

MADAGASCAR IN WAR TIME

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THE 'TIMES' SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT'S EXPERIENCES
AMONG THE HOVAS DURING THE
FRENCH INVASION OF 1895

BY

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'WHERE THREE EMPIRES MEET' 'THE CRUISE OF THE FALCON'
'THE CRUISE OF THE ALERTE' ETC.

WITH A MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

My thanks are due to the 'Times' for the kind permission I have received to reproduce in this book portions of my letters from Madagascar, which appeared in that newspaper.

E. F. KNIGHT.

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MAP: MADAGASCAR *At End*

MADAGASCAR IN WAR TIME



CHAPTER I

VOYAGE TO MADAGASCAR—RUNNING A BLOCKADE—I LAND AT FORT
DAUPHIN—CIVIL WARS AND REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH—HELPLESS-
NESS OF THE HOVAS

ONE day, towards the end of January 1895, a telegram was delivered to me in Cornwall, instructing me to proceed to Antananarivo without delay. The paper I represented had originally intended to send me to Majunga, to join the French Madagascar expedition, but the French Government, when applied to, refused to grant the necessary permission, and replied that no foreign correspondents would be allowed to accompany the expeditionary force. I learnt afterwards that even French newspaper correspondents were unwelcome in the French camp, and that they all returned home, in disgust, long before the termination of the campaign.

As the French would not have me with them, it was decided to send me to Antananarivo, to see the fighting from the Hova side, and my immediate object was to reach, as soon as possible, the head-

quarters of Colonel Shervington, the English officer who was at that time the military adviser of the Hova Government, and was supposed to be virtually in command of the Hova forces. It was understood in England that Colonel Shervington had organised the defences of the country against the French invasion, that the Hovas were a brave and patriotic people, that their army was fairly well trained and well equipped. Those who knew the difficulties of the country which the French would have to traverse, foretold that General Duchesne's force would not reach the capital that season, if it ever did so at all. I therefore left England in full expectation that the Hovas would make a determined resistance, and that I was to be the spectator of a most interesting campaign. There can be no doubt that in none of our own recent native wars have we been opposed to a foe that appeared so formidable. The Queen could summon her warriors in hundreds of thousands; rifles and ammunition were not lacking; the Hovas had far better artillery than any the French could bring against them; and of cattle and rice wherewith to feed the troops there was an unlimited supply. In short, nothing was wanting to the Hovas save the most essential thing of all. Had they possessed one tithe of the pluck of the Matabele, for example, the French expedition could have been cut up over and over again, as the French officers themselves have frequently admitted to me.

I had received my instructions, and it was now

my business to get to the Hova camp as best I could. I should have to avoid the vigilance of the French, and run the blockade, if one had been declared by the time I arrived off the Madagascar coast. It was certain that the French would prevent any Englishman from betaking himself to the Hova capital on such a mission as was my own, if they could catch him; and I afterwards learnt that they were very wroth at Tamatave when news came that I had landed on the island.

The intermediate steamers of the Castle Line call once a month at the eastern ports of Madagascar on their way to Mauritius. The boats on this route are the smallest and slowest of the company, and the voyage is a long one, occupying about seven weeks. I sailed from Southampton on the 'Dunbar Castle,' on February 2, and took the precaution of booking my passage for Mauritius instead of for a Madagascar port, for it was understood that agents of the French Government were inspecting the passenger lists at this time, and were on the look-out for British adventurers who were seeking service in the Hova army.

It was, of course, impossible for me, until I should reach the island, to form any definite plans. If the steamers were closely watched at each Madagascar port of call, I might find it necessary to tranship at sea on to some innocent-looking Mauritian schooner, or to go to Zanzibar and charter a dhow. That I should have little difficulty in accomplishing

my end in some way I had little doubt. So, too, thought Captain Pierce, our skipper of the 'Dunbar Castle,' and many were the discussions we had together, and the ingenious schemes we formed during our long but pleasant voyage. We called at Las Palmas, Cape Town, Mossel Bay, Port Elizabeth, East London, and Delagoa Bay. At the last-mentioned port, by the way, we found the Portuguese, as usual, beleaguered by the Kafirs. The enemy was within two or three miles of the town, and a battle was expected on the morning after our sailing. The Portuguese had recently sent out reinforcements, and the men were dying off like rotten sheep in the barracks as their predecessors had done before them. Since then, however, the Portuguese have succeeded—at last—in subduing the natives, and the king of Gazaland, our old friend Gungunhana, is their prisoner.

It was not till we reached Durban that I was able to gather any news of the French expedition or of the state of affairs in Madagascar. The 'Garth Castle' had recently called at Durban, and had brought information that was far from reassuring to me. Her captain stated that the French were still in occupation of Tamatave alone, and that all the east coast ports south of Tamatave were open; but that in all probability no passengers would be permitted to land at those ports, as recent events had aroused the suspicions of the French. It was asserted that some of the passengers who had been

put on shore by British steamers had openly avowed their intention of lending assistance to the Hovas, while three Englishmen who had been expelled from Tamatave had contrived to land at Vatomandry and proceed to the capital, notwithstanding that the captain of the vessel on which they had taken passage had entered into a written agreement with the French authorities to the effect that he would land no passengers. This last incident more especially had exasperated the French, and they were said to be keeping a more vigilant watch than heretofore on British shipping. Though they were bound by a recent agreement with the European merchants on the island not to proclaim a blockade of the eastern ports, they now threatened to protect themselves against these alleged breaches of neutrality by escorting with their gunboats British steamers trading on the coast. This would have been tantamount to a blockade, for the Hovas would of a certainty have refused to send off their lighters or surf-boats so long as a French gunboat was in sight, and it would therefore have been impossible to receive or discharge cargo.

On receiving this report, the Castle Company, so as to avoid any risk of complications, announced that for the future no passengers could be booked for the south-eastern ports of Madagascar. This order had just been issued when we called at Durban, and the Company's agent at that port was inclined to refuse me a passage unless I could procure

a passport from the French Consul, a somewhat absurd suggestion; and I need scarcely say that I carefully avoided an interview with the last-mentioned gentleman, as to have acquainted him with my purpose would have most probably ruined all my chances of landing in Madagascar.

Happily for me, however, we had the right sort of skipper on the 'Dunbar Castle.' Captain Pierce, who had received instructions concerning me before leaving England, is of an adventurous spirit, and no shirker of responsibility. He was determined to fulfil the promise he had made me, and assured me that he would succeed in landing me somewhere on the island. He afforded me every assistance in his power, without in any way violating the arrangements that had been entered into with the French. Up to that date the Castle boats had made a practice of calling at the Madagascar ports on their homeward voyage from Mauritius, Tamatave being their first port of call on the island. But Captain Pierce now decided to take the reverse route with the 'Dunbar Castle;' for, had we first entered Tamatave, the French authorities would no doubt have demanded of him an undertaking not to land passengers on the coast, and would have raised such difficulties, if he refused to give it, that in all probability I should have been carried back to Natal. The 'Dunbar Castle,' therefore, called at the Madagascar ports on her outward instead of her homeward voyage, and in the following order: Fort Dauphin, Mananjara,

Vatomandry, Tamatave. This gave me three chances of landing.

One piece of information I obtained at Durban made me feel very impatient to be on shore in Madagascar, for it appeared that I had no time to spare if I wished to be present at the opening of the campaign, and it was possible that I was already too late. I saw a letter written to a friend by an officer on Colonel Shervington's staff; it was dated six weeks back, and stated that Colonel Shervington had already set out from Antananarivo for the front—presumably the neighbourhood of Majunga—and that the entire staff was shortly to follow him. This officer was of opinion that the Hovas could keep the French out of the island for at least two years.

We were joined at Durban by another passenger for Madagascar, the Rev. J. Pearse, of the London Missionary Society, who has lived in Madagascar for thirty years, and most probably understands the language and the people better than any other white man on the island. He is a missionary of the old sort—that is, a man who honestly endeavours to do good, who speaks the truth about the people, neither exaggerating the results of the mission work among them, nor veiling their faults; not the man to give a glowing but quite misleading description of 'Christian Madagascar' for the gratification of a suburban mission meeting; a Dissenter of broad views, and no narrow-minded bigot full of prejudices against all who

do not agree with the tenets of his sect. There are, I am glad to say, other missionaries like him in Madagascar. There are others very unlike him, and these last would describe him as too old-fashioned. I think most people would find more to admire and respect in the old than in the new fashion ; but this is a matter concerning which I shall have more to say in the course of this book.

Mr. Pearse's station is at Fianarantsoa, in the centre of the island, to which Mananjara is the nearest port. He was as anxious as myself to reach our destination as soon as possible, and we arranged to be companions so far as our way lay together. Of the three ports at which we could land, Vatomandry is 98 miles from the capital, Mananjara 280 miles, and Fort Dauphin about 570 miles. It seemed to us that our safest course would be to disembark at Fort Dauphin. It was true that from that port the journey would be a long one ; we should have to leave most of our baggage behind, and probably have to tramp it, for bearers are not easily procurable in the south of Madagascar ; but, on the other hand, if we went north with the steamer we should run a great risk of not landing at all, as we were informed that the French gunboats were frequently cruising off Mananjara and Vatomandry, whereas they had hitherto never come so far south as Fort Dauphin.

Mr. Pearse had never travelled in the south of the island, which is but little known, and is inhabited

by savage tribes. However, there were two creole passengers on board who had traded in Fort Dauphin. They told us that only one white man before had undertaken the journey we contemplated, that the road was very difficult, and that, since the misunderstanding had arisen between the French and the Hova Government, the south country was in a state of anarchy, so that no men would dare to accompany us as carriers. We also had to bear in mind that the steamer could carry us as great a distance in one day as we could travel in a month on shore, walking along the hot sea sands and wading through the great swamps. It was also certain that we should be attacked by fever in the course of so long a tramp on the malarious coast.

We were, therefore, still undecided as to what we should do when the 'Dunbar Castle' sailed from Delagoa Bay on March 12, and her course was shaped for the southern end of the great island of Madagascar. On the evening of March 16 we were off Cape St. Mary, the southern extremity of the island, where, as is often the case, a strong wind was blowing and the sea was rough. Throughout the night we steamed along the mountainous coast, and early on the following morning, March 17, the 'Dunbar Castle' let go her anchor in the lovely bay on whose shore is situated the little Hova settlement of Fort Dauphin. No French gunboat was in sight, and it was the Hova flag that flew over the fort. This spacious harbour is enclosed by sandy dunes, behind

which rise steep mountains of bold outline. The mountain sides, and even the sandhills, are clothed with an abundant vegetation—then beautifully green after the summer rains. The little town of thatched huts nestles in verdure; while on a bluff commanding the sea stands the old French fort, built at the time of their first occupation, in 1646—a strong place in its day, whose ruined walls surround the residence of the Hova Governor and the ill-equipped arsenal.

We saw naked black people hurrying up the hill-sides; but for some time it looked as if the natives had no intention of communicating with the vessel. I learnt afterwards that as no Castle boat was expected we were at first mistaken for a French man-of-war, and caused quite a panic among the inhabitants. For some thirty hours before we entered the bay it had been blowing hard from the north-east, and a big swell had risen; so when the natives at last became reassured as to our true character and launched a small lighter through the surf, they had a long struggle against wind and sea before they got alongside of us. I now had my first glimpse of the people among whom I had to travel, the tribesmen of the south coast. Utter savages they appeared to be as they squatted naked on the battened-down lighter, labouring at their oars and screaming discordantly. Their ugly heads were crowned with that thick mop of hair which characterises the Papuan, and they bore a remarkable resemblance to the savage natives of some of the South Sea islands,

and are indeed supposed to be partly of the same race.

The lighter also brought off three white traders who boarded us, and were anxious to learn the news. They were Englishmen, for the Queen had banished all French subjects from the island some months before. The Hova Governor, on receiving notice of this decree on January 16, expelled the French residents, fifty in number, from Fort Dauphin; and had it not been for the intercession of Mr. Ralph, the agent here of the well-known Madagascar firm of Procter Brothers, the Governor would have driven them out at fifteen minutes' notice and confiscated their baggage. On my arrival there were about a dozen Europeans in Fort Dauphin—English and Germans, and one Norwegian lady missionary.

The 'Dunbar Castle' had but little cargo to discharge, and was to sail in an hour, so Mr. Pearse and myself had to make up our minds quickly as to what we should do. Our visitors from the shore told us that we should be able to procure bearers at Fort Dauphin without difficulty, a most extraordinary misstatement on their part; but that which chiefly determined our decision was the state of the weather. Captain Pierce was anxious to land me as near to my destination as possible, and he was of opinion that the land journey from Fort Dauphin might present insurmountable difficulties; but he told me that it was doubtful whether the high wind and consequent swell would allow of the lighters

coming off to us across the dangerous bars either at Mananjara or Vatomandry—both open roadsteads, and not sheltered like Fort Dauphin Bay—in which case he would be compelled to pass both ports and proceed to Tamatave. This was a risk we would not run, so after a short consultation we decided to undertake the long land journey, packed up our things, clambered down to the lighter, and were just landing through the surf on the sandy beach at the head of the bay as the 'Dunbar Castle' disappeared round the point on her northward journey.

We walked across the sands towards the town, and while Mr. Pearse took up his abode in the Norwegian mission house, I was hospitably received by Mr. Ralph, who, when I informed him that I wished to set out on the following morning, shook his head and told me that in these troublous times I should be very lucky indeed if I succeeded in procuring even a few carriers after a week's diligent searching; he was not even certain that I should be able to engage carriers at all, despite offers of high pay. I now realised to my dismay that my first informants—possibly with the best intentions in the world—had completely deceived me, and that I might find myself detained at Fort Dauphin for weeks before I could make a start.

Mr. Ralph at once despatched messengers to seek men for me, and he then imparted to me all the latest news of the southern end of the island, for of what had been going on at Tamatave, Antananarivo, or on

the west coast, he knew no more than we did. He told me that the whole of this part of the island was in a very disturbed condition—its normal state, by the way. It must be remembered that only the central provinces of the island have been brought completely under the Hova rule. The greater portion of Madagascar is virtually independent, though the Hovas have a few lines of fortified posts traversing the country, by which safe communication is kept up. In the south the Hova rule is extremely weak. The Hova posts are on the sea-coast only, and are far apart from each other. The interior is not only out of their control, but is practically unexplored. Fort Dauphin is the last of these posts, and south of it is a land of absolute savagery. The nearest post to the north, on the road to the capital, is more than 150 miles away. Most of the southern tribes have never owned allegiance to the Hovas, and Mr. Ralph explained to me that those tribes over which the Hovas had exercised some authority had seized the opportunity of the French invasion to rise in open rebellion. The Hovas are cordially hated by the southern peoples, and this, their most remote post, was in some danger; for the garrison of Fort Dauphin was isolated and surrounded by enemies on all sides. This garrison consisted of one hundred listless and very unsoldierly-looking Hova soldiers, armed with rusty Sniders, poor specimens of the Queen's army. They were now caught in a trap, for they were living in dread of another bombardment by the French, yet

would not have dared to run away if it had occurred ; to have escaped into the country would have meant to be cut to pieces by the tribesmen, who, though no friends of the French, were eager to avenge the cruelties perpetrated by the Hovas in former years.

Even in Fort Dauphin itself the Governor and his officers appeared to have no authority. Despite the Queen's order that all property should be respected, the people had pillaged the stores of the expelled Frenchmen, and were stealing the goods of the English and other merchants whenever they got the opportunity. Within the last three years some Europeans have established a trading station at Mandrare, thirty miles to the south-east of Fort Dauphin, and consequently in a country where the Hovas are powerless. The Antandroy, a savage people occupying the extreme south of the island, entered this place on March 5, drove off the Europeans, and plundered all the stores. They were reported to be advancing on Fort Dauphin, whose garrison they could have easily overpowered. To the west and north also of Fort Dauphin the tribes were in arms, and were engaging in little wars with each other. This part of the country is occupied by the Antanosy, the numerous subdivisions of which tribe are ruled by kings and queens, sometimes of fairer complexion than their subjects, being the descendants of Arabs who long since founded these petty dynasties. But revolution appears to be in the air in Madagascar ;

the tribesmen were everywhere rising against their hereditary rulers and creating little Republican States. I heard that on the route we were to follow, near St. Lucia Bay, the Loyalists and Republicans of a tribe governed by a queen were engaged in civil war, while a few mile to the westward of Fort Dauphin a battle between two neighbouring tribes was daily expected.

These little wars are not, as a rule, attended with much bloodshed, but they lead to a considerable destruction of property, and had at this time brought trade to a complete standstill. The natives had ceased to bring in from the forests the indiarubber which is the principal article of export, and, on the other hand, there was no sale for cloth. The European merchants were unable to carry on any business, and it was evident that there was no security for life or property. The arrival of a French gunboat would have been welcomed, for the Hova Governor had no longer power to afford protection. Mr. Ralph told me that traders in the south could then neither obtain reparation nor protection. He had written in vain to the British Consul, who had replied that if Englishmen were rash enough to establish themselves in the unsettled portions of the island they must take the consequences. Then Mr. Ralph addressed himself to the Governor of Fort Dauphin and claimed compensation for the losses he had suffered at the looting of Mandrare. The Governor, in a very polite letter, regretted that lamentable incident, but, true Hova

that he is, did not reply directly to Mr. Ralph's request. He pointed out that the French invasion was responsible for all the mischief; the southern people were 'now so sore in their patriotic hearts, hence these outrages.'

CHAPTER II

CHARACTER OF THE HOVAS—THE GOVERNOR OF FORT DAUPHIN—FORCED
LABOUR—HOVA ADMINISTRATION—AN UNHAPPY GOVERNOR—A DIFFI-
CULT ROAD—BOYCOTTED—PALANQUIN TRAVELLING—PROVINCE OF
ANOSY—MALAGASY COINAGE

MR. PEARSE and myself, on the morning of our arrival, went up to the *Rova* (fort) to pay our respects to the Governor. We walked through the narrow streets of the town, which are bordered by little stalls, presenting somewhat the appearance of an Oriental bazaar, but having little of the picturesqueness of the East. No ornamental weapons, no objects of native art of any description were exposed for sale. I saw only the cheap hardware of Europe, cloth from America, native-made implements, pottery and other articles for common use, which made no pretensions to beauty. The stalls where fruit and vegetables were sold were alone at all pleasing to the eye. It is a curious fact that one never comes across any sign of artistic faculty among the natives of Madagascar. The Hovas themselves, when taught by the missionaries, can soon turn out work as good as that of the ordinary European artisan ; they are clever imitators, but appear to be incapable of invention, and possess merely, as Dr. Allen puts it in a mission report, a

‘sterile quick-wittedness.’ That so intelligent a people should be so void of originality is but one indication of that lack of backbone which characterises this flabby race.

At first every traveller is favourably impressed by the Hovas, but this is not a case in which the first impressions are the best. As I walked with Mr. Pearse through the town on my way to the Rova, and looked at the light-complexioned Hovas, many of whom are not so dark as the Southern Italian peasantry, and observed their gentle, courteous ways, I realised that I was among a people who had attained a fairly high standard of civilisation, if outward appearances were to be trusted, and I should not have been much surprised to find them, on further acquaintance, as estimable as some of the missionaries would have us believe. I was deceived at first, like all travellers in Madagascar; for it takes time, when dealing with so plausible a people, to arrive at the falseness, the cruelty, the cowardice, the outrageous conceit, so complete that it rarely finds expression, the contemptible nature, that underlie this fair veneer; but I do not think I was ever quite so taken in by their specious manners as was that enthusiastic Madagascar correspondent of a London paper, who, about this time, wrote that the Hovas were the finest of the yellow races, not excepting the Japanese, and were even ‘superior to some of the European peoples, the Spaniards for example.’

I was much struck at first by the contrast between



Tanoy Tribesmen

the Hovas, of whom outside the garrison there are but few at Fort Dauphin, and the natives of the district, belonging to the Tanosy tribe, who form the bulk of the town population. Through the bustling crowds of noisy coast savages, most of whom were naked save for the loin-cloth, some armed with spear and shield, dark bronze, or even black of skin, with hideous Papuan mops of hair, with features of low type, often repulsively ugly, there walked with quiet stately step the yellow men of the higher race, of shorter stature than the savages, though of good physique, of refined features, some of them clad in European dress, but most of them simply wearing the *lamba* of white cloth, which is wrapped round the body in graceful folds, and the broad-brimmed high-crowned Hova straw hat. But before I left the country I had come to prefer the frankly savage Pagan of the coast and south to the smooth-tongued educated Methodist Hova of Imerina. I believe, by the way, that there are no Methodists in Madagascar. The L.M.S. missionaries are for the most part Congregationalists, but the French invariably speak of the converts of this society as Methodist Malagasy, and the expression, though inaccurate, is now generally used by all save those to whom it is applied.

It is a mystery how such a race as the Hova ever got to Madagascar, and how, having got there, the Hovas succeeded in subduing the greater portion

of the island. Possibly, when, at some distant period that tradition tells not of, the Hovas sailed from the far eastern archipelago and landed on these shores, this alien people of Malay stock possessed better fighting qualities than now. But we have no record that the Hovas have ever really fought like men. They appear to have pushed their way to the supreme position on the island by dint of superior cunning rather than by prowess. Their boasted conquest of the savage tribes—of the Betsileo, for example—was effected by treacherous trickery, followed by cruel massacre. A great Hova general was, as a rule, a sort of sordid edition of the wily Ulysses. His favourite tactics were to open peace negotiations with the enemy, and make most generous promises on behalf of his king; and at last, having allayed the apprehensions of the simple tribesmen, to beguile them to meet him at a great *kabary*, or palaver. Then the Hova soldiers would suddenly fall upon the unarmed and unsuspecting tribesmen, and cut them to pieces.

Having traversed the town, we passed through the picturesque old stone gate of the French fort, and then by a wicket through the great stockade which surrounds the Government buildings. The Governor most courteously received us in a large room strewn with mats, wherein sat several officers with very rusty swords. Mr. Pearse, observing the strict Hova etiquette, commenced by inquiring after the health of the Queen, the Prime Minister, the

Governor, and his family. To this the Governor, in the low voice affected by Hovas at official interviews, replied in the prescribed set terms; and then, ceremony having been satisfied, we engaged in general conversation. This Governor had been a native pastor of the London Missionary Society, but had now relapsed into what may fairly be described as an irreligious mode of life. For when it is remembered that Hova governors receive no pay, and yet that men compete keenly for these honorary appointments—which they can only obtain by bribing without stint high Government officials and Court favourites—it may be imagined by what iniquitous methods, by what gross corruption and blackmailing, they contrive not only to recoup themselves and live comfortably, but also in many cases to retire after a few years on what even in Europe would be regarded as a considerable fortune. The system of *fananpoana*, or forced labour, puts it in the power of every provincial governor, and indeed of every petty official, to enrich himself at the expense of the wretched cultivators of the soil. For example, should the Prime Minister order a Governor to send a hundred labourers to the capital for some purpose, the Governor would despatch his *dekas* (a corruption of *aide-de-camp*) to impress four hundred men, the superfluous three hundred of whom he would release on payment of their part of blackmail. The *dekas*, again, so as to get their own share of the spoil, would probably collect some hundreds more of

extra men, and wring all they could out of them as payment for exemption from service.

We must give the Hovas credit for having with extraordinary ingenuity elaborated a system of administration better adapted than any in the world for the thorough squeezing of the people by all those, from highest to lowest, who are within the privileged circle of the ruling class. Their system of honours is unique. They have no other titles save these. The Prime Minister has sixteen honours, the highest number of any. Another man has twelve or ten honours, as the case may be. By judicious bribery a man may rise in rank, buying a few honours at a time. These honours are by no means empty titles; the purchase of an honour is an excellent investment. For a man with fourteen honours can command—that is, blackmail or otherwise fleece—a man with twelve honours, and so on all the way down to those who have the fewest honours, who can only rob honourless persons. When one of these magnates enters a village, unless he find some one there already with more honours than himself, the villagers are little better than his slaves for the time, and must do for him and give him all he may require. I had not been long in the country before it began to dawn on me that the Hova Government was as corrupt as the worst of Oriental states, without possessing any of the inherent strength and capacity to cope with emergencies often displayed by the latter. It was a machine for robbing, not for fight-

ing. It was ridiculously impotent in the hour of danger, and it was full time that the great Hova bubble was pricked.

But it is only in Imerina and the settled provinces that a Governor can make his administration really profitable, and I am afraid that the poor little Governor of Fort Dauphin made a bad bargain of it when he bought this unremunerative post of his in the remote and dangerous south. He had an unhappy and disappointed look, and I think he regretted his more easy and secure, if less exciting and distinguished, career as village pastor under the L.M.S. I saw that the tribesmen around Fort Dauphin, and even the townsmen, were not the least afraid of him or of his garrison. They would have regarded it in the light of a good joke had he attempted to blackmail them or to enforce *fanampoana*. He had quite a respectable number of honours too, but they avail him not in this outlandish spot. Possibly, however, in a seaport there are some pickings to be got out of the Custom-house by a governor who understands figures.

The Governor confided some of his troubles to us. It grieved him much that the heathen of the south were wickedly rebelling against the parental Government of Imerina. He had recently sent his sub-governor with some soldiers to conciliate one of these revolting tribes, no doubt in the usual Hova fashion, by bribing the rebel leaders, and holding forth promises of concessions to the tribesmen, which

he had no intention of observing. My mission was explained to the Governor, but I do not think he believed a word of what I told him. That any European journal should send a correspondent all this way to report the doings of the Hovas was quite beyond his comprehension; he knew that the *Malagasy News*, the only paper of which he had any knowledge, had never sent a correspondent to England. However, always polite, ever all things to all men, as all Hovas are, he concealed his mistrust of me, and said that he quite recognised how extremely important it was for the Hova cause that I should reach the capital as soon as possible, and then tell the world the truth about persecuted and maligned Madagascar; for this might induce England to come to the rescue of this Christian people. He knew that he would be carrying out the wishes of the Queen and Prime Minister if he rendered me every assistance in his power, and he would now give orders that a sufficient number of carriers should be placed at my disposal at once.

Then we left him, myself grateful to his Excellency, and in full expectation that he would keep his word, but Mr. Pearse doubtful; he warned me not to be over-sanguine. My friend was right; the Governor supplied us with no men, though he had sufficient authority, feeble as he was, to have done so had he wished it. I suspect that he even went so far as to boycott us, a common trick of Hova Governors, and, while affecting friendship and

promising assistance, secretly prevented men from coming near us; for it is curious that, do all we could, we were unable to find a single carrier in Fort Dauphin that day, and yet we knew that there were several in the town, belonging to northern tribes, who were anxious to return to their homes, but, fearing that they would be murdered by the tribesmen on the war path, had not ventured to leave the town: these should have been glad to accompany us, for white men are rarely molested in Madagascar, and to be a follower of a white man serves as a protection to the native traveller, and inspires him with confidence.

The next day passed, and we were equally unsuccessful in finding men. Had I been higher up the coast, in a more populous and civilised region, I could have dispensed with carriers, left all my baggage behind, and tramped it up to the capital without much difficulty. But on the road from Fort Dauphin to the north villages are few and far apart; in many of them supplies are not procurable; the inhabitants are often ill-disposed, and would probably place insuperable obstacles in the way of a solitary white traveller unacquainted with the language. My friends at Fort Dauphin impressed it upon me that I should most probably never get through if I set out alone. There was a fair chance of being murdered, and almost a certainty of starvation, and of being struck down by coast fever in the wilderness, far from possibility of succour.

