claim she may have thought she had.

It soon transpired, however, that the French people were not satisfied. They provoked further quarrels ; and the Malagasy paid a further indemnity to secure their independence. Still, it seemed as if nothing but the conquest of the island and its incorporation as a colony, would satisfy the desires of France. Accordingly in 1883, the government made demands of such a character that the Malagasy could not grant them. On

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their refusal to concede them, war was declared. The French seized the towns of Mojanga on the North-West, and Tamatave on the East.

The war continued for three years, but the Hova troops were not dislodged from their camp a few miles above Tamatave. In 1886 the Hovas agreed to a treaty which, while it reserved to them the control of all the domestic affairs of the island, gave the French certain privileges in foreign affairs, and placed all the Malagasy residing outside the island under French protection. Some clauses inserted in the treaty by the French were of an ambiguous character, and were promptly and persistently repudiated by the Malagasy government; but in correspondence these were explained away by French officials, so that, though never quite easy concerning them, the Queen's government was led to believe that they had misinterpreted these clauses and that they were innocuous.

During this period, the action of the French commander, Admiral Pierre, almost involved France in war with England. One of the missionaries at Tamatave, Mr. G. A. Shaw, was seized and confined as a prisoner on board a French warship. He was cut off from all communication with his wife and friends; held in close confinement, shamefully ill-treated; and, it was at one time feared, would be executed; while no crime had been proved against him. Public indignation was aroused in England, and feeling

ran very high. The government was compelled to interfere to secure Mr. Shaw's release. When he reached England, a triumphant reception was given him, and the story of his sufferings at the hands of the French admiral aroused such widespread resentment, that the government called upon France to apologize and make amends for the action of their commander. Probably it was only the yielding of the French government that averted a fierce and bloody war.

In 1893 France returned to the attack on the independence of Madagascar, in the determination to enforce, not merely a protectorate, but absolute control of the country. On Dec. 12th, 1893, Tamatave was seized, and plans were gradually matured for marching to the capital, conquering the country, and abolishing the sovereignty of the queen and her government.

For a long time it seemed doubtful if the French would be able to accomplish their desire without a loss of life which would have rendered a victory too costly. However, with an estimated loss of 6,000 men, they at length succeeded in their purpose. Antananarivo was taken on Sept. 30th, 1895, the French flag was raised on the palace, and the Kingdom of Madagascar had ceased to exist.

The spirit of the French conquest was soon to be revealed. In 1890, a diplomatic controversy arose between England and France, as to the claims the latter country was putting forward.

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On Aug. 5th, 1890, the British government concluded a treaty with France, in which, many think unwisely, Lord Salisbury recognized the French protectorate; while the French government consented to the following clause: "In Madagascar the missionaries of both countries shall enjoy complete protection. Religious toleration and liberty for all forms of worship shall be guaranteed."

Immediately after the conquest of the island this clause was repudiated; the door was thrown wide open for the intrigue and intolerance of the Jesuits; and, in 1896, the queen was banished because she was a Protestant and refused to become a Roman Catholic. When the question was raised in the French Senate, and the Colonial Minister declared that religious liberty was guaranteed by the French flag, he was met by roars of laughter from the Senators. Such was the course of the French nation in the conquest and subjugation of Madagascar; such was the passing from her high position of a Christian queen, who had ruled her people in the fear of God, banished by a powerful nation,—which could not justify its acts of conquest on any moral grounds—not for crime, intrigue or rebellion, but for loyalty to conscience and God.

We have yet to learn of the terrible consequences which followed,—of the letting loose of the passions of heathenism; the persecution by Jesuits; and the destruction of life and property

in the attempt to destroy all that had been accomplished for God and the people in the previous thirty years.

It is worthy of note, that, during these times of war and peril, the missionaries remained at their posts. They chose to suffer if needs be with their people, or, at any rate, to render comfort and guidance during the dark days which covered them; and determined, so far as possible, to protect them from outrage and wrong, while striving to restrain them from any acts of revenge. On the morning of the day on which Antananarivo was bombarded by the French, the missionaries were gathered at the hospital; and there the doctors and nurses attended to their duties, while shells were flying around and bursting only a little way off. They did not remain at their posts for want of inducements to forsake them, for many of their friends chided them sorely, and would, if possible, have compelled them to leave. Neither did they stay as a matter of bravado. They felt the Malagasy needed their presence and counsel in their time of danger; that the time had come to prove their sympathy, devotion and courage; and that God himself was directing them to stand at the post of duty; and therefore they stayed.

It was impossible that such marked political changes could take place without decided consequences following, favorable, or unfavorable, to the work of the Christian churches in the island.

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Since one of the earliest acts of the French government was to ignore the religious liberty clause in its treaty with England, it was not to be expected that the political results of the conquest would be favorable to the work of Protestant missions; and the event justified the fear. From the very first, the government of France, through its agents, seized the church, school and residence buildings of the Protestant societies, where needed, for the quartering of troops or other government purposes; and this without arranging for any compensation. It was so at Tamatave and elsewhere. At Antananarivo two hundred soldiers were quartered in one of the churches of the London Missionary Society.

