

THE MIRACLES OF MISSIONS.
THE WONDERFUL STORY OF MADAGASCAR.

[EDITORIAL.—A. T. P.]

To an English boy, Robert Drury, wrecked near Port Dauphine, the Southeastern cape of Madagascar, we owe the first full account of the savages on this great island. He saw the captain and crew, who escaped with him from the angry sea, pierced with the lances of the inhospitable natives, till out of over a hundred only a dozen survived, and he himself was saved only to be enslaved. This was early in this century. He found the country divided among many warring tribes; might the only right, women and children carried off like cattle and made slaves; woman, so degraded that even the King's daughter, wife or mother, cringed before him and licked his feet. Heathen ceremonies of the most absurd and degrading kind were matters of daily occurrence. A wooden charm called an *owley*, borne up by forked sticks, was worshipped with incense. Fortune tellers, or *umossees*, held the people in the bondage of superstition, and lived upon their ignorance and credulity. The Malagasy were the victims of magicians, and constantly fought and plundered one another. The arrival of a European vessel was the signal for wholesale crimes of lust and trading in human bodies and souls. All who had slaves drove them to the seaside.

Half a century ago the Hovas held the interior portion of the island, and their King or chief, who was called Radama, had come to the throne in 1808. With these Hovas and their sovereigns the modern history of Madagascar is mainly concerned. Morally and spiritually the picture is very dark. From three to four thousand natives were sold, it is said, every year, and the spot where they caught the last glimpse of home, and the first glimpse of the sea that was to bear them into hopeless exile, is even now called the "*weeping place of the Hovas*." Though they had courts of law, bribery was so common that trial was a form and a farce. Honesty was scarce known, and children were trained to falsehood and deception as a virtue. Punishments were savagely cruel, devised to give long, lingering pain—burning by slow fires, drowning in boiling water, poisoning by *tangena*, beating, starving, hurling over precipices, crucifying. The tangena was a substitute for trial, and thousands died every year from this poison, while those who proved their innocence by outliving the dose were wrecked in health.

The people were a nation of thieves as well as liars. Madame Pfaffer's property was stolen while at the house of the Chief Justice, but recovery was impossible, where even high officers stole. Even graves were robbed, bodies stripped, and every article of value buried with the dead was an object of ruthless plunder. The nation was so wedded to lying and thieving that Christianity was objected to because it taught people to be true and honest. They were so far lost to all virtue that they resisted any influence that promised moral improvement.