

## DEATH OF THE QUEEN OF MADAGASCAR.

We have to announce the decease of that notorious personage who has so long been the scourge of the island, and the murderess of the Christians throughout her dominions. As, for many years, her ferocious persecutions have rendered her name familiar and odious throughout the whole civilized world, it may not be amiss to recapitulate briefly the leading features of her extraordinary history.

Our readers are aware that the island of Madagascar was formerly divided into a number of little clans, the chief of one of which, named Andriamavalona, conquered a large number of them, his son and successor, Radama, pursued these conquests still further; he came to the throne in 1808, and died, aged thirty-six, in 1828. On his death the late Queen Ranavalona (who was one of his twelve wives) usurped the throne, and commenced her sanguinary reign with a brutal ferocity which has few parallels in history. She at once sent for two of the chief officers in the army, and induced them to espouse her cause, and the first act of this infernal trio was to murder in cool blood, Rakolobe, the rightful heir to the throne. He was speared while in the attitude of prayer, and thrust into the grave warm and reeking in his blood. His mother (who was the late King's sister) was another obstacle in the way of this Jezebel Ranavalona, and she was accordingly starved to death, with her brothers, Andriamiana and Ratafika. A cousin of the late monarch was also speared to death, and another would have been killed but he gave them the slip, and died in 1811. Shortly after, in a fit of intoxication, she consented to the deliberate murder of her prime minister, and took the two assassins and rivals in the stead of their victim. The younger of these soon died.

Having secured the throne by individual murders, she sought to extend her dominions by wholesale massacres. She had an army of thirty thousand men, and out of a population of four millions, which the island contains (being nine hundred miles long, by three to four hundred broad), during her sanguinary reign, she slaughtered nearly 140,000 of them! Our readers will remember the message of the late Queen Adelaide by the deputation, to this Ranavalona, "That she could do nothing so good for her country as to receive the Christian religion." But instead of taking this advice, it is impossible to detail the atrocities which accompanied the suppression of Christianity, and the murders of the converts. Sixteen were caught attempting to escape to the Mauritius, nine of them were speared to death, and the rest sold into slavery. We might go on to relate the horrors of infanticide, and the bull fights permitted and patronised by this wretch, but space forbids it. Her chief amusement was to laugh at the melancholy grimaces of a number of idiots, who were made to dance for her gratification!

"Madam," said a prime minister a few years ago in addressing her, "your son is a Christian; he prays with the Christians, and encourages them in this new doctrine. We are lost, if your Majesty does not stop the Prince in this strange way." "But he is my son," replied the Queen, "my only, my beloved son! Let him do what he pleases. If he wish to become a Christian, let him. He is my beloved son."

That mother who exhibited such strong affection for her child, and who was one of the most bitter and relentless persecutors of Christians, is no more; and that son who cherished and protected the followers of Christ in defiance of laws which pronounced slavery and death upon them, is, we suppose, now King of Madagascar.

This island, which contains a population of about 4,000,000, was first visited by Missionaries from England, in 1818. After laboring with much success in teaching and preaching to its ignorant inhabitants; and having instructed in that period more than 20,000 pupils, and gathered together about 500, who professed faith in Christ, they were expelled by the late queen in 1836. Since that time more than 2,000 have suffered in different ways for reading the Bible, and worshipping the true God—several have been put to death, others have been banished, sold into slavery, fined and persecuted; still a few, in despite of all prohibition, have met together privately for religious worship. These laws, we suppose, will now be repealed—the people be again accessible to missionary effort, and may the truth as it is in Jesus gain the ascendancy over every mind and heart.—For this Christians in this land should pray, and also "that his way may be known upon the earth, his saving health among all nations."

## AUSTRALIA.

We have received the following letter, dated 5th July, from the Rev. Mr. Ritchie, who has formed a congregation at Yaas, 189 miles from Sydney.

*Parting Gift.*—It is intended in this communication to give you a brief account of our movements since leaving Sydney in the end of May 1850. The parting testimonial from our friends in Church Hill congregation, formerly referred to, consisted of a massy silver bread or fruit basket to Mrs. Ritchie, a bank cheque for £60 to myself, and a small token of remembrance to our son, all which was very gratifying, especially as indicating the most kindly feelings in those among whom we had laboured for upwards of three years, if not with great success, yet, doubtless, not altogether in vain. Prior to this, they had presented me with a very handsome pulpit gown and cassock—a copy of Scott's Bible, illustrated by maps and plates—and an elegant Psalm-book.