The Malagasy government had always been superstitiously unwilling to give an absolute transfer of land to any foreigner; and even when such titles were given, in the utmost good faith, insisted on inserting a clause which reserved a nominal right to the sovereign. This was the case in a great many of the titles to the mission properties, although the clause of reservation always stated that the sovereign's rights were agreed to, on condition that the buildings should ever be used for the worship of the church connected with the particular society.

The French Government treacherously availed itself of this clause in many of the titles, to claim that the mission properties were really government possessions; and while ignoring the condi-

tion attached, viz., that they were held for the worship of the particular churches, confiscated some of the largest and most valuable mission properties; either using them for official purposes or handing them over to the Jesuits. It thus came to pass that the work of a great many missionaries was seriously retarded—in some cases altogether stopped; while official countenance was given to the claims of the Jesuits and their attempts to become possessed of the properties of Protestant societies. It should however be here stated, that after three years of negotiations, between the London Missionary Society [aided to some extent by the British government] and the French government, some measure of reparation has been granted. It has just been announced that the government has given all missionary societies the right to purchase the freehold of all their properties. Numbers of the buildings have been restored; and in 1899, the French government agreed to pay, in three yearly instalments, the sum of \$30,000 for the hospital building at Antananarivo, and \$6,000 for the furniture, drugs and supplies which were in the building, when, in 1896, it was seized; also to pay interest for the years 1896-99, at 3 per cent.

Another immediate result, which has interfered with the labors of the missionaries, was the secularization of educational work. This was decreed in the expectation of hindering the instruction of children in religious knowledge and scrip-

ture truth. The hands of the Jesuits can be clearly traced in this change, and in a still more emphatic decree, which insisted on the French language being taught in every school. It was supposed by the Jesuits, that this would force immense numbers of children into their schools, believing that few Protestants would be found who could teach French. But they had underestimated the educational status, the energy and determination, of the protestant missionaries. These immediately set themselves to meet the government requirements. The law was fully respected; and although so much time is required to be given to French, that other subjects have to be somewhat neglected, they have maintained their position as the principal educational force in the land. In several examinations the children in the Protestant schools have secured the highest positions. They have surpassed, in their knowledge of French, even the children taught by French Jesuits in their schools; so that, not only has this attempt to embarrass the work of the Protestant societies failed, but the success which has attended the efforts to loyally carry out the requirements of the government has been one of the factors in leading that government to ultimately remove some of the restrictions which had been placed upon their operations.

The French conquest may possibly be productive of some benefits. The hand of a strong European power may ultimately give to the whole

island a firmer and more uniform government; but, if this is to be so, the government will be compelled to dissociate itself from the intrigues of religious factions, and especially from the claims and doings of the Jesuits; and this, thanks to the wise and statesmanlike policy, and the conciliatory representations, of the directors of the London Missionary Society, they are already beginning to do.

Proclamations of religious equality have been recently made which are already bearing fruits in the re-assurance of the people; and, if the government will firmly enforce these provisions, it may do much for the stability and prosperity of the island. The abolishment of slavery is another measure in which all friends of humanity will rejoice. When that curse becomes wholly a thing of the past, a new era of light and manhood will have dawned for the people.

One of the first effects of this action is being seen in the increased attendance of children at the public schools. Given freedom, education, and religious toleration; the French Government may, by a strict and impartial enforcement of these constitutional provisions, help on the peace and prosperity of the whole land. Unfortunately there are at the same time only too many sad signs that the French conquest has brought in its train habits which will, for long, prove an utter curse to the people. Already the spirit of the Continental Sabbath has taken hold upon them;

and the breaking down of that safeguard of the national life forms a very real peril to the country. The missionaries in their reports bear witness to the increased demoralization of the people through their coming into contact with a new, and largely irreligious civilization. Irreligion and immorality—the licentious habits of the continent—are making themselves felt even among those who seemed to have been lifted out of the licentiousness of heathenism.

It is authoritatively stated that, in some centers, nearly every European and Creole keeps a concubine; and the more respectable and intelligent girls, who have been educated in the mission schools, are sought and ensnared for these immoral relations. Another of the sorest curses is the spread of drunkenness. France is, perhaps, not more to blame than other nations, in this matter; yet that fact does not destroy her responsibility, nor minimize the evil as it now presents itself in the life of the Malagasy. Drink shops have multiplied. Liquors used in Europe, and wines of the coarsest grades, have been introduced; and the effects are becoming disastrous. In these ways, the French conquest has proved, and must prove yet more and more, an injury to the people, a blight on the life of the land, and a terrible obstacle in the way of the spread of pure religion over the country.

