

upon Missionaries with rather a hostile feeling. At an early date, however, in the present century, the attention of British Christians was turned to this Island, and a Missionary was sent forth who died before reaching his destination. In 1818 the London Missionary Society sent forth its first Missionaries, who, shortly after landing, were prostrated with a dreaded fever prevalent on the coast, and all with one exception died. The only survivor commenced his labours after regaining strength, and opened a school with but three pupils. Such was the small beginning of the Mission in Madagascar 50 years ago. The King who reigned at this time was very favourable to the Missionaries and gave them every encouragement in the promotion of education, and hence in a short time the one school had increased to 32, and the scholars from 3 to 4,000. At the death of this King, however, he was succeeded by one of his wives, a devoted lover of idols, and hence was not favourable to the cause of Christianity. She soon showed her deep hatred of the gospel, and with a view of checking its progress, prohibited any pupils of the mission schools to be baptized or receive the Lord's Supper, and this prohibition was soon after extended to the whole people. This restriction, however, only served to stimulate the Christians, and the converts were constantly increased. The bigoted heathen and idol keepers noticing this their ire was stirred up, and every means were employed to incite the Queen against them. By some measure a list of the places of meeting and of the number baptized was obtained, and she being astonished and enraged at the great progress they were making, declared that she would put a stop to it by the shedding of blood. At once the people and missionaries were apprized of her intention, and consternation and alarm seized them. Dark were the days that soon followed, and heavy were the trials which they had to endure. They were forbidden to meet on Sabbath for worship, and were ordered to deliver up all their Christian books. Persecution now raged with great violence, until at length blood was spilled, and a young woman was honoured to be the first martyr for the cause of Christ on the Island of Madagascar. Spared to death in

the act of prayer, she nobly gave up her life for Him whose cause she dearly espoused, and on the spot where her blood was shed now stands a beautiful church with a handsome spire. Torture was now freely applied to others, many endured fearful sufferings, some escaped from the Island to England, where they excited sympathy, many were put to death and some reduced to slavery. Notwithstanding, however, these trials, some contrived to meet on some mountain top or in some lonely cave and there worship the true God, and even amid these dark times, accessions were made to Christianity from the ranks of heathendom.

In 1849 the persecution burst forth with increased vigor. Great numbers were arrested, and about two thousand condemned to lesser though severer punishments. Some were conducted to the top of a lofty precipice and were taken one by one and pushed, rolled, and kicked over a slope about 60 feet in height. Their bodies were then placed in one pile and buried. After this fearful persecution, however, though subjected to frequent trials, the Christians enjoyed a measure of repose, when in 1861 the good hand of God was seen. The queen, who had been relentless in her bitter opposition and persecutions in that year died, and thus closed the martyr age in the history of the Madagascar Mission.

After the queen's death she was succeeded by King Radama, who though not a Christian, favoured Christianity, and the cruel sentences put into execution during the queen's reign were now no longer thought of. Additional labourers arrived to cultivate the vineyard, large congregations were formed, and the gospel message carried to surrounding villages.

A proposal was soon made to erect memorial churches on the spot where the martyrs suffered, and was nobly responded to in England, the sum of £13,000 being raised. The King readily granted free sites for these churches, and placed no hindrance in the way to retard the spread of Christianity. His reign, however, was of short duration. A revolution breaking out in the capital, he was assassinated, and succeeded by his wife, who gave the same religious-