

If the spiritual life be thus maintained, what will be the outcome in the daily life of the Ideal Member? Will there not be loving consideration and ready sympathy, as well as a cheerful yielding up of her own wishes to others, when their wishes do not clash with her duty to her Lord and King? Will not her mother find her a real comfort and help in the house, and would not her brothers and sisters unconsciously turn to her in trouble and need, feeling sure that her desire for their highest good would lead her to seek heavenly wisdom in order to guide them aright?

The Ideal Member would much value Christian fellowship and opportunities of Bible Study with the Members of her Branch, but here, too, she would seek to be guided by her Master, so as cheerfully to give up this real help and enjoyment, if by so doing, she could minister to the comfort or real need of another. The Ideal Member will seek to take sickness as much from her Father's hands as days of health and strength, and should she be laid aside she will recognise that suffering is only to the Lord's child another and higher form of service.

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Member of Victoria House, Brighton (Central).

The Isles of the Sea.

OUR Missionary Prayer Subject takes us all over the world, for there is no ocean where the Isles are not found, beginning from the one which is really a Continent—Australia—to the thousands of small Isles in the South Pacific, and the Isles off our own coasts. Try and reckon over some with your fellow Members.

Instead of going over many, we are telling you of only one, the great Island of Madagascar, which is to-day in special need of prayer; for the French wish to conquer it, and war is going on, for the people are not willing to give up their independence. Pray for the Christians, and ask that God may overrule this sorrow, and that His work may not suffer.

Story of the Madagascar Mission.

TRULY this is a wonderful story. In 1816 an embassy was sent from England to RADAMA, king of Madagascar, in answer to his desire for civilization and political position. He was a young man of considerable personal character, who seemed beyond his time, and awake to many of the follies consequent on idol worship. The year following that of the treaty saw two Welsh Missionaries and their wives arrive at the port TAMATAVE, sent by the London Missionary Society. It was, however, an unhealthy season, and

in seven weeks from the date of their landing, Mr and Mrs Bevan and their little child, with Mrs Jones and infant daughter, had succumbed to malarial fever. Mr Jones determined not to go back, though his health obliged him to leave the island for a while to recruit in Mauritius.

He started work at length at ANTANANARIVO, the capital of Madagascar, with favour from the king, who was willing Christianity should be taught, in order to secure other instruction for his people. We can imagine this pioneer missionary in his loneliness, learning the strange, unwritten language, with no companionship save that of his God, living in the house appointed for his use by the king. After he had remained at Antananarivo a year, he had the joy of welcoming a fellow-labourer, Mr John Griffiths, and later, Mr Johns and the Rev. John Jeffreys, with four skilled artisans, who were to teach their trades at the king's request.

So things went on for eleven years, growing and expanding under God's blessing in a marvellous degree. In 1828 a public examination of the four thousand children in thirty-two schools took place, a marked contrast to eight years before, when the first school of three scholars was started in the Missionary's room.

This event was followed shortly by another of great importance to the Christian Missionaries: King RADAMA died. Before his death, having no son, he had appointed a nephew as his heir. One of RADAMA's wives determined she should be queen, and caused the death of the young prince. RANAVALONA, for such was her name, feared lest any other claimant to the throne should appear, and in a short time every member of the late king's family, companions, and friends, were killed at her command. The Missionaries naturally feared they would come also under her displeasure, but, strange as it seems, nothing but encouragement was given, at all events for a time. Be it remembered, till this moment, not one Malagasy had renounced heathenism by baptism. Now, the queen proclaimed liberty for such, and twenty-eight baptisms took place.

The heathen priests were not to be ousted like this, and took the opportunity of instilling into RANAVALONA'S mind that the large assemblies gathered in Sundays in the chapels were honouring a Jehovah who was king of England, and His Son Jesus, and that soon they would transfer their allegiance from her. She took the hint, and heathen practices were once more sanctioned publicly by the Government, and hindrances placed in the way of Christianity. Seven years from the commencement of her reign, an edict was issued, sum-

moning men, women, and children to be present in the capital on a certain Sunday. A proclamation was then read by the chief judge, forbidding the continuance of any religious customs, save those of their ancestors, and if within a month every person so doing had not confessed to his or her share in the matter, they should be put to death on the accusation of others.

