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MIRACLES OF MISSIONS.—No. XXIV.

THE ROMANCE OF THE HOVA BIBLE.*

BY THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

As the heart makes the theology, so, it is to be feared, it often makes the history, or at least misreads it. Because amid the four millions of Madagascar nine tenths still remain heathen, there is on the part of some no little proneness to depreciate the grand results of Protestant missions there, and to disparage the magnitude of the work begun in 1820.

We have thought well to reproduce, from the panorama of these seventy-five years, one scene which is at once full of romance and reality, pathetic and poetic, vivid in its contrasts and intense in its interest—the story of the Malagasy Bible. Christian missions have many such pictures, which need no retouching by human hands to make them brilliant with historic lustre, and fascinating with romantic beauty; but this story of the Hova Scriptures will bear to be put beside any similar narrative of this missionary century.

Seventy-five years ago two humble Welshmen landed on the coast of Madagascar—David Jones and David Griffiths. But one year apart in their arrival at Antananarivo, they were the pioneers of Protestant missions on this great island, which has been called the Britain of the Dark Continent.

They found the French mission, which had preceded them by more than a century and a half, had scarce left even a permanent footprint to mark its twenty years of experiment. Madagascar was still virgin soil; the people lacked all true knowledge of Christ, and had not even a written language. It was still a pioneer work that was to be done; and a score of years of teaching, discouragement, and hardship had failed even to lay the foundations for a church of Christ.

*See "Madagascar of To-day." By Rev. W. E. Cousins. F. H. Revell & Co.