

A Page for the Young.

MADAGASCAR.

THE ever-wonderful story of Gospel progress in Madagascar is thus told by one of the Missionaries of the London Missionary Society,—Mr. Richardson:—

In 1866, there were 79 congregations in Madagascar; there are now 1,142. In 1866, there were 13,682 people gathered into the churches; but now there are more than a quarter of a million assembling Sabbath after Sabbath. In 1866, there were 5,255 church members; now we have 70,000 professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of them are very ignorant, and many know nothing about the elementary truths of Christianity, but still they do express a desire, however feebly and however imperfectly, to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1866, we had 18 schools in the island, with 811 scholars; now we have 890 schools and 50,000 scholars. In 1868, when the barbarian horde came into the church at Madagascar, there were about ten men striving to grapple with that great mass of heathen corruption. It was in 1870 when the Testaments were sent out, and it was in 1873 before the complete Bible came out. Now we have among our adult population 25,535 who can read, and among our children 25,365; and there are 36,245 complete copies of the New Testament or of the Bible in the hands of these readers.

Mr. Richardson also gave an account of a meeting held in the church built on the "Tarpeian Rock," from which, in the days of persecution, so many Christians were hurled to meet their death.

We asked the Prime Minister to come and take the chair, and he did so, and the man who twelve years ago would have gone up to his knees in mud to give honor to his idols, came into one of our pulpits and posed as chairman of the Missionary Society, and he did it very well, too. His first words in addressing the meeting, were, "Ladies and gentlemen,—As Prime Minister of Madagascar I have no right here, but as a man loving the Lord Jesus Christ, and desirous to promote and further His kingdom, I have as much right here as any one of you. He said how martyrs prayed in former times, 'When, Oh, when shall we have a Christian Queen?' God had sent them a Christian Queen, and they were all desirous of sending the Gospel to the heathen. He narrated how they had oppressed the people in former times. He spoke to the evangelists, five in number, who were going out, and said, 'Do not tell the people—put away your idols because we are sent by the Queen.' He said, 'If you use force and compulsion, your work will fail;

you will not propagate the principles of the Gospel of Peace by any pressure. Go with gentleness, and patience, and perseverance; show the people the better way, and you will win them from their superstitious practices.' The people cheered him to the echo. As the meeting broke up, I met him 'at the vestry door, and he took me by the hand and said, 'Mr. Richardson, did you note the enthusiasm of that audience?' I said 'Yes.' 'Could not I rule the Church of Madagascar if I liked?' 'Yes, I am sorry to say you could.' 'Ah,' he said, 'we know better than that; there will be no head of the Church in Madagascar, except the Lord Jesus Christ.' We were met in the church built on that rock of hurling, and he went on to say, 'Standing upon this spot, years and years ago, there were gathered together some officers of the kingdom. My father was there, and a little girl was brought before him. My father looked at that little girl, and said 'Take the child away; she is a fool.' The little girl raised herself, and said, 'No, sir, I am no fool; but I love the Lord Jesus Christ. Throw me over.' Six years ago, when Dr. Mullens preached at the opening of the church, the Queen, the Prime Minister, and all the Court ran away out of the capital; but now, six years afterwards, the Prime Minister comes to that very spot on which we were assembled,—where that little girl was hurled over, and her body landed on the plain below,—and he said, 'If a little girl in those dark times could give her life for the love of the Saviour, shall we hesitate to give of our substance to send these missionaries to the heathen?'

I want to tell you another thing connected with that story. In 1851, a little lad in a South Lancashire town, I saw a picture in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* of these poor people being hurled over the rock. I was only seven years of age, and I said, 'Oh! teacher, if ever I am a man, I will go and be a missionary there!' I forgot all that. I went to college, and in 1868 Dr. Mullens offered me Madagascar. I said, 'Of course, I go to Madagascar, because that story made me a missionary in 1851.' I went to Madagascar, and now here is the remarkable thing. You talk sometimes about chance and coincidence, but I think this is a leading of Divine Providence. When I was chairman of the district committee, standing on the spot portrayed in the picture which had made me a missionary in 1851, I had to give the first missionary charge to the first missionaries sent out by the Church of Madagascar. A year after that I had to accompany a second company, and I was within a span of being another martyr of Madagascar; and a year after that I stood and looked up into the face of the Prime Minister as he told me that very story which had made me a missionary.