

## Trials of the Foreign Missionary.

WE speak at times of the "romance of missions," and surely Fable has never pictured anything more "romantic" on merely natural principles, than the sight of three or four men, or three or four hundred men, calmly undertaking to revolutionize the faiths and the moralities of India and Japan and China. These men attack with quiet confidence religions that had their root deep in the popular heart before the Angels sang near Bethlehem, "Glory be to God in the highest." Here is the moral sublimity of Christian faith; here is the courage which is the sure presage of ultimate success. The popular idea of Foreign Missions in some quarters amounts to this: a young minister travels over historic lands and seas, settling down among palm-groves, vineyards and oliveyards, or under the shade of the far-spreading banyan tree, reading the Gospel narratives to interesting savages who eagerly listen, their eyes filled with tears and their mouths with blessings; converts flocking in by scores and hundreds; all difficulties lightly overcome; the missionary returning at last to spend the bright evening of a long and prosperous day in the suburb of some favourite city!

The *reality* should be frequently and earnestly contemplated, so that our sympathies may be quickened, our prayers multiplied, and our exertions increased on behalf of those who have gone forth from among ourselves to carry the Gospel to the heathen.

William C. Burns, one of the most spiritually-minded of missionaries, was wont to complain feelingly of the depressing and degrading tendencies of heathenism even upon the Christian missionary. We have known of professing Christians going to heathen lands and lapsing into the atrocities and pollutions of heathenism. Happily the instances are few, but they are not unknown even in our own day. Missionaries feel that to bring up their children among the heathen, or even among recent converts from

heathenism, is full of peril. It takes more than one generation to establish on heathen soil that pure and beautiful and lovely institution, the Christian Family. Aneityum is a glorious instance of the power of God's grace; the whole island being turned to the Lord, and all having professed their faith in the Gospel. This revolution took place more than twenty years ago. Yet at this day the Aneityumese are in a very low state of Christian civilization, and require the tender, firm, and vigilant guardianship of the missionary. The Sandwich Islands, owing to their geographical situation, are peculiarly favoured, and the conversion of the people appears to have been as thorough as it was sudden and wonderful, yet, even there, the danger of a general relapse has been great, and the spiritual trials of missionary life have been sufficiently serious. In the magnificent island of Madagascar the conquests of the Gospel have been most brilliant and signal. Nowhere else has the good seed sprang up more freely or yielded a richer return. But there too, the missionary has to encounter his full share of trial. One of these Madagascar labourers, writing from a town thirty miles from the capital, says, "The district contains about 100 villages and 70 churches, each with its native pastor and a certain number of communicants. It is in the most distant villages there appears to be the most vital godliness and desire to be taught, while in this town, the capital of the district, we find scarcely anything but apathy and indifference to instruction, while the grossest sins and wickedness of every kind prevail. The people, though they have put away their idols, are but little better than heathen. I never realized, I perhaps could never realize at home, as I do here, what it is to have fellowship with Christ in suffering. The heaviness of heart caused by seeing the sin, hypocrisy, and coldness of so many of his professed followers, would be indeed unbearable had He not told us to cast our burdens upon Him."

The experience of missionaries in all heathen, or recently christianized lands has been to a large extent similar. But, perhaps, the