

Only indirectly have the missionaries in Imerina had to deal with the heathen as such. But they have, nevertheless, had the happiness year by year of seeing how God uses His churches as a true missionary agency for spreading the light, and for drawing men away from the superstition and impurity of heathenism. The organized churches are still the great instruments for extending Christ's kingdom; and all that tends to strengthen and develop church life hastens on the day when the whole of Madagascar will be indeed a Christian land; and, on the other hand, all that tends to break up or to hinder their work seems to us calculated to retard, at least for the present, the extension of Christ's kingdom in the island.

"Christian churches are to-day one of the most prominent and easily recognized forces in the land. Religion no longer hides its head in the depths of the forest or in the caves of the earth, but buildings set apart for worship and schools erect their heads boldly in the most conspicuous positions. In and around Antananarivo this fact forces itself upon the notice of a traveller. The four stone memorial churches of our own society, the cathedral of St. Lawrence—belonging to the Anglican Mission—and the great Roman Catholic cathedral are one and all well-built and imposing structures. These and other public edifices in the capital tell their own tale, which is also confirmed by the districts around. Any one standing on the higher parts of the city may count well-built village chapels by the dozen. Indeed, almost every village around Antananarivo has its Protestant place of worship.

"These 'houses of prayer,' as they are called by the natives, are on the whole well attended. The Hovas are a religious people. The Sunday morning is ushered in by the church-going bell, and the streets of the capital are crowded before and after service time by hundreds of neatly dressed worshippers. Even casual visitors are struck with the air of order and quiet that reigns on

Sunday in the 'great Hova city'; and in this general observance of the day of rest we have a clear indication of the hold the Christian religion has taken on the people.

"If we enter with these church-going crowds we shall usually find good congregations met for worship. The men will all be seated on one side and the women on the other. This is the universal practice in Madagascar; and it has arisen, I think, not from any rule laid down by missionaries, but from native feelings of propriety.

"The visitor will soon find that the Malagasy are a music-loving race. Much of the singing is really excellent. The voices are musical and the parts are well sustained, though the style of tunes most popular, many of them of native composition, does not always commend itself to our taste. The singers occupy a prominent position near the pulpit, and are considered by themselves and others as very important functionaries. Occasionally they cause trouble, as I understand singers have been known to do in more advanced communities. Some time since I met a native pastor from the country, and on my asking him about the progress of the congregation in his village, he said: 'Oh, we are doing well now. Those singers cause us no more trouble; we punished them for their insubordination by making them stand with heavy stones upon their heads'—Daute's purgatorial punishment for the crime of avarice.

"Malagasy congregations, and especially Antananarivo congregations, are generally well behaved, and the people listen with attention and interest to the sermons either of missionaries or of their own native ministers. Public speaking is an art in which many excel, and the man who has the gift of uttering apt and well-chosen words exercises great influence for good.

"The strength of our Protestant services is the supreme place which is given to the reading and explanation of God's Word. Bible-teaching has always held a prominent place in our