But I explained that it was absolutely necessary for me to get to Antananarivo, and that too as quickly as possible, that I could not tolerate another two days' delay, and that I should travel alone on foot if there were no other way ; for get there by some means or other I must. I began to think that I had made a great mistake in landing at this outlandish spot, and that I should have done far better to have gone north with the steamer or to have transhipped on to some coasting schooner. There were now nearly 900 miles of difficult country between me and the front at Majunga, a terribly long journey to contemplate for one who was in such a fever of impatience to push on ; for, ignorant as I was of what had been occurring in the capital, I thought that the campaign would have opened long before I could reach Colonel Shervington's camp. I should not have been in so great a hurry had I known all.

But I soon abandoned the idea of undertaking a solitary tramp across Madagascar ; for, on walking to the beach, I suddenly observed to my delight a little schooner lying at anchor in the most sheltered corner of the bay ; and I realised that fortune had provided me with the means of accomplishing my journey in a far more expeditious and safer fashion than on foot. The French residents, as I have already stated, had been expelled two months before from Fort Dauphin, and their property had been looted by the mob. This vessel belonged to one of these Frenchmen, who had left her here at anchor when he was

banished. There was no one in charge of her, and no one was responsible for her, unless perhaps it was the Governor. So far the natives had not considered it worth while to strip her, and I was informed that her sails and gear were all on board. She could have been got ready for sea in a few hours. She was a handy-looking little craft, and I saw that with Mr. Pearse's assistance, or indeed single-handed if necessary, I could have sailed her up the coast. So I suggested to Mr. Pearse that in case no carriers should turn up here, I should borrow this vessel and sail him to Mananjara, where carriers are procurable, and whence we could easily proceed by land to Fianarantsoa. Mr. Pearse did not appear to altogether approve of my scheme. 'You may call it borrowing,' he said, with an amused smile, 'but I think it savours something of piracy.' I had to allow that mine was not exactly the orthodox way of chartering a vessel, but urged that when it was of extreme importance to a person that he should get to a certain place it behoved him to place above all other considerations the fact that he *must* get there, by hook or by crook, in the best way he could, and therefore ought not to be too nicely scrupulous about the means which circumstances might compel him to employ. But my friend exposed the casuistry of this argument, which, as he pointed out, would justify the greatest crimes. Then I tried to prove to him that we should be undoubtedly acting as the benefactors of the Frenchman if we temporarily

annexed his vessel, and that he would in all probability be very grateful to us for so doing; for she would be looted if she remained at Fort Dauphin, whereas I could engage men at Mananzara to sail her on to the French port of Tamatave, where she would be perfectly safe. Mr. Pearse was of opinion that I might find it difficult to persuade the French of the innocence of my motives if we were overhauled at sea by one of their gunboats. I could not persuade him to become my accomplice in the seizure of the schooner, and perhaps it would have been rather a compromising proceeding for a missionary. However, there lay the boat ready for me if all else failed, and the sight of her prevented me from getting so anxious as I otherwise should have been.

But as it happened I was enabled after all to proceed on my journey without resorting to questionable measures; for on March 19, after an enforced delay of three days at Fort Dauphin, just as I had despaired of procuring carriers, and was about to put my piratical design into execution, we heard that a *vazaha* (European) was entering the town, followed by a considerable number of carriers. This proved to be Mr. Nilsen, a Norwegian missionary, whose residence is at Fort Dauphin, who had come from some other station of his mission further north. The Norwegian Lutherans, by the way, are the only missionaries in this portion of the island. His appearance was a most extraordinary piece of good fortune for

us. The arrival of a European traveller by land at Fort Dauphin is a very rare occurrence, and we might have had to wait another ten months for another such opportunity. I have always had some faith in my luck when on a journey, and I saw that it had not forsaken me on this occasion. Mr. Nil-
sen's carriers were mostly men from the central provinces of the island, through which we had to pass; and they were therefore glad to return to their country in the service of a white man.

Some other men in the town, who were of northern tribes and were also anxious to return to their homes in safety, but who so far, either from sheer perversity or in obedience to the Governor's orders, had hung back, now came forward and volunteered to go with us as far as Vangaindrano, the nearest Hova military post, about 150 miles higher up the coast, at the exorbitant pay, for Madagascar, of five dollars a man. In all Mr. Pearse and myself were able to engage twenty-two men. So as to travel as fast as possible, we left our heavy baggage behind, and six men, lightly loaded, carried all we required between us. This left us eight men each to carry our *filanjana* (palanquins). We were thus enabled to get over the ground a good deal quicker than if we had tramped it all the way, and with much less risk of succumbing to fever.

These trained palanquin-bearers in Madagascar have marvellous agility and endurance. It is usual to take eight men: while four carry the palanquin,

the other four trot on in front ready to take their place. They relieve each other at frequent intervals, and there is no check in the pace when this is done, the men one by one slipping nimbly aside while their fellows, running alongside, in their turn place their shoulders under the long poles. In this way



A PALANQUIN

they can easily carry a man thirty miles a day and more if the conditions are favourable; but we knew that we should not be able to average so much as this, for this road is a difficult one. Our progress would necessarily be slow across the great swamps and the numerous deep fords; and the broad rivers

we should have to cross in small dug-out canoes were likely to cause much delay. The tracks through the forests and on the hillsides are often too narrow for the employment of palanquins, so that we should have to walk no inconsiderable portion of the way. In addition to this we were told that the disturbed condition of the country might make it necessary for us occasionally to avoid the more frequented and therefore easier roads; for not only were several of the tribes through whose territories we had to pass at war with one another, but certain villages which lay on our route were said to be inhabited by robbers, ever lying in wait to levy blackmail on travellers.

In order to reach Vangaindrano we had to traverse the province of Anosy almost from end to end. It was on the Anosy coast that the French founded their first establishments in the seventeenth century, but it is now a country very little known; a few Europeans, missionaries, and Creole traders travel along the coast occasionally, but the interior is altogether unexplored. The northern road follows the shore, and to turn off it at all in a westerly direction is to plunge into an unknown wilderness. The soil is very fertile, but the coast is exceedingly malarious, bordered as it is by a long line of stagnant lagoons and rank jungles, which cover the vast deposits of decaying alluvium brought down by the many rivers. In this province the Hovas have no military station north of Fort Dauphin; and the tribes,

as I have already pointed out, have preserved their independence, and utterly despise the Hovas.

We anticipated difficulties on the first portion of our long journey—the little-frequented route which we had to follow to the Betsileo frontier, a distance of 300 miles. It was decided that from Vangaindrano we were to strike inland into the Tanala country, cross the great forest belt and the mountain ranges, until we reached the Hova post of Angalampana; whence to Antananarivo—about 290 miles—the journey is attended with neither difficulty nor danger.

Before starting we provided ourselves with a few stores and a sufficiency of cut money. The French five-franc piece is now the standard of coinage in Madagascar; for small change it is cut up into bits of all sizes, some so small that they contain less than a farthing's weight of silver. The traveller has to carry a pair of scales about with him, and whenever he makes a purchase the specified quantity of this most inconvenient money is weighed out with the greatest exactness, first on his own scales and then on those of the suspicious native of whom he is buying. If two natives are dealing, the vendor and purchaser will squat on the ground and weigh and reweigh in their separate scales a halfpenny's worth of these silver chips for half an hour at a time, a throng of people standing by and watching the proceedings with the keenest interest, so anxious is either party not to be defrauded of a tittle of his due. The French are now introducing their own

small coinage, and this will prove a great benefit to the island. When I was in Madagascar so much spurious cut money and so many non-current dollars introduced by Europeans were in circulation, that no transaction with a native could be carried out without long haggling. He would always closely examine every minute fragment of the silver that had been given him, and raise objections to perhaps half of it.

CHAPTER III

WE COMMENCE OUR JOURNEY—COAST SCENERY—IAVATRA—TRIBESMEN
ON THE WAR-PATH—ST. LUCIA—A COAST TRADER—THE QUEEN OF
ST. LUCIA AND HER REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS—A REGION OF ROBBER
VILLAGES—MANAMBATO

WE set out on March 20, and for the first few marches we avoided the beaten tracks and followed the sands of the sea-shore, so that we might not fall in with the war parties of the fighting tribes ; not that these were likely to attack white men, but they might have frightened our carriers and caused them to run away, leaving us alone with our baggage in the middle of the wilderness.

The coast scenery we passed on this journey is as beautiful as any I have ever seen, even in the West Indies or on other tropic seas. Spurs from the inland mountain ranges form grand promontories, enclosing lovely bays. Every few miles some fine river pours its waters into the sea. All these rivers have narrow mouths, closed to shipping by narrow bars, but open out inside the sand dunes into extensive lakes or lagoons, with shores winding in many capes and bays. The hills that slope into these lakes are clothed with tropical bush and groves of palms and traveller's-trees, while the plains and the rolling downs, which

extend to the distant mountains, are generally covered with fine grass, affording excellent pasture. But this magnificent country is very thinly inhabited, and the greater portion of it lies waste. We often travelled all day without seeing a human being or a sign of cultivation, and it was only around the rare villages that small but luxuriant patches of rice, maize, cassava, and sweet potato testified to the richness of the soil. Sugar, coffee, and all tropical produce have been proved to thrive on this fertile coast, and this would certainly be as good as any country in the world for the white colonist, were it not for the coast fever, especially deadly at the season we undertook our journey—the termination of the rainy season, when the subsiding waters leave leagues of foul mud to fester in the sun.

Sometimes we travelled along the wet, surf-hardened sand at the very edge of the breakers, and sometimes plunged by narrow footpaths into the forest, where the dense vegetation shut out the breeze and the light, and the black mud gave out a sickly odour as we trampled through it. For miles at a time our way would lie across the malarious swamps, where gigantic arums were in blossom, and where the snow-white herons haunted the great reed-beds. On some portions of our route we followed a long narrow strip of sand, strewn with wreckage and sea-drift, with water on either side of us; on our right the thundering breakers of the Indian Ocean, on our left a chain of far-stretching lagoons. At times we

struck inland, to cross a country of curious formation, crumpled up like a confused sea after veering gales, huge grassy billows divided from each other by steep gullies, the bottom of each gully a fetid morass shaded by palms and ferns. We had to cross a number of large rivers. Some of the fords were difficult, and the water was often full of crocodiles. Fifteen deep rivers, some half a mile or more in breadth, had to be passed in dug-outs, which were not always readily procurable from the natives; while strong winds, raising a sea that made the passage dangerous for these light canoes, at times threatened to keep us weather-bound by the banks of some great stream. But we were fairly lucky; delays were few, and we accomplished the journey in eight days.

Our first day's march did not take us far, for Mr. Pearse's carriers, just as we were starting, put down their loads of one accord and struck for extra pay. They would not be persuaded to move; so Mr. Pearse suggested that I should go on ahead and wait for him at some village on the road, as this would probably induce his own men to make up their minds quickly and follow on. So I set out with my twelve men, stalwart fellows, with a very small amount of clothing to hamper their movements, and each armed with a spear. We followed the sandy shore of Fort Dauphin Bay for twelve miles, and came to the little village of Iavatra, close to the opposite cape, where I determined to halt until my companion had come up.

Iavatra stands on the slope of a wooded hill at the mouth of a broad valley. The river flowing down this valley widens in front of the village into a lagoon of considerable size, whose waters pour into the ocean breakers through a very narrow channel. We forded this channel, and as I sat under a large tree outside the village to eat my tiffin, a view was spread out before me than which it would be difficult to find a lovelier in any land, and it was a view very characteristic of the delightful scenery of the Anosy coast. The colouring was marvellously brilliant. Overhead was the bluest of skies. The water of the lagoon below me, though quite transparent, had the rich ruddy hues of swamp water. In places its surface had the sheen of burnished copper; but wherever a shadow fell on it one looked far down into pellucid luminous depths, glowing in various exquisite tints of red, bronze, ruby, and gold. It was as some fairy lake of liquid jewels. A lush vegetation grew to the edge of this ruddy lake, and the hills that enclosed it were densely covered with trees and bushes of many-coloured foliage, from the most vivid to the darkest green, fresh and rank after the long rains. Through the gaps of the near hills I could see the great granite inland mountains and the sea capes, towering in jagged masses, purple in the distance, while to my left extended the dazzling belt of the white sea sand and the rollers of the Indian Ocean.

It was indeed a fair land, and whether I looked

around me or far up the long valley into the unknown inner country, I could see that it was also a very rich and desirable land, green and fertile throughout. The grass I sat on was soft and sweet as that in Normandy, not rank and coarse as that which grows in some other parts of Madagascar, and the great sleek kine that grazed around me evidently thrived upon it. The French, I said to myself, have here an island worth the fighting for, if much of it is like this.

Iavatra itself, with its reed houses, is a picturesque little village. It is surrounded by plantations of plantains and manioc, and below it is the burial-place of the tribe, a ghastly congregation of great flat stones—some twelve feet in height—standing on end, and quaintly carved posts, each stone and post covered with the skulls and horns of the oxen that were killed and devoured at the burial feast of the man who lies beneath. The villagers appeared to be a simple, happy lot. I attempted to open a conversation with those who came to see me, with the assistance of my dictionary, but was not very successful; they seemed highly amused at my accent. As I sat there, some half-dozen men of one of the fighting tribes passed by. They were on the war-path—athletic brown savages, with bushy hair, naked save for the loin-cloth, and armed with assegais and old flintlock Tower guns, which they always keep scrupulously bright and clean, in this respect setting an example that might well be

followed by the Hova troops, whose Sniders are invariably in a most neglected condition. These coast warriors are reputed to be more warlike and brave than the Hovas; I can quite believe it, and they certainly look as if they would make good fighting men if trained and led by European officers. It is certain that the French will find in Madagascar a most valuable recruiting ground for their colonial army, and it is quite possible that some of these tribes will furnish regiments as useful as those we raise among the warlike races of India.

At last Mr. Pearse joined me with his mutinous following. It was too late to proceed further that day, so we passed the night in one of the village huts, which was placed at our disposal by the occupiers—who, according to Malagasy custom, turned out and lodged elsewhere during our stay, not to enter an appearance again until the next morning, just as we were preparing to start, when they came to receive the usual gift.

On March 21 we set out at dawn, and after marching some thirty miles reached the large coast village of St. Lucia. I had already begun to discover that white men travel more luxuriously in Madagascar than in any other wild country I had ever visited before. The missionaries wisely take very good care of themselves on the road, and thus materially diminish the chances of fever. Here the traveller can walk when it pleases him to do so, and

so soon as he is tired he has his palanquin at hand in which to get. Even on this unfrequented road we had the shelter of a house of some sort every night, and we could always obtain a nourishing, if monotonous, diet of fowls and rice.

This day's journey took us through a great variety of scenery. We travelled now along the sandy sea dunes, now through dense swampy jungles and forests, where the air stank of decaying vegetation, so that we were glad once more to come out upon the shore and feel in our face the invigorating trade wind, salt with the sea foam, that had blown over thousands of miles of pure ocean, and be able to breathe freely once again. Then we followed the shore of a great and beautiful bay, where the water was quite smooth; for from the jutting rocky promontory at one extremity of the bay to the promontory at the other extremity extended a sheltering line of islets, some of them mere bare rocks, some larger and overgrown with trees and bushes, linked together by reefs on which the Indian Ocean rollers broke incessantly with a great roar, throwing up huge columns of spray into the air.

Into this smooth blue bay flows a river called the Laokoro, like all the other streams on this coast rushing into the sea by a narrow mouth, but opening out inside the dunes into an extensive lake. Here again, looking up the broad green valley down which the river flows, we caught glimpses of the wonderfully beautiful inner country, an undulating

verdant wilderness of deep grass, forest, and bush, extending to far-distant mountain ranges.

The Laokoro proved to be unfordable, so our men went in search of a canoe. They found no signs of human habitation, and we were becoming anxious lest we should have to halt by the bank of the river until we had constructed a raft, a not unusual expedient here, when we saw a frail craft pushing off from one of the wooded islets in the bay, about a mile distant. The two naked men who paddled her soon got within hailing distance of us, when they ceased pulling and began to parley. The islanders were evidently shy of us at first, not knowing what to make of our party; for these were war times, and it behoved men to be cautious. Mr. Pearse at last reassured them as to our peaceable intentions, so they beached the canoe close to us, and ultimately arranged, for a small consideration, to ferry us across the river. We certainly did now look a somewhat imposing party, and this was not the last time that we inspired alarm in the country people, for our numbers gradually increased as we progressed, other travellers attaching themselves to us for protection. No less than eight strangers had already joined us, so that our little force now numbered thirty-two men, all armed with spears, and two carrying muskets.

Our two islanders were the first people we met this day, for we were now traversing a very sparsely inhabited country, and were also off the main road.

Having crossed the Laokoro, we left the shore and struck inland across a waste country of long coarse grass, with here and there clear streams winding down dells, shaded with traveller's-trees and ferns. Then we ascended a steep ridge, and from it saw far below us a fair lake, upon which, possibly, no white man's eyes had ever gazed before. It is unmarked in any of the maps. It appears to have no outlet to the sea, though we could hear the surf roaring not far off across the low coast hills. This lake is several miles in breadth, and has a wooded island in the middle of it. We saw a number of fish, which must have been of immense size, jumping in the water. This landlocked sea winds in many picturesque bays, a green plain borders it all round, and the plain itself is shut in by the forest-clad mountains. It reminded me of some of the inlets of the great Gulf of Rio de Janeiro.

Then we came back to the shore again, and marched through the ever-changing and ever-beautiful coast scenery, across the great bays and lovely coves, whose silver sands were overhung by luxuriant tropical vegetation, past numberless islets, whose peaceful green groves seemed in strange contrast to the never-ceasing turmoil of the outer line of breakers from which they rose. Late in the afternoon we came to the banks of a deep river, which inside the dunes broadened into a mangrove-surrounded lagoon. Here we had to wait some time under a heavy rain, while our men went in search of a dug-out. At this season it is generally fine throughout the day on the

coast, but every evening just before sunset the traveller is overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, and the rain often falls steadily through the night. As no canoes were to be found on our side of the river, three of our men braved the crocodiles and swam across, to return shortly with a long dug-out. After crossing the river and following a track through the bush for a few hundred yards we reached our destination, the village of St. Lucia. The climate was already beginning to affect our men; two had fever, and one so severely that he had to be carried this day.

St. Lucia was once the centre of a considerable European trade, as there is fair anchorage in the bay for coasting schooners, but we found but one foreigner here, a Mauritian Creole, who kept a store. He told us that he intended to remove all his goods to Fort Dauphin at the earliest opportunity, as the tribal wars in this neighbourhood had brought all trade to a standstill, and it was probable that St. Lucia would shortly be pillaged. Neither at his store, nor at any other in this part of the country, were we able to buy flour, sugar, or supplies of any kind, so we had to live almost exclusively on fowls and rice; we should have esteemed a loaf of bread a great luxury just then.

This particular trader appeared to have nothing in his store at that time but bottles of the cheap vile absinthe and vermouth, manufactured at Marseilles for the consumption of the Malagasy natives. I tasted

both by way of experiment, and I certainly never before came across such poisonous liquors. The Mauritian rum sold to the natives on the coast, if rather new, is, at any rate, an unadulterated and comparatively innocuous spirit. In the coast villages barrels stand in the doorways of many of the huts, from which rum is retailed. The French intend to restrict this traffic to a limited number of licensed canteens, and to charge heavily for each licence.

There are no Hovas in St. Lucia. The district is ruled by a queen, whose palace is just outside the village. As I have already explained, a large proportion of her subjects had risen in rebellion against her, and proposed to establish a republican form of government. The Creole told us that both parties were in the field, and that a decisive battle was expected shortly. It was very probable, he said, that we should encounter some of the war parties on the following day.

It rained heavily that night, and it was still raining when we set out the next day—March 22. This made it uncomfortable for either army to carry on military operations, so we were able to march through the country without seeing any signs of the civil war. This march was much like that of the previous day. We generally followed the shore, forded many rivers, and were carried by canoes across the deeper streams. At one of the latter we were delayed for several hours. In the first place

the natives for some time refused to come over to us with their canoes, being under the impression that we were an invading force. Then we found that we had to cross the lagoon itself, nearly a mile in width, in one canoe, which, in order to transport our large party, had to make several voyages. The outlet of the lake into the sea through the sandy hills was scarcely fifty yards in breadth, but we should have been swept out to sea had we attempted to cross it with the canoe, for the water rushed through this passage with enormous velocity, and fell over the bar into the breakers as a foaming cascade.

We had now safely traversed the region of civil war, but had entered, so the Creole trader of St. Lucia and all our followers assured us, the far more perilous district of robber villages and blackmailing kings. By following the coast we had eluded the war parties, but it was impossible, they told us, to avoid this new danger. We stayed in the villages, and we even passed three successive nights in the houses of these same dreaded monarchs. In applying these royal titles to these petty chiefs I am following the universal custom of southern Madagascar; the same term is employed to describe a village ruler and the Queen at Antananarivo. We found that there was nothing at all romantic about these thieves; they were not bold caterans, but mean, false, and incredibly avaricious rascals, robbing and murdering all natives who fell in their way—Hovas in preference—but far too cowardly to resort to force when

dealing with any white man who displayed firmness.

In the course of this day's journey we had to traverse a belt of forest, going single file by a very narrow track that pierced the dense undergrowth, stepping over fallen trees, wading through morasses, and clambering up rocky defiles. Our men considered it possible that we should here be attacked by robbers, so they begged me to lead the way with my revolver, a weapon in which they apparently placed implicit confidence, while they followed in silence, keeping well together, and not straggling, as was their wont. In the heart of the forest we came to some open glades carpeted with moss and various flowers. Here for the first time I saw the curious pitcher-plants, which were growing in large clumps. These fly-catching blossoms are well named; the pitchers even have well-fitting little lids, that open and shut as on a hinge.

We passed this night in the village of Manambato among a wild-looking people. The king, who was as naked as his subjects, gave up his house to us for the night, and was not too proud to receive a gift of sixpence on the following morning. I heard afterwards that his people were likely to depose him, as in their opinion he was not a good king—that is, he was an easy-going, timid sort of a man, who neglected the traditional duties of his royal race; he did not lead his men on cattle-lifting raids into the country of his neighbours, and was a poor sort of robber-

king in other respects ; a very different person, we were told, from the king whose guests we should be on the next night. He was a true king, who kept up the credit of his family and tribe, and had never lost a favourable opportunity of despoiling the stranger.

CHAPTER IV

MAHAVELO AND ITS THIEVING KING—A TANOSY VILLAGE—THE KING ATTEMPTS TO BLACKMAIL US—MATSIO—INDIFFERENCE OF THE TRIBESMEN TO THE FRENCH INVASION—THE ANTAIFASY—A NORWEGIAN MISSION STATION—A KING OF THE ISLES—VANGAINDRANO

ON March 23 we left the coast to travel across a disagreeable country—leagues of swampy ground, with grass-grown hillocks rising here and there like islands above the fetid morass. We were ferried across two broad rivers, the Manambata and the Ifitanamalama, and had tiffin outside the robber village of Ankaraminia, where the people, though wild-looking, seemed to be the mildest robbers that ever cut throat. They begged vociferously, but made no attempt at thieving. Thence for many miles we marched across a country of that curious crumpled formation I have already described; a succession of grassy downs 100 feet in height, like huge storm-billows, but steeper than any seas, which we were ever laboriously ascending and descending—up crest after crest, and down into trough after trough of malodorous black bog.

Then we came to a river, over which we were ferried in a dug-out by two very ugly women, and soon after entered our resting-place for the night,

the village of Mahavelo, of whose robber-king we had heard so many evil reports.

A description of this village and an account of our dealings with his thieving Majesty will convey an idea of the sort of people we were now among. Mahavelo is a typical coast village—a congregation of small one-roomed huts enclosed by a stockade for defence against the raids of neighbours. These huts are well adapted to the climate. They are raised on piles, so that the floor is some two feet above the ground. The walls are constructed of the ribs and fibres of the traveller's-tree leaf, and the same leaf supplies the thatch for the steep roof; mats made of the outer sheath of the papyrus cover the floor. The whole is held together by a light framework of wood. The cattle are driven within the stockade at night, so that the habitations stand amid the deep filth and mud of a cattle kraal. The village, in short, is a gigantic dunghill. In a Tanosy village at night there is a very babel of sound—the lowing of cattle, the snoring of men, the gossip of women, the crying of babes, the crowing of cocks, the squeaking of pigs, the intermittent hoarse cry of the watchman, to show that he is awake and on the look-out for the sudden attack of enemies, and, if there be any rum in the place, the discordant din of savage orgies.

As for the inhabitants of this and other coast villages, they show distinct traces of several races, and present a great variety of type. Negro, Sudanese, Arab, South Sea Islander, Malay, all

appear to be represented in this curious breed; and many must have in their veins a dash of the blood of the old pirates, who for so many years made this portion of the Madagascar coast their head-quarters. At Mahavelo I saw one man who might have stepped out of a Goorkha regiment, and another who might well have passed as a native of Bengal. In the same village one observes the repulsive features of lowest savagery and the refined beauty of the noblest branches of the human family. There are types, too, that puzzle one to classify. At Mahavelo I saw one tall, lean man, with shapely bronze limbs and small head well set up in the shoulders. His black hair was tied together in a top-knot. There was a strange and sinister beauty in his cruel yet intelligent face. He looked to me like an Egyptian mummy unswathed and brought to life, and as likely as not he had the blood of old Phœnician navigators in his veins. The men are for the most part naked save for the loin-cloth, while a simple wrap of papyrus matting round the middle is the most common costume of the women, not one of whom, by the way, that I ever saw has the slightest pretensions to good looks. The personal appearance of these generally rather forbidding people is not improved by the skin diseases with which they are afflicted to an extraordinary extent. Scarcely a man, woman, and child did I see in Mahavelo but was covered with hideous lumps and sores.

As we passed through the stockade into this noisome village—crowds of wild-looking creatures

following us and eyeing us with inquisitive and suspicious looks—I was struck by the uncanny aspect



TANOSY WOMEN

of the place. It was like a town of wicked enchanters, such as one reads of in the fairy tales, and what increased this impression was that all the

houses were festooned and closely linked together overhead by tangled masses of gigantic spiders' webs, amongst which lay in wait monstrous black spiders. Some of the coast villages are almost completely roofed in by these great webs.

The king himself came out to meet us—a deceitful-eyed cruel-looking old savage, with a dirty cloth wrapped round his loins—accompanied by several of his warriors, naked as himself, with their hair knotted up after a variety of fantastic fashions, and armed with flint-lock guns and spears. The king led us to his house, which, like the other huts, stood on stilts in the middle of the ancient dunghill within the stockade. He had new papyrus mats strewn on the floor, and politely insisted on placing his abode at our disposal for the night.

