

work, and the open Bible is the glory of our churches. Protracted labor has been expended on producing a standard translation—Protestant missionaries of all the societies having, under the superintendence of the British and Foreign Bible Society, spent eleven years on this important work. The 2000 Protestant churches now existing in the island have as their most cherished possession, as their perennial fountain of healthful teaching, and as their shield against all the wiles of error, this carefully considered version of the Holy Scriptures.

"Much activity is manifested by the various congregations, and a healthy interest in church affairs exists among the people. A very strong democratic spirit prevails, and any one from within or from without, missionary or native, attempting to 'dictate to the Church' (*mandidy jiangônana*) soon finds he has to reckon with a spirit of sturdy independence.

"Great interest is taken in the discussion of church business; but I notice that nothing draws so many as the knowledge that some personal matter will come up, possibly some case of discipline. I have known very happy and helpful church meetings in Madagascar; but I have also been present at some in which party feeling ran high, and the feelings and tongues of the people were both unduly excited. A year or two since I attended a meeting in a country church where some difficulty had arisen about the choice of a pastor, and I found the village almost in a state of riot, bludgeons and long knives having been brought by some as aids toward the settlement of a question that had evidently caused strong party feeling. Happily the discussion of the matter in question was postponed *sine die*.

"A growing spirit of liberality is noticeable among our people. Remembering that a dollar means to an ordinary Malagasy about as much as a sovereign does to the average Englishman, and that threepence or fourpence per

day would be the usual wages of a laboring man, it is a fact full of encouragement that no less a sum than £7336 was raised in 1894 for church purposes. . . .

"The missionary spirit is certainly growing, . . . and many among the Hova Christians are deeply in earnest in the attempt to win the whole of Madagascar for Christ. . . .

"The coming war may, it is feared, check much of this growing activity for a time. Disorganization and confusion may be caused in many districts if the French persist in their attempt to obtain by force what they have not been able to gain by milder measures. But I do not for a moment believe that these Protestant churches of Madagascar will be turned away from the faith they have accepted. The conservatism of the people, which sometimes proves a hindrance to the plans of an earnest and enthusiastic missionary, will in this matter be a strength to the churches. But above all else the knowledge of Holy Scripture possessed by the people, the way in which the Bible has rooted itself in their reverence and love will now prove their safeguard. Roman Catholic missionaries have nothing to offer that would take the place of the free, healthy church life they now enjoy, and of the supreme place the Bible has taken in all their services and in the development of their religious life. We may be prepared to hear of changes in Madagascar, perhaps even of temporary retrogression, of work interrupted, of schools broken up, of churches discouraged. The war may cause many evils such as these; but looking at the character of the people, at the way they have borne severe trials in the past, at the condition and work of the churches to-day, and, above all, looking upward to Him who is the Guide and Defender of His people, we cannot, I think, include among the evils to be feared any large measure of departure from the simple, Bible-nourished Christian faith which has now, for so many years existed among the Malagasy people."