Consequences of a very different character were also to follow—consequences which we may

speak of as religious, in order to distinguish them from those referred to in this chapter as political effects; results which, unhappily, seem to be inseparably connected with every attempt at French colonization, because of the absence of anything like a clear realization of what religious liberty means, and because of the fear and subservience of the French government to the intolerant power of the Jesuits. With these results the next chapter will deal.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS AGAIN

LET us read, once again, that protecting clause in the Anglo-French treaty of 1890: "In Madagascar the missionaries of both countries shall enjoy complete protection. Religious toleration and liberty for all forms of worship and religious teaching shall be guaranteed." What words could have inspired larger confidence and hope in the hearts of Protestant missionaries than these? They were almost like a breath of the British Constitution, and might well partially reconcile them to the change in government, since they seemed to exclude any interference with their religious work. But their hopes were raised too high. There ought to have been no difficulty, under that clause, in prosecuting Christian work unhindered and peacefully, had it been faithfully enforced; but the repudiation of the clause opened the way for a double-headed evil to arise. There came at once an extension of Roman Catholic propagandism, conducted on Jesuitical methods; and also a serious resistance, on the part of the heathen, to all civil authority, and a fierce onslaught upon the Christians, with a view to their extermination; and a twofold persecution of the

CHAPTER IX

A WOMAN'S INTRIGUE.

THOSE who have lived in a tropical country, such as Madagascar, are familiar with the struggles through which the day often seems to dawn. In its earliest stages thin forks of light gleam across the night sky, cleaving it north and south and pointing toward the meridian.

But for a time, dark, gloomy, inky clouds float hither and thither over the horizon, and creep along the tops of the Eastern hills, as if they would stay the sun in his course and turn back those streaks of dawning day.

Ultimately the clouds depart, or are burst asunder by the rising sun; and over and under, and through the clouds, the day breaks.

The phenomena of nature might illustrate, in measure, the phenomena which accompanied the passing of the dark night of superstition and idolatry in Madagascar, and the dawn of spiritual light and life—daybreak through the clouds.

In the midst of the dawn of promise, a dark cloud overcast the sky. Radama, as we have seen, while possessed of many traits of character which separated him from the majority of heathen around, still adhered to the ancient cus-

toms and faith, and, without restraint, gave himself up to the licentiousness which prevailed amongst his people. It could scarcely be expected that one who seemed to turn his whole life into one long day of indulgence and excess, should attain a great age. In 1828 it became known that the king was sick, and as the weeks passed away it became a matter of certainty that his enfeebled constitution could not for long resist the inroads of disease. Conscious that the end was drawing near, Radama one day summoned his council and his nephew Rakotobe as his successor on the throne, taking an oath of the council that they would faithfully execute his will and loyally support the young king. Turning to Rakotobe he reminded him of all that he had done for the teachers and the Christian faith, and expressed his gladness that, though he himself was passing away in the darkness of idolatry, Rakotobe had embraced the new faith and rejoiced in the light it had brought; and urged him to be the friend and protector of all the Christians, and to seek to spread the light and increase the blessings which had begun to uplift the country. With the utmost heartiness Rakotobe promised all this, at the same time expressing his own sorrow that Radama should only have seen the light, and not have walked in it; so that, while the star of hope was rising, with bright promise for his country, he who had prepared the way for that light was now passing

out into a darkness, awful and mysterious. Nothing, however, could change the position of Radama.

Intellectually and politically he admired Christ and His religion. But he had not, and sought not, the power to break away from his evil life, and morally and spiritually he remained a heathen.

When the council retired, Radama's mother and sister came to take a last farewell of the king; and while they stood around his bed, heart-broken with grief, just as the sun went down, Radama's spirit fled—the most enlightened heathen ruler of Madagascar had passed to his account.

Later in the evening the council assembled and arranged to keep secret the death of the king until all the plans were completed for proclaiming Rakotobe the successor of Radama I. Little did they anticipate the awful consequences that followed this decision. The council separated to meet again the next afternoon to complete the preparations for the coronation of the new king.

That same night another council was held in the capital. The late king had had twelve wives, and his harem had been full of intrigues; so that some of these heathen women were adepts in the art. One of them, named Ranavalona, had at present no child of her own, whose claim to the throne she could set forth; but, being a woman of unscrupulous character and cruel disposition, she

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aspired to something higher. Her purpose was already formed—to try and secure the royal power for herself. She was fierce in her support of the idols, and hoped on this account to receive help from the idol keepers. She was also wealthy, and hoped to be able to bribe others to support her claims. Accordingly, she summoned Kelazapa, the chief keeper of the national gods, and with him the commander of the army. After taking from them an oath of secrecy she began to unfold her plans. To the commander of the royal army she appealed by a heavy bribe—urging him to put forth earnest efforts, and to use such sums of money as might be necessary to gain the army to her side. By this means, coupled with promises of promotion and power, she secured the promise of the commander to use his influence in the direction desired. In seeking to gain the hearty support of the idol keepers she not only used bribes, but also sought to arouse their zeal in her cause by pointing out that Rakotobe had professed Christianity, and that others, who might claim the throne in opposition to him, were also favorably inclined to the new faith; while she had always been loyal to the national worship, was the friend of the idols, and was prepared to exert all the royal influence against Christianity. She then went on to show that, by supporting her cause, Kelazapa could not only obtain wealth, but also secure a most

powerful ally in his efforts to oppose the spread of the new faith.

This council separated, to meet at noon next day, that reports might be given as to the prospect of securing the support of the army and the idol keepers in the attempt in which Ranavalona was now determined.