We accepted his hospitality; and later on, as we were awaiting our usual dinner of fowls and rice, which our men were cooking for us over a fire in the middle of the floor, the almost naked king, and his hideous queen wrapped in a bit of matting, crawled through the low door into the smoky chamber, and presented us with some rice and milk in token of their friendship. The old king smiled at us with a very ugly smile, which he doubtless meant to be ingratiating, and he was fulsome in his expressions of regard. He promised that he himself would ferry us across the broad river below the village on the following morning, so as to prove to all men that we were his dearest friends. He was

as nice-spoken a robber chief as one could wish to meet, but we trusted him not; he was a great deal too polite for one who was not meditating mischief.

In the course of this visit the queen had a violent quarrel with some of our men, to whom she had sold fourpennyworth of rice. Stooping down, with her breasts dragging on the floor, the old crone in the flickering firelight carefully weighed out in her brazen scales the little chips of broken-up five-franc pieces, and then suddenly she broke out into shrill shrieks of voluble abuse—dreadful language Mr. Pearse told me some of it was—bitterly complaining that the money was underweight by some fraction of a farthing. She would not be comforted or stay her horrid clamour until I presented her with quite twopennyworth of silver, which she and her lord passed from one to another, and gloated over with avaricious eyes. A miserly grasping couple were this king and his consort. Our men afterwards told us that the king would not let them have a hut to shelter them from the heavy rain that fell that night until they had paid him a considerable sum—a piece of extortion quite opposed to the hospitable custom of the Malagasy. Attempts to fleece us were made in nearly every one of the Tanosy villages, and Mr. Pearse, who had never before travelled in the barbarous south, said that in all his thirty years' experience of the rest of the island he had never encountered so many difficulties on the road or met with so disagreeable and detestable a lot

of savages. These people seem eaten up with selfish greed; they would allow a penniless stranger to starve in their midst. I have on several occasions travelled alone among more uncivilised peoples without understanding their language, but I certainly should not like to try this experiment in southern Madagascar, and I was very fortunate in having Mr. Pearse as my companion for the early stages of my journey.

On the following morning, March 24, we gave the king a suitable *cadeau* (one of the numerous words which the natives have borrowed from the French, and one which they are apt to use too frequently in the south), and then proceeded with our men and baggage through a heavy downpour of rain to the river bank. The king, still effusively polite, followed us with a number of his armed warriors. There was a large dug-out awaiting us, and our men were just about to place some of our baggage in it, when, at a word from the king, one of his followers leaped into the canoe and paddled her off a few yards from the shore.

Then of a sudden all his cringing politeness slipped off the king, and this sly old fox of Mahavelo turned on us with an insolent smile, while his people giggled at our discomfiture. He told us that he would not ferry us across the river unless we paid him an exorbitant sum and gave him a certain quantity of cloth. Had we submitted to such demands, the story of our weakness would have gone before us: each king would have required his

blackmail of us ; and we should soon have been left without money or baggage in the wilderness. So we positively refused to comply with his request. ‘Then you can remain where you are,’ he calmly said ; ‘my canoe shall go away.’ It was in vain that Mr. Pearse remonstrated. The king would not abate his claim one jot, and he proceeded to vehemently upbraid us as ungrateful people, and then threw the presents he had given us—worth twopence—in our teeth.

The river was deep and half a mile in breadth. We might have had to tramp along the swampy bank through an uninhabited country for days before coming to another canoe, and there were no supplies to be obtained until we reached the village on the further side ; so that our situation was unpleasant ; the king thought he had us in a trap. But, anxious as I was to hurry to the scene of war without any delay, I was in no mood to waste much time in argument with this miserable monarch. I asked Mr. Pearse to translate to me the king’s words, and then to translate to his Majesty a little speech I was about to make. First I drew my revolver, which happened to be unloaded, and as I stood in front of the king, who eyed me uneasily, I inserted the six cartridges one by one into the chambers, one of my bearers, to whom I had explained the mystery of the weapon a few days before, taking it upon himself the while to give the king a most exaggerated account of its deadliness.

I then told the king that it was not customary for

white men to pay blackmail, that we were ready to give him one dollar—ample payment—if he would take us across the stream; but that if he did not accept these terms, and at once recall the canoe to the bank, I should be under the painful necessity of firing at the man in the canoe; that I should seize the canoe, whether he liked it or not, and should stand by with my revolver on the shore until I had seen all our men and baggage across; and that I should shoot his Majesty himself if he ventured to interfere with me. Mr. Pearse translated as much of what I had said as he considered expedient.

The king for a little while made no reply to this. He shuffled from one foot to the other, and evidently felt uncomfortable as he peered down the barrel of my revolver. Seeing that I was determined to do as I had said, he at last sulkily gave way; for he realised that otherwise he would not only lose his dollar but also his canoe; as we should have left her on the further bank, which was in a country of his enemies. After making several passages the canoe transported us all across the river. We took the old king with us on the last voyage, as we refused to pay him his dollar until we had him on the further side. Then Mr. Pearse made a speech, in which he rebuked him for his abominable treatment of strangers, while the king stood on one foot, with head bent, looking very sheepish and undignified, but malicious and unrepentant, several men of his enemy's tribe, who had come up to see who we were, surrounding and jeering at him.

The ruler of Mahavelo has long enjoyed an evil reputation as a blackmailer of all travellers who pass through his district, and he possesses an immense number of stolen cattle. Our carriers told us that the Hova Government had recently imposed on him a fine of a thousand oxen—a fine he will never pay; for in this region, as I have explained, the Hova power does not extend beyond the walls of the forts. Unfortunately an unarmed Norwegian missionary was once robbed of the greater portion of his baggage by this king, and so established a very bad precedent. Europeans lose all their prestige in the eyes of a native who has once with absolute impunity robbed or murdered one of them. The king of Mahavelo no doubt fancied, after that experience, that he could intimidate and plunder a white man as he would a mere Hova. Still more foolish than to go about unarmed in an unsettled country is it to carry a revolver, present it at some threatening ruffians, and then to unresistingly allow oneself to be disarmed and robbed, because one suddenly discovers that one has compunctions about using one's weapon. This is how an English missionary acted in the west of Madagascar on one occasion.

Leaving the mortified monarch we resumed our march, our men keeping well together, as they were still afraid of being attacked by robber bands. In the afternoon we reached the banks of the Iavibola, a fine river about three-quarters of a mile in breadth, which was mentioned by Palestrina in 1511, but is

now rarely visited by Europeans. Here we found several large dug-outs, and accomplished the rest of this day's journey by water. We paddled across the river, passed into a sinuous tributary with many creeks running into it, and then worked our way through an intricate labyrinth of islands, channels, and lagoons unmarked in any map. The best of the maps, by the way, are altogether untrustworthy in their delineation of this little known and altogether un-surveyed portion of the island. Lastly, we opened out a magnificent piece of water rippling under the fresh breeze, a broad lake surrounded with green hills, a narrow belt of jungle-grown land dividing it from the Indian Ocean, the roar of whose breakers could be heard on the other side. At the further end of the lake, on the summit of a grass-grown hill, stood the stockade-surrounded village of Matsio, where we passed the night.

The king of Matsio placed his hut at our disposal; we found this robber chief a much pleasanter person to deal with than his Majesty of Mahavelo, with whom, by the way, his relations, he told us, were rather strained. In this region there exist almost perpetual feuds not only between tribe and tribe, but also between village and village of the same tribe. The king begged us not to be alarmed if we heard a noise in the night, for he had told off several men to watch the cattle, and to raise frequent shouts. He had reason to believe that some wicked people of a neighbouring village intended to make a raid that

very night on his oxen, and he would show them that he was ready for thieves. 'A short time since,' he naively exclaimed, 'I stole a number of their cattle which I still have with me here. My neighbours have not forgotten or forgiven this.'

We sounded several of the tribesmen with regard to their views on the coming conflict between their nominal rulers, the Hovas, and the French. They all displayed a complete indifference. In January 1894 M. Ferrand, then French vice-resident at Mananjara, made a tour throughout this district. He became very popular, for he distributed money freely among the natives, and paid the ferrymen and carriers whatever they asked of him. He summoned *kabarys*, or meetings of the tribes, and asked the people in full council whether they would help the French when the latter came to fight the Hovas. They, of course, replied in the affirmative, as they would have done to an emissary of the Grand Lama, or to anybody else who did not spare his silver. They are ever ready to promise anything to anybody for a consideration, and they thought they were doing very good business with this foolish *vazaha*, who was so ready to buy light Tanosy promises with good hard dollars.

The southern tribesmen, while hating the Hovas, are suspicious of the French, and would rather preserve the independence they still enjoy than try any new dispensation. For independent these tribes practically are—there are few freer people on earth. The Hova Governors have no authority over them ;

they are in no wise oppressed ; they do no forced labour ; they pay no taxes. They render some obedience to their tribal kings, but even a king must pay for the labour he requires, and an unpopular king is always deposed. There is, indeed, scarcely any limit to their freedom, for have they not the licence to rob travellers, to lift cattle, and to make war on their neighbours when it pleases them to do so? They are shrewd enough to know that they would forfeit many of these privileges under French rule. But they love French silver. When I first arrived in his village, the king of Matsio asked me with a sly smile whether I was not a Frenchman, and he appeared to be rather disappointed when he heard that I was not. Another generous French agent, anxious to give big *cadeaux* in exchange for empty words, was the sort of white visitor he would have liked to see.

On leaving Matsio we entered the country of the Antaifasy, a kindred tribe to the Tanosy. The alluvial coast belt is here much broader than it is further south, the mountain ranges are further inland, and their spurs no longer project into the sea as bold capes. It is a land of uninhabited and highly malarious plains. On March 25 we travelled for many leagues along a sandy belt overgrown with pandanus or screw pine, about a hundred yards in breadth, with the ocean on our right, and on our left long lagoon after lagoon, and swamps across which wound many sluggish creeks. All the inner country

appeared to be of the same character, a dreary wilderness, where marsh plants only grew, with broad expanses of water scattered over it. We forded nine large rivers on this day's march, and passed other streams which, at this season, do not flow into the sea; the stagnant waters of the estuary lagoons being dammed in by the great sandbanks, which are driven up by the surf and the trade wind. In the rainy season the swollen rivers break through the sandbanks, and rush into the sea through the deep channels they have eaten away.

This day we halted for tiffin at the stockaded village of Ambalafandra, where the local king received us in his palace, which stood on stilts in the middle of the usual dunghill. He discussed politics with us while we had our meal. What he practically said was that he and his people would like to see the French and Hovas fight it out like the Kilkenny cats, until not one of them was left alive.

After this we forded a rapid river, at the bottom of which were great slippery boulders. The water was above our men's shoulders, for a few paces in the deeper part it was above the heads of some of them; but they lifted the palanquins high with upstretched arms, and carried us dry across, shouting in chorus whenever their mouths were above water, to scare off the crocodiles. In the rainy season it would be impossible to accomplish this journey, as most of the rivers would be altogether unfordable. We could see by the line of drift weed on the banks that the

water had recently been six feet higher in this stream.

During all this long day's march we encountered no inhabitants save in the little village of Ambalafandra, and met with no signs of cultivation. But the wilderness assumed a more pleasing aspect as we progressed ; for we left the swamps for a while to cross a bush country intersected by many grassy glades ; the shrubs were gorgeous in their various autumnal tints, and were covered with bright berries ; the large purple blossoms of the convolvuli festooned the branches.

Just before sunset we suddenly saw through a gap in the jungle—to our great astonishment, for we thought we were in the heart of an entirely pagan and savage land, with not a European within many days' journey of us—a wooden cross topping what appeared to be a thatched steeple on a wooded hill in front of us. On coming up to this symbol of civilisation in the wilderness, we found it to be an isolated bell tower, standing in the midst of a small native village, the barn-like church being hard by. This, we learned, was the village of Manambondro, a station of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, where was then dwelling by himself one young Norwegian missionary, who had but recently come out from his own country. We found him in his house, and I need scarcely say that he treated us with great hospitality.

I met several of these Norwegian missionaries

during my stay in Madagascar. They are undoubtedly most excellent men, and wholly devoted to their mission work. They have a simplicity of character, not so often to be found among our own missionaries. But they struck me as being in some respects a rather helpless folk, and I observed that few of them, on the east coast, had the slightest idea as to how white men ought to live in a tropical and unhealthy country. Their houses are singularly ill adapted for such a climate as that of the Madagascar lowlands. This poor young fellow, for example, was living in a house that had been constructed by his predecessor. It was of sun-dried brick, and had but one small window, which would not open. The house was not raised on stilts above the malarious soil, after the sensible native fashion, and the bare ground formed the floor. The Norwegians do not receive the emoluments of our London Missionary Society men, but that is no reason why they should not take the ordinary precautions to preserve their lives. Our missionaries take very good care of themselves; but these poor Norwegians rarely attempt to make themselves comfortable, and often live miserable lives. They therefore suffer very severely from fever and other climatic diseases, and the mortality among them has been unnecessarily high. They have not the traditional experience of tropical life possessed by the London Missionary Society, and it is a pity that they are not given some instructions on the subject before they are sent out. In their ignorance they

build their houses as they would within the Arctic circle, and they even sometimes have their beds in cupboards in the walls after the fashion of chilly Scandinavia. It was only in the ill-ventilated and stuffy houses of these worthy men that I was really worried by mosquitos on the east coast.

This young man, as I have said, was living quite alone in the midst of these greedy and treacherous savages. His must be a saddening and disheartening labour, for it must be difficult indeed to make these barbarians understand that there can be such a thing as unselfish devotion among gods or men. So suspicious were they of his motives that for some time they refused to allow their children to attend his school, thinking that this was some subtle scheme for making slaves of the infants and for transporting them beyond the seas. Schooners used once to call at Manambondro, which was a small trading station. A German firm had established a store there, but the young Englishman whom they placed in charge of it caught the fever and died within twenty-four hours. We asked the missionary whether there were any other Europeans in the neighbourhood; he replied that there were two French traders hiding with a tribe a day's journey off. They had been unable to leave the island when the expulsion of all French subjects was decreed, and now dared not come down to the coast in case the Hovas should kill them.

The young Norwegian had suffered a great deal

from fever, which was not to be wondered at. On one occasion when he was prostrated with malaria another Norwegian came from Vangaindrano to nurse him. This one, too, fell ill, and another followed; and at last all three were laid up together in the poor little house with its unopening window. He told me that he shortly expected a girl from his own country, who was coming out to marry him and to live with him in this lone spot. He was building a house for her—on stilts, I am happy to say—but the work had come to a standstill for a time, as the one native to whom he had taught the use of carpenter's tools, having been guilty of an indiscretion, had recently been speared to death by a jealous husband.

On March 26 we set out at daybreak, embarked in large dug-outs on a branch of the river Manambondro, and paddled for some miles up the many creeks and channels of its delta. It was blowing hard, and the water was quite rough in some of the more open reaches. We wound in and out of the low islands, which were covered with rank aquatic growth, the *via*, or gigantic arum, seven or eight feet in height, being conspicuous with its large white blossoms. Its seeds form an important article of native food. In the middle of this crocodile-haunted waste of swampy islets and creeks is one large island with rice-fields and other cultivation on it, where stands the capital of the king of the district, a place from its position secure from the attack of any raid-

ing tribes. This king is the lord of many islands and villages; the village of Manambondro is in his territory. Our friend the Norwegian missionary gets on fairly well with him, but sometimes the king of the delta takes it into his head to show what an important man he is by boycotting the missionary in a variety of irritating ways.

On leaving the canoes we marched to the banks of the river Masianaka, which forms the northern frontier of the province of Anosy. On crossing it we entered the province of Vangaindrano, and were under the jurisdiction of the Hova Governor, whose residence is in the town of the same name. We passed the night in the village of Ambatomana, which stands on a rocky promontory jutting into the broad lake formed by the river at its estuary.

The next day's journey brought us to Vangaindrano, and to comparative civilisation once again. As we approached it, the country became less sparsely inhabited; villages were frequent, and we crossed flats on which rice was cultivated on a large scale. At last we saw Vangaindrano in front of us, a considerable place, standing on a wooded hill surrounded by great swamps and rice-fields. After wading for some miles across a marshy plain we reached the foot of the hill, ascended the rough muddy lanes bordered by hedges of prickly pear, and, having found the house of the Norwegian missionary, Mr. Horner, threw ourselves on his ready

hospitality. He told us that some five foreigners—missionaries and traders—were still in the town.

Vangaindrano, rising as an island above the swamps, is a very unhealthy place. The wind, from whatsoever place it blows upon it, comes saturated with miasma. The view from the summit of the town was depressing on the day of our arrival. The sky was overcast, and it rained steadily. Looking round me I could see in all directions leagues of dreary swamp, here and there little villages crowning the island-like knolls, with vivid green patches of young rice at their feet. Some miles inland there stretched to a great distance a forest of rich dark foliage. All the vegetation was rank and lush and green. It was a region that looked as if it were perpetually soaked with moisture, the very home of malaria. Just below the town to the north flowed the river Mananara, here nearly a mile in width. Looking eastward I saw still other swamps extending to the sea-coast six miles away, where the shore was bordered by dismal mangrove swamps. Beyond all was the tossing Indian Ocean, on that clouded stormy day grey as our own Channel, with frequent rain squalls driving across it.

CHAPTER V

MORE DIFFICULTIES WITH OUR FOLLOWERS—WE SEEK REDRESS FROM
THE GOVERNOR OF VANGAINDRANO—IMPOTENCE OF THE HOVA RULE
—THRIFTY JAMES—A SAVAGE WAKE—A MUTINY QUELLED—MAHAMANA
NINA

ANXIOUS as I was to reach Antananarivo as soon as possible, I had perforce to pass three nights at Vangaindrano. Several of our men had contracted fever during the march from Fort Dauphin, and had to be left behind, while a large proportion of the others, having now reached their own country, and having already earned sufficient to maintain them in idleness for months, refused to proceed further. It therefore became necessary for us to engage other carriers. Mr. Horner warned us that it would be an extremely difficult matter to find them ; for, in the first place, a war conscription had been decreed on the coast, and this small place had been called upon to supply a contingent of several hundred men ; and in the next place, in these troublous times men were afraid to travel on the southern roads, and especially were unwilling to be taken into a Hova country, where they ran a risk of being impressed as soldiers.

The result was that we could only engage men from the scum of the population, who displayed an

unruly spirit even before we started. Mr. Pearse assured me that in all his travels in Madagascar he had never had to deal with such a lot of ruffians as those who accompanied us from Vangaindrano. I was often on the point of chastising them, but was deterred by Mr. Pearse, who pointed out that their immediate desertion would be the result of my action, and that we were entirely at their mercy—a fact of which they were fully aware. As my one object was to get to the capital without delay, I had often to suppress my feelings and pursue an opportunist policy, which went very much against a white man's grain.

By the evening of March 29 we had, after a great deal of difficulty, engaged the required number of men, and had taken a list of their names. They were to go with us as far as Aboumandroso in the Betsileo country, and were to receive very liberal pay. On the same day we went up to the *Rova* to call on the Hova Governor, one of the most respected men in the country—a very decent fellow, said all the Europeans, for one in such a position—and he appeared to be anxious to do all that was in his power to assist us. In the afternoon he returned our call, marching up to Mr. Horner's house, with his brass band playing military music, and accompanied by a considerable portion of his small garrison. The soldiers wore no uniform, and were armed with a curious assortment of rusty weapons. Their officers, giving the words of command in English, put them through their facings. They performed all

sorts of fanciful feats, throwing up their rifles and catching them in unison, saluting with low curtseys, and so forth. It was all done in our honour, so we had to appear gratified at the spectacle.

It had, of course, been our intention to start on the following morning at daybreak, and it had been arranged that our men should assemble at the mission-house. As not a man had turned up two hours after the appointed time, we went in search of them, and at last came across two or three of the rascals lying in the middle of a street in a helpless condition. It seems that the whole lot had indulged in a drunken bout on the vile rum sold by the traders, and they positively refused to travel at all that day. We found it impossible to move them, and had reluctantly to submit to circumstances. Later in the day they sent us an insolent message to the effect that they had struck against the agreement and demanded an increase of wage, a dollar a head to be paid in advance. To have yielded to them would have placed us still more completely at their mercy ; there would certainly have been another orgie and further indefinite delay ; while many of them, having received their dollar in advance, would have disappeared altogether. We therefore haled them all before the Governor in the hope of obtaining redress.

On our applying to him, the Governor sent out soldiers, who after a time contrived to collect all the drunken crew within the *Rova*. They squatted on the floor at one end of the council chamber, while

the Governor, with some half-dozen of his officers, sat at the opposite end. The Governor heard our story, and then he reproved the men mildly, and attempted to cajole them into fulfilling their engagement with us. It was a pitiable scene, and gave me an insight into the condition of that unfortunate country. On the one hand, were the nominal rulers of the land—the civilised, refined, and dignified Hova gentlemen, impotent to enforce the laws; on the other hand, were the low-browed savages we had hired, who treated the Governor with open contempt, laughing at his reproof, interrupting him, shouting coarse defiance. There was one swaggering young bully who acted as spokesman for the rest, and was evidently the ringleader of the strike. ‘Try to put us in chains if you dare,’ he cried to the Governor, in insolent tones; ‘what do we care for you?’ I saw that we could not fail to have trouble on the road with this ill-conditioned young ruffian, and I had my eye on him, determined to thrash him as soon as he should give me an opportunity. However, having stirred up as much discontent as he could among the men, he deserted us on the following day. The Governor and his officers dared not resent these insults, and their grave, impassive countenances betrayed no sign of what they must have felt. A Hova in the southern provinces had to put up with a good many indignities at that time. In bygone days the Hovas cruelly oppressed these tribesmen; but now the tables are turned, and the tribesmen,

waxing bold, bully the Hovas, who are powerless to punish disobedience even within the walls of their forts.

Thus the Governor calmly and patiently argued with these howling savages of ours, many of whom were slaves of leading Hovas. He appealed to their better feelings, which amused them; and, as might have been anticipated, he failed to persuade them. He was too wise to incur still greater ridicule by making threats which he could not put into effect; so at last he apologetically and reluctantly recommended us to submit to the terms the men had imposed upon us, and though we felt as mean as any Hova, we had after all to do so; for we knew that we could find no other men to take their place. But there was one point we would not yield. We stipulated that the advance pay of a dollar a head should not be paid in Vangaindrano, but after the start, on the further bank of the broad river. To this the men, after some more squabbling, agreed.

We got off at last on March 30. The Governor and Mr. Horner were evidently of opinion that we should have much trouble on the road with such a turbulent drunken rabble at our heels. The bearers did not assemble in front of the mission-house until after midday, and were inclined to strike again for still further concessions on our part. The Governor, with a body of his soldiers and his brass band, came to our rescue and escorted them to the river bank. Here they were met with loud and bitter reproaches by a

crowd of natives of the poorer class who had been lying in wait for them. Our rascals, it appeared, had bilked all the people with whom they had had dealings in the town, and were now beset by irate men from whom they had purchased rum, and half-naked women, who were frail, but certainly not fair, clamouring for the money that was due to them.

The Governor was appealed to, and it was decided that a deputation of these creditors should accompany us to the other side of the river, and that there a Hova officer should hand over to our men the advance pay we had promised, after deducting from it what they owed to the townspeople, and settling with the latter. Accordingly, our twenty-four carriers, an officer and ten soldiers, and some twenty of the creditors, were paddled with us across the broad river; and then on the sandy shore, in the full blaze of the sun, they all squatted down together, and occupied fully an hour in weighing and re-weighing the cut money in their scales, vociferously wrangling over accounts, shrilly accusing one another, denying their indebtedness, and making generally a wonderful display of petty greed. At last it was all settled somehow, but to no one's satisfaction; each person, according to his own account, had been outrageously defrauded. The soldiers secured all the canoes and carried them back to the opposite shore, so as to prevent our men from deserting and returning to the town. The chief spokesman at the trial of the

previous day was alone missing. We were not sorry to lose him, and succeeded in engaging a substitute. It was a curious experience, but not a unique one for us. At every considerable place we passed our men used to madden themselves with rum, and the military were on other occasions called out to assist us in driving them out of the town when we were ready to start.

At Vangaindrano we finally left the sea-coast to strike inland across the forest belt and the great mountain range, which forms the backbone of Madagascar, to the central highlands of Betsileo. The journey to Fianarantsoa, the capital of Betsileo, occupied twelve days. We traversed a little-known region, and were for some days in a country altogether unexplored.

First we followed a track that led to the Hova fort of Mahamanina. We started so late in the day on March 30 that we could only accomplish a short march to the village of Tsararano. On March 31 we reached the Hova station of Ankarana, a large village on the flat summit of a lofty hill. Now that we were away from the cool trade winds of the coast, though still in the lowland belt, we found the climate much hotter and the vegetation was more tropical. The country for the most part presented that appearance of a confused sea which I have already described as being so characteristic of Madagascar scenery—a sea of grassy hillocks extending to the horizon, with bamboo-shaded morasses in the troughs between.

Mangoes, guavas, pineapples, oranges, citrons, and other fruits were growing wild. The citron trees were covered with large ripe fruit. We also found that onions and tomatoes were cultivated by the villagers, so that we were now able to vary our late monotonous diet of rice and fowls with several delicacies, and lived quite luxuriously.

This portion of the country is very thinly inhabited, and here, as further south, we saw vast tracts of the richest soil lying waste. The rare villages were perched on the highest hill-tops. The inhabitants, like the other tribesmen we had met, appeared to be absolutely indifferent to the coming war; they said it was not their business, but they often expressed indignation at the conscription which was then being put in force. Each district had been called upon to send its contingent of spearmen to the capital, and in each village I saw officers drilling the men in the shield and spear exercise. If these men had had a tithing of the Zulu pluck, they would have been of great service in harassing the French. But these tribesmen have no love of country; their patriotism is bounded by their particular rice-fields, and the bulk of these spear-bearing conscripts deserted long before they reached the capital.

The people of this district were friendly to us, and were more civilised in their habits and better-looking than the inhabitants of the coast. They appeared to take more pains in the cultivation of their land, and every man had his little garden of

sugar-cane and manioc. But our bearers professed to be in great dread of the dangers yet before us. 'The people are good here,' they used to say, 'but in a few days we shall be among a very bad people.' And they would tell us dreadful tales of the wilderness of long grass we had to pass through, far taller than the highest man, where the bushmen thieves lie in wait to rob and murder the traveller; of the great climb through the clouds up the mountain, which was to bring us to the dreadful black forest, haunted by man-hating ghosts and witches, and of other horrors and perils.

Each day we became more disgusted with our followers. We discovered that to treat them kindly, to make them presents of meat, as one is inclined to do on a long journey, in short to show any consideration for their well-being, had the effect of making them more insolent and contumacious. They appeared to be devoid of any sort of good feeling. They were despicably mean in their dealings with each other, and would never voluntarily lend one another assistance. One night we gave them a large quantity of meat to divide amongst them. One man being down with fever did not claim his share until the following morning, when his fellows, though they had more than they could possibly eat that day, refused to give him a morsel. They were all pagans save one, a Christian convert, who had been christened James by the missionaries. James had learnt to read and write in the mission school, and was now able to

make a good use of his education. I observed that he kept a diary, in which he entered his notes with a praiseworthy regularity. I contrived to look into this little book on one occasion, and was surprised to find, instead of pithy observations on the journey and the strange ways of his *vazaha* employers, long rows of names and figures. It seems that James, who was a sober young man, and did not waste his wages in riotous living, was in the habit of lending his money at a somewhat usurious rate of interest—100 per cent. per month was his usual charge, if the security was good—to his thriftless heathen companions, whenever they required the wherewithal to pay for a debauch. He kept all his money-lending accounts in this diary.

