

Next to Mr. Ellis's well-known work on Madagascar, Lieutenant Oliver's* Brochure is the most readable account we have seen of that anomalous island. It is far less extensive than Mr. Ellis's work, as might be expected: Mr. Ellis having spent many years of his life in Antanarivo, the Hova capital of Madagascar, while Mr. Oliver merely paid a flying visit, and that on an occasion when every effort was made to set forth the semi-civilized institutions of the Hovas at their best. Among the pleasantest features of Mr. Oliver's book are the sketches of Madagascar scenery, some of which are of rare boldness and beauty; one or two of them appeared a year or two ago in the "Illustrated London News." Lieutenant Oliver visited the island of Madagascar in the interval between two revolutions. The Hovas, or dominant military and aristocratic caste, who rule the island by right of conquest over the Negro Aborigines, are a fine race of men, mentally and physically superior to the tribes of African origin. They seem to have reached a considerable advance in civilization, which is especially seen in their complex system of aristocratic government: The entire race forms a military caste organized under the command of the chiefs, the office of General being hereditary in the family of the leading noble. The king is at the head only of the civil power—the late queen Ranevolana represented a very old dynasty, and seems to have been a woman of very great energy and talent, reminding one by times of Queen Elizabeth, Catharine II, Lucrezia Borgia, and bloody Mary. She governed with a strong hand, encouraged the introduction of European Arts, and persecuted Christianity as being hostile to the destinies of her race.

Her son, educated by the Christian Missionaries, was represented by Mr. Ellis as a hopeful convert. On his accession, an embassy was sent from Mauritius, to which Lieutenant Oliver was attached to attend the king's coronation. A Bible, a field marshal's uniform, a complete set of brass band instruments were accompanied by an autograph letter from the Queen of England. The embassy reached the capital, and were received with every honour, including unlimited champagne, and the decorations of the new order of Knighthood, the white ribbon and gold star of Radama II. They were presented to the king's wife Rabodo, a pagan, and to his concubine Marie, who favoured the Christians. Mr. Ellis and the Presbyterian Mission were omnipotent, and all was *couleur de rose*.

Now, it had happened that the old Queen Ranevolana had foreseen that her son would fall into the hands of the Presbyterian Mission, and that the old customs and the old religion would fall into neglect. Before her death, she bound Radama by a solemn promise that the place of her burial should at least be sacred to the religion of the "twelve gods," her ancestors, and that none of Mr. Ellis' mission should be allowed to set foot there. She was buried in the sacred city of Amboimango: the holiest place in the island. But after the coronation, such was Mr. Ellis's influence with Marie, that he was able to insist

* Madagascar, by Lieut. Oliver, R.A., London, Longman, 1867.