The following day, at noon, this council of conspirators assembled; and one hour later the government council met for the purpose of putting into effect the will of the late king.

Ranavalona presided at her council, and was encouraged, when, on asking what reports had been brought back, she was assured of the absolute support of the army and the priests. At the same time the commander pointed out the grave risks involved in her attempt. If by any means it should fail, or if subsequently any of the several claimants for the throne, apart from Rakotobe, should become sufficiently powerful to successfully contend with her, it would mean instant death for her and for all who united in her plot.

The priests also pointed out that they would depend on her to protect them from the anger of the late king's council; and they warned her of the difficulty of accomplishing her purpose unless in some way the people could be induced to believe that this was not a contest between human beings alone, but between the national gods and Jehovah. Then she might hope to have the multitude on her side.

Perhaps their own proverb did not occur to their minds—one which might have made them pause and consider that perhaps Jehovah was, for the moment, winking at their plottings: “There is nothing unknown to God, but He intentionally bows down His head.” To their credit, be it said, the commander and Kelazapa had not till that time entertained the idea of destroying the claimants who might oppose Ranavalona’s accession to the throne; and, perhaps for this reason the chances of success seemed to them the more remote.

Not so, however, with Ranavalona. Strong in her ambitions, and unscrupulous in her acts, she was ready for all that might be involved in the conspiracy. Speedily she unfolded her plans, which were that the commander, with several companies of soldiers, should seize Rakotobe and put him to death; that any others who sought to interfere with her plans should similarly be put beyond the power to dispute them; and that Kelazapa should make public a proclamation that the national gods had declared Ranavalona should be queen.

The calmness with which Ranavalona set forth her scheme of death surprised even the soldier and the crafty priest. But they had already so far committed themselves that there was no receding with safety, and by the necessity of their position they were now compelled to become the tools in the hands of an inhuman woman, by

which she would accomplish a diabolical crime, and seize a throne.

No time was to be lost, for at any moment the palace gates might be thrown open, and the accession of Rakotobe be proclaimed to the people. Immediately a proclamation was made ready and posted at the entrance to the palace courtyard, announcing that the idols had nominated Ranavalona for queen. At the same time several companies of soldiers surrounded the courtyard and the council meeting within the palace was summoned to surrender. When the chief of the army appeared at the council door, the president asked for an explanation of the intrusion. He was informed that the priests and the army had recognized and proclaimed Ranavalona as queen, and in the queen's name he called upon them all to take the oath of allegiance.

For a moment they hesitated. But on coming out into the courtyard and finding the palace in the hands of the soldiers and the queen, all of them, save four, accepted the situation. These four were faithful to their oath to the late king, and declared in favor of Rakotobe. Immediately they were dragged forth and speared to death, while Rakotobe was sought for. So sudden and unexpected had this movement been that he had no opportunity of escaping or of concealing himself. In a short time Rakotobe had lost not only a throne, but his life also, through a cruel woman's intrigue.

Having seized the crown with blood-stained hands, Ranavalona soon discovered that she must stain those hands again and again in the blood of the innocent ere she could feel secure in her position.

Selecting several of the swiftest officers and soldiers, they were despatched in different directions for the purpose of getting rid of those relatives of the late king who might possibly dispute her title to reign. The eldest sister of the king was cast into prison; her mother, with her brother and a son, were also cast into cells; and these four were left to a lingering death by starvation. We have seen that shortly before Radama's death, Ratefy had been appointed to an important governorship. So rapidly did the queen's messengers travel that they reached the coast almost as early as the proclamation that announced Ranavalona's accession. Ratefy was perplexed by this announcement, but the full truth dawned upon him when, a few hours later, he received news of the death of Rakotobe. Ratefy would have boldly demanded redress for this wrong had he been allowed opportunity. But so swift were the queen's actions that before he had fully recovered from the shock he was seized, a mock court martial held, and Ratefy slain as a traitor. Even yet the queen did not feel safe. Two cousins of the late king still lived, and such trifling peril must be removed.

By a base act of treachery, secured by a large

bribe from the queen, one of them named Ramanola was assassinated by the hand of a former friend. The last probable claimant to the throne being warned of his danger fled, and the most vigorous search of the soldiers failed to discover his whereabouts.

Several valuable lives had been sacrificed in order that a vain and licentious heathen woman might secure the throne of Madagascar instead of the rightful heir, who was a Christian.

But the first stroke of retribution soon fell. The priests and idol keepers had sold themselves to Ranavalona. But she had, almost as surely, sold herself into their power. And it was not long before she was made to realize this fact. One of the foremost conspirators, whose aid had been invaluable in accomplishing the vile purpose of the queen, was highly objectionable to the heathen party because he had shown a spirit of toleration toward the Christians.

The priests were filled with apprehension lest this man should presently incline the queen's mind to favor the new religion, for should this happen the very object that had weighed so much with them in joining the conspiracy would be frustrated, and the Christians would become the supreme power in the land.