On April 1 we reached the village of Ambohimananandr— There are some other syllables yet to this portentous name which I am unable to decipher in my note-book; the very faulty maps ignore the place altogether.

This day's journey was a pleasant one. We travelled for several hours along a high breezy ridge, which was several hundred feet above the surrounding country, and from which we could see the line of the distant sea on our right, and on our left the far mountain range, which we should have to cross a few days later, the fine peak of Ivohibe, fifty miles away to the west of us, towering above all.

Here we were overtaken by three Queen's messengers, who were on their way to the capital with

despatches from the Governor of Vangaindrano. They asked permission to attach themselves to our party, as they were afraid to cross the Tanala country alone. In the evening two of our carriers came up to explain that they would have to leave us for two days; they wished to follow a circuitous route, so as to avoid the town of Mahamanina; but had hired the Queen's messengers as substitutes, who would carry their loads for them until they rejoined us. They frankly told us their reason for doing this. It seems that a month or so back the Governor of Mahamanina had done his duty to his country, as well as replenished his own coffers, in the good old Hova fashion. He had surrounded the town with his troops one market day, and had impressed all the strangers as soldiers, these two men among them. They had not money to purchase their liberty from the Governor, and had therefore seized the first opportunity to desert. They feared that they would be recognised and arrested, if they entered the town.

We set out before sunrise on April 2, so as to reach Mahamanina that evening. At ten in the morning we came to the Manampatra river, here as broad as the Thames at Richmond; on the opposite bank was a large village called Mahafasina. We gathered on the shore, and awaited the canoes, of which there were several drawn up under the village. The inhabitants collected on the bank in great numbers, but appeared to pay no attention to us. In vain we shouted to them across the stream; in vain

did the Queen's messengers explain that they were entrusted with urgent despatches for the Queen, and threaten the people with severe punishment if they did not at once send a canoe to us.

Nearly an hour must have passed before at last a man in a very leisurely fashion descended the bank, baled out a canoe, and paddled across. He merely grinned foolishly when we gave him a piece of our mind, and we saw that he was very drunk. We now seized two or three other canoes, and soon transported our party to the further bank. We then entered the village, and found that all the inhabitants—men, women, and children—were out of doors, rushing to and fro in a state of violent excitement, and all more or less intoxicated. There was a fearful din of shrieks, wailings, rhythmical clappings of hands, and now and again the beating of tomtoms, and the chanting of many voices in monotonous chorus. On inquiring what this noisy demonstration signified, we discovered to our dismay that the whole population was engaged in holding a drunken pagan wake, which would probably be kept up till the following morning, over a corpse of some distinction.

Rum was flowing liberally; our rascals, as we feared would be the case, were unable to resist the temptation. It was with difficulty that we collected them after tiffin. We gave the order to start, and some of them went so far as to pack their loads and shoulder them. Then they began to whisper together, and we knew what was coming. Soon a

spokesman, shuffling and false, came up to us with the usual old story: Mahamanina, he said, was far off, and we could not possibly reach it before dark. We must therefore stay where we were for that night. If we went on we should be benighted in the wilderness, and the robbers would probably fall upon us; it was also certain, too, from the signs of the sky that it would rain hard all night.

In vain Mr. Pearse expostulated with them and appealed to their good feelings. They laughed impudently; those who had shouldered their loads placed them on the ground again and commenced to unfasten them. They had made up their minds to have a merry night of it over the opportune corpse that had brought them free rum galore, and they refused to travel another yard that day. After a long palaver, Mr. Pearse told me that he could do nothing with them; there was no help for it; we must give in and reconcile ourselves to wasting a whole day in this village of drunkards.

However, this was more than I could put up with. My one thought was ever to push on, and I foresaw that I should arrive at the front too late for any of the fighting if I allowed these men to have their own way in every village where rum was procurable. They were ready to spoil all my plans with an irritating indifference, but I had at last lost all patience with this trifling, and I was determined not to give in to the ruffians. At the commencement of the journey, having received a large advance on

their pay, they had frequently threatened to desert us ; but now, arrears being due to them, I was in a position to turn the tables, and I threatened to desert them. I told Mr. Pearse that in five minutes' time I was going to resume my journey, whether any one came with me or not. I think he considered my plan quite impracticable, but I called my own particular twelve men together, and asked my companion to translate to them the words I was about to speak.

I said to them : 'It is necessary that I should arrive at the capital by a certain day. You are well paid, you undertook to march the usual stages. You have lied to me ; you have already lost two days at Vangaindrano, and now you wish to waste another day here. I will have no more of this nonsense. I do not care whether we are benighted or not ; but unless you at once take up your loads and march, I will leave you ; I will place my baggage in charge of the headman of this place, and I will walk alone to Fianarantsoa. You can remain where you are, but in that case not a penny of your wages will I pay you. I will retain your passports and I will report your conduct to the Governor of Mahanina who will, I have no doubt, know how to deal with you.' The men listened in silence ; they could see that I was not making idle threats, and that I intended to carry out my words. I had proved to them that I could walk—it is a theory of the Malagasy that the palanquin-riding *vazaha* cannot use his legs. They fully realised that if I abandoned

them here in a strange country their fate might be a miserable one. They were penniless and would be left to starve by the natives. They were far from home, and were now between two Hova forts, so that whichever road they took they would be seized as masterless men without passports and be impressed into the army. The Governor of Mahamanina would be on their tracks, and if they tried to escape westward into the wilderness it would be only to fall into the hands of savage tribes, who would probably despoil and slay them. It was now my turn to have them at my mercy. The men looked at one another, and then, without a word, they proceeded to shoulder their packs. I saw, to my great satisfaction, that I had won the day. Mr. Pearse's men, who had collected round to hear what I had to say, after a little grumbling also gave in; and to Mr. Pearse's astonishment—for he thought my threats would prove of no avail—we were soon once more travelling fast upon our road. I had reason to congratulate myself; for to have walked across the country alone without knowledge of the language would have been a difficult matter, and I might easily have come to grief. My map was quite useless. Of the various scarcely distinguishable tracks I should never have known which was the right one, and I should have had to find my way as best I could by compass, while the tribesmen would probably have shown hostility to a *vazaha* travelling in so unexampled a fashion.

Of all journeys I have ever made I think this one was the most disagreeable, not on account of flooded rivers, heavy rains, rough food, inhospitable natives, and other natural difficulties, which one accepts as a matter of course, but on account of the altogether unnecessary delays for which the bad disposition of our men was responsible. It is trying, when one is in a fever of impatience to push on, to be brought to a standstill after half a day's journey instead of completing the full stage, simply because one's followers, having smelt rum, are determined to have a drunken night

It was dark when we reached Mahamanina, for the way was long. First we crossed extensive swamps, and then marched over bleak downs under a drizzling rain. The hills ever got higher as we advanced, and we had a steep climb at the end to reach our destination, a considerable town, like all others hereabout crowning a dome-shaped hill, and overlooking a vast expanse of rolling country ; the billows of verdure were much loftier and steeper than any we had yet seen ; and there were peaks near us which attained the height of 3,000 feet ; for we were now approaching the highland country.

CHAPTER VI

AN UNEXPLORED REGION—THE TANALA COUNTRY AND PEOPLE—THE WILDERNESS—THE BUSH ROBBERS—A RICH REGION—IVOHITROVA AND ITS 'FOMBA'—MAHABO—THE HIGH MOUNTAINS—A LAND OF WATERFALLS—ANKILSIKA—A NOISY NIGHT

ON the following morning, before setting out, we called on the Hova Governor at the spacious Government House. We were taken into a room furnished quite in European style, and here we found the Governor, his wife and child, all in European dress; they were pleasant, educated, and refined people; and little as one may love the Hovas, one cannot but realise that there is an immense gulf between the intelligent inhabitants of Imerina and the savage tribes who occupy the rest of the island. The Governor told us that the tribesmen on the road we had to follow were much addicted to robbing and murdering travellers, and he therefore insisted on sending with us an escort of four soldiers.

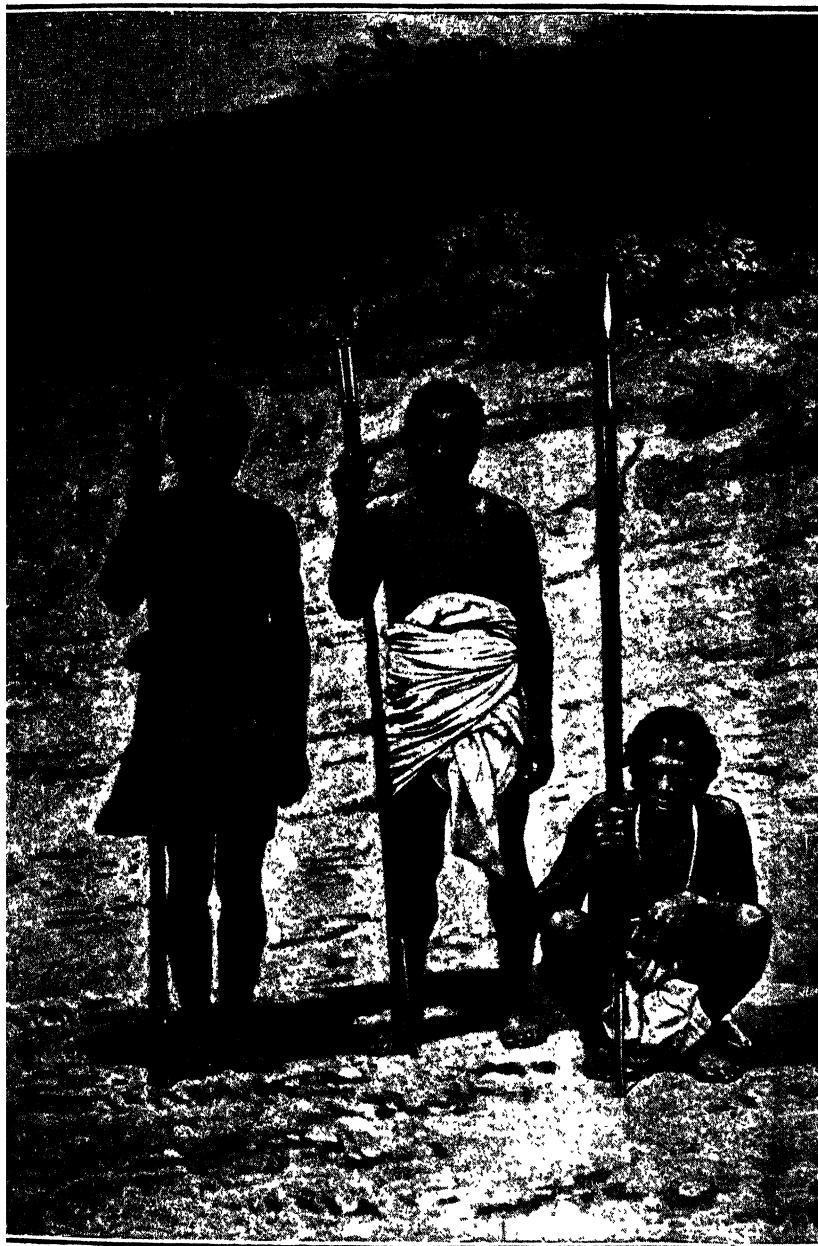
Our route from Mahamanina across the forest and the great mountain range to Angalampana, the next Hova station (a five days' journey), lay through an unexplored region, left blank on the maps, occupied by the Tanala or forest tribes (*ala*, forest). These people are entirely independent, have never

submitted to Hova rule, and have been untouched by any form of civilisation. I am not aware that any Europeans before us had made this journey. There is another road, marked in some of the maps, to the north of this, which was formerly frequented by those who travelled from Mahamanina to the central highlands; but the Governor told us that it was now impracticable, as the tribesmen would allow no strangers to pass through that portion of the country.

We of course had some difficulty in getting our carriers out of Mahamanina, with its many tempting grog shops. They pathetically complained that this was their last chance of procuring rum till we reached our destination several days hence, and that it was cruel thus to hurry them off into the wilderness without allowing them any time to enjoy themselves, and to then recover from the effects of their enjoyment. But I was obdurate, and with the assistance of a detachment of the Hova garrison we cleared them out of the town at about midday—a disreputable following indeed for a respectable missionary and a special correspondent; for these men were mad with drink, and descended the hill with tottering gait, shrieking with idiotic laughter, and shouting obscenities. But we had little difficulty with them after this. In the wilderness we were no longer at their mercy; they became more amenable to discipline; they were ever ready to start before dawn, and most cheerfully undertook marches of really extraordinary length. I began to wish that

our entire route lay through robber-land, where there were no towns of dalliance, no rum, no fraternising with the dreaded natives to delay our debauched bearers. Driven by fear, they hurried across this wild region as fast as they were able. During these five days Mr. Pearse and myself tramped it for a great portion of the way, as the track was often too steep and narrow for the use of palanquins.

However, it was rather late in the day before we had torn our men from the luxuries of Mahamanina, and on April 3 we only made a short march to the village of Samadio. We now looked a formidable party, and ought to have been quite capable of holding our own against any band of ill-armed robbers. We had our twenty-four bearers, the two Queen's messengers, and half a dozen hangers-on, who were travelling in the same direction as ourselves, all armed with spears, and the four soldiers of our escort, who had Snider rifles. We were thus thirty-six men in all, and were accompanied for several days by a young woman who had no baggage with her, and was probably a runaway slave; but we asked no questions. I had little doubt, however, that the whole of these armed natives would have bolted at the first alarm. It is unlikely that even the soldiers would have shown fight; they were men of the Taifasy tribe, and could only be distinguished from our other naked savages by the white lambas which they wore.



On April 4, after a stiff four hours' march across downs covered with long coarse grass, we came to our first Tanala village, Marosery, which I spell phonetically, for all this country is blank upon the maps. Here we found ourselves among an uncivilised people once again; but they were simpler and more easy to deal with than those we had met on the coast. The men, who wore the loin-cloth only, like the Tanosy, were armed with old Tower-marked flintlock muskets. The women were wild-looking, but more comely than those we had hitherto seen. A mat of *rofia* palm-fibre tied round the waist, a necklace of beads, and a few brass wire rings completed their costume, and they wore their hair rolled up in balls about the size of a duck's egg, thickly plastered with beef fat. These people appeared to have had no dealings with Europeans; they did not care at all for money, but were eager to obtain beads and salt. The houses are here built of bamboo, and not of the leaves and fibres of the traveller's-tree, as on the coast.

After a short halt for tiffin at Marosery we pushed on again, our men being anxious to traverse before nightfall a district of very ill repute, far the most dangerous on our whole road, the robber *effitra* (wilderness) as they termed it, which now lay before us. It was a most wearisome march across an undulating country, where the coarse grass grew thick and high, rising several feet above our heads. Our men forced their way through it cautiously and

in silence; for it was this grass, they said, that afforded ambush to the dreaded robber bands.

Suddenly we met an old man coming from the opposite direction. When he perceived us he stood still, and, leaning on his spear, watched our party until it had all defiled by him. Then he came up to Mr. Pearse, and told him that a considerable body of robbers were lying in wait in some thick bush a mile or so further on. He offered to turn back and accompany us, for the robbers, he said, knew and respected him, and if they saw him with us they would not venture to attack us, but would lie low. We surmised, and I think correctly, that this influential person was himself in league with the robbers, and had been posted on the road as scout, and that his presence in our midst was meant as a warning to his friends not to fall upon us, as we were too formidable to be an easy prey.

So we took him with us; he led the way, and I walked immediately behind him, with my revolver ready in case he meditated treachery. At first it looked as if the old man was leading us into a trap, for he turned off from the beaten track, with which our men were familiar, and brought us to a very dense jungle of tropical bush. This we traversed by a narrow path in single file, clambering up and down the steep sides of many rocky gullies. When we were in the thickest portion of this jungle, where the rank vegetation, closing in above our heads, only admitted a dim light, we heard the confused mur-

muring of many voices in the depths of the apparently impenetrable bush on our right. 'Those are the robbers,' said the old man quietly, 'but you have no need to fear them. They have already seen that I am with you.' At last we came out on to a piece of open ground. Here we called a halt, until all our followers had come up. Some of the robber gang crept out, and stood staring at us from the edge of the jungle about forty yards away, not venturing to come nearer. Even had we not been aware of their character, we should have regarded these forbidding-looking savages with considerable suspicion. These jungle devils were of a more brutal type than any other natives I had yet seen on the island; of stunted stature, with big heads and ragged mops of hair, they were rather like some of the degraded bush tribes of Australia. The women, of whom a few also came out to peer at us, never before, in all probability, having set eyes upon a European, were decked with barbarous ornaments of bone, wood, and metal. We asked the old man from what villages these robbers came; but he was naturally too cautious to commit himself in his reply. He said he did not know whence they came, or even whether they had any permanent abode. Their country was a far-distant one, and they occasionally made their ambush for weeks at a time in this belt of bush.

The old man insisted on seeing us safely to our journey's end that day, and recommended us to come to his own village, of which he was the chief: he was

not a king, he modestly informed us. But our followers, still suspicious, determined to pass the night at Veravina, a village which they had visited before, and which they had already fixed upon as our night's resting-place. On our way we crossed a jungle-shaded defile, and the soldiers who formed our escort informed us that at this spot a party of Hova travellers had recently been attacked by the robbers. We questioned the old man on the subject, and he replied, 'Yes, this is the place, and this bush is generally full of the robbers. You smell that smell—and there was indeed a very strong odour—that is one of the Hova travellers they killed;' and then he pointed out the spot where the dead man still lay in a shallow stream.

At sunset we entered Veravina, a congregation of a dozen huts or so on a high hill-top, and here the old man left us after receiving his well-earned *cadeau*. We gathered that no European had ever before been in this place. The people clamoured for beads, of which we unfortunately had none, but were so indifferent to money that they refused to sell us any supplies, and we should have gone dinnerless to bed had not our host, the head man of the village, at last presented us with a fowl. All the women were busy making cloth of *rofia* fibre on our arrival, but we saw few men, the majority, so far as we could make out from the cautious statements of their wives, having left their homes to raid somewhere in the neighbourhood. These people were naturally inclined to look

upon every stranger as a possible enemy. I took a walk outside the village while our dinner was cooking, and on turning a corner suddenly came face to face with a girl who was bringing in a bundle of *rofia* fibre from the jungle, and had not yet heard that white men were in the village. She started, stopped, and gave a cry of alarm ; but hers were not the aspect, the attitude, and cry of a timid maiden, but rather as of some startled wild beast that showed its fangs threateningly.

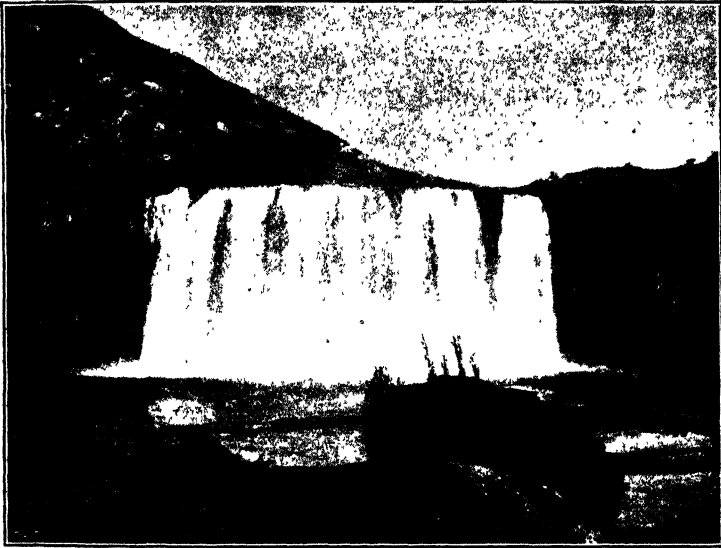
However, we passed through the robber district without mishap, and indeed got on very well with the Tanala tribesmen. We were quite sorry to leave the robber land, for while in it our men were on their best behaviour ; they were unable to obtain rum in the villages, they could not fraternise with the natives, whom they feared ; and in their anxiety to reach a safer and more civilised country they never growled at the length of the marches.

From here we travelled almost due west, and entered a beautiful highland region of wooded mountains and clear torrents, the climate becoming gradually cooler as we advanced ; for we were ascending all the while, and in front of us loomed ever higher the great mountain range which forms the backbone of Madagascar, the watershed between the rivers flowing eastward into the Indian Ocean and those that flow westward into the Mozambique Channel. This portion of the Tanala country is marvellously rich, and appears to be admirably adapted for Euro-

pean colonisation. The fruits that grow in wild luxuriance on the hillsides, the bananas, manioc, and sugar-cane that thrive in the fertile alluvial soil of the broad valleys wherever the natives plant their gardens, testify to the great possibilities of the region. A traveller, quoted in Mr. Olliver's book, says, I think with justice, of Tanala that it 'presents a magnificent field for European enterprise in the cultivation of coffee, sugar, vanilla, and even tea.' The French are fully aware of this, and at the termination of the war I met several coffee planters from the French colonies who were on their way to these foot hills of the great range to seek their fortunes.

How these planters are now faring there I cannot say. Even before I left Madagascar civil wars had broken out in all directions. In August last, somewhere near Mahamanina, the rebellious tribes fell upon a Hova force that had been sent to suppress them, and an action ensued in which five hundred men were killed ; so they must have done some more honest fighting than any that occurred in the more civilised and very tame war—it can only be termed a sham war—between the French and the Hovas. But recent reports show that things have gone from bad to worse since the French occupation of Antananarivo. Imerina itself is quiet, and the Hova people appear to have reconciled themselves to the new *régime*, which they will soon come to vastly prefer to the old one. But in all the southern

country, and to some extent in every portion of the island outside the central highlands, the tribesmen have thrown off the Hova yoke, and have defeated the Hova forces in several actions. The Hova Queen, under her French Protectorate, is now only recognised by the Malagasy as sovereign of the central high-



A CASCADE IN TANALA

lands, and throughout all the rest of the island complete anarchy is said to prevail. To pacify this huge territory and re-establish the authority of the central Government will be no light undertaking for the French, and yet they will have to effect this before white men can settle in the only districts adapted for colonisation. Imerina itself, though the

natives produce an abundance of rice in the valley bottoms, is for the most part a treeless wilderness with poor soil, and is altogether unsuited for European enterprise.

On April 5 we followed for many miles the valley of a broad, rushing stream, a tributary of the great Matitanana river. The scenery was delightful, and the fresh breeze that blew down upon us from the mountains was invigorating after the close atmosphere of the lowland swamps and jungles. On either side of the valley rose steep hills covered with forest or rich pasture. Many tributary torrents rushed down picturesque rocky ravines, or fell from great heights as cascades into the river, and we were ever crossing rivulets of cold clear water that flowed down bamboo-shaded gullies. Looking up the valley we caught occasional glimpses of the dark masses of the main range.

We halted for tiffin at the village of Ivohitrova. Before passing between the two great blocks of stone which form the narrow gateway into the village, we had to rearrange our caravan in accordance with the inexorable local *fomba* or custom. The superstitious law of this place lays down that no man carrying a load singly shall be allowed to pass through the gate; there must be two men to each load. We had therefore to make up our baggage into double loads, and put two men to each burden. Such senseless customs prevail throughout Madagascar. 'It is the *fomba*' is the only explanation of their sig-

nification that one can extract from a native. His ancestors before him, from time immemorial, always insisted on the rigid observance of the *fomba*, and if the present generation should fail in the traditional duty, the ghosts of the ancestors would be angry, and evil would befall the village; the houses would be struck by lightning, the cattle would rot, and the rice seed would die in the ground. These customs are often extremely inconvenient to travellers. For example, it is somewhat exasperating at the end of a long day's journey to arrive weary and hungry in front of a cheerful-looking village, and then to discover that one cannot enter it, and that it is even impossible to purchase food from the inhabitants, because by bad luck it happens to be one of the particular days on which the custom of the place taboos it to all strangers.

Here, too, we found few men, as most of them were away fighting their neighbours over some question of a disputed rice-field. The women would not trust us in the least, and refused even to supply us with a drop of water until we had given them some money in payment for it. We passed this night in a very large village called Mahabo, which is built on the top of a lofty isolated hill. It is the capital of this portion of the Tanala country, and a chief of some importance resides here; but there is not a Hova in the place, and the Hova supremacy is altogether ignored. Here we were very well treated by the inhabitants. We had now attained a consider-

able elevation, it was quite cold at night, and we found our blankets necessary. Our men all looked fatigued and worn after their recent hard marching, and the chill highland air brought out the fever in them, so that our quinine bottles were in constant request.

As we were setting out early on the following morning—April 6—the view from the high hill which Mahabo crowns was singularly beautiful. All round us stretched a level sea of mist, covering the plains and filling the valleys, and from it rose, like an archipelago of hundreds of islands, the summits of the steep hills—some richly wooded, some covered with pasture, some of bare rocks, on many of which stood the stockaded villages of the Tanala. Looking eastward towards the lowlands we had left, we saw these islands extending to a great distance, until at last on the far horizon was the unbroken line, as of the sea. But when we looked westward our view was shut in by the towering sierras of the mountain range, with forests and cliffs glowing in the rays of the rising sun, stretching to right and left like the steep coast of some great continent, while the mountain spurs projecting far out into the pearly sea of mist were as rugged promontories enclosing deep-winding fiords and bays.

This was to be our longest and most arduous day's march ; our men, therefore, set out as soon as they could see the road. Throughout the day we were ever clambering up and down the mountain

sides by tracks so narrow and difficult that Mr. Pearse and myself had to tramp it for the greater part of the way, for not only was it impossible to employ the palanquins, but our carriers even could scarcely get along with their loads; for wherever it could get a hold the rank vegetation covered the slopes, and we had to thrust our way through bamboo groves and thickets of prickly bush.

The mighty mountain buttresses ever loomed ahead of us, and from the summits of the ridges we obtained magnificent views over the main range, which here falls precipitously to the foot hills, forming a gigantic step. On the summit of the range and fringing the very edge of it is the Alabe, the great forest of Madagascar, a broad belt running parallel to the coast, which encircles the interior of the island in a great ring, estimated as being upwards of two thousand miles in circumference. The Hovas have always regarded the mountain range and the forest as the impregnable bulwarks of their central highlands, from before which the enemy, who has even succeeded in forcing his way through the malarious lowland coast-belt, must of necessity retire baffled. But the Hovas have now learnt that, unless the people too fight in defence of their country, no natural difficulties of mountain, forest, desert, swamp, or fever can stay a determined invader.

Here the Alabe forms the watershed between the Indian Ocean and the Mozambique Channel, and is the mother of many fine rivers. The rivers that flow

through its gloomy depths in an easterly direction fall in cascades of great height and volume over the gigantic mountain step I have described. While we were yet some six or seven miles from the mountain we saw several of these cascades, and one of them, whose roar we could distinctly hear, was especially grand; I imagine there are few finer in the world. A large river emerged from the forest and plunged over a precipice which appeared to be eight hundred feet in height. It fell, the lower half of it veiled in a great cloud of spray, into the depths of a profound gorge. Had I not been hurrying to the war, which I supposed to be then raging, still many hundred miles away, I should have much liked to explore the wonderful scenery of this district and examine from nearer some of these stupendous waterfalls.