The time was afterwards limited to a week. It was a testing time. Some withdrew their former profession, and fell back into heathenism. Many more held together, and joined in prayer, in spite of its prohibition by the queen. The last day arrived, but in answer to the united appeals from the provinces for the band of Christians, RANAVALONA withheld her hand, and not one person suffered death, though many were fined and reduced in rank, to the number of 2,400. This was not the end but the commencement of persecution. Christian instruction, worship, prayer, books, were all forbidden under penalty of death. Sunday was publicly desecrated by compulsory work. The Missionaries being unable to do anything to help their brethren left three months later, being followed by the remaining two, the next year, 1836. In the twelve months' space between, the persecution seemed not as water but as oil on the fire of Christian enthusiasm. Converts pressed in, and went through much danger in order to procure portions of the Word of God. They met on the mountain tops, where they might pray and praise undisturbed, their sentinels on the watch ever ready to give warning. Only one suffered death at this time, a young woman who was persuaded by her captors that the names of all the Christians were known, and who thus revealed those of seven of her companions. She found out her mistake, and feeling her further profession could bring her no further harm, did not hesitate to exhort others to turn to the only Refuge and Saviour. After much torture, she was speared to death.

Persons of all ranks were in peril of their lives. A noble woman of high position was one of those who opened her house for prayer and private reading of the Scriptures. She was accused by her slaves, and acknowledged herself a disciple of Jesus. Her execution was ordered by the queen, but being the daughter of an important member of the State, she was instead fined half her property. Again information was laid against her. She was arrested, but a fearful fire in the capital awed the queen and those around her, and an order was issued to "discontinue Government service," which meant that no further business should be proceeded with, and this led to her being kept five months in prison, after which she was sold in the public market-place. A

distant relative bought her, who showed her much kindness, allowing her much liberty. Her husband, a colonel in the army, obtained a few months' leave of absence, and visited her. Once more she gathered fellow Christians together, but this time she was betrayed by one of their professed members. Flight only was available. For months she and a friend wandered in the country towards the west. Wonderful were their escapes. Once hidden for a day and night in a pit covered with thorn bushes, once behind an unfastened door in an empty room, the other side of which were the seeking soldiers hidden under a mat close by them; we hold our breath as we read. After a time of fearful perils and privations, they were put on board ship under the guise of sailors, and landed at Mauritius.

Others, not having the opportunity of flight, were flogged, tried by an ordeal of poison, and those who escaped were, by command of the queen, to be put in a pit and boiling water poured on them till dead.

A season of comparative quiet followed, owing to the influence of the queen's son, who was himself a believer, but after two years, in 1849, the storm burst forth with renewed vigour. As in the plain of Babylon of old, all the people were to assemble to renew their oaths of worship to the idols. Multitudes refused, and four were condemned to be burnt; fourteen to be hurled from the edge of a rock, and their wives and children to be sold into irredeemable slavery; a hundred and seventeen to labour in chains for life; to be publicly flogged, fined, etc. Officers were fined and reduced to the lowest grade, and Prince RAMONJA, a zealous Christian, nephew of the queen, who had been the means of influencing her son to Christianity, holding high rank in the army, was fined heavily and reduced to the rank of a common soldier.

Thus the time went on. The queen's regulations were read every fortnight, but, except in the capital, gradually fell off in the severity of their observance. RANAVALONA gradually placed more authority in the hands of her son, and it was known that there was a renewed desire for intercourse with England. Negotiations were re-entered through Mr Ellis, a London Missionary Society Missionary, and Mr Cameron, who in 1853 landed at Tamatave bearing a memorial from the people of England, expressing friendship. They were courteously received, but not encouraged to stay.