The proclamation of the new queen had not long taken place when Kelazapa, seeking a private audience with her, suggested that the dreaded favorite should be destroyed. The queen in-

dignantly refused to listen to the suggestion, though again and again it was urged with vehemence. But the priests were as crafty as their mistress.

Kelazapa knew the disposition of Ranavalona, and that she was the subject of a strong drink passion. Under cover of a pretended revelation from the gods he secured an invitation to sup at the queen's table. His plan was to secure an interview with her when she was strongly under the influence of liquor, and a small bribe to a slave was sufficient to accomplish this aim. At the supper table Ranavalona drank freely, so that when the slave placed at her hand a draught of stronger potency she did not detect the difference, but drank it. Kelazapa insisted that before he could announce the important message from the gods all the slaves must withdraw—the message was for the queen alone. And she, growing each moment more intoxicated, gave orders for them all to retire. It was then that Kelazapa, producing a warrant for the execution of her favorite, demanded in the name of the idols that she should sign it. And when she hesitated, even in her drunken condition to take the step, threats and bribes were so freely used that presently the priest left the palace armed with the queen's warrant for carrying out the dark deed. That warrant was put into execution at once, and when the queen awoke from her

drunken condition her favorite was slain. Kelazapa and the idol keepers had gained the ascendancy, and through a stream of blood Ranavalona had waded to the throne of Madagascar.

CHAPTER X

EVIL OMENS

THE events connected with the succession to the throne had not passed unnoticed by the Christians, and it is not to be wondered at, that in the minds of some of them there arose anxious forebodings as to the evils that might be involved in the events. They knew well that the idol keepers had been the queen's ablest helpers in her plots, and were convinced that some sort of compact regarding the Christian faith existed between them; and the murder of the queen's favorite at the instigation of Kelazapa, on the ground of his tolerance toward their faith, was an indication to them of the spirit likely now to prevail at court.

A few months after the death of Radama, a son was born to Ranavalona and was named Rakota Radama (the young son of Radama). But the awakening in her heart of the mother-love for her child, did not seem to soften her feelings toward any whom she might regard as enemies or as standing in the way of her avarice and love of power.

Rafaravavy, and those of her friends who frequently assembled at her home, began to be more

watchful, while in no way relaxing their efforts to strengthen one another in their faith or to win new converts to the faith. And in these efforts they became more and more successful. Steadily the little band of Christian converts grew.

Rasalama was another of this group of friends who early accepted the truth proclaimed, and acknowledged herself a follower of Christ. In the cases of Rafaralaly and Ramonja there was a deepening interest in the doctrines of the faith; but still their own personal relations to it were of an indefinite character. Fantaka seemed to become less actively hostile, but apparently the truth made little or no impression on her heart.

One of the company seemed differently affected, but whether from fear of possible consequences, or from fickleness of nature, was not at present manifest. At any rate, Ranivo gradually withdrew herself from the Bible readings, and, though still remaining outwardly friendly toward her old companions, resumed her devotions at the idol shrines.

It was not possible for this state of affairs to continue long. The Christians felt that, in some way, the line of demarkation between them and the heathen was being made more clear; while the heathen party were beginning to realize that if something were not done, and done promptly, the whole city would go after the Christians.

Even now there could be heard the low mutterings of a rising storm. As the rustling leaves

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and the bending treetops, the tiny specks of cloud and the restlessness of the birds and beasts, give certain premonition of the coming tempest, so did the whispered grumbling of court officials, the furtive glances of royal favorites, the ill-concealed elation of the heathen priests, the anxious expressions of friendly heathen and the spontaneous sense of strained relations when Christian and heathen met, seem to imply just that condition which so often precedes, and ushers in, some great upheaval in the social or religious life of a people.

In this case, it was the premonitory sign of a long, dark and cruel life and death struggle between the long-established and well-equipped forces of idolatry, and the new and lightly-established, though infinitely more mighty, force of Christianity. It only remained to be seen how and when the storm would burst. That the Christians, small a body as they formed, were fearless of the consequences was evidenced by the fact that just now they resolved to unite themselves into a Christian community or church. By permission of the queen, two houses had been opened for preaching and teaching near the close of 1830.

In May of the following year, the queen had also given public permission to the natives to receive the rite of baptism, to partake of the Lord's supper, and to be married with the Christian, instead of the heathen, ceremony.

Encouraged by this royal permission, and in fulfilment of their resolve, and acting on the teaching of their Scriptures, in the early part of 1831, twenty-eight of them received public baptism, and the first Christian church was formed. By November 4th the number of those received into membership had grown to be seventy-five, and a second church had been formed.

The heathen party responded to what they considered a challenge by approaching the queen with a request that she would in some way exert her influence to stem the tide of progress of this faith.

