

With hymns and prayer the Christians went to their fate, singing in the midst of the flames, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive our spirits," and "Lay not this sin to their charge." Showers of rain put out the flames, but they were rekindled more than once.

Fourteen victims were then led to the "Rock of Hurling," about 150 feet above the plain. Bound and wrapped in matting they were lowered a short distance over the edge, and then, on again refusing to worship the idols, the rope was cut and they fell on the rocks below.

By order of the queen, Ranivo was stationed in full view of all these horrors, but still remaining unshaken in her fealty to God, an officer struck her, saying, "You are a fool, you are mad," and she was reported insane and put in safe keeping.

This spectacle had a very impressive effect on the people, convincing many of the reality and power of Divine truth. Believers multiplied; secret meetings were held in seven places in the capital; and sixty-eight members in one church alone celebrated the Lord's supper monthly.

The death, in 1852, of Rainiharo, the prime minister, an adviser of cruelty, gave a little respite from persecution. He was succeeded by his son, a friend of Prince Rakatoud, who became Secretary of State and an officer in the palace. It was rumoured that his mother thought of abdicating in his favour. Encouraged by these good tidings the London Missionary Society sent Rev. Wm. Ellis to investigate affairs and to strengthen the Christians. He succeeded in distributing 1,500 Bibles, Testaments and Psalms. Although active persecution had ceased, yet the Christian religion was still prohibited. He exerted a profound influence on the destiny of the island.

In less than three months a persecution broke out as fierce as ever, partly induced by political events. For some years, two French gentlemen had resided at the capital, a manufacturer and a planter, who now conceived the idea of placing Prince Rakatoud on the throne. Mr. Lambert, the planter, went to France to enlist the help of Napoleon. Failing in this he returned. The plot being found out, the queen was so enraged that she immediately ordered the French gentlemen and two Jesuit priests out of the country. This not sufficing, she vented her rage on the Christians. Being warned, they fled in great numbers to distant parts of the island. Bands of soldiers were sent in search of fugitives, and about 300 were arrested on the charge of praying, reading the Bible and singing hymns. More than 200 were condemned to various punishments, the most prominent being sentenced to death. Fourteen