

motives that were purely selfish he no doubt was prompted to this through sympathy with the oppressed condition of the people, and of the christians in particular. The plot was soon detected. The foreigners were compelled to leave the island. The natives involved were summarily put to death. Among these were a few christians who had certainly known of the scheme, and hoped for some relief through it.

But the queen was persuaded that the christians as a body had shared in the scheme, and were thus retaliating for her cruelty. She now resolved that the hated religion should be crushed for ever. The christians were ordered to accuse themselves. Few did so. The queen became exasperated. Large relays of troops were sent to scour the country. Orders were given that all pits and caves should be searched, that bogs and rivers should be dragged, and that villagers sheltering christians should be put to death. So great was the terror of the people that the inhabitants of whole villages fled. Those who were captured, and those who gave themselves up, were brought together. Now think of another great assembly with its military pomp, its thousands upon thousands of people—a day of terror. Think of the christians again marched out in order, and listen again to the reading of the dread sentences. New punishments—it was thought they were more terrible—were inflicted. Twenty-one were stoned to death. Others were hurled over the cliffs. Fifty drank the tangena, of which eight of them died. Fifty-seven were chained together in fives and sevens, a massive ring surrounding each neck, and bars stretching between. These were banished to distant parts, where more than half of them died a lingering death. Whether we regard the number, the sentences, or the position of those who suffered, this was the most bitter year of the persecution.

And now one draws a breath of relief when he is told that the "time of darkness," as the natives call it, is ended. The queen died soon thereafter, and a king favorable to the christians ascended the throne.

It may be satisfactory briefly to summarize here the causes of the persecution, and to state its results.

*Causes.*—(1) The queen was despotic, armed with resistless power, and awfully cruel. Christianity seemed aimed at her absolute rule, and therefore she strove to crush it. (2) There was some degree of sincere belief in the power of the idols. They allowed full license to the passions of man's fallen nature. Christianity therefore aroused fanaticism and hatred. (3) Covetousness helped on the persecution. The informer received half of the goods of the person condemned.

*Results.*—During this period probably over 200 people laid down their lives, and several thousands suffered "cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments," as well as loss of rank, and property and liberty. Yet at the end of this twenty-six years of bitter suffering, not only do we not find the christians diminished in number, but—wonderful fact!—increased about twenty fold. But the result is not to be measured by mere numbers so much as by the depth and power of faith in the heart, by the width to which the truth was scattered, and by the grand proof given to the Malagasy and to the world of the truth of christianity.

We close the persecution by emphasizing a few of its *peculiarities*.

(1) One signal feature was that the Malagasy were left alone with the Bible. They had not even the counsel and encouragement of aged christians. They were brought to faith in Christ one day, and the next were left with their