Kelazapa sought to awaken the queen's jealousy by pointing to this small community, amongst whom were already to be numbered several of her wealthy subjects, and by suggesting that one day, when those wealthy ones had secured a larger following, they would be likely to raise a sedition and seize the royal power. The queen listened to all he had to say, but, for the present, seemed undecided what steps to take. But soon the priests were roused to still more urgent efforts. Rumors had been circulating for some time past that not only were some of the nobles favorable to this faith, that not only had some of these wealthier persons adopted this new religion, but that at least one notable diviner was showing an interest in the teaching. On the day the first Christian Church was formed, the truth of the rumor was abundantly verified. For there,

in truth, was the notorious diviner, whose influence had for long been most powerful in support of the idol worship, now numbered with the Christians, and receiving in baptism the Christian name of Paul. Publicly he renounced his allegiance to the heathen religion; publicly he exposed the superstitious folly of divination; and in presence of all declared his faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. Such a confession produced a marked effect on the heathen present. It also stirred more deeply the anger and jealousy of the priests, who, in their indignation and fear, wondered whereunto this thing would grow.

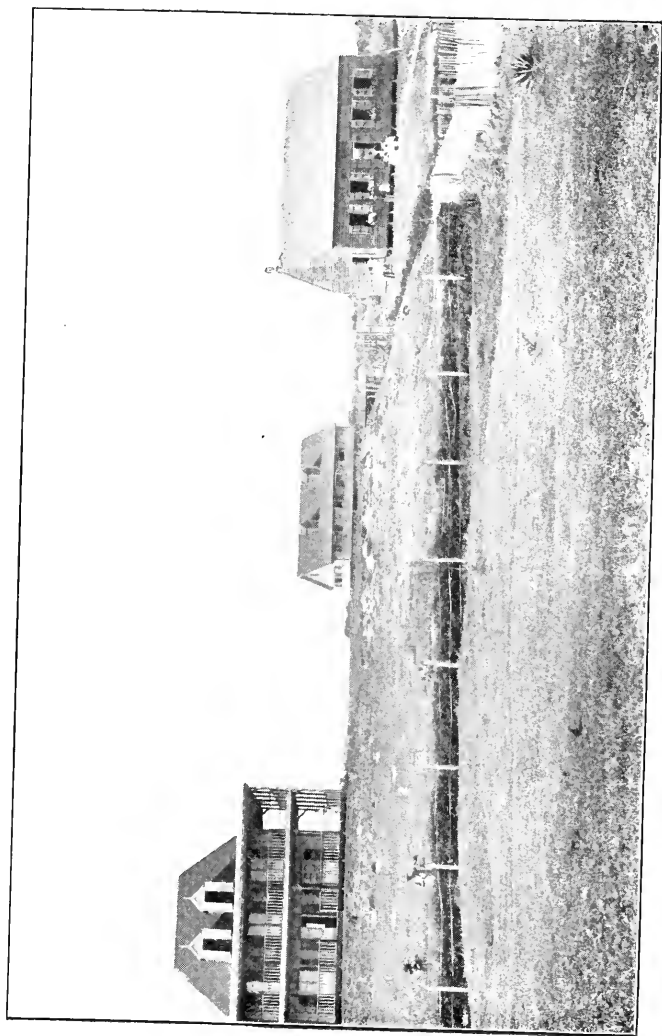
Again, therefore, Kelazapa approached the queen and sought to incite her jealousy and to awaken in her mind a fear for her own safety. This time he was more successful in the effort, and when the queen questioned him as to the possibility of putting down this sect, he cunningly reminded her of what happened when the first teachers landed on her soil. He told of the struggles between the idols and Jehovah, and how, in a few weeks, the idols slew all the band save one, and drove that one from the land. He was shrewd enough to pause there, and Ranavalona, in her excited state of mind, did not pause to consider that the same teacher had returned to the island, and that the very body she was now asked to exterminate was the living proof that the idols had not, even on the first occasion, triumphed over Jehovah. It now became the

ism seems to have made its final struggle to regain the ascendancy over Christianity, and has failed. Large numbers of those who followed the leaders of the rebellion have recently acknowledged their wrong, and their repentant hearts will probably prove to be prepared soil to receive the truth of God.

It is also a cause for deep gratitude that, during the past year or so, there have been great improvements in the relations of the government to the agents of the various societies, and their work. A kindlier spirit, a truer interest, a more generous confidence, and a willingness to avail himself of the able services of the missionaries for the advancement of the people, have marked the attitude of the governor-general and many of his officers. The visit of a deputation from the London Missionary Society; the assumption of the responsibility for a large share of the work by the Protestant churches of France; and a visit, as a deputation from the Paris Missionary Society, by MM. Boegner and Germond, may have done much toward bringing about this result. The discovery by the governor-general that the missionaries were men of sound judgment, ready for any good work, and loyal to French authority, has also done much to dissipate suspicions; so that the government has twice requested the co-operation of the medical missionaries of the capital, in efforts to improve the sanitary conditions, to stamp out smallpox, and to induce the people to

quietly submit to vaccination. This has created mutual confidence and enabled the missionaries to prove the physical, as well as spiritual, advantages of their work. The London Missionary Society reports for last year, that the government has "loyally kept its promise to give the missionaries of the London Missionary Society the same freedom and recognition, as is accorded to others;" and on several occasions the resident general has gone out of his way to make it clear that he appreciates their work.

