

General Fever!" He had sagacity enough to form a just opinion of the English people, whose civilization he wished to share, and, when the British Governor of the Mauritius sent an embassy to him, he welcomed them gladly, and made a treaty with them, agreeing to give up the slave trade. He never became a Christian, but, with the wisdom of an astute political economist, he welcomed the arrival of the first missionaries most cordially, promised them protection, and invited as many others to come as chose, with their wives and families. And, he kept his promise faithfully. He even sent a letter to the London Missionary Society to send them missionaries, "being satisfied that they have no other object than to enlighten the people and shew them the means of being happy after the manner of European nations." The special qualification in Radama's opinion being that they should be "skilful artisans, able to instruct my people in the Christian religion, and also in various trades, such as weaving, iron-working, carpentry, and the like." He studied English and French and watched with deep interest the work of the missionaries in reducing the language of the Malagasy to a written form, for hitherto they had no literature except what was oral. He even issued a proclamation that no letter in the new vocabulary should have more than one sound!

The first missionaries, in 1818, were two Welshmen—David Jones and Samuel Bevan, their wives and children. But, unfortunately, they landed upon an unhealthy spot, took fever, and all died save Jones, who escaped to the Mauritius for his health. He returned, however, in 1820, went straight to the capital, Antananarivo, where he received a hearty welcome, and was shortly afterwards joined by two other ordained missionaries, two printers, and six skilled mechanics, sent out by the London Missionary Society. They soon had their hands full in the work of teaching. An adult school was opened in the palace yard, in which the officers of the army and their wives, to the number of three hundred, were instructed. Qualified native teachers were set at work in the neighbouring villages, and in less than ten years they had a grammar-book: the whole of the Bible was translated and printed, and fully fifteen thousand native youths were able to read

their own language. Many of them, too, had been converted to Christianity. Although the wisdom of Radama was altogether worldly, yet he was unconsciously opening the way for the gospel, while contenting himself by saying to the scholars,—“The knowledge you are gaining is good, good for trade, and good for Radama!”

This great man died on 27th July, 1828, in the 36th year of his age, after a reign of almost unexampled prosperity, of twenty years. He had no son living, and had named his nephew *Rakatoba* as his successor. But he was suspected by the nobles to be infected with Christianity, and, fearing for their heathen religion, they concealed Radama's death as long as they could. In the meantime, RANAVALONA, his senior wife, seized on the reins of government. This wicked woman became “the bloody Mary” of Madagascar. During her reign, “from twenty to thirty thousand persons fell victims every year to her bloody rule.”* It has been calculated that, during her reign of 32 years, very nearly one-half the population was swept away, and that had she lived much longer, Madagascar would have been reduced to a wilderness. For a time it was her policy to conceal her hatred to the Christians. A certain amount of toleration was extended because of the manifest advantages to the state. The people were becoming good artisans. The inland revenue increased!

But the leaven of Christianity was working all the while. Complaints began to be made to the Queen that her orders were being disobeyed. “The people were still praying, reading the Bible and worshipping God.” They were brought before the magistrates and compelled to drink “the tangena”—a poisonous cup which was administered as a test of innocence, and from which many died. A general conclave was called for 1st March, 1834, when a list of the names of the Christians was handed in. It was so large as to cause alarm. At length a proclamation issued. War was declared against Christianity, and one month given to all “to recant.” The text of one of the missionaries who preached at this period is still preserved. It was this,—“*Save Lord! we perish!* But the Christians spent the nights in prayer and continued steadfast in the faith. Ranavalona