

to all innovation, and desiring to maintain things as they are, and uphold the superstitious and ancient customs of the country. What the numerical strength of those parties respectively may be, we have no means of correctly ascertaining; but in other respects, we were led to believe it is much more nearly equal than might at first appear. Under existing circumstances it is next to impossible to ascertain the exact number of Christians in the country. There are doubtless many sincere believers in Christ, known only as such to Him, and perhaps to some of their nearest earthly friends. There are others who, though they might not shrink from the avowal of their faith and all its consequences, yet have no means of communicating with those who have obtained like precious faith. And there are many more who, though strangers to any decisive spiritual influence from the gospel, yet fully estimate the collateral benefits it has conferred on the people, and would be glad to see it recognized and extended to all classes. Several among the chief officers with whom we had frequent intercourse, represented the youth of the country, above the servile classes, as thirsting after knowledge, expressed their regret that they were growing up without education, and said they earnestly desired to see the schools again in active operation. There are also those, perhaps a numerous class, who though destitute of any love for the gospel, are too far enlightened not to perceive the folly and the falsehood as well as the unnecessary character of their superstitious. These persons, though not suspected of Christianity, occasionally, as we were informed, ridicule the idols and reproach their keepers, though sure to be fined or otherwise punished for their indiscretion. There are also large numbers whom the extortion and oppression of the present government and the unrequited labor exacted by them have reduced to such a state of social wretchedness, as to render any change desirable.

Although, for the reasons already stated, it is not easy to form any thing like a correct estimate of the number of Christians, yet we are assured on testimony fully entitled to confidence, that there are certainly in the capital and its immediate vicinity, ONE THOUSAND PERSONS KNOWN TO EACH OTHER AND MUTUALLY RECOGNIZED AS THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST. These meet regularly on the Sabbath and at other times, by night or by day, for the worship of God and the celebration of Christian ordinances. Besides these, there are known to be considerable numbers in other places. The Christians comprise amongst them some of the most intelligent and reputable men in the community; many of them hold offices of great responsibility, chiefly if not solely in consequence of their ability, integrity and known worth. It is even supposed that the suspected, if not known Christianity of some of them is connived at on account of the value of their services.

When the lengthened duration of the present persecution is considered in connection with the extreme severity with which his maledictions have fallen on such numbers; when it is known that NOT FEWER THAN ONE STRIPPED PERSON HAS BEEN SENT TO DEATH, besides the far greater number that are still suffering exile, bonds and degradation; that their number should at the present time include so many is a matter of astonishment and gratitude. But that, under circumstances so adverse, their number should continue to increase, which, according to the testimony of many witnesses, is the case, and that men and women, by birth and rank much above the inferior classes, though now in bonds, wearing rudely-fabricated heavy irons on their persons night and day as the penalty of their attachment to Christ, should be among the most active and the most successful in bringing others to the Saviour, presents a state of things which the Church and the world have but rarely been privileged to witness. It must be ascribed to a higher than any human influence, and is a demonstration that God is with them of a truth.

Connected with the Christians are those who now hold the highest offices in the kingdom, and those who may at no distant period exercise the sovereign power. But opposed to them there is a numerous, active, and influential party, at present possessing great power and all its advantages. These are the patrons and supporters of the idols and their keepers; of the sickly and the tangena, of slavery and coerced labor, and all else included in what are termed the ancient customs of the country. At the head of this party is one of the most active and able members of the present government. He is a nephew of the Queen's consequently cousin to the Prince, as well as own brother to Ramonja, another member of the government who is said to be in great favour with the Queen, and an attached and faithful Christian friend of the Prince. . . . The leader of the anti-Christian party is represented as a shrewd, ambitious, daring man, with considerable business talent and large property. It is said that no efforts are spared by this chief and his party to prevent the accession of the Prince to the throne. They are said to represent him to the Queen as totally unacquainted with the business of government, and bewitched by the Christians, and that to place the sovereignty in his hands would be to promote dissatisfaction, and to sacrifice the good of the kingdom. This is probably the Queen's own opinion, for we were more than once told that the fact of the Christians having, as she deems it, taken advantage of the Prince's inexperience and amiable disposition to draw him over to their party, has more than all besides, excited her extreme indignation. Still the Prince is firm; he and his wife are both members of the Church, and true and constant friends to the most afflicted and suffering of the persecuted flock. The father of the Prince's wife, a time-honored officer of distinguished reputation and great influence, though not a Christian, is also their tried and steady friend. The Prince is represented as being exceedingly amiable in disposition and honorable in character. One who has seen much of society was lately some time at the capital, and though he has no