A ten hours' march up torrent-beds and through belts of forest brought us to the foot of the mountain step, and we now had before us what our men had so often spoken of as 'the big climb' to the summit. It was a stiff ascent with which to complete a long day's journey. We clambered up from boulder to boulder, and at last, shortly after sunset, reached Ankilsika, a highland village perched on a rocky knoll at the head of the pass, with peach trees growing round it. This pass is much frequented by native travellers, and Ankilsika is the only resting-place upon it. We found the inhabitants the most unpleasant people we had yet met. Their apparent occupation is to blackmail the travellers that come

their way, and then to spend the proceeds of their exactions on bad rum.

We lodged in the hut of a vile old hag, who squabbled with our men, attempted to fleece us in divers ways, and worried us with reiterated statements of all the benefits she had conferred upon us : how she had laid down a clean mat for us here, opened a window there, brought us some water in a bamboo, and so forth. A relative of the headman had died, a calamity we sincerely deplored, though we had never known this personage ; for, as we entered the village, the usual savage wake was being held over his corpse, and we knew that we had a night of disorder before us. First all went soberly enough. There was even something pleasing in the rhythmical wailing to the beating of tomtoms and tramping of many feet, in the plaintive death-song chanted in the minor key, in the wild choruses in which nearly the entire population joined, the tomtoms beating furiously. But soon the whole village was drunk. Then the regular ceremonial was abandoned for a hideous din of screaming, idiotic shrieks of laughter, and violent quarrelling. The maddened savages rushed in groups round the hut in which we lay, yelling horribly. Never before had Mr. Pearse or myself listened to sounds of such utter, unredeemed barbarism. To make slumber still more impossible for us, numbers of rats and beetles were constantly running over us throughout the night. Lovers of rum as they were, our men, happily for us, were

afraid to join in this Tanala orgie, and remained sober.

One of our escort came to us in the middle of the night to tell us that the people were excited against us; they were evidently unaccustomed to European visitors, and took us for Frenchmen. One of the principal Tanala had declared to the people that he recognised me as a white man, who had taken him and some other tribesmen to the west coast, and there left them without paying them their wage. He and his friends were determined to prevent our departure in the morning, and vowed vengeance on us. Our enemies did not venture to enter our hut, but stood outside and howled abuse and threats. I expected at any moment to see an assegai come flying through the light bamboo wall, and had my revolver ready to reply. To have gone out and argued the matter with the tribesmen in their then frenzied condition would have been worse than useless, so we waited where we were till morning.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT FOREST OF MADAGASCAR—WE CROSS THE WATERSHED—
 THE BETSILEO PROVINCE—ANTANAMBAO—AMBOHIMANDROSO—THE
 LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY—ITS SUCCESS—A DEMOCRATIC CHURCH
 --THE FALSENESS OF THE HOVAS—RESULTS OF MISSION LABOUR

AT dawn on April 7 we called our men together, and I sent one of our escort to bring up the Tanala chief who had said he would oppose our going, as it was my intention to march him down with us to the nearest Hova Governor, before whom he could prefer his charge against me. But he could not be found. He had hidden himself away in some corner, and was doubtless suffering from a very bad headache, with all the brag evaporated from his silly brain. The village was quite quiet now, for the population was sleeping off its wild orgie. We left the place without encountering any opposition; only two or three haggard, blear-eyed villagers were up to see us off, and none had a word to say, with the exception of our miserly old hostess, who made some nasty remarks about us, because we had not given her a *cadeau* that quite came up to her expectations.

This day's march took us across the great Madagascar forest which, as I have already explained, forms a belt round the entire island, just within the

under the control of the Hovas. The Betsileo tribesmen have acquired a considerable degree of civilisation, not only from contact with their rulers, but also from our missions, which have been singularly successful in their work among these people. The Betsileo are taller than the Hovas, and are of much darker complexion. They have less intelligence, but according to some of the missionaries, they are a braver, more trustworthy, and altogether better people than their conquerors.

We descended the mountain side into this pleasant land, where I noticed that most of the people we met were clad in the white *lamba*. They greeted us with friendly smile or word, instead of scowling suspiciously or sullenly staring at us, as did so many of the barbarians among whom we had recently been; some of whom would not even deign to reply when Mr. Pearse put a question to them. We passed the night in the village of Antanambao, the furthest Hova station in this direction, on the edge of the wilderness, guarded by three Hova soldiers. Here, for the first time, we found the people took an interest in the coming war, and were anxious to obtain any information we could give. The only reports that had reached them were conflicting and wildly improbable. They were evidently no friends of the French, and dreaded the coming invasion. At the same time their feelings towards the Hovas were very different from those entertained by the independent tribesmen of Tanala, Vangain-

drano, and Anosy. These last, having no fear of a rule that was so impotent in their own districts, while hating the Hovas, regarded them with utter contempt. But the Betsileo feared as well as hated the conquering race, which in their province was strong enough to fearfully oppress the people.

The Governor or Sub-Governor of this district was a heartless blackmailer of all those under his authority, and the people groaned under his tyranny. One of the first professed Christians, by the way, whom I met in Madagascar, was a Hova official notorious for his cruel exactions, one of the greatest scoundrels indeed of his class. He called at the house in which I was passing the night, and I happened to offer him a cigar. 'I thank you,' said this good man, rejecting it with a reproving sigh; 'I used to smoke once, but since I have become a Christian I have abandoned the habit.' It was this incident that first made me suspect that the Nonconformist Christianity of the Hova people, of which we have heard so much, is for the most part a matter merely of teetotalism, non-smoking, sabbatarianism, and chapel-going, and is absolutely unconnected with the higher rules of conduct.

On April 8, after traversing several broad vales in which the fat alluvial soil is cultivated from end to end, and where even the hillsides have been converted into irrigated terraces, we reached the town of Ambohimandroso, built on a hill and appearing to me, after my long journey across the wilderness,

very civilised, with its well-built houses, two stories in height, of red sun-dried bricks. The Governor of the district has his residence here, and the place contains a considerable Hova colony. Here, too, we saw Europeans once again; for we had now come to the country where the London Missionary Society carries on its operations; we found two families of missionaries stationed in Ambohimandroso, by whom we were, of course, hospitably received.

It was very interesting to me to come, for the first time, in contact with a body that has produced such great results in this island. It is indeed wonderful that a society of English Dissenters, or, to speak more correctly, of English, Scotch, and Welsh (there are a good many of the latter) Dissenters, should have established themselves so firmly and gained such influence under so tyrannical and corrupt a government as that of Madagascar, and should even have been in favour with this same government, whose methods, one would have thought, are altogether antagonistic to the democratic principles of our Nonconformist sects. It is an anomalous state of things that much puzzles the observer at first.

The newcomer to this country is almost invariably favourably impressed by the plausible Hovas, and in this first impression he is nearly altogether at fault. He is also lost in admiration of the work of the London Missionary Society; in this he is to a great extent right, but I think not wholly so. Madagascar

is the land of sham, and its Christianity and civilisation will not bear too close examination. It ought never to be forgotten, however, that the London Missionary Society's missionaries have been the pioneers of Hova civilisation, and have produced results, even if these be only on the surface, such as Protestant propagandism cannot, so far as I know, show in any other part of the world, and which can only be compared to the great work wrought long ago—I don't know whether Nonconformists will altogether like the comparison—by the Jesuits in Paraguay.

The London Missionary Society had much in its favour. The missionaries wisely, in the first instance, approached the paramount and more intelligent, if also more contemptible, Hova race, which occupies the central highland province of Imerina. They encountered few of the difficulties that beset mission enterprise in other lands. They had not to contend with any strong anti-European feeling or religious fanaticism, so their efforts were phenomenally successful. From Imerina as their base they gradually extended the sphere of their labours over the neighbouring highlands, including the province of Betsileo. On her coming to the throne Queen Ranavalona II. publicly announced her faith in Christianity, and ordered the national idols to be burnt. On this great numbers of natives in all the districts where the Hova Government could make itself feared hastened to adopt the new religion, so as not to fall under the displeasure of the powers that be. This,

of course, much facilitated the work of the London Missionary Society.

The London Missionary Society stations are now scattered over the whole of the central highlands ; they have very few stations elsewhere—these, I believe, are at the seaports of Tamatave, Majunga, and Ambahy. The conversion of the savage peoples on the highly unhealthy coast is mostly left to other societies, the Norwegian Lutherans, who have obdurate races to deal with in the Tanosy and Sakalava, and the Anglican missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, most of whose stations are on the east coast. The London Missionary Society is jealous of other missions that encroach on its preserves, and the London Missionary Society men affirm—with small reason, I believe—that the Anglican missionaries have broken faith with them, as, by entering Imerina and placing a bishop in the capital, they have not adhered to some agreement or tacit understanding which binds the Anglicans to keep out of Imerina, and to carry on their work in other parts. As the London Missionary Society initiated missionary work in Imerina, this is not altogether an unnatural attitude to take, but it looks as if these good men wished to thrust other denominations into the wild and unhealthy regions, where small appreciable effects follow mission efforts, so that they might themselves monopolise Imerina, and take all the credit for its immense advance. But the London Missionary Society has not been allowed

the monopoly of Imerina ; for now the missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, of the Friends' Foreign Mission Association, and of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission are stationed there ; so, too, were the Jesuits and other Roman Catholic missionaries, until they were expelled with other French subjects ; they will, of course, return in greater numbers now that the war is concluded and the French supremacy has been established.

Like many other people who have travelled in South Africa, I arrived in Madagascar with certain prejudices against Nonconformist missions generally ; but I had soon to acknowledge that they had on this island accomplished admirable results, to which they can point with a just pride, while the missionaries themselves appeared to be superior men to those I had met in other lands. But I am still of opinion that it would be better if mission work were left to properly organised churches, having some authority and enforcing discipline. The democratic Congregationalist system of the London Missionary Society may do very well at home, but it appears to me to be singularly ill adapted for the training of vain savages, and to have a tendency to flatter all their weaknesses. The Hovas love to display their fine clothes of a Sunday. It gratifies their vanity that any individual may get on his feet and declaim at a prayer-meeting, for they love to hear their own voices ; and that the administration of the churches is placed entirely under the control of the members, each one

having a finger in the pie, as is the case under the London Missionary Society's system. Schisms are, of course, frequent. If a preacher offend some of his congregation, off these will go to build a rival chapel of their own over the way. With the exception, I believe, of the memorial churches, the churches are the property of the congregations, not of the London Missionary Society. There is a mighty deal of squabbling in the loosely organised Church which is patronised by the Queen and Court, and is the most popular in Madagascar at present. What it really wants is a Pope.

One cannot but come to the conclusion that the strong parental rule of the Roman Catholic Church, tolerating no dissent and schism, is the one best suited to this flighty people, while the dignity of that Church and the unselfish devotion of its celibate missionaries must strongly appeal to any good feeling the Hovas may be capable of. The liberty, or rather licence, of the London Missionary Society system is of course more attractive to the Malagasy mind than the stricter discipline of other churches. The London Missionary Society's converts sometimes say that the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches are too severe for them; the chances therefore are that the converts of the latter are more sincere than those of the London Missionary Society.

When travelling in certain portions of South Africa, it would be invidious to say where, I observed that the young Englishmen who were seeking their

fortunes in those new countries associated a good deal with the highly educated and excellent Jesuit fathers, and were thereby probably saved from much wildness. On the other hand, the Dissenting missionaries had little communication with the white men, and in their missionary zeal had apparently lost all sympathy with people who had not got black skins. Nevertheless, the Jesuits had far the greatest influence over the natives; for the latter saw with wonder what self-sacrificing teachers were these men, who made no money and never *traded*, and who were—perhaps the most important matter of all—respected by the white man. The native is observant, and he always understands the distinctions of caste; he likes to deal with a gentleman, in short.

If a man be uneducated, narrow-minded, with the instincts of the small-tradesman class from which he springs still alive in him, he may be overflowing with honest zeal and good intentions, but he is not the right man to send out as a missionary into heathen lands, and still less so if the heathen lands are overrun by fortune-hunting pioneers. Coming fresh from his own narrow circle in small town or city suburb, he has little judgment or power of observation, though he is seldom devoid of spiritual arrogance. He is inclined to exaggerate at meetings at home the results of his work. He is loth to allow that his long lists of converts are anything but true Christians. He is often incapable of seeing below

the surface of things. He is gulled by the subtler natives; sometimes, I fear, he wilfully shuts his eyes, and I have known him throw dust in the eyes of a newcomer in a way that the latter, when his vision becomes clear, is apt to resent. One finds more fairness among the educated and broad-minded missionaries sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Universities' Missionary Society.

When I first came to Madagascar I met missionaries who glorified the Hovas, even at the expense of their own race. One told me that he would rather trust a Hova than the average Englishman he met at home, which does not say much for the little community from which he came. There were few missionaries among the London Missionary Society who would go so far as this, I hasten to say, and the wisest of the body have admitted to me that they begin to despair of the false Hova race, and that there is practically no Christianity in the country. Unfortunately there were also some who had come over to their work, narrow-minded, ignorant of the world, and fanatic haters of other sects, more especially of the Roman Catholics—not that they had a much higher opinion of the Anglicans. Their prejudices against the French were ridiculous in the extreme, and they were evidently of opinion that the Hovas were a far more civilised and Christian people than our neighbours. When a French resident was first sent to Fianarantsoa, a missionary called

upon him and implored him not to have a resident's guard, as there was a danger lest the notoriously wicked French soldiers should corrupt the morals of the Christian converts! I remember taking up the cudgels for the French in one conversation, when they attacked with great injustice the lives of French people generally, a subject of which they of course knew nothing. When I suggested that the English were not altogether such an immaculate people that we could thus condemn our neighbours, I raised a storm of indignation, and a missionary declared—and, to my amazement, all those present supported him—that whereas nine out of ten young Frenchmen live wicked lives, nine out of ten young Englishmen live perfectly moral lives. This makes us no less than ninety times more virtuous than the French—something indeed to boast of. I could only reply that after such a statement I should know how far to trust their judgment when they lauded the gentle Hovas.

Just as there are people who believe in the sudden conversion and permanent reform of a scoundrel at an hysterical revival meeting, so there are men who, having come out to Madagascar with preconceived ideas as to its being the mission paradise, shut their eyes, and refuse to recognise the fact that the acceptance of the Christian faith—often from interested motives—cannot make black white. It is evident that the Hovas, like many other inferior races, are wanting in moral backbone, and are desti-

tute of those feelings of honour which characterise the higher races, and inspired the Europeans long before they embraced Christianity. The Hovas are profoundly false, and in their spirit of greedy self-seeking have no idea what true friendship signifies. Not one of them will trust another. Until their whole nature changes—which, to judge from what one knows of them, will be so soon as their colour does—they will be incapable of combining in any undertaking where a man has to place faith in his fellow's honesty. Their government has never been anything but grossly corrupt; the administration of their independent church on democratic lines can scarcely be much purer. They have no real patriotism, though they bragged so much about it. In the late ridiculous war they were careful not to risk their lives, and there were few, I believe, who would not have gladly sold their country for French gold. In short, they have none of that altruistic sentiment which not only enables European nations to govern themselves and be masters of the world, but which is the very essence of Christianity.

It is strange, too, how in their ignorance of men and nations the L.M.S. missionaries formerly over-rated the greatness of the Hova power. They accepted it at its own value. They considered it a great honour to be granted an interview by one of these dusky princes. Unwittingly they flattered the vanity of these corrupt nobles, and the latter, eaten up by the conceit which is so marked a trait in the

Hova character, accepted all this homage haughtily, waxed insolent, and came to think themselves the equals of the princes of Europe. Was not the late Prime Minister, Rainilaiarivony, held up to the world by the L.M.S. missionaries as an enlightened statesman, a Christian, the lover of his people, and a great reformer? But was he not in truth the jealous enemy of every man of merit, a cruel oppressor of the people? He did liberate the Mozambique slaves, but did he ever try to reform any other abuse, though his empty promises were manifold? Were we not also told by the L.M.S. that the Hovas were a noble, Christian, and patriotic people, fighting for their independence against the cruel and grossly unjust invasion of the French? No colonial wars are strictly just, and yet the L.M.S. approved of our conquest of Matabeleland. But in the one case they had all to lose and in the other much to gain by European interference with the native government. The French will probably destroy many shams in Madagascar, but it is absurd to contend that their occupation will retard the progress of the people. That there will be changes in the condition of mission work is probable, but one can scarcely regret that the French Resident-General, himself a Protestant, has invited the Superior of the Order of Trappists to establish missions in Madagascar, serious rivals though they may be to our own; for the Trappists are among the most Christian of missionaries, and the work they have done in Algeria is above all praise.

That the Hovas have welcomed missionaries is not to be wondered at. They are an intelligent people, and they realised that they could derive substantial benefits from the ministrations of these kindly white men. They are evidently eager to acquire any knowledge that can help them to attain material prosperity, for they are lovers of comfort and luxury; and the Government has profited by the teachings of its European advisers, to counterfeit the methods of a respectable European Power, with its Prime Minister, its Cabinet, its Foreign Office, and what not, employing the English terms for all these bogus institutions; hoping thereby to impose upon the world, as it did for years impose upon some of the missionaries. It was a matter of high-sounding words, and nothing more.

To become Christian in name was a small price to pay for all the assistance the Hovas have received, and the large sums their English sympathisers have spent upon their advancement—sums that have not been wasted, it is true, for it is chiefly due to the labours of the London Missionary Society that a considerable portion of the population of the Central Highlands is now fairly educated; and the numerous well-attended schools will bring about a still further improvement in the coming generation. The missionaries have taken great pains to instruct the people in the more useful arts, and the industrial schools at which carpentering, the working in iron, and other trades are taught have proved of great

service. The inhabitants of the cities no longer live in rickety wooden huts, but in well-constructed houses of sun-dried brick, two or three stories in height. Burnt bricks are also now largely used, while the stone churches in the capital have been skilfully built by their mission-trained artisans. The Hovas fully avail themselves of the education afforded by the numerous schools, and by the L.M.S. College in the capital; and, to judge from conversations I have had with native doctors and students in different parts of the country, the medical course at the Mission Hospital must be an excellent one, hampered though it be by the impossibility of obtaining subjects for dissection.

All this is very good, is of great advantage to the Hovas, and is undoubtedly a great step towards civilisation. But after all it is only what so intelligent and imitative a people would have acquired under any circumstances from contact with Europeans. Their Christianity, it appears to me, is but skin-deep, as hollow as their patriotism. Their conversion was altogether too rapid and easy to be worth much, and has therefore left them, if possible, even more conceited and hypocritical prigs than they were before. I am afraid that the chief result of all our mission labour in Madagascar has been to turn out an army of useful clerks, carpenters, tinkers, bricklayers, and so forth, for the benefit of our friends the French.

CHAPTER VIII

BARA AND SAKALAVA RAIDS—AMBALAVAO—A WASTED COUNTRY—FIANARANTSOA—BAD NEWS FROM THE CAPITAL—ENGLISHMEN ASSAULTED AS SPIES—AMBOSITRA—THE PROVINCE OF IMERINA—I REACH ANTANANARIVO—RESIGNATION OF COLONEL SHERVINGTON—NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENTS SUSPECTED AND BOYCOTTED

MR. PEARSE was suffering from the effects of our long journey, which brought out later a severe attack of fever, so decided to rest with his friends at Ambohimandroso for a few days before proceeding to his station at Fianarantsoa. Being ignorant of all that was happening at the capital, which was still 270 miles distant, I was unable to take a rest, but bidding farewell to my friend, who, with his long experience of the Malagasy, had been of such great assistance to me on the journey, I pushed on again on the morning after my arrival at Ambohimandroso. As nearly all my men had fever or dysentery, were footsore, or were otherwise knocked up, I engaged a fresh lot of carriers for my journey to the capital—willing cheery fellows, very unlike the mutinous rascals whom I had been compelled to employ hitherto—who accomplished the journey at the handsome rate of 33 miles a day.

The Governor sent with me an escort of four

soldiers, as the road was then very unsafe. The rich valleys of the Betsileo are exposed to the raids of the wild Bara tribesmen, who burn the villages, lift the cattle, and carry off the men, women, and children into slavery. These dreaded Bara are hereditary robbers, and at the birth of each male child the incantation is uttered: 'May he be a great robber, may he be brave, may he die at last by the spear!' Within the last few years the Bara and Sakalava have captured a great number of Hovas and Betsileo, and have disposed of them, in exchange for guns and ammunition, to the Arab slave-dealers, whose dhows frequent the creeks of the west coast, often sailing under French colours. Since the declaration of the French Protectorate our gunboats have ceased to patrol this coast, and the slave trade has been carried on with impunity. It is said that the captives are often smuggled up the Persian Gulf. I hear that the French are now about to take this matter in hand. A few days before my arrival at Ambohimandroso the Bara had made a raid on the country through which I had now to pass, and had carried off 500 head of cattle and 300 captives. It was rumoured that a large body of the tribesmen were still in the neighbourhood. The Hova Governors on this road made no real effort to protect the people under their rule. Sometimes they would despatch a few soldiers to chase the raiding Bara, but these invariably came back with the same tale: 'The robbers fled into the wilderness. We did not

follow them, as we could not have caught them, so we have come back.' It never entered into the head of a Hova Governor to send a punitive expedition into the Bara country, to execute the kings respon-



SAKALAVA ROBBERS

sible for the raids, burn their villages, and seize their cattle.

It had been my intention on April 9 to make a long day's journey, so as to reach Fianarantsoa early the next morning. But when we reached the village of Ambalavao, the Hova sub-governor of that place

told me that I could not proceed further that day, as the Bara were attacking a village through which I had to pass. He put a house of his at my disposal, and insisted on my staying there until the following dawn. As he knew no language but his own, he was unable to explain himself to me, despite an English-Hova dictionary which he possessed, in which we looked up words in turn and pointed them out to each other, in the vain hope of effecting an interchange of ideas. Happily, a young pupil of the Jesuits was found in the village, who had learnt French from the fathers. He was an intelligent and well-informed boy, and made an excellent interpreter. It was not altogether prudent while travelling in Madagascar at that time to show that one was conversant with the invader's tongue, and I never employed it save in case of necessity.

At midnight I was awakened by a great tumult in the streets, trumpets and conchs sounded the alarm, men shouted, women screamed and babies howled, while the cocks and pigs and cattle contributed to the hubbub. I was informed that some 600 Bara had burnt a village only an hour's journey off, and were now driving off the captives and the cattle. So the Governor was calling together all the fighting men of Ambalavao with the object, unless it was too late (and they soon discovered that it was too late), of giving chase to the marauders. Nothing was done, but there was a big demonstration in the village.

On April 10 we set out at dawn and marched across a well-cultivated country for several miles. Then we saw many signs of the Bara raid and traversed a desolated region, passing wrecked and still smouldering villages; and we saw the unfortunate people gathered together in groups upon the hill-tops, guarding the cattle they had saved, and mourning the relations they had lost; for it is said that no captive of the Bara ever returns to his home. Eight men had been killed on this occasion, but the robbers had effected their escape with all their booty, and the smoke of the fires at which they were cooking their morning rice was visible on the distant hills to the west.

In the evening we reached Fianarantsoa, the capital of the Betsileo province, a city of about 10,000 inhabitants, the second in the kingdom, picturesquely situated on the slopes of a steep hill, and containing many well-built houses and handsome churches. This is an important station of the London Missionary Society, and the Roman Catholics have here a rather imposing cathedral. I stayed with one of our hospitable missionaries, who was able to communicate to me the latest news from the capital, as a runner had just come in with letters. It was startling news and disappointing for me. Colonel Shervington, it appeared, far from having gone to the front, was still in Antananarivo, and was in very bad odour with the Hova Government. It was reported that he and all his staff of British officers

had resigned their commissions in disgust, and were likely shortly to leave the island.

It was evident that there was no longer any necessity for my hurrying on to the capital, as I had done hitherto, without allowing myself a day's rest; and as the malarial fever, of which I had felt symptoms for some time, had now got hold of me, I halted at Fianarantsoa for two days so as to shake it off. At that season of the year the coast fever is most virulent, and it is almost impossible for a traveller to escape an attack. I began to realise that the French had a difficult task before them even if the Hovas did not show fight. Europeans who knew the country estimated that 75 per cent. of the French troops would be down with fever if they ventured to cross the pestilential coast belt before the middle of June, and they were not far wrong in this anticipation. On reaching the capital I found that out of seven Europeans who had recently been carried comfortably up in palanquins from Vatomandry—a very short route compared with that taken by the French—all but one had caught fever or dysentery. I have already shown that of the men who came up with me from Fort Dauphin, seasoned though they were, many were attacked by coast ague. I could gather from this what was likely to befall white troops on the march, enduring hardships and fatigues which the ordinary traveller is careful to avoid. An expedition, moreover, has to be faultlessly organised if the commissariat and transport arrangements do

not, at least occasionally, break down; and to be ill-fed means, for the European, fever in its worst form.

It was while I was resting in Fianarantsoa that I observed the first symptoms of any anti-European feeling among the people. On the afternoon of April 11 I saw from the mission-house in which I was staying a large mob of excited natives march into the town and collect round the Hova Fort. On inquiring what this tumult signified I was told that the people had seized two French spies, and would have killed them had not the soldiers come to the rescue and taken them before the Governor. These two French spies turned out to be two English gold prospectors, who were tramping down from the capital to the seaport of Mananjara. They were released on the following morning, so soon as some of their fellow-countrymen residing in the town had testified to their nationality. I had a conversation with these men. They told me that they had been mobbed and insulted in every village they had passed through on their way from the capital, and that their lives had been in serious danger on several occasions. They presented a very suspicious appearance in the eyes of the natives; for, in the first place, their helmets resembled those worn by the French colonial troops, and in the second place they were both short men; the Malagasy aver that the features of all Europeans are much the same, and that the difference between an Englishman and a Frenchman is

merely one of stature. At that time there was safety in inches for the white traveller in Madagascar, and it was dangerous to be anything under five feet eight.

On April 13 I resumed my journey. The distance from Fianarantsoa to Antananarivo is 234 miles, which my fresh bearers accomplished in seven days. My fever had left me, but when I endeavoured to climb up the steep hills, in the now more rarefied air of the central highlands, I discovered that even a slight attack of Malagasy malaria takes a good deal out of one. At that season there was a good deal of fever even in that healthy highland region; several of my men fell ill on the way, and there were constant calls on my quinine bottle.

We were enabled to travel fast, for it was no longer necessary to call a long midday halt while my men cooked their rice. At frequent intervals on this road I found natives, generally old women, squatting by the wayside with pots of rice and manioc boiling on fires in front of them. At these primitive restaurants our men were able to purchase their meals ready cooked. The country now offered few difficulties; the rivers were easily fordable; I had done with the arduous ascents, the swamps and the dense forests, and my way for the most part lay across a succession of gently sloping treeless downs, affording pasture to herds of humped cattle, while the alluvial soil of the valley bottoms was carefully cultivated, producing crops of rice and wheat. It

was a country, too, of abundant fruits and vegetables. The potatoes, introduced by the missionaries, were excellent ; we travelled through great fields of pineapples, and bananas and mangoes were procurable at each hamlet.