Four years later Mr Ellis again conveyed assurances of friendship of the British Government to the queen, and also sent presents. A warm reception awaited him during the month he stayed at the capital. But perse-

cution was not over. A plot was discovered to dethrone the queen. RANAVALONA professed to have discovered it as a proposal of the Christians, and once more many were stoned to death, banished in irons, poisoned, sold as slaves. This was the last outbreak. In 1861 Queen RANAVALONA died, and her son took her place as RADAMA II. His first act was one of mercy. He invited foreigners to return, proclaimed religious liberty, and liberation of all exiles, prisoners, and captives. He was favourable as formerly to Christianity, but not decided as a Christian. Unhappily he overreached himself, and in trying to plant too many reforms at once, lost the confidence of the people, and not long after he was assassinated. His wife reigned about two years and then died a heathen. The next day, 2nd April 1868, RADAMA's cousin, RAMONA, sister of Prince RAMONJA, was proclaimed queen, under the name of RANAVALONA II. A devoted Christian herself, the people were glad to follow her decided example, and ere long, as a voluntary act, burnt their idols. Christ was triumphantly acknowledged, and many blessings were borne in on the tide. Schools and churches multiplied, though not without some difficulties also. Queen RAMONA died in 1883, and was succeeded by her niece, who as a girl was trained in the schools of the Society of Friends and the London Missionary Society.

What was the power which enabled the converts to stand so firm? It was that they were firmly grounded in the Word of God. In a book just published, called "Madagascar of To-Day," it is said: "The Christianity of our converts in Madagascar has been described by Romanists as consisting mainly of 'reading the Bible.' The Bible has taken a great hold on the minds of the people. Love of the Bible was one of the most marked characteristics of the persecuted Christians, and I see no prospect of the Bible losing its supreme place in the love and esteem of the people."

There are now about 107 Protestant Missionaries, with 2004 congregations, and a total of 375,000 adherents, more than 96,000 of whom are Church members, and the Protestant Schools contain 120,000.

As there are 4,000,000 inhabitants, even these numbers are few in comparison of those still heathen. May those who are Christ's be so imbued with His Spirit as to labour to win others!

Branch Reports.

TULSE HILL AND WEST NORWOOD.—On May 10th this Branch removed to Sterndale Lodge, Tulse Hill—larger premises—so that a Home and Institute is now

combined. The Rev. E. L. Roxby presided and spoke, and Miss Ellis of Gipsy Hill told how a Branch and Home could be worked successfully. There was a large attendance, and interest was enlisted.

A. KING *Hon. Treasurer.*

UPPER NORWOOD AND WEST DULWICH.—On May 30th this Branch held its Annual Gathering of Members and friends in St. Aubyn's Hall. Three hundred attended. The chair was taken by Rev. J. R. Edwards, who opened with prayer, and those present joined well in our Y.W.C.A. hymn, "True-hearted, Whole-hearted." The address was given by Rev. W. E. Peters of Guildford, who gave some timely words of advice, counsel, and encouragement.

C. ELLIS, *Hon Sec.*

BANBURY.—The Annual Meeting of this Branch was held in the Cadbury Memorial Hall on Friday, May 4th, and was largely attended.

The proceedings commenced with the hearty singing of "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" Mr Austen occupied the chair, and made some very appropriate remarks on the value of the Bible and its undying power. The Hon. Secretary then read the Report, which was a summary of work done during the past year, and the Treasurer's account, which was satisfactory. After the singing of a hymn,

Miss Ginger gave a beautiful address, based on 1 John iii. 16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." She showed us that these words cover a large range of time—ever since Christ was manifest upon earth in the flesh. Two thoughts suggest themselves here—*Sacrifice* and *Victory*. We cannot dissociate Christ from sacrifice, first and chiefly on the Cross, but also throughout His earthly life—from Bethlehem to Calvary. He came to do the will of God and to finish His work. "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Victory follows the sacrifice. God has linked the two together, and if we are faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ we must know something of sacrifice here below, and we shall know victory also. He asks us to give our lives to Him in perfect, full, and glad surrender. He laid down His life for us. Try to live as He lived on earth—to walk as He walked; share His cross and share His triumph. When He cometh may we have many sheaves to lay at His feet. Let us now be found among those who are helping to establish His kingdom.

The meeting closed with the hearty singing of "All Hail the power of Jesu's Name," and the Benediction.

On Saturday evening Miss Ginger most kindly had a talk with the children attending the Saturday afternoon