

the story of that martyr church two facts stand out like opposing mountain peaks on a landscape—like Gerizim, the mount of blessing, and Ebal, the mount of curse, at the gateway to the plains of Sychar—the intense hatred of the persecuting queen and her court toward the new Bible, and the equally intense love and devotion of the Hova martyrs for that hated and proscribed book.

History furnishes few more pathetic tales of heroism, even where touched with the pencil of romantic fancy, than is found in the martyr church of Madagascar. The blessed Book had to be treasured in secret, and in secret read and studied. Discovery meant the sure destruction of the book, and the almost equally sure death of the possessor. Every copy of the Bible was therefore kept and read at a risk of life. A quarter of a century is a long period of testing; but they stood the test. When some of the Bibles were found, as they were, and committed to the flames, they hid the rest in trunks of trees and in rock caves, and many of them committed large portions to the memory, that at least one imperishable record might be preserved which no fire could destroy.

And, when the missionaries once more found welcome at Madagascar, very few complete Bibles were left; perhaps not more than a dozen or so survived; and with these was associated a most pathetic interest. They were thumbed and worn into shreds, or patched and so preserved, but treated as precious relics that no price could buy; and he was counted specially happy who could produce even a few leaves of the sacred Word, however soiled or ragged through much use, or mildewed with the mould of the damp place where they had been secreted.

The revision of this early translation supplies in its way a story scarcely less romantic. On December 1st, 1873, eight foreigners and three natives began a work, not completed until thirteen years later, of retranslation. When the first Bible had been prepared, the knowledge of the language had been so imperfect that, as in all other similar cases, errors had inevitably crept in, and it became necessary to prepare another version, embodying all the results of later and more accurate scholarship. On that new Revision Committee five denominations of Christians were represented, all working in loving harmony during all the years of the work, though only two Europeans and one native, who were members at the inception, remained on the committee until its completion.

The meetings were held on Wednesdays, and two sittings of three days each were given to the task. So slowly and carefully was the work done that a day was sometimes spent on a dozen verses, though sometimes from sixty to eighty were covered. But what a beautiful sight in God's eyes it must have been, when, for nearly fourteen years, Anglicans and Lutherans, Pres-

byterians, Independents and Friends sat every week studiously seeking to make a new and complete Bible for the people, forgetting all minor differences in one absorbing aim and work! and, as Mr. Cousins beautifully says, even Mr. Richardson's Malagasy Dictionary lying comparatively unused on the table, because at one end was a living lexicon of the native language in the person of three native helpers, to whom, in fact, the final revision was mainly entrusted.

When the labor of these long years reached completion, and the prayers of more than six hundred successive sessions had been answered, it was felt that a thanksgiving service should signalize the close of such a gigantic task. And the place chosen for such a praise service—there could be none so appropriate—was the stone memorial church at Ambónin' Ampamarinana, the sanctuary reared on the verge of the precipice over which, thirty-eight years before, fourteen Malagasy martyrs had been flung, because they loved that Bible and would not disown the Christ it had revealed!

But in what different circumstances that thanksgiving service was held! When that earliest edition had been completed, a storm of pitiless persecution was beating on the heads of native Christians, before which even the translators were driven away. Now it was eighteen years since the public burning of the idols, and at the thanksgiving meeting behold His Excellency, Rainilaiarwóny, the Prime Minister, sent by a Christian queen, Ranavalona II., the first Christian sovereign of Madagascar, to represent her and convey to all who had aided in this great work the thanks of the queen.

With what emotions must they who remembered the horrors of the reign of the first Ranavalona have heard this noble premier, the queen's consort, as he told of the profound personal interest his royal wife had taken in the work of revision, and how in her jealousy for its perfection she had herself often suggested to the revisers certain suitable words and phrases to convey the sacred sense. And so in more than two thousand congregations and nearly as many schools, representing more than three hundred thousand Protestant Christians, this revised Bible is to be used.

If facts have any force, surely no one who candidly surveys this panoramic scene can doubt that a Divine Artist has been at work. The hand of God has drawn these outlines, and there is a touch of celestial coloring. The rainbow round about the throne reflects its sevenfold beauty in the history of the Hova Church: there is something which arches this whole seventy-five years, in sight like unto an emerald. Shall we question the Divine sanction upon missions when seventy-five years among the Hovas work such changes and reveal such fruits?—*Dr. A. T. Pierson in Missionary Review.*