Here then, are rifts in the clouds of suspicion, indifference and intolerance, by which the religious horizon in Madagascar had been overspread, on account of political changes; and these assist in inspiring our hope, although there are clouds still hanging above the horizon. Notwithstanding its more friendly attitude, the government has recently created a new perplexity for the native teachers. They have been released from the necessity of giving free labor, in constructing roads for the country; but, on the other hand, the government has required that, in every school, horticultural teaching shall be organized. The enforcement of this decree has been made so oppressive as to cause many of the teachers to give up their duties. Yet a way will be found to surmount this difficulty, as has been done in every other case. If Pharaoh will have bricks made without straw, then, until the Lord removes Pha-



A COUNTRY STATION OF THE PARIS MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

raoh's decree, we can trust the missionaries under God to find a way to accomplish the work.

Since the French conquest, a very important departure has taken place in the prosecution of mission work. For many reasons it appeared desirable that a new agency should be brought to bear upon the life of the Malagasy. The new political conditions; the need for exerting direct influence in the French Senate so as to secure liberty and toleration; and the spiritual advantages, to the Protestant churches of France, of being called upon to recognize their great opportunity and enter the field of service open to them; these, among other reasons, led to steps being taken which have placed a good deal of the Protestant mission work in Madagascar under the direction and care of the Paris Society of Evangelical Missions. This society has entered upon its labors with much vigor. In France it is maintaining an earnest struggle to secure full religious liberty for the converts in the colony; for missionaries of other nations, who are loyal to the laws, to settle and labor there; and is seeking to conserve to the Christians the Bible, and the free church life in which they have been nurtured. At the same time they are sending out many laborers into the field. Last year, 1899, eighteen missionaries were sent to Madagascar; and all their agents are working in harmony with those of other Protestant societies. In these new

departures, probably, will be found a factor which will prove of immense importance in the future of the country, and which cannot but re-act, in a quickened spiritual life, on the churches of France.

Gradually the breaches made in the work of the several societies are being repaired. Churches and school-rooms are being rebuilt; others are being restored and strengthened; the schools are being reopened and the children attending more regularly; while from many quarters, tidings come of the growth of congregations, and a large demand for Bibles and other books. These are facts to quicken the hopes of the church, and to stimulate her to greater diligence in responding to her call. There are further signs of promise too, telling that the darkness is passing and the glory of the Lord is again about to be revealed.

It is not altogether surprising, when we think of the rapidity with which the great changes which have occurred have come upon the island, that many of the people should have become bewildered, alarmed; and, at first contact with their new surroundings, should have drifted from their moorings. The fact that very many more have not been driven altogether from outward allegiance to Christianity, is evidence of the power with which the Gospel has influenced even the hearts of the masses; and the further fact that, during a period of peculiar trial, when in-

vasion and conquest, loss of country and queen, persecution and destruction of property, fell upon them, so few renounced their faith in Christ, is proof of the reality and purity of their love to Him.

One or two instances of this steadfast faith should be recorded. One is given by the Rev. J. Coles, of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The heathen burnt the home of a native Christian and carried his wife away into slavery. Unable to protect himself or to recover her, he entered the Hova camp and remained there for more than a year. Drum sounded in camp at 4 A.M. every day, and at that hour each morning, and again each evening, this man held public prayers—especially pleading for his enemies. Many used to scoff at him; but they could not turn him from his habit; and at length, by his consistent life, he stopped the mouths of the mockers, and won their respect.

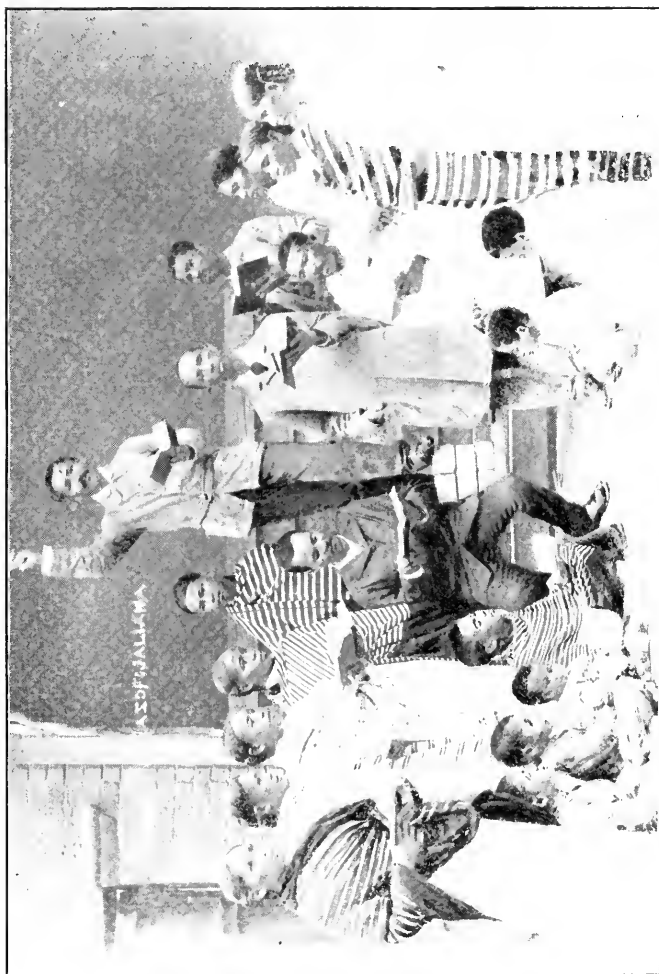
In the darkest moments of the persecution the hearts of the European missionaries were greatly cheered by occasional and remarkable signs of divine blessings. The district of Tsira-be, occupied by the Norwegian Society, was in the stronghold of the heathen rebels; and every family suffered during the war; but the native pastor, Rarifoana, kept right on with his work. In this large district, at the crisis of the persecution, over four hundred were baptized in one year, and seventy-nine received into the membership