*Goulburn.*—Frist Sabbath of June I preached forenoon and evening in Goulburn, for the Rev. W. Ross, one of the state-paid ministers in connection with the Church of Scotland, an excellent man, and, as I believe, a

diligent and faithful minister of Christ, and much more liberal in his sentiments than most of his brethren with whom I have come in contact. Since then, I have also assisted him in dispensing the Lord's Supper to his people, who are chiefly from the North of Scotland, and are greatly attached to him, principally, perhaps, because he is able to address them on Divine subjects in their mother tongue, and almost every Sabbath, less or more, does so. Yaas, although distant from him nearly 60 miles, was formerly one of his stations, at which he preached twice or thrice a year, and he repeatedly expressed to me his great joy and delight that at length there was one Presbyterian minister beyond him in the bush.

*Formation of a Church at Yaas.*—Second Sabbath of June, I commenced my stated labours in this place. For a few weeks, we had public service in the court-house. That, however, was found to be inconvenient in several respects, and therefore the place of worship was changed to a room in our own dwelling, which has been comfortably fitted up with a pulpit, and seats for 70 persons, and which might, if required, be made to hold about 100. During the week it is used for a school taught by our son, and for the use of it on Sabbath, the people allow me £10, which reduces my rent to £15 per annum. To account for an apartment of such a large size in the Australian bush, it may be proper to state, that previous to our arrival here, it was the ball-room of the first inn in Yaas, the tenant of which being about to leave, I took the whole premises, house, stables, and stock-yard, &c. &c. off his hand, as being, all things considered, the most suitable to be had at the time. The present lease extends to the 1st of May, 1853, and by that time the congregation will be better prepared than at present, to determine what they should do.

The people attending my ministry are a mixture of nominal Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, State Churchmen and Voluntaries, and Free Church folks, who, as with you, hold the principle of the former, while they follow the practice of the latter. Such being the case, very considerable difficulty was experienced in forming ourselves into a church. That desirable event was at length accomplished by us in the month of March, and elders elected, who were ordained to the office in April—since which time we have been a regularly constituted Presbyterian Church, and yet independent of all other churches in the meantime, while the pastor is an avowed and acknowledged member of the Synod of New South Wales. This state of matters is far from being what we would wish, but it is all that we could for the present attain.

On second Sabbath of last month, the Lord's Supper was observed by us for the first time, when twelve persons obeyed his dying injunction, "Do this in remembrance of me." You will thus perceive that it is with us only the day of small things. But are these to be despised? Let us rather pray in faith, and hope that the little heaven may speedily pervade the whole mass—that the handful of corn may soon fill the whole land.

*Gold Fever and Severe Drought.*—The number of communicants was much smaller than we expected, owing to the gold fever at present raging among us, and which has affected all classes of the community to a degree of madness scarcely conceivable. Bathurst district, some 120 miles west of this place, is now the grand point of attraction from all parts of Australia. Almost all the able-bodied men of Yaas, and even some of the boys from school, have gone with their parents to the diggings. In consequence of this, I have lost, in the meantime, one of my elders, and nearly one-half of my usual audience. Provisions of every description are greatly advanced in price. Wheat, which this time last year sold at 2s. per bushel, last week brought 12s. 6d. This we attribute chiefly to over speculation, which in former days proved ruinous to vast numbers of our colonists, although a considerable rise in price of the staff of life was rendered absolutely necessary, owing to a deficient harvest, caused by a season of very uncommon heat, and unusually protracted drought. Some days the glass stood with us at 112° in the shade, while there has not been one day's heavy rain in the district these twelve months past. The oldest colonists declare that they never saw our river so small, it being for three-fourths of the year merely a chain of ponds. Thousands upon thousands of stock, both sheep and cattle, have perished for want of food. Bullocks are seen lying dead upon the public roads in all directions, and great numbers brought to the river for drink have died within its banks, their weakness rendering them utterly unable to return.

*My field of labour* is by far too large for anything like efficient cultivation. It now extends upwards of 100 miles from east to west, having the town of Yaas for its centre. Here I preach regularly on three Sabbaths each month. Once a quarter, I preach in Queanbeyan district, about 50 miles to the eastward—at Jugiong, 40 miles to the west, and at the Murrumbidgee river, about 15 miles to the south. Our friends in this place are regarded as members of Yaas congregation, and some of them are worshipping with us every Sabbath. Both the other places contribute by subscription to the fund of our church. At the first mentioned, the attendance is highly encouraging as to number, but being composed chiefly of servants, their influence in the district is not so great as could be wished. Our subscribers at Jugiong are mostly extensive squatters and small settlers, and, consequently, though fewer in number, are able to do more for the support of our cause. The stipend promised last year has been duly paid, and this year I have the promise of an additional £10 or £15 in the name of horse-keeping or travelling expenses. This item would not be required were innkeepers in New South Wales to do as those with whom Brother Richardson met in Victoria. But here we have men of a different stamp to deal with. They think nothing of either sin or shame in charging me 1s. 6d. or 2s. for a feed of oats by the way, and 5s. or 6s. for the keep of my horse each night, while refreshment for myself bears a similar proportion to home charges in the like circumstances.