sympathy with his religion, expressed his opinion of his moral worth in strong terms; he said he was not like a Malagasy in any feature of his character, but must like an English gentleman. He is at all seasons very respectful and attentive to his mother, spends much of his time with her, and the Queen is said to be exceedingly attached to him; and when dis-abled it is gratifying the purpose of her heart by making him her successor, the fact that he is her own son, her only child seems to overrule all objections and supply all deficiencies. How wonderful are the ways of God! Seldan was a purpose more resolutely formed, or more resolutely carried out, than the determination of the highest authorities to extinguish Christianity in Madagascar. There was "no sparking of the fire and faggot," and so long was the persecution continued, and so profuse the shedding of human blood, that many imagined the purpose accomplished. At that time He who subdueth all things to his own will, called into exercise the maternal instinct in the only heart in which it could effectually operate to stop the flow of human blood and to cherish and invest with the requisite prestige of authority and power, the only human agency that could effectually shield and foster the despised and defenceless sufferers for Christ. Nature, obedient to its Author, was supreme; the mother's feelings were stronger than the fanaticism of society or the malignant spirit of bigotry, and were thus made subservient to the preservation of that reviled and rejected faith, in which all nations of the earth shall be ultimately blessed. Lo, there are a part of His ways who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

Though the just ground to hope for better days afforded by the character of the Prince and his faithful adherents, furnishes reasonable cause for joy, it is needful to rejoice with trembling. One of the latest letters from the capital confirms, most fully, rumors previously heard, of a formidable conspiracy against the life of the Prince. At the head of this conspiracy is his deadly rival; and a gentleman recently at the capital, and possessing good means of information, said very recently that if this man were not most vigilantly watched, night and day, no one could guarantee the Prince's life for four-and-twenty hours.

The Queen, who is now about sixty-four or sixty-six years of age, and is moreover said to have recently become comparatively feeble, and to take but little part in public affairs, does not perhaps feel here if strong enough to seize at once and to depose the chief of the conspirators; she does not however omit what she doubtless deems effectual precautionary measures. Whenever his adversary is absent from the palace, the Prince is not allowed to leave it; and when the Prince is absent, the Queen commands the personal attendance of his rival; or if emergencies require both to be absent at the same time, special means are used for the Prince's safety. A strong corps of selected men have been enrolled as his body-guard, having the same equipment and arms and designated by the same name as those formed by Radama for a similar purpose. These troops are at all times, but especially when he goes out, in considerable force about the Prince's person. He himself no doubt places his confidence in the protection of a more invincible arm, but those precautions show the Queen's sense of her son's danger and her anxiety on his account.

A state of things so precarious to the Prince may perhaps have hastened the decision which, when on the very eve of leaving the country, we heard the Queen had made. An officer of considerable rank and long service stated, on the last day that we were on shore at Tamatave, that the Queen had resolved to retire from the government, and was actually making preparations for the coronation of the Prince, who, he added, was not to exercise a co-ordinate authority with his mother, but to be constituted sole ruler of the country. This may be only an unfounded rumor, but it was communicated in the first instance, without any solicitation from us, and it was repeated afterwards with several particulars, and the assurance that the intelligence was among the most recent tidings from the capital. We regretted that our departure on the following morning prevented our making inquiries respecting it in other quarters.

The interests of true religion among the Malagasy have, at different periods, appeared to be placed in extreme peril, but never seemingly more so than at the present time. Should the Queen be suddenly removed before the Prince is firmly established as her successor, or should his life be sacrificed to the ambition and the enmity of his rival, there would not only be a great destruction of human life, but a revival of the persecutions against the Christians, in all probability more violent and cruel than has yet been witnessed. The rival of the Prince was the chief instigator in the last persecution, and he is the only one now who ventures to accuse the Christians to the Queen; all others are deterred by the fear that the Prince may remember it hereafter; but this man still pursues them with unrelenting hatred. Could the friends of Christ at home, those who have contributed so promptly and so liberally towards the renewal of missionary labors when the door appeared open, but clearly perceive the full importance of the interests involved, and the apparently imminent peril in which the Malagasy churches are now placed, I am persuaded there would forthwith be manifested such a general, earnest, united, and importunate spirit of prayer unto the Most High as should form the most encouraging ground of hope not only that the life of the Prince, apparently so precious, would be preserved, but that the churches would be favoured with rest, increase, and a state of pre-eminent prosperity. The Christian churches at home have, on more than one occasion, shown themselves, in recent times, to be nursing fathers to infant