On April 16 I reached the large village of Ambohitra, where I found a very surly and suspicious Hova sub-governor, who informed me that all the Englishmen who had been in the Hova service were now in disgrace, and that the Hova Government would therefore, in all probability, not only refuse me permission to accompany the troops to the front, but prevent me from sending any correspondence home. Close to this place I came to the first alluvial gold workings I had seen in the country, and I also noticed some very promising looking-quartz.

On April 17 I came to a desolated region. The raids of the wild western tribes extend even to this civilised portion of the country, and the borders of Imerina itself are not secure from their depredations. The Bara had recently plundered this district, and I passed some wrecked and deserted villages. Then having traversed several leagues of bleak downs covered with coarse grass, with here and there a little village walled and surrounded by an immense moat, we came to our night's resting-place, the large village of Ambodifiakarana, whose inhabitants, the missionaries had told me, bore a very bad name as robbers and blackmailers of travellers. However, they gave me no trouble that night ; but on the following

morning, as I was preparing to start, I saw a number of villagers fall upon the hindmost of a long train of carriers that was passing through the village, and help themselves to some of the cloth of which their loads consisted. The carriers protested, but offered no resistance, neither did their companions attempt to come to their rescue.

The next day's journey brought us well into the province of Imerina, and among a people of the more handsome Hova type. I was much struck by the high spirit displayed by all those with whom I was able to converse. They spoke of the determined resistance which would encounter the French invasion; they entertained no doubt as to the result, and scouted the idea of the French expedition ever reaching Imerina. This cheery and absolute confidence of the Hovas seemed pathetic, for I felt that they little realised the strength of a European Power when properly exerted. They were able, however, to show cause for their faith, and discussed with intelligence the methods that would be employed by the Hova troops to harass the enemy. They pointed out that the French would have to march across a desert country; no cattle, no crops would be left to them; the grass would be burnt down before their advance, so that they would find no forage for their mules; their transport service would in all probability break down; and the men, weakened and dispirited by the fever, would fall an easy prey to the Hova warriors, who would ever hover on the

French line of march, and allow the enemy no rest. And all this might indeed have happened had the Hovas been a tenth as valiant in action as they were in words.

At last, after a thirty-two days' journey from Fort Dauphin, a long march from before dawn till after dark, on April 20, brought me to Antananarivo. Far off we saw the capital, hours before we reached it, as we attained the top of each successive grassy treeless hill, appearing as a far blue peak crowned with the towers and domes of palaces and churches. There were many signs to show that I was approaching a great centre of population. The villages became more frequent, and the landscape was studded with the country villas of the Hova nobles; well-built houses of red brick of a uniform style of architecture, and generally surrounded with shrubberies, suggesting reminiscences of the genteel but cheap suburbs of some of our own large towns. Conspicuous too were the rows of the great stone family tombs of the Hova nobles, some nearly twenty feet in height, which lined the road. In the vaults beneath these tombs the corpses are laid out on slabs, wrapped in *lumbas* of silk. The Hovas pay great respect to the remains of their ancestors, and when General Duchesne commenced his march from the coast he issued a proclamation, with the object of conciliating the people, to the effect that any profanation of the Hova tombs on the part of his men would be punished with the utmost severity.

It is the ghastly custom, once a year, for relatives to remove their dead from their tombs, and, after holding a drunken wake over the mouldering corpses, to take them to other tombs; the change of residence, they affirm, being agreeable to the uneasy ghosts.

It was dark when we reached the foot of the rugged ridge on whose summit and slopes the great city of Antananarivo is built. One of my men walked in front with a lantern to show the way as we walked, or rather clambered, up precipitous narrow alleys full of pitfalls, between the houses of sunburnt bricks. The winding streets of Antananarivo are best described as rough mountain paths and dry beds of mountain torrents, encumbered with great boulders, eaten away into deep gullies by the rushing waters of the rainy season. After a long climb we came to the summit of the northern part of the ridge, where Faravohitra, the European quarter, extends in one long lane, bordered by the garden-surrounded residences of the missionaries, the college, and several churches and schools. I passed the night in the house of one of the missionaries, and on the following morning moved to the vice-consulate, which is also in Faravohitra.

Mr. Porter, our vice-consul, gave me a description of the situation which I found anything but encouraging. Colonel Shervington and the other English officers, with the exception of two or three who still remained in the hope of ultimately obtain-

ing employment in the Hova service, had resigned their commissions and left the country in disgust. Colonel Shervington, as a man of honour, could not have acted otherwise. He had formed an excellent plan of defence ; he had fully explained to the Hova Government the steps that should be taken to oppose the French invasion, and there can, I think, be little doubt that had his counsel been followed, and had the Hova officers honestly supported him in his efforts, the French would have failed to reach Antananarivo before the rainy season, the expedition would have resulted in a complete fiasco, and for another year at least the independence of the Hova Government would have been preserved. But the rulers of the land, while professing to approve heartily of the Colonel's proposals, and promising to do as he recommended, neglected persistently, despite his earnest and repeated entreaties and warnings, to do anything. Time was pressing, but no men were sent to the front, no steps were taken to block the river up which the French flotilla of gunboats was to steam into the interior. It became apparent that jealousies and, it was whispered, treason in the palace, were hopelessly crippling the defence. Officers of high rank, with true Hova baseness, intrigued against Colonel Shervington, and spread it about that he had sold the country to the French. In proof of this charge, which poisoned the mind of the foolish queen against him, they adduced the fact that he had a year before foretold the route by which the

French would come, and had advised the Hova Government to fortify certain strong positions on that route. How, they asked—and this is a fair sample of the Hova method of reasoning—could he have foretold the plans of the French unless he were in their counsel? After several vain attempts to bring the ever-promising, never-performing, Prime Minister to reason, Colonel Shervington rightly refused to receive any longer pay, as military adviser, from a Government that consistently disregarded his advice. He wrote to the Prime Minister to point out that under the circumstances it was impossible for him to be responsible for the defence, and he left Antananarivo for the coast a few days before my arrival, not too soon, say some who were behind the scenes at the time, for his enemies had decided to assassinate him.

Like a good many others, I was disappointed and disgusted at the turn of events. There was but small chance, I saw, of my taking part in the interesting campaign I had anticipated, as the French would probably walk over. But now that I have had some experience of the Hovas I am bound to allow that all has happened for the best. In the first place, a handful of British officers could not have prevented the Hovas from running away. One of the chief reasons why the Hova officers objected to Colonel Shervington's presence at the front was that he would do his utmost to make them fight, whereas for fighting

they had no stomach. All the blame for the defeat would certainly have been laid on Colonel Shervington, and he would probably have been murdered by his own men. Moreover, when one comes to think of it, does not a European officer put himself in a somewhat degrading position when he undertakes to fight for black men, more especially black men of such kidney as these, against a European foe? In the next place, had Colonel Shervington been loyally supported by the Government and army, and had the French been kept out of the island, the conceited Hovas would have waxed so insufferable, that not a white man, missionary or other, could have remained in Imerina. The sooner that so iniquitous and incapable a government as the Hova was overthrown the better for both natives and Europeans. How it is that so many of the missionaries have supported such an institution, and deplored its probable loss of independence and the transference of the administrative control to a civilised European Power, is beyond my comprehension.

But whether the Hovas were about to make a fight of it or not, it was my business to get to the front, wherever that might be (for nobody seemed to know), as soon as possible. Mr. Porter told me that in his opinion there was very small chance of my obtaining permission to accompany the Hova forces. The correspondent of another paper had already applied for such permission, which had been refused.

Unfortunately for me, certain recent events, and the astonishing indiscretion displayed by some of the Englishmen in the capital, had suddenly much intensified the anti-European feeling, and the officials cannot be altogether blamed for the profound distrust of all foreigners which they evidently entertained. Those who know Madagascar will understand that it would have been quite impossible for me to have got to the front in defiance of the Government prohibition. European newspaper correspondents were naturally suspected above all other white men, for no one could understand what our business was, and most of the leading Hovas believed that we were French spies. We were closely watched while in the capital; and if one of us undertook a trip into the country he was dogged by the agents of the Government, who reported his sayings and doings, and would at once have arrested him had he made an effort to approach the front. Had he ventured off the route specified on his passport, his carriers would have deserted him, and no one in the country would have dared to supply him with provisions, for none understand better than the Hovas the art of boycotting, and their system of espionage is almost perfect. So I spared no effort to obtain the needful permit, which would give me liberty to travel in the direction of Mojanga, at which port it was rumoured that the first section of the expeditionary force had already disembarked. My first step was to write a letter to the Prime Minister, in which I explained

my mission and requested an interview; and while I was awaiting his reply, which I did not get for a fortnight, I cultivated the acquaintance of Resandjy, his first private secretary, perhaps the best educated and most far-seeing man in the country, some of the Cabinet ministers, and other men of influence. These gentlemen were all extremely polite; they acknowledged that it would be to the advantage of the Hovas that I should accompany their army, for otherwise the outer world would have to rely entirely on French sources for the story of the campaign, and one-sided statements unfavourable to the Hovas would remain uncontradicted. They promised that they would do all that lay in their power to assist me; but they told me the question would have to be decided by the Cabinet, and they would find it difficult to persuade the Ministers of the old Conservative party, who were haters of all Europeans and their ways (I don't blame them), that I could be anything but an agent of the enemy.

I therefore had to stay a good deal longer in Antananarivo than I had anticipated, and was fortunate enough to be admitted as a member of a mess which had been formed at the vice-consulate by Mr. Porter and a few other Englishmen who, having prudently sent their wives and families home at the outbreak of the war, were bachelors for the nonce. Had it not been for this, I should have had to hire a house and live in loneliness, for there are no hotels in the Hova capital. I soon became

familiar with the sinuous steep lanes of this very irregularly laid-out city of 100,000 inhabitants, and made the acquaintance of the few Europeans—the large majority of whom were missionaries—who still remained. The French, of course, had all been expelled.

CHAPTER IX

DESCRIPTION OF ANTANANARIVO—ITS SOCIETY—MISSIONARY ENERGY—
A FOOL'S PARADISE—ATTITUDE OF THE MISSIONARIES—THE MARKET—
THE HOVA CENSORSHIP—INFORMATION SUPPRESSED—LETTER SMUG-
GLING— MY PEDLAR SPY

ANTANANARIVO is a city of well-built houses, a large number of which are of burnt brick, roofed with tiles, and of two or three stories in height. The residences of the wealthier natives are often really handsome, but it is the custom always to leave them incomplete in some respect; thus one of the windows, for example, is of intention left unfurnished with frame or sashes, and is loosely bricked up; this is due to a superstitious belief that he who builds himself a house will die as soon as he has finished it. There is nothing in the least Oriental in the appearance of Antananarivo; it presents rather a European appearance, for the natives have acquired all their architectural style and building art from the missionaries, and twenty-five years ago the whole town was constructed of wood and bamboo. The tracks—one cannot apply the term 'street' to any of the thoroughfares—are certainly the steepest and roughest of any large city in the world that makes any pretensions to civilisation. One road, it is true,

is irregularly paved with cobbles ; it leads from the queen's palace through Andohalo, the principal trading quarter of the city, and is bordered by the stores of the Europeans, Indians, and leading native merchants. The fine stone cathedrals and churches, the hospitals and school buildings, that would do credit to a fair-sized European town, the stately palaces of the Queen and Prime Minister which dominate the city, seem in strange contrast to the utterly neglected paths by which only they can be approached, and of which some, carried along the edges of rocky declivities, are trying even to the nerves of those accustomed to cliff-climbing. More especially to the traveller from the coast, as it first bursts upon his view after he has crossed the wild country and the savagery that surrounds Imerina, Antananarivo has an imposing and royal appearance, standing as it does on its rugged height, with its handsome edifices, its garden-surrounded mansions that cover the steep slopes. But when inspected too closely it must be confessed that this city gives one the impression of being a shoddy sort of a place, with buildings of pretentious exterior, making an obtrusive show of a civilisation that is all on the outside.

Life at Antananarivo, as one may imagine, is somewhat colourless and dull. The Nonconformist missionary families are here the leaders of society, and a very gossipy society it is, numberless petty scandals—for there is apparently no serious sin in

these circles—lending a never-failing zest to the tea-table talk. This society has established an etiquette of its own, in some respects more rigid than any that prevails in Europe, and exacts the observance of it from strangers who visit the country. I remember that a few days after the French had captured Antananarivo I expressed an intention of calling on General Duchesne. Some one observed that I might find it difficult to procure *mpilanja*; and on my replying that I should walk I raised a storm of protest. It was a breach of etiquette, I was told, in Antananarivo for one to make a ceremonial call on foot, and it was urged that those who had lived years in Antananarivo must know better than myself what was the right thing to do. But I would allow nothing of the sort. I pointed out that I was calling on a French officer, not on a missionary or a Hova, and that the etiquette of London and Paris was good enough for Englishmen and Frenchmen in any part of the world. The fact is that the Non-conformist missionaries, consistent in their recognition of the Hova race as being on an equality with the races of Europe, have adopted many of the Hova fashions. Thus they seldom walk, even if it be for a few hundred yards, in the streets of Antananarivo, because a Hova noble does not condescend to do so, and are constantly carried about in palanquins, so that the stranger is apt at first to put the missionaries down as a very lazy lot of people; for be it remembered that the climate of

these highlands is healthy and bracing, and that one can here take with safety as much exercise as one does in Europe, even in the heat of the day. It would be well if this foolish habit of being ever carried about on men's shoulders, so as to look dignified in the eyes of the natives, were discontinued; for these people, who often rail at extravagance that takes other and more rational forms, such as the drinking of wine at dinner, waste a good deal of money in this way.

But the missionaries in the capital, of whatever sect they be, are certainly not a lazy people. Some of them get through an extraordinary amount of work, as do their wives and daughters. The results of their labours prove this. I visited the college and several of the boys' and girls' schools, and was astonished not only at the good behaviour, the keen attention and evident eagerness to acquire knowledge on the part of the students, but at the thorough instruction that was imparted by these painstaking English men and women. The L.M.S. industrial school, which is about a day's journey to the east of the capital, has proved a great success, and now the imitative native workmen in the capital produce good specimens of European articles in common use, furniture, pots and pans, boots and clothes, and so forth; while the compositors in the various missionary presses are fairly smart in their work.

Farovahitra, the European quarter, is the cleanest

and pleasantest part of the city. From here, as from the still loftier height on which stands the Queen's palace, towering 700 feet above the plain below, a grand view is obtained over the surrounding country—a vast panorama of rolling hills and cultivated plains and leagues of rice-fields, a fair landscape studded with hundreds of villages, and gleaming with lakes and meres and many sinuous rivers and streams. But the country is almost bare of trees, a few of the villages only being surrounded by little groves. The aspect of these barren downs, where only a short grass grows, withered and brown for a great part of the year, would be very dreary were it not for the rich colouring of the earth, which is of the red and reddish-brown tints one sees in some parts of Devonshire, and for the vivid fresh green of the rice-fields that fill the valley bottoms. On many an evening during my stay, the view from the vice-consulate, as one looked over the brow of the ridge eastward, was inexpressibly beautiful; the vast expanse of ruddy undulating land that extended to the far mountain ranges glowing in the rays of the setting sun as if it were a world of molten gold.

Antananarivo was wonderfully quiet when I reached it, and it was difficult to realise that one was in the capital of a nation which was on the eve of a war for very existence, the invader already on her shores. The *kabarys*, or public meetings, at which the Queen and the Prime Minister had spoken such stirring words to enthusiastic thousands of the

white-robed Hovas, and at which the Hova officers had bragged so loudly with much dancing about and waving of their swords, the reviews of the troops, were all over before my arrival, and now a strange and profound peace had fallen on the great city. There were not the slightest signs of excitement or anxiety ; the people were employed at their usual avocations, there was the happy absolute confidence in the future I had observed in other portions of Imerina ; they had no fear of the French ; they felt secure in the protection of the forest, the fever, famine, and the bravery of the Hova troops. There was something ominous in so complete a calm ; the city seemed as some sleeper dreaming of peaceful, happy things, and all unconscious of the rude awakening that was soon to come.

I found that the majority of the missionaries relied fully on the friendly relations they had established with the Malagasy after these many years of ministry, and some even ridiculed the idea that in the event of Hova reverses they and their families would incur any danger. However, some of them had had the sense to send their wives and children home, and I think it would have been well if the directors of their societies, instead of leaving everything to the discretion of the missionaries, had ordered them all to take this course. Mr. Porter, in his capacity as acting vice-consul in the capital, displayed admirable tact and common sense throughout all this critical period. His task was often a very

delicate one; but I do not think that he ever failed to do the right thing at the right time, or that he ever took a step that was not warranted by the circumstances. He would have done some very foolish and compromising things had he not resolutely refused to adopt certain courses of action which were recommended to him by some of the less sensible of the British community. Mr. Porter put it strongly to all British subjects that their women and children ought not to remain in the country. On my arrival there were some 160 registered British subjects resident in this consular district, of whom about eighty were women and children. Of the latter, some thirty took passage to England a short time afterwards.

But many of the missionaries would not follow Mr. Porter's advice; they expressed a blind confidence in Providence, which was scarcely practical or logical. Even if it be allowed that they were right in refusing to abandon their posts in the hour of danger, they were surely acting very wrongly in keeping their wives and young daughters with them. They met all argument with an obstinate fatalism that was exasperating. It must be remembered that the missionaries were scattered all over the country, some in remote and wild districts. It was in vain to point out to them that, in the event of French victories, savage tribesmen, who knew not Christianity or the missionaries, enraged by defeat and incapable of distinguishing one European from another, would

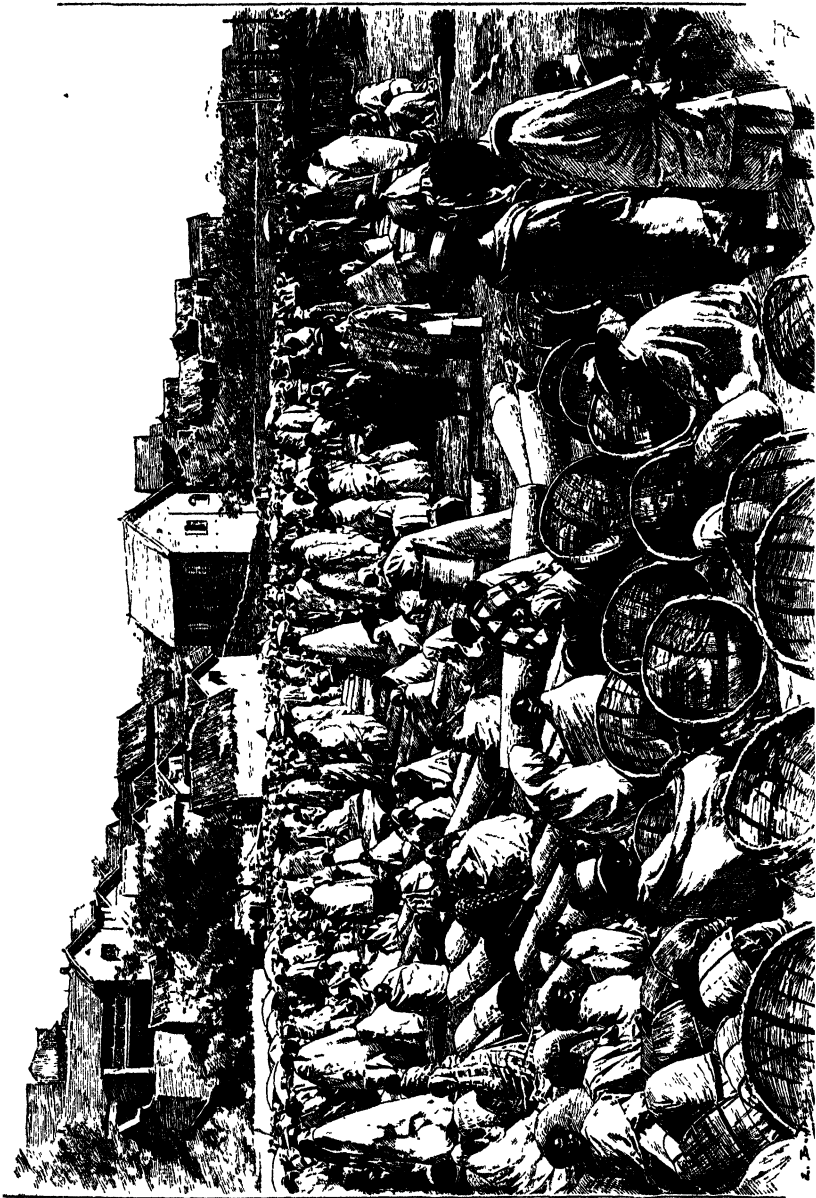
probably overrun the country. They did not realise how the nature of the mildest people changes in time of war ; how excited city mobs are apt to act ; how dangerous and rapidly spreading an epidemic is the spy-fever, of which there were already symptoms in the land ; and how it was quite within the bounds of possibility that, if the capital were taken by storm, the victorious French soldiery—and more especially the Algerian and negro troops—would get out of hand.

Every Friday a large market is held in the capital, and shortly after dawn all the narrow paths leading across the plain between the rice fields are white, as far as one can see, with the thousands of *lamba*-clad country people who come to sell their wares. It is estimated that some twenty thousand people attend this market, and as one walks through the dense crowds chaffering at the innumerable stalls, one acquires some insight into Malagasy life. The people are generally good-tempered, though noisy, save when the cry of cut-purse is raised. The Hova carries his money tied up in a fold of his *lamba*, and to cut off the little bag thus formed with a sharp knife is a comparatively easy task for the thief. It is a dangerous trade, for if he is detected in the act he is, as a rule, promptly stoned to death by the people, who have a traditional right to take the law into their own hands on these occasions.

All classes are represented in this great marketplace on a Friday morning : the noble in his palanquin,

with his following of slaves unceremoniously pushing a way for him through the crowd; the smart young gentleman on a caracoling horse (so few horses are there in Madagascar, by the way, that I saw only one in the course of my long voyage from the coast; in the capital I do not think there can be more than two dozen); the sauntering *roué*, as likely as not the proprietor of a slave band of burglars whose nocturnal depredations refill his coffers when depleted by the extravagance of his dissipations—several of the Prime Minister's relatives successfully patronised this aristocratic sport; then there are the slouching, sad-looking soldiers with their rusty rifles; half-naked criminals walking about with fettered legs, begging of every passing European; of women, too, multitudes and few comely, least comely of all the widows, with their tangled mops of hair flying loose in token of their mourning.

In this market one can purchase nearly everything that is produced in Madagascar or imported into it. Different portions of the market are set aside for the sale of different commodities. Here one can buy cattle; here turkeys and fowls; here rice, maize, manioc, and sugar-cane; here native-made ironmongery; here native silk ready for the weavers; here American clothes; here native cloth of *rofia* fibre; here the great Hova straw hats; here dried locusts, and cakes, and sweetmeats, not tempting to the European. In one corner of the market-place slaves are sold; the men, women, and children sit in



a row on the ground for the inspection of would-be purchasers. They do not seem to me to feel their position much. The domestic slavery in Madagascar is possibly the lightest in the world, and is often sought as a boon by the freemen; for, as I have already shown, men here deliver themselves into slavery so as to avoid the intolerable burden of military service and the Government forced labour.

I soon discovered that, in their profound distrust of my mission, the Hovas, far from lending me any assistance, were bent on placing every obstacle in my way. The Government denied me access to any information, and did its utmost to suppress all news from the front. A few days before my arrival it had instituted a censorship, which was rigorously enforced. The Foreign Office clerks who read our correspondence for England were instructed to permit no letters to pass which contained any allusions to the politics of the island or to the progress of the war. As Europeans at this time were leaving the island by each mail, and were of course free to publish all they knew on their arrival at Durban, such stringent regulations were of little avail—a fact so clearly recognised by the Hova Government that, in its anxiety to keep the world entirely in the dark as to what was doing here, it seriously discussed the advisability of preventing any one from leaving Madagascar while the war continued; and it would have carried this outrageous design into effect, and detained in the capital the English women and children who were

about to seek safety beyond the seas, had it not been for an apprehension of what the British Government might have to say in the matter.

The Hova clerks who read our outward letters did so very conscientiously, and several letters were returned to their writers as containing objectionable matter. One letter, in particular, was regarded with much suspicion. It had been written by a married lady here to her sister in England, and concluded with a quarter of a sheet of unknown characters and a row of crosses. The intelligent clerks were certain that they had hit upon an important communication in cipher, and hesitated to accept the explanation that these were but the meaningless scrawlings and crosses for kisses of a baby who had played at writing to her aunt at the foot of her mother's letter. The two of us who represented the London press in the capital were placed under a strict surveillance. Not only did the censors attempt to render our correspondence valueless, but the Government would have severely punished any native supplying us with information. Friendly Hovas, of whom we saw a good deal at first, at last became afraid to be seen speaking to us, and had a carrier been detected in attempting to smuggle our letters to the coast, he would certainly have been put to death.

The Hova Government did not take these precautions with the object of preventing the French from receiving information of the movement of the Hova troops—as a matter of fact, some of the lead-

ing Hovas were known to be carrying on a treasonable correspondence with the enemy—but because they had sufficient conscience left to be ashamed of the course they had pursued for some months, of their ineptitude, and of their utter lack of patriotism. It naturally galled them to have two Europeans in the capital whose sole business it was to observe and to record; and they were anxious, so long as was possible, to keep back the inevitable disclosure. They still, I believe, had a lingering hope of receiving assistance from their Nonconformist sympathisers in England. But, despite the vigilance of any government, news will out, and I soon discovered that there were underground passages for communication in Madagascar, as elsewhere.

Antananarivo at this time was completely cut off from all news: we were practically isolated; for not only did the Hovas make it almost impossible for us to obtain trustworthy information as to what was taking place on the island, but the French, by whom we Europeans in the capital were then regarded with as much suspicion as by the Hovas, intercepted at Tamatave all the newspapers and many of the letters that were sent to us from home; and we were thus left in the dark as to what was going on in the outer world.

I found natives willing, for a small consideration, to risk their lives by carrying letters for me to the nearest seaport, Vatomandry; there they delivered the letters to my agent, who in his turn handed them

over to some one on the first Castle steamer that called, to be posted in Natal or Mauritius. The regular mail to and from Madagascar was carried by the Messageries steamers *viâ* Tamatave; but I durst not send my letters by that route, as they would be opened and read, possibly intercepted, by the French authorities, as some other people's letters, to my certain knowledge, were. I had to use every precaution in despatching my carriers; it would have meant their destruction had the object of their journey to the coast been suspected. I never employed the same man twice; each was paid his wages on delivering my letter to my agent, and not one failed in getting through, despite the various dangers they had to encounter; for, in order to leave the city, they had to obtain passports from the Government under some false pretence or other; all the roads were guarded by soldiers on the look-out for deserters from the army and smugglers of gold-dust or letters; and every traveller was carefully searched at Moramanga, the second stage from the capital—the most formidable peril of all. In order to circumvent these searchers I used, as a rule, to take a copy of my letter in flimsy, roll the copy up into as small a space as possible, and jam it into the bottom of the carrier's snuff-box, a bit of bamboo about six inches long; a false bottom would then be driven into its place on top of the letter, and the bamboo, filled with snuff, would present an innocent appearance that disarmed all suspicion. At Vato-

mandry my agent would flatten out the flimsy pages, and put them in an envelope. On one occasion, having no trustworthy messenger, I had to write the words of a highly compromising telegram in invisible ink on the back of a private letter, to be developed by a friend on the coast.