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of the church; while last year one hundred men and women came forward seeking baptism and Christian fellowship. In the whole Norwegian Mission there were, in 1898, 4,230 baptisms.

Such facts surround with a halo of glory the life of the Christians and the spirit of the workers. While there are such men in the Church of Christ, it can never be overthrown. During these troublous times, knowledge has been spreading; the printing press has been kept running; and from this agency has poured forth an increasing supply to meet the increasing demand, which has come with the return of peace and a more stable government.

The Christian Endeavor movement has taken firm hold upon the young people in the churches of Madagascar; and possibly some of the most earnest and faithful Endeavorers to be found in any part of the world are to be found there. Their influence has been most marked and helpful to the churches and the spiritual life of the natives during the period of change and trial; and generally, the young people seem to be possessed of an aggressive spirit. Their Bible, Orphanage, Missionary, Preachers' and Tract societies, are all of them indications of this fact, and call for deep gratitude to God and earnest prayer in their behalf. If the past gives any promise for the future, then the young people of Madagascar are certainly to be counted upon as one of the great forces which will labor, and that successfully, for



A MALAGASY SINGING CLASS.

the full establishment of Christ's kingdom in the land; and thus are the means being prepared, and agencies advanced, to reach the masses which are yet unevangelized, and to send out the light into the regions still sitting in darkness.

Let us not lose sight of the important work that remains to be done; for, notwithstanding the mighty results already realized, we have so far seen only the beginnings of the Gospel's triumph. The total population of Madagascar is estimated at 3,500,000; and of this number only some 500,000 are nominally Christians. It is a great thing to have secured a permanent footing in the capital, and to have brought the central province, and the powerful Hova tribe, into loyalty to Christ and His teaching. It is a great thing to have the Church of Christ firmly established in the heart of the country, and stations widely planted amid the heathen tribes, which, growing in strength, will become more and more powerful as centers for the evangelization of all these heathen. But the knowledge that there are yet 3,000,000 souls to be taught, won, saved, reminds us that much remains to be done before we shall behold the noontide splendor of Christ's kingdom in Madagascar. Nevertheless, it is toward that hour we are looking—gazing in unshaken faith; anticipating it with undimmed hope; and, while we look, marking the signs of increasing brightness, and relying upon the promises of God.

Such are the prospects:—what is the sum-

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mons? Surely the events we have chronicled—the power of the Gospel displayed in this land; the sustaining grace manifested in the lives of suffering Christians; the triumphs of the kingdom of Christ over all the malice and pride of its foes; the awakening of the churches to new life; and the signs of the weakening of heathenism, together with the outpouring in new power of the spirit of God—are all of them the voice of God speaking to the hearts of His people, and summoning them forth to nobler purpose, and more faith-inspired effort, to hasten the coming of his kingdom and the final triumph of the cross in Madagascar.

I do not appeal for Madagascar alone; for there is no discrimination in the love of God, and there need be none in the missionary labors of His church, between the needs, the claims, and the invitations to salvation, of all the islands and continents of the world. Each station occupied in the name of Jesus is but an advanced post, marking the line of conquest of His kingdom, and pointing onward to the uttermost ends of the earth; and there is no danger that the love and effort devoted to Madagascar will exhaust the energies of the Christian church, or lessen her power and resolution to make His kingdom world-wide! The unselfish joy kindled by the inspired hope of universal salvation, lights up the hearts, and illumines the faces of all who go out in His name to win the world for Christ.

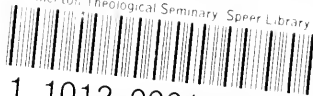
Standing in America, in Europe, in Madagascar, the vision is the same on all sides:—Everywhere the sounds of strife, the signs of toil, the songs of praise, the shouts of triumph, and the first fruits of harvest from a century of sowing; and the prospect grows wider and brighter as the days go by. To faith's eye it is given already to see the consummation; and thus, amid the perils, toils and shadows which still surround their work, the Christian church and her missionaries move hopefully and steadfastly forward to the realization of the promises of God—the day when all the nations shall bow before the cross of Christ; when His name shall be proclaimed as “King of kings and Lord of lords;” when the world's dark night shall issue into the day of God on earth; and the light that never shall pale shall shine over every land; since it is written, “Thy sun shall no more go down.”

THE END

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The sign of the cross in Madagascar

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