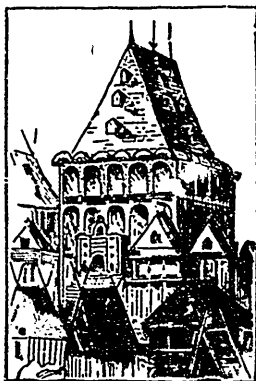


MADAGASCAR.—ITS MISSIONARIES AND MARTYRS.*

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ROYAL PALACE,
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THREE hundred miles off the south-east coast of Africa is situated the island of Madagascar, the third largest island in the world, four times the size of England and Wales. With several mountain ranges, the highest peak reaching 9,000 feet, there is a delightful climate; numerous streams and lakes give fertility to many plains, now well cultivated. The hilly region is surrounded by a dense forest belt of valuable timber. The flora and fauna are abundant, furnishing two hundred and fifty varieties of ferns, and orchids unrivalled, with numberless birds of beautiful plumage, and small animals

in great numbers. Unquestionably the uplands are attractive.

The climate in the low country, sloping to the coast, is, on the contrary, hot and damp, producing malaria, very prejudicial to the health of Europeans. Rice is the staple food, and fruits grow similar to those of India and China. The people are called Malagasy, from the Malays, being Polynesian rather than African, although the original inhabitants may have come from South Africa. They formed numerous tribes, speaking various dialects, but had no written characters till Christian missionaries reduced the language to writing, thus opening the door of intercourse here, as in so many islands of the deep, with the outside world.

Although not so degraded as some, yet many evils prevailed, such as lying, theft, laziness, drunkenness, polygamy, infanticide,

*Gleanings from "Madagascar, Its Missionaries and Martyrs." By William John Townsend, D.D. Toronto: William Briggs.

Current events in Madagascar give special interest to the story of its conversion to Christianity. A recent paper says: "The French are bullying the Hovas of Madagascar again. On the score of carrying blessing, with her she has positively no excuse at all for interfering in Madagascar. She found there a Christian government, progressing rapidly in civilization—a civilization due chiefly to the self-denial of English missionaries. The French carried thither a condition of ceaseless petty war between them and the lawful government. They found there a necessary prohibitory law