I have never before had to resort to such unusual methods; but they were fully justified on this occasion. I was under no obligation to the Hova Government, which ever did its utmost to thwart, trick, and deceive me. Had I relied on the regular mail service to the coast, which was completely under their control, few of my letters would have reached England. Of this fact I satisfied myself; for while I smuggled copies of my letters out of the country in different ways, I sometimes sent the originals through the orthodox channel. The Hova Foreign Office censors were cunning enough to pass these letters, making no objection to their contents, and leading me to believe that my correspondence was safe in the mail-bags, on the way to England; whereas these officials frequently, as I afterwards discovered, purloined them. The only letter of mine to my paper which completely miscarried was one which I sent through the Hova Foreign Office, and of which I neglected to forward any copy by underground *route*, as, in my opinion, this particular letter, strangely enough, had nothing in it which could offend the susceptible Hova Government

The Hova Government, of course, soon dis-

covered that, despite the vigilance of their spies, and in defiance of their regulations, I habitually smuggled letters and telegrams out of the island; for cuttings from papers in which these appeared used to reach the capital in some way or other, and very unpleasant reading several of them must have been for the rascals who were then at the head of affairs, as I did my best in what I wrote to expose the corruption of the Government and the treason that was preparing the way for the invader. The stories I had to tell of the discreditable intrigues in the palace must not only have exasperated some of the officials, but have caused them to wonder from what sources I obtained my information. On one occasion the Hova rulers practically allowed that they were cognisant of my contraband correspondence; for, on my applying for permission to get to the front when Colonel Graves was sent to defend Andriba towards the close of the campaign, they asked me whether, in case such permission were granted, I would give my word to despatch no letters save by way of their Foreign Office. As I was very anxious to witness the magnificent stand the Hovas boasted they would make at Andriba, I agreed to these terms. Nevertheless they would not let me go. Disappointed at the time, I am now glad that they persisted in their refusal; for, had I gone to the front bound down by such conditions, I should not have been able to send my correspondence home; I could not have written a true word about the campaign that would have

passed the censorship. I did better by staying in the capital, where I could write what I pleased and smuggle with an easy conscience.

Considering what they knew of my doings, it may seem strange that they did not expel me from the island, or remove me in some other fashion. It was not any kindness of disposition that prevented them from so doing, for did not this very Government, later on, order the burning at the stake of poor wretches guilty of offences far less grave in its eyes than mine had been? But I realised that I was incurring little danger. The tyrannical yet pusillanimous Hova Government, while hating the white man, has always refrained, even under great provocation, from molesting him openly; though it will, when it thinks proper, secretly boycott and hamper him with a cunning ingenuity. This is a cowardly race, and the Hovas still respect and stand in awe of the European, despite their chapel teachings about their being his brothers and his equals. They hesitate to attack a white man, unless they get him in a corner and are in overwhelming odds, as when, some months later, two thousand of them massacred an unarmed Quaker family, or as when their troops murdered and mutilated the wounded French prisoners. So I remained at Antananarivo for nearly half a year, writing and speaking as I thought proper, without paying any heed to what the feelings of the Hova rulers might be in the matter—the only attitude possible for me under the circumstances.

Towards the end, when the approach of the invading columns had excited a dangerous anti-European feeling in the capital, and when my most compromising letters had returned to the Hova Government to accuse me, my position became somewhat difficult, and I felt much safer when the French appeared in sight.

Before I could write my letters it was necessary to procure the wherewithal in the way of information, and here again I had to contend with the cunning Hova Government, its army of spies, and the dread of detection on the part of those who were willing to render me assistance. I soon found that the majority of the missionaries were not well informed. They received many letters from members of their congregations who were serving at the front—nicely worded letters, not lacking hypocritical sentiments, and calculated to impose on the unsuspecting gentlemen to whom they were addressed. Some of these good men, long as they may dwell in the land, never acquire the slightest conception of the depths of Hova duplicity. These letters from the front were evidently written to order, and the unconscious missionaries were made use of by the crafty Government to set its *canards* flying through the town. How often has one of my friends rushed in to announce to us—on the absolutely trustworthy testimony of some native pastor—that the whole French force had been annihilated! I have in my possession a translation of one of these letters re-

ceived from a Hova officer, full of cant and professions of affection for his spiritual guide, and also full of ingeniously invented tales of Hova bravery, and of atrocities committed by the French soldiery—a letter well calculated, if read at a mission meeting in England, to excite deep sympathy for these blameless Christian people fighting so gallantly for their independence against an invasion of ruthless barbarians. ‘I always understood,’ wrote this consummate liar, ‘that the French were a Christian people, and that they waged war after the manner of civilised nations; but I am sorry to say that they have been guilty of cruelties that would disgrace the savage heathen, for not only do they slay the unarmed old men whom they find in the villages, but even the pregnant women and the babes at the breast.’

But by going about in the town among the Creole traders, some of whom had business relations with high officials in the palace, I contrived to gather a good deal of information on which I could place reliance. I was also in communication with natives behind the scenes, who gave me interesting accounts of what transpired at the frequent Cabinet meetings, and of the strange doings in the palace. Certain other British subjects too, Indian and Arab traders, who had agents at Mevatanana and other places on the French line of march, kept me fairly well informed as to the movements of the French and Hova armies. There was a courageous native of the carrier class whom

we (another correspondent and myself) frequently sent to the front to acquire news. His ostensible profession was that of hundreds of other natives during the war : furnished with a passport he used to travel in the guise of a pedlar, and sold salt, snuff, sugar, soap, and other luxuries, with which we supplied him, to the Hova troops. He made several such journeys, each one shorter than the last, as the French advanced, stayed some days in the Hova lines, and occasionally visited their outposts and caught a glimpse of the enemy.

CHAPTER X

GOLD PROSPECTS IN MADAGASCAR—MINING CONCESSIONS—ILLICIT GOLD-BUYING—SEDITION IN THE CAPITAL—THE FRENCH PARTY—A BETRAYED QUEEN—MY INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER

THERE were many wild rumours afloat when I first arrived in the capital, but it was known that the invaders had done little to further their ultimate design. A portion of the expeditionary force had landed at Majunga, French troops occupied Tamatave on the east coast, and Diego Suarez in the extreme north. So far they had made no serious attempt to capture the strong positions which the Hovas held in the immediate vicinity of these three ports. Thus a Hova force, well supplied with artillery, watched Tamatave from the strongly fortified heights of Fara-fatrana, only four miles inland, while a few miles to the back of Diego Suarez Bay a large Hova garrison held the almost impregnable hill-fortress of Ambohararina, which was for many months in vain beleaguered by the French. I learned also, by the way, that the 'Dunbar Castle' had been prevented by bad weather from holding communication either with Mananjara or Vatomandry; so I had good reason to congratulate myself on having left her at Fort Dauphin.

Trade had almost come to a standstill since the commencement of the war, for there was a sense of insecurity among the European traders. There was no falling off, however, but rather a considerable increase, in that very profitable business, the purchase and export of gold-dust. Rich alluvial goldfields are found in every part of Madagascar, and the reefs that have been discovered have a very promising appearance, the surface quartz containing much visible gold and panning out well. None of the reefs have yet been touched, only the alluvial diggings are worked; but it is highly probable that Madagascar will become one of the great gold-producing countries of the world.

All minerals in Madagascar are the property of the Hova Government. The Prime Minister, who practically constituted the Government, was for many years loth to grant mining concessions to Europeans. He had closely followed the history of South Africa, and with good reason feared that a large influx of white miners would imperil the independence of the country. But of late, after much pressure, he has granted some concessions, notably one to an Englishman, Mr. J. Harrison Smith, an account of which will give some idea of the gold prospects of this island. This concession grants mining rights over nearly 30,000 square miles of auriferous territory, divided into four districts, of which that of Ansihanaka, about 120 miles to the north of the capital, is probably the richest. It is

expressly stipulated that no Europeans, save such as are necessary for purposes of supervision, shall work on the goldfields. Natives alone can take out mining licenses, for which they pay the concessionaire five shillings a month per licence. They have to bring all the gold-dust they extract from the alluvial soil to the agents of the concessionaire, and are paid for it at the rate of ten dollars for a silver dollar's weight of gold-dust, that is about 2*l.* 5*s.* per ounce troy.

The concessionaire sells this gold in the capital to any purchaser for from 3*l.* 8*s.* to 3*l.* 10*s.* an ounce. The gold is of remarkable purity, containing only a trace of silver, and realises in London or Australia from 4*l.* to 4*l.* 2*s.* 7*d.* an ounce. Consequently every one in Madagascar trades in gold, and a missionary going home naturally changes all his money into gold-dust, so as to realise this handsome profit of 12 per cent. or more on the transaction.

In the Ansihanaka district the gold is found in hematite formation (hard red earth) in nuggets of various size. When I was in the country 650 ounces a month were received from one small camp alone. In this district, too, numerous reefs have been discovered, and it is considered that these have the appearance of true fissure veins. Inexperienced natives brought in a hundredweight and a half of specimens of quartz from the outcrop of five different reefs, and these when crushed gave an average assay of over seven and a quarter ounces.

The gold is sealed up in short lengths of bamboo,

and is brought from the goldfields to the capital across hundreds of miles of disturbed country, the raiding-ground of Sakalava tribes, by unprotected native carriers, and it is an extraordinary thing that none is ever stolen by the way. But of course, as in every other part of the world where gold is discovered, frauds of all sorts are practised, and the illicit gold-buyer of South Africa has his counterpart among the simple Malagasy. Any native detected in searching for gold without a license is put in chains for many years, and it is unlawful for any but a concessionaire to sell gold. But it is so easy for the country people to work surreptitiously the alluvial deposits in their neighbourhood, that much the greater portion of the gold exported from Madagascar has so far been obtained and sold illicitly. The dealers in this contraband gold can often greatly undersell the concessionaires. Indians and Arabs, and some Europeans too, were engaged in smuggling gold out of the country on a large scale during the war, and fortunes were made in this way, despite the fact that soldiers watched all the roads to search suspected travellers. But having been careful to provide themselves with forged certificates, which testified that they had purchased the gold from authorised sellers, these illicit gold-buyers nearly always contrived to get through safely.

This illicit gold trade led to still worse abuses; for example, to the systematic blackmailing of suspected persons by high Government officials.

Rajoelina, the Prime Minister's son, used to place natives under confinement without the knowledge of the Hova Government, accuse them of having dealt illegally in gold, and extort hush-money from them. The illicit buyers, if new arrivals, are sometimes taken in themselves, and discover to their cost that it is not all gold that glitters; for the natives have been taught to mingle the gold with baser metal so ingeniously as to defy all the ordinary tests. I happen to know that ingots of what appeared to be gold have been imported from Europe, with what object it is not difficult to surmise. The French, I learn, are now taking vigorous steps in their own interests, as well as those of the concessionaires, to put a stop to all this illegal buying and selling of gold.

A few days after my arrival an ominous incident, quite without precedent here, spread dismay throughout the capital. Seditious placards were posted on the church doors, and a letter was left at the gate of the palace, despite the fact that a number of soldiers guarded all the approaches. These documents called upon the people to put the Queen, the Prime Minister, and their relations to death, and to welcome the French as their true friends.

This manifesto on the part of the French party was the first open sign of the wide-spread conspiracy which ultimately placed Madagascar at the mercy of the invader. Several arrests of suspected people were made about this time, but the Government was

reticent on this subject. Outwardly all was still very quiet in Antananarivo; the fatalist people pursued their usual vocations, as if nothing out of the way was happening in the country. Despising their enemy and confident of victory, they cheerfully awaited the turn of events. They seldom took the trouble even to discuss the situation, and there were no gatherings of the population, save in the numerous churches, at those frequent prayer-meetings in which the Hovas take so keen a delight.

An observer of the situation in Antananarivo at that period could not fail to regard the Government with feelings of indignation and contempt, while entertaining pity and sympathy for the unfortunate people who, ready to make a struggle for their independence, were to be ruthlessly sacrificed by their rulers. It was obvious to the Europeans in the capital that, while professing a policy of heroic resistance, the Hova Ministers could scarcely have done more to further the French cause had they been the astutest agents of the enemy. The defence was a sham, and was not likely to stay the invading columns for a day, though it afterwards afforded a plausible pretext to the conqueror for exacting far more humiliating and comprehensive conditions at the termination of that war of futile sacrifice of life, than those which were set out in the rejected ultimatum.

The majority of the Hovas detested the French, were loyal to their Queen, and, if properly led, would

perhaps have fought for her. The leading men, however, had not the patriotism to forget their petty jealousies even at such a juncture, and the defence was completely paralysed by divided counsels. But something far more culpable than lack of patriotism was also to blame for the neglect of all ordinary military precautions on the part of the rulers of the land. It was well known that an influential party



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had been bought over by bribes, in one shape or the other, to do all it could to serve the French cause; it included some of the Queen's relations and her more immediate advisers, who jealously guarded the Royal presence and prevented all who might give her timely warning from obtaining access to her. The base intrigues of an Oriental court are not unknown in Madagascar; old women about the palace who happened to have the Queen's ear, and

whom the gift of a few dollars could corrupt, exerted an immense influence in State affairs. Thus the Queen's nurse, of a slave family, herself formerly a slave, and others equally ignoble and ignorant, often procured the most responsible public appointments for those they favoured. It was largely due to this state of things that absurdly incompetent officers were placed in command of the troops which were sent to the front, while men of ability, who had received a military training under the eyes of British officers, were totally neglected; for everything British was then offensive to the Court party. There can be no doubt that the very regiments that guarded the palace were at the disposal of this faction, and were kept ready to crush any attempt at revolution.

The leaders of the more patriotic party were fully aware that the independence of their country had been sold, but they could do nothing. They lived in daily dread of assassination, and they were unable to combine or even to exchange confidences, for none knew whether his nearest relative or friend might not be one of those who had been secretly bought over. The Hovas possess some amiable qualities, but they are a proverbially time-serving and treacherous people. 'How can you English trust any of us?' exclaimed one to a friend of mine. 'Why! we never trust one another.' Many of the principal citizens were evidently bent on running with the hare, while hunting with the hounds. They made no display of what lukewarm patriotism they

may have possessed, they refrained from meddling with politics, they avoided the society of foreigners, and prudently strove so to conduct themselves that whatever happened their property would not be confiscated. As for the bulk of the population of Antananarivo, they were entirely ignorant of the conspiracy that was to betray them to the French. They fondly imagined that all was well, and lived undisturbed by any misgivings in their fool's paradise. Puffed out with the unlimited conceit which forms one of the principal traits of the Hova character, these people never tired of boasting that, as in the last war they had beaten the French, and years before defeated the English and French combined, they would now not have the slightest difficulty in repelling the French invasion. In their happy ignorance they despised the scientific methods of European warfare, and scouted the idea that Europeans could teach them anything worth knowing; consequently, they entertained no mistrust of the suicidal policy pursued by their Government, and it flattered their national vanity that the services of foreign officers had been dispensed with.

It was a pitiful state of things, and it would have been well for the country had the Queen and Prime Minister followed the advice proffered by the wise and honourable Englishman, who was their trusted counsellor for so many years, and had submitted at once to the terms of the French ultimatum. But the Government bragged that it would never yield to the

French demands, and that its armies would fight to the death in defence of the country; yet by its own criminal negligence it made resistance quite hopeless. For example, the Hovas talked for months of blocking the river Betsiboka—no difficult matter—so as to prevent the ascent of the French boats; and yet no steps were ever taken to effect this object. Again, though the supplies of ammunition in the country were altogether insufficient even for a brief campaign—as was repeatedly pointed out by the British officers lately in the Hova service—I was told that not a cartridge had been turned out for months from the fully-equipped cartridge factory in the capital. And so the wretched soldiers were hurried to the front, short of ammunition, to find that no adequate arrangements had been made for supplying them with the necessaries of life; if they made a stand, to be mown down helplessly by the trained troops of France; to perish miserably of starvation and fever; and if they attempted to run away, to be burnt at the stake in accordance with the ancient Hova military law. Had not treason and blind folly blocked the way, all might have been ready for a defence that would at least have been attended with some prospect of success. But it was too late, and it was obvious that the most heroic resistance under such circumstances would only lead to unavailing slaughter.

The unconscious cause of all this evil was she who dwelt in the palace crowning the steep city, the

proud, fearless, obstinate, narrow-minded, well-meaning Queen, who, despite her birth, was as but one of the humble people in her youth, and all whose education and knowledge of the world was acquired in a mission school. She was determined not to yield a jot to French demands, and apparently entered upon the war with a light heart, little knowing she was surrounded by sycophants—old women and traitors—who would not allow the truth to reach her ears; and her mind was exalted with illusions that were likely to bring about the death of many thousands of her subjects. She believed that her armies were invincible, and she was told by her flatterers and by that silly and mischievous local newspaper, the *Madagascar News*—subsidised by the Hova Government, and of which an Englishman was proprietor and editor—that she was nothing less than a second Queen Elizabeth.

Frequent rumours reached us of a projected patriotic *coup d'état*, an improbable event, for the necessary strong man was not to be found in Madagascar. But we all fully expected that later on, when the advance of the French had opened the eyes of the foolish people, when they realised their betrayal and their danger, their complacent confidence would be suddenly changed for unreasoning panic, and popular fury would vent itself in dangerous riots.

At last, on May 8, the Prime Minister replied to my letter, and granted me an interview for that

morning at the palace. On my way I encountered a great crowd of violently excited and apparently drunken savages. These, I was told, were Sakalava tribesmen from the districts between Majunga and Mevatanana, who had come into the capital to make solemn declaration of allegiance. The Queen received them at a *kabary*, when they expressed their determination to fight resolutely on the Hova side. After a long palaver, and much lying and boasting on their part, they received their presents and set out for their country again. I believe, despite all their promises, they never struck a blow. There was some uncertainty at this time as to the attitude that would be taken in the war by the Sakalava of the West Coast. Quite unorganised as they are, divided into a number of petty tribes which are often at war with one another, it was unlikely that these savage hordes would undertake any combined movement. Those who know the Sakalava best were of opinion that the tribesmen would hold aloof until they saw that one side or the other had met with a serious reverse, when they would fall upon the defeated, and gratify their hereditary lust for plunder. It was said that some of the tribes had been bought over by the French by promises of loot and high pay; but it is certain that many of the chiefs regarded the French with deep distrust, and dreaded the future vengeance of the Hovas, should they give any assistance to the invaders. The Sakalava have lawless instincts, and all authority is galling to them. They were practi-

cally enjoying independence, being beyond the control of the Hova Government, and they were shrewd enough to realise that they would be deprived of much of their cherished licence to raid and rob if the French interfered in the administration of the country. As a matter of fact they were a trouble to either side. Those engaged by the French as carriers deserted the expedition, while, on the other hand, those who had ostensibly taken up arms to defend the Queen were careful to avoid any conflict with the invading columns, but raided and plundered the Hovas, and destroyed their villages, both in the north and west.

On reaching the gate of the palace I was met by one of the Prime Minister's secretaries, and with him I walked across the great courtyard thronged with leading Hovas—extortioners, and place-hunters all of them—took off my hat, according to the prescribed custom, as I passed the tombs of the kings; and then was ushered into a small but gaudily furnished chamber, where sat the Prime Minister and his three principal secretaries. Rainilaiarivony was clad in a yellow silk robe, wore crimson slippers with pointed toes, and had a great jewel on his breast. He looked old and worn, and I think his hair was dyed; his head and hands shook as if with palsy; his expression was amiable but inscrutable. He rose, and taking me by the hand, led me to an arm-chair. He understands very little English, if any, so Resanjy acted as interpreter throughout the interview, which was a

short one. After the usual ceremonious compliments I explained my mission to His Excellency, asked for permission to go to the front, and attempted to show that my presence there might be of service to the Government, as I should be able to contradict one-sided statements made by the French correspondents, and tell the true story of the campaign.

The old man listened courteously to all I had to say, he even approved of my remarks; but I could get nothing more definite out of him than that he would 'think the matter over and send me a reply shortly.' But Rainilaiarivony had no desire that I should be a witness of the absurd fiasco which he must have foreseen even at that early date. He himself with all his faults was no traitor to his country, and was no party to the treason which he yet had not the power to crush. The Prime Minister at that time had lost much of his former power; his designs were generally opposed vigorously by the Queen's party. The entire policy of the Hova Government was then very perplexing to all onlookers, and it is only since the French occupation, when men talk more freely, that the cause of its extraordinary inconsistency is clearly understood. There were three leading parties in the State—the old conservative loyal but anti-foreign party, which was opposed to the employment of any Europeans; the more advanced loyal party that was anxious to obtain the services of European officers; and lastly, the disloyal party, of whose machinations I have already

spoken, which, while betraying the Queen, and, later on, even compassing her death, had succeeded in gaining her entire confidence. These parties, it appears, were so evenly balanced, that each in its turn held the reins of Government, the predominance of one party or another at any particular moment being determined by the humour or state of health of the Prime Minister, a man in his dotage and of enfeebled will; at one time ready to consent to any proposition, so that he might be left in peace, and at another time obstinate as in the days of his vigorous manhood, and asserting an authority which no one had courage to dispute.

The Prime Minister was never the good man and the great statesman he has been represented to be by his European flatterers, but he was undoubtedly a cunning and strong tyrant over a cowardly people. The cruel oppressor of his own people, he was shrewd enough to profess friendship for the European residents, more especially the London Missionary Society's missionaries, whom apparently he most successfully humbugged. Grateful for his condescension towards them, they lauded his virtues and his statesmanship. True he liberated the Mozambiques, but of all the other reforms he promised not one did he carry out except on paper. The old man had for his counselors and intimates the worst oppressors of the people, and like some other Oriental despots, he acted as if he thought he would never die; for in his jealousy of possible rivals he banished, or put to death all men

of conspicuous ability, and yet trained no son or other relative to succeed him. He was the one man in the State ; the whole Government was centred in him ; the most petty details of administration had to pass through his hands ; not a cartridge nor a soldier's button could be served out without his signature. At last in the hour of national danger Rainilaiarivony, in ill health, paralysed of will, incapable of fulfilling a tithe of his onerous duties, yet obstinately refusing to accept assistance or advice, lost all control of public affairs, broke down completely, and neglected to take any steps for his country's defence. This old man's impotence and vain folly were not the least of the numerous causes that lost Madagascar her independence.

CHAPTER XI

A SERVICE IN A NATIVE CHURCH—AMONG THE MAIDS OF HONOUR—I
FIND A PLAUSIBLE PRETEXT FOR GETTING TO THE FRONT—CAPTURE
OF MARAVOAY BY THE FRENCH—FALSE REPORTS—THE PRIME
MINISTER'S DESPAIR—INFATUATION OF THE POPULACE—THE 'MADA-
GASCAR 'NEWS.'

ON the day following my somewhat unsatisfactory interview with the Prime Minister I was present at an interesting function—the opening of a newly-erected place of worship by the Queen. This was a chapel of the independent native church, which has its own native pastors, and is established on the lines of English Congregationalism. At the appointed time I took my place in a gallery which was set apart for European missionaries, native pastors, and other persons of distinction. The Ilovas near me all wore European dress, glossy black coats and trousers, and from the parting of their hair down to their square-toed shoes their style was strictly evangelical. The body of the church was packed with native men and women clad in white *lambas*. At one side of the church was a raised throne on which the Queen was to sit, for it is the rule that at all ceremonies Her Majesty should be placed at some height above her subjects.

I had to wait a long time, for punctuality is not a virtue of royalty in this land; and then the sound of military music and the shouting of the crowd outside told me that the Royal party was approaching. A brilliant procession filed into the church. The Queen was dressed in excellent taste, and walked to her seat with an easy dignity. The Prime Minister was with her, not wearing his red slippers and yellow silk dressing-gown as on the previous day, but patent leather shoes and a very loud check suit. The old beau in this costume looked rather the bookmaker than the Nonconformist statesman. Then came in a number of Hova officers and other men of position, and lastly a dazzling stream of maids of honour and other ladies of the Court, attired in fine clothes from Paris, *chic* hats, bright coloured silk dresses, and dainty shoes. Several of these young ladies came up to our gallery, and I was at last entirely surrounded by them; a few were distinctly good-looking after their fashion.

I had been warned that a service in a Hova church is a portentous affair. The fact that anyone in the congregation can get on his legs and have his say prolongs proceedings indefinitely, and this particular ceremony, to my dismay, lasted for four hours. There was an interminable succession of hymns and long exhortations. The entire service was, of course, in the Malagasy tongue, and English missionaries, as well as many natives, addressed the meeting. The Queen herself spoke a few words to

the people, and I noticed that her voice was musical, and that her smile was a remarkably pleasing one, lighting up and making quite beautiful for the moment her somewhat homely but attractive features.

The Hovas have a great talent for music, and their beautiful and liquid language lends itself admirably to song. I was struck by the excellent singing of the hymns at this ceremony, and by the charm of the native airs to which some of the hymns were set. A solo was sung by the head of the police, a soldierly-looking old man with a powerful bass voice, who also gave a long discourse in unctuous tones. He is one of the most notorious old scoundrels in the country, by the way, though a zealous member of his church. I understand that the French have recently deprived him of his office, and have made him disgorge much of his ill-gotten wealth. I was unable to understand a word of the service, but when I had heard man after man deliver his lengthy discourse in a flow of well-modulated language without pause or hesitation, I was satisfied that the Hovas are indeed the born orators they are reputed to be. But what sense there may have been beneath all this sonorous sound I know not, for the Malagasy is a foggy language adapted to Cromwellian obscurity of expression. It is easy in Malagasy to talk a great deal without saying anything—a Hova diplomatist never commits himself; any statement he may make can be explained away, and can be made to bear any

construction he pleases, or none at all. As soon as a Hova gets on his feet to speak he literally becomes 'intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity.'

The poor little maids of honour who surrounded me were evidently not at all comfortable. They put on their gorgeous Parisian attire only on great occasions, such as this was, and never thoroughly accustom themselves to the confinement of stays, shoes, socks, and gloves. Several of the young ladies fidgeted about uneasily with the hooks and eyes and shoe-strings that imprisoned their limbs, and at last one, who sat immediately in front of me, could support the pain no longer. After glancing over her shoulder at me with a demure smile, she proceeded to take off her shoes, and then tried to unhook the back of her dress. She found some difficulty in doing this, and I was wondering whether it would be a breach of Hova etiquette for me to assist her in the operation, when a fair neighbour came to her rescue. She was then at her ease again, and was able to listen patiently to the half-dozen or more sermons that were yet inflicted on us. The Hova ladies practise their unpleasant habit of snuff-taking in the churches. The snuff is not employed after our method, but is thrown into the mouth, and after a while spat out again. On attending a service later on at the Chapel Royal I was surprised to find a row of ornamental spittoons provided for these snuff-taking maids of honour, of which they made

frequent and noisy use—a very unpleasant custom, forbidden in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, but permitted in the free chapels of what may be called the state religion of the Hovas—English Congregationalism.

After awaiting in vain for several days the Prime Minister's reply to my petition, I became impatient and made another effort to obtain permission to go to the front. It happened that some Arab traders had come into the capital to complain to the British vice-consul of outrages that had been committed by their countrymen in Mevatanana. They brought the blood-stained shirt of a murdered man with them to testify to the truth of their statements, and demanded justice. It seemed that a sort of small civil war had broken out among our Arab and Indian fellow subjects. It was not possible to bring all the witnesses up to the capital, neither could Mr. Porter go to Mevatanana. I saw that this incident afforded me a good opportunity of attaining my own ends, and my hopes revived. I proposed to Mr. Porter that he should send me to Mevatanana to take the evidence of the people concerned. To extract truth out of wily Orientals is well known to be a question of time, so I hoped to be able to prolong my inquiries until the arrival before Mevatanana of the French columns, and so witness some of the fighting. For the Hovas were said to be strongly entrenched at that town, and it was anticipated that the first great action of the war would be fought there. The first step was

to obtain the Prime Minister's sanction to this scheme. So Mr. Porter wrote to him, pointed out how necessary it was that some Englishman should be at once sent off to pacify the rioters, and suggested that I, as a barrister, was the most suitable person for such a mission. But the wary Prime Minister was not to be taken in thus; and in writing to Mr. Porter he regretted that he could not see his way, in the then disturbed state of the country, to allowing any European to travel on that road. The Indians and Arabs were, therefore, allowed to fight it out among themselves.

For nearly a month after my arrival we had no definite news from the front. The Government spared no efforts to keep us completely in the dark, while the English editor of its subsidised organ, the *Madagascar News*, published each week long lists of Hova victories, and anticipated that the French would soon be driven into the sea by the 'masterly tactics' of the Hovas. But at last travellers brought us some information on which we could rely, and we heard that the French columns were steadily advancing, and had defeated the Hovas in every action. The Hovas still flatter themselves that their troops fought heroically, but we know that they made nothing approaching to a stand on any single occasion.

The news that Maravoay had been captured by the French on May 2 leaked out in the capital about three weeks later. I spoke to natives who were present at that fight, and found that they were

incapable of giving me anything approaching to a truthful or intelligent account of what occurred; but I was somewhat more successful when conversing with my friends the Arab and Indian traders. A number of these, who carry on their business at Maravoay and Mevatanana, considering that their lives were in danger in that part of the country, had come into the capital; and some, apprehensive of an anti-foreign agitation in Imerina—of which there had already been ominous symptoms—were on their way to Mauritius to seek safety. According to these men the Hovas neglected the most ordinary precautions; they placed no outposts, and their sentries had a habit of sleeping very soundly. They said the Hovas cut off the heads of all their prisoners, happily only savage Sakalava so far, for no Frenchmen had fallen into their hands.

I also met a coloured Mauritian Creole who had fled with the Hova troops from Maravoay. The morning after my interview with him, and possibly in consequence of it, this poor man was arrested by the Hova Government as a French spy. He was escorted to the coast and sent off to Tamatave, which was the place to which he wished to get, as it happened. According to him, three French gunboats at anchor in the river Betsiboka shelled Maravoay and the surrounding villages throughout May 2, while two bodies of Algerian troops and Sakalava, armed with repeating rifles and led by French mounted officers, directed a rapid and very effective fire at short range

on the various villages. The loopholed mud walls afforded but little protection against the hail of bullets, and the Hovas soon began to bolt. First the survivors of the Majunga garrison were driven out of the large village of Amparivola ; then village after village fell into the hands of the French, and at last the Hova flag was left flying at Maravoay alone. It was not till nearly midnight that this place was taken by assault. My informant accompanied the Hovas on their retreat to the south-east. On the evening of May 3, the French still pressing them close, the troops came to a village where they found awaiting them the Governor of Maravoay, the illustrious General Ramasombazaha, in whose courage and military ability the Government professed to have such complete confidence. He had been among the first to fly from Maravoay, and now, when at a comparatively safe distance from the foe, he resumed his command and retreated with his demoralised force ; this general was superseded, and he was to have been burnt alive on his return to the capital, but being a wealthy man he was able to purchase his pardon. Some Indians, who crossed the field of battle a few days later, assured me that the scene was a ghastly one ; the ground was covered with dead Hovas ; and hundreds of crocodiles, which swarm in these waters, had come out of the river, and were dragging into it the corpses and the wounded men.

All my informants stated that many hundreds of women and children were massacred in the neigh-

bourhood of Maravoay. It is possible that something of the sort occurred. The Hova Government diligently spread it abroad that these atrocities had been committed either by Algerian troops or by the coloured regiments of the French. Hova officers, in obedience to their instructions, wrote to missionaries and other friends in the capital to this effect; while Malagasy from the front told me the same story with many ghastly details. Later on, on making careful inquiries, I satisfied myself that these statements were absolutely false. If any women and children were murdered, it was by independent Sakalava, who were then pillaging the country on their own account, lifting cattle, burning villages and carrying the inhabitants into slavery. They also acted as useful foragers to the French, and obtained from the invader a good price for the captured cattle. At this time all the roads leading to Imerina were crowded with the beasts which were being driven up to escape the forays of these tribesmen, and numbers of Hova families were abandoning their homes in the west to take refuge in the capital.

The loss of Maravoay was a very serious matter for the Hovas; for there they had established their principal depôt of munitions of war for the supply of the troops at the front. All their cannon and rifles, ammunition, and stores of rice fell into the hands of the French, whose Sakalava allies drove in from the pastures surrounding Maravoay some

thousands of cattle—an irreparable calamity, due to the crass negligence and military incompetence of the officers to whom the Hova Government had entrusted the conduct of the war.

The man [most to be pitied in the country at that time was the Prime Minister. Though this once strong absolute ruler of the land was unable longer firmly to grasp the reins of government, his will weak, his memory gone, yet he had not so far sunk into dotage that he was callous to disaster; better had it been so, for in that case his heart would not have been breaking, as they say it then was. When he was informed that Maravoay had fallen and that the negligent Governor of that place had allowed all the stores and ammunition to fall into the hands of the French, instead of destroying them according to his instructions, Rainilaiarivony appears for the moment to have clearly realised the impotence of the Hova defence; he called his officers round him, told them what had occurred, in a speech interrupted by paroxysms of weeping, and then fell fainting into the arms of those who stood by him. It was whispered in the city that the poor old man constantly walked up and down a chamber in his palace, wringing his hands, lamenting and praying; and it is said that he was heard to cry out, ‘ Ah! if my *vazahas* (Europeans) had been here, such a misfortune would never have befallen us! They are gone, and I have no one left whom I can trust, no one who can counsel me!’

The people themselves received the news of the fall of Maravoay very quietly. In face of the well-authenticated reports of Hova reverses the same extraordinary confidence still prevailed in the capital. Apparently no disaster could bring it home to those infatuated people that the capture of Antananarivo by the French was within the bounds of possibility. This was the season, the rains being over, when building operations are actively carried on in the capital, and it was strange to notice at such a juncture as this, that the nobles were lavishing their wealth in raising to themselves spacious mansions in all directions, even as if we had been in the midst of a profound peace. This should have been a city of mourning, but fashionable marriages and festivities of all sorts proceeded much as usual. On one day, for example, the French invasion was quite forgotten in the excitement of a grand function—a marriage between members of two of the most powerful families in the land. The wedding breakfast, to which all in society were eager to obtain invitations, was a wonderful and sumptuous repast of thirty-six courses, the consumption of which occupied nearly the whole day. The *menu* was in the French language.

It was evident that the Hova rulers had neither the pluck to make a resolute fight for their country's independence, nor the moral courage to accept the inevitable defeat, and come to terms with the enemy. Earthworks were being thrown up in the neighbour-

hood of the capital, and it was quite possible that the Government, afraid to confess to the people that they had been hopelessly beaten, would insist on the troops making some feeble show of resistance at each successive defensive work right up to the palace itself, round which at this time a massive outer wall was in process of construction. The routed soldiers were not likely to fall back on the capital, for they dreaded too much the cruel death—burning at the stake—to which those who run away in battle are condemned; it was more probable that they would disperse all over the country; so that the Government would have to send out fresh bodies of men, one after the other, to simulate resistance, and to flee. The authority of the Queen was still unquestioned, and I always expected that this suicidal policy of no surrender would be persisted in to the bitter end, and involve the destruction of the city. The mad *Madagascar News* frequently urged the Hovas to burn their capital, should it be found impossible to keep the invader out; and the sapient editor argued that this heroic measure would leave the enemy in much the same desperate straits as were Napoleon's forces when Moscow was reduced to ashes.

The weekly appearance of this curious little paper was an event to which the Europeans looked forward during all those weary months. It was intensely amusing with its pompous style and prodigious inventions. To do it credit, it was undoubtedly thorough, and never abandoned hope of the Hova cause

until the French were in sight of the capital, when the editor suddenly and quietly disappeared: we learnt that he had prudently hurried to the coast to sail to a land where he would enjoy security under the British flag. According to this paper the Hovas were the most warlike, patriotic, civilised, and genuinely Christian of peoples. The Government, it proclaimed, was conducting the campaign with the most admirable skill; the defeats and retreats of the Hova forces were but strategic movements to the rear; and whenever things went very wrong indeed with the Hova armies, it would publish long quotations from Lord Wolseley's 'Pocket-Book,' and from these attempt to prove, with much ingenious sophistry and twisting of the author's meaning, that everything was going very well, and that what were apparently crushing disasters were really victories in disguise. We could not have spared our little *Madagascar News*, even though (maintaining, as it did, that it was our bounden duty to fight for the Hovas) it was rather hard on Great Britain occasionally, and in its native edition made statements calculated to excite a strong anti-English feeling among the more ignorant natives. However, these inflammatory articles did little harm, if any, for no European and no Hova I ever met believed a word that appeared in this reckless journal.

The Prime Minister must have enjoyed all the fulsome adulation which this paper offered up to him weekly; for it was subsidised by him, and every para-

graph was revised by his secretaries. And yet, all the while that these ridiculous eulogies of the Hova rulers appeared, the Government was showing itself grotesquely incapable ; with pompous conceit it played childishly at waging war, and the whole business would have appealed to us as a laughable farce, were it not so likely to end in a bloody tragedy.

CHAPTER XII

EUROPEANS THREATENED — UNSKILFUL CONSPIRATORS — CAPTURE OF MEVATANANA BY THE FRENCH—A FATUOUS GOVERNMENT—INCAPACITY AND CORRUPTION OF HOVA OFFICERS—MISERABLE CONDITION OF THE HOVA SOLDIERY—AMBOHIMANGA, THE SACRED CITY—NEWS OF AN ANGLO-FRENCH WAR

In the beginning of June there were signs to show that the position of Europeans would become dangerous, and it was suggested by several that we should leave the capital to retire to Vatomandry, or to occupy some village a few miles out, and there remain until the French had settled down in peaceable possession of the district. The white residents exhibited little anxiety ; indeed, it seemed to me that it would have been better if some of them had more fully realised the possibilities of the situation. There were many missionary women and their children still in Antananarivo, and it was bewildering to the ordinary intelligence to find that certain missionaries, while taking the precaution to remove their valuables to a place of safety, relied implicitly on Providence to protect their young daughters, whom they refused to send away.

There was still some talk of coming revolution, and those who knew the people best appeared to

entertain the most apprehension on this score. On the morning of June 6 a British trader, whose house is in the chief street of the capital, was somewhat scared to find posted on his outer door the following notice in Malagasy: 'Fly quickly, you Europeans now resident here; for if you do not fly, we are free from your blood. So say the Malagasy rebels. Do not think this is a light word, or you will regret it.' Practical joking is a pastime unknown to the Hovas, and the perpetrator of such a joke would have been beheaded at once if caught, so we could not altogether disregard such a warning.

The secret revolutionary party was also credited with an attempt that was made about this time to blow up the house of the Queen's uncle, an uneducated man who had risen considerably in the world, for in his youth he used to peddle cakes of soap by the roadside (as, they say, did the Prime Minister). When the Queen succeeded to the throne his royal connection afforded him power and opportunity to amass a large fortune by oppressing and blackmailing the people, by whom he is detested. But Hova politicians are not adroit in the management of bombs, and their attempt failed, as most things did in Antananarivo at that time; the bomb, though inserted in the wall of the house, exploded without doing any damage. On two other occasions later on these unskilful conspirators endeavoured in vain to blow up this same old gentleman.

It was about this time too that, in the country

round the capital, mischievous agitators—native pastors some of them—began to make inflammatory speeches, in which they reviled all Europeans, of whatever race, and attempted to persuade the credulous peasantry that it was the European custom in war for the victorious to kill all the conquered; the favourite French method, according to one of these orators, being to drive the people into crowds, drench them with paraffin, and then set fire to them.

I also noticed that an uneasy feeling now began to manifest itself in the city, and the Europeans strongly suspected that the French were much nearer than the Hova Government cared to acknowledge. This opinion was confirmed on June 4 when we received certain information that the French had captured Mevatanana, and that the Hova army had been scattered. An eye-witness, who visited me in secret to convey this news, stated that the Hovas were very scared by what he described as the invisible death dealt out by the French troops. 'There was no smoke,' he said, 'there was scarcely any noise, and yet our men fell in hundreds. We believe that there was magic in it.'

It was saddening for us Europeans in those days of suspense to live among the unfortunate Hovas, sympathising, as we could not fail to do, with the people and their cause, while realising with feelings of disgust that a despicable government had thrown away their every chance. I visited the city nearly

every day to meet my various informants in the back rooms of Creole storekeepers, or in the houses of the Indian traders; and as I walked through the crowded Friday market, or in the main thoroughfare of Andahalo, I perceived that a change was gradually coming over the native population.

So long as the enemy were still far off, the inhabitants of Imerina could not realise that the Hova rule was doomed. But now, as the end approached, as each day brought some fresh tale of Hova disaster and of the deliberate, resistless advance of the invader, the people to a considerable extent lost their cheery, conceited confidence. They had a gloomy air, and glanced with uneasy eyes at the European when they passed him in the streets. On the rare occasions that our native friends ventured to reveal their sentiments to us they spoke bitterly of their fatuous Government, which still simulated an unshaken faith in itself and in the future, though it had, as all men knew, so grossly failed in its duty, and though its downfall now appeared to be almost a question of days. The whole farce of reckless misstatement was still being played out, to the disgust of the onlookers. If one had taken this Government at its own valuation, one would have had to admire it as the most heroically patriotic that ever existed. It glibly lied to a scornful people about the completeness of the Hova military preparations, about the marvellous strategy displayed by the Hova generals, about absurdly impossible

Hova victories ; and yet all the while, to every one's knowledge, the French were steadily coming on.

The practice of the Government was singularly at variance with its preaching. Plan of campaign it had none. It despatched occasional dribblets of men, a thousand or so at a time, to the front, placing each dribblet under the command, not of a tried soldier, but of some quite incapable person, a civilian more often than not, who had obtained his military rank by bribing the Queen's nurse or some other old woman about the palace. This same Queen's nurse, once a slave, was at that time the fountain of all honours in the capital, and even Europeans who sought some favour of the Government, toadied her and sent her valuable presents. I was told that I should never succeed in obtaining permission to go to the front unless I bought her goodwill.

It was not love of country nor aspiration for glory in battle that prompted so many Hovas thus to purchase their commands ; their real object was to enrich themselves by blackmailing, in divers ways, the hapless men who were under their orders. The general used to mulct the colonel, the colonel the captain, and the captain the private soldiers, these last, of course, having to find the wherewithal to satisfy the covetousness of all the grades above them. The British officers who had been attached to the Hova army would not tolerate such abuses, and thereby incurred the unscrupulous hostility of Hova officialdom.

The following incident will serve to illustrate the sort of comradeship which was fostered in the Hova service by the above iniquitous system. As a rule, of course, the private soldiers could not indulge in blackmailing, as they had no one under them, but when they did get an opportunity they used it with pitiless alacrity. After the fight at Maravoay a number of wounded Hova soldiers, while seeking to escape from the French, got hopelessly stuck in the deep bogs, and would have remained there to perish had not some of the other fugitives come to their assistance; but before the latter would make any attempt to pull out their foundering countrymen they extorted from each poor wretch a promise to pay a ransom proportionate to his means.

The civilian officers had no stomach for fighting, and they nearly always initiated the running away. Their ideas of duty and discipline were curious. About this time a general was sent to the front to supersede another who had been disgraced for cowardice. When two days from the capital he met a hundred or more of the men under his command, travelling eastwards. The general asked them how it was they were going in that direction, seeing that the French were behind them. They replied that they were on their way to their respective villages to get some more *vatsy* (provisions for the campaign), and would soon be back. 'Then I will wait for you here,' said the general, 'and we will go to the front together.' He waited patiently for four days, but

his men did not return ; and then, coming to the conclusion that he had seen enough of soldiering, he too turned his back on the invader, quietly went off to his farm in the country, hung up his sword, and retired into private life.

The Hova commissariat arrangements are very simple. The soldiers are expected to supply their own rations, and to enable them to do this many, when called out at the beginning of the war, had to sell their little rice plots and all their worldly possessions. So soon as their store of provisions was exhausted they returned to their villages to procure more—an opportunity of desertion of which numbers naturally availed themselves. The Hova levies thus melted away as fast as they were gathered ; successive reinforcements dispersed like water poured into a sieve, and out of a thousand men despatched, perchance two hundred reached the front. But how could these poor fellows be expected to make any sort of a stand against a European foe, half-starved as they were, receiving no pay, robbed and betrayed by their officers, and in many cases unprovided with ammunition ? How, moreover, could they fight with any loyal ardour in defence of a government that so shamelessly oppressed them, and threw away their lives with such criminal callousness ?

Deserters, and those who ran away in battle, were now being burnt, in accordance with the old law ; not all of them, of course—there would not have been sufficient fuel in all Imerina for that—but

only some of the penniless and friendless among the private soldiers. The pagan superstitions still have a strong hold on this people ; many of the rites



HOVA OFFICER AND PRIVATE

of the old ancestor-worship are still observed, and a Hova considers it above all things important that he should be buried when he dies by the side of his forbears in Imerina. Burning at the stake makes it impossible for the relatives to perform the last duties

to the dead, and hence this punishment *is regarded* with intense horror, bringing, as it does, *lasting infamy both on the dead man and on his family.* The condemned soldiers were generally shot before the fire was lit, but one man at least was burnt alive in the rice-fields outside the capital. Many of the people were greatly incensed with the Government, which thus put to death with torture and ignominy poor wretches like this man, while condoning the far deeper guilt of wealthy officers who had the wherewithal to bribe.

It is a fact that these blackmailing officers of the Queen, not content with fleecing the living, appropriated the little effects of the slain, and carried on a lucrative trade in their dead men's bones. When a Hova is killed in battle outside his own country, it becomes the pious office of his relatives to find the body, to cut the flesh off the bones, and bring the skeleton (or, if that is not possible, the shoulder blades alone) to Imerina for burial in the ancestral tomb. Knowing that the relatives are ready to make great sacrifices to recover the remains of their dead, throughout this war the officers, in their almost incredible greed, turned this sentiment to their own profit, and refused to allow the bones of men who were under their command to be carried away until the relatives had paid ransom for them according to their means.

It will be understood from what I have said, that military service was not popular in Madagascar. All

who could afford to do so purchased exemption, often bribing their officers to let them go. Freemen only serve in the Malagasy army, and it was a common thing then for a man to deliver himself into slavery so as to avoid the dreaded obligation of fighting, or rather of pretending to fight, for his country. The men of the crack regiments I saw drilling in the capital looked smart enough in their white uniforms and caps. One would have said there was good material here; and in general appearance, but in nothing else, they resembled our own gallant Gurkha troops. But there was no *esprit de corps* among them, no pride in their profession of arms—how could there be under such a system? A man wore his uniform no longer than he was compelled to do so, and so soon as one of the infrequent parades was over he hurried away to doff this badge of poverty (for who would serve who had the money—three dollars would suffice—to buy exemption?), and then went about at his ease, no longer ashamed of himself, in the simple *lamba* of the civilian plebeian.

On June 13 I left Antananarivo to pass a few days with my friend, the Rev. P. Gregory, of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Mission, at his station Ambato, a village about twelve miles to the north of the capital, where the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel has established a College. A few miles from Ambato is the most famous of the sacred cities of the Hovas, Ambohimanga, of which I

was anxious to get a glimpse, as it was the prevailing opinion that the Hovas would here make their last stand. This seemed probable; for I had observed that the road from Ambohimanga to the capital presented few difficulties to the advance of troops, whereas the main road from Majunga followed the embankment of the Ikopa river for many miles, being but a narrow path along the top of the dyke, with the river on one side and an extensive swamp on the other, along which troops could only advance in single file, exposed all the while to the fire from the heights beyond. It was therefore almost certain that the French, on nearing the capital, would be compelled to make a detour and pass under Ambohimanga.

This is the most venerated of the twelve sacred cities of Imerina. Here Queen Ranavalona I. and her predecessors are buried; the great national idol, Fantaka, was kept here in the pagan days; and still, once a year, at the Fandroana festival, the Queen goes in state to the holy city to visit the tombs of her ancestors. No European is permitted to enter Ambohimanga—a prohibition expressly laid down in the treaty of 1865 between the Hova and the British Governments—and the profanation of its streets by the feet of the French invaders would be accepted throughout Madagascar as a conclusive proof of the downfall of the Hova power.

On June 14 Mr. Gregory and myself walked across the steep domes of hard red earth so charac-

teristic of Imerina, treeless, but covered with a short grass, at this midwinter season withered and russet of hue ; passed through some ancient hill villages, each dominating a dome-shaped height, and surrounded by an immense fosse with perpendicular sides, as a protection against raids of neighbours ; and at last attained the summit of a rugged mountain, from which we overlooked Ambohimanga. The sacred place presents a very picturesque appearance. A steep hill, with crags at top, rises above the undulating treeless country. The red houses are scattered among dark forest foliage ; for the whole hill is a sacred grove ; no man may fell timber upon it, and some of the trees appear to be of great age.

Though we saw no one near us, we were perceived by the sharp-sighted and suspicious Hovas, and we were told afterwards that our presence on the hill-top and my long inspection through glasses of the sacred place had caused a good deal of excitement in Ambohimanga. We were put down as a couple of French spies prying into the weakness of the Hova defences, and on our account a *kubary* was held in the town that night by the frightened citizens.

When we returned to Mr. Gregory's house we found that two men had come in from the capital with letters for us from some of our European friends, containing news of a very startling nature. They informed us that a London telegram had been smuggled over from Mauritius, announcing the outbreak of war between England and France. It had

come about over the Egyptian question, and it seemed that Lord Dufferin had been grossly insulted, and had left Paris. So well authenticated this amazing information appeared to be that I hurried off to Antananarivo forthwith, and on arriving there found that the story was generally accepted as true, and that the whole city was in a ferment. British subjects eagerly discussed the chances of their country in such a conflict; and some, loth to linger in captivity as French prisoners of war, were making preparations to escape from the island.

As for the Hovas they rejoiced exceedingly, and thanked Providence that it had intervened on their behalf. They boasted that in reply to their earnest prayers a great European war had been brought about for the express purpose of preserving the independence of these good Methodist Malagasy? The Government, with its usual readiness, backed up this piece of news by spreading a report that the French troops were retiring on Majunga, with the intention of scuttling away in their ships, before the advent of an avenging British squadron.

On some of the more sceptical of us tracing this story to its foundation, it was discovered that the *Madagascar News*, which had published the details and had stated among other things that our Parliament had voted sixty millions sterling for war purposes, was responsible for it all. In a few days it was known throughout the capital that the rumours of a war between France and England were altogether

unfounded, and that the French, far from having beaten a retreat, had captured Mevatanana without encountering any opposition from the disorganised Hovas, and, strongly entrenched, were there preparing for their final swoop on the capital. There then came a sudden and violent revulsion of feeling, which, I believe, for the first time opened the eyes of the bulk of these deluded people to a clear perception of the true state of things.

But the Hova Government still obstinately refused to recognise acknowledged facts; and, curiously enough, while regarding Europeans with extreme suspicion and placing every obstacle in the way of our obtaining information, it was apparently strongly opposed to the suggested exodus of the British community. The Prime Minister always insisted that such a step was altogether unnecessary. A proclamation of the Queen now called the whole native population to arms, and the people declared that British residents also would be compelled to fight for the Hovas should the capital be in danger. This was openly advocated at the services in the native churches, where any member of the congregation can rise and say what he will. For instance, on one Sunday, at one of the churches near Ambohimanga, the preacher reminded Europeans of the words, 'He who is not with Me is against Me,' whereon a man rose and cried out, amid great excitement, 'Any man who has sympathy with the French must be killed, even if he is caught under this sacred roof.'

The missionaries at that time testified to the strong anti-European feeling which was spreading through the country districts. It was another sign of the times, too, that the soldiers made a practice of raising insulting and threatening cries while marching past the European stores in the capital. 'Why are these *vazahas* allowed to stay here?' they called out. 'All their heads should be cut off. French, English, American, Norwegian, they are all the same. It is these *vazahas* who have brought all this trouble to Madagascar. Let us kill them.'

Each day brought us its exciting bit of news—generally false. One day an enthusiastic and talkative missionary of the L.M.S., who apparently always placed implicit faith in some very mendacious correspondents of his at the front, and who was therefore of great service to the Hova Government as the spreader abroad of its even wildest *canards*, rushed in to announce to us that three Hova forces had fallen on the invading columns, and had defeated them with great loss, six hundred of the Algerian troops alone having been left dead on the field; and yet on this same day we heard from another source—and this was far more probable—that the Hova forces had been utterly scattered, and that their most renowned general, Raintany, who had received his military education, such as it was, in France, had only thirty men left with him.

CHAPTER XIII

MY THIRD ATTEMPT TO GET TO THE FRONT—OUR VICE-CONSUL'S INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER—STORMY CABINET MEETINGS—DISCONTENT OF THE POPULACE—TROOPS MASSED ROUND THE CAPITAL—MISSIONARY FANATICISM—ANTI-EUROPEAN DEMONSTRATION—FURTHER HOVA DEFEATS

IN view of all these conflicting rumours and the growing excitement of the populace, the British vice-consul was anxious to hold a meeting of British subjects, so that some plan of concerted action might be arranged in case of emergency. Several of the missionaries still refused to leave the capital, and the traders were naturally reluctant to abandon their houses and goods unless imminent peril rendered such a course necessary. In order to obtain information bearing on the matter, Mr. Porter had an interview with the Prime Minister on June 17. He pointed out to his Excellency that the French were reported to be within a few days' journey of the capital, and that the time had therefore come for the British residents to decide whether it was expedient for them—and more especially for the women and children—to retire to the coast. Mr. Porter requested the Prime Minister to enlighten him as to what was happening at the front, as such knowledge

would greatly help us in coming to a decision. He also asked for permission to send two Englishmen through the Hova lines with a message for the French general, as it was of the utmost importance to ascertain what treatment would be accorded by the French to British neutrals resident in Antananarivo.

The Prime Minister, no doubt, made a shrewd guess as to who these two Englishmen would be. Seeing another chance, though a small one, of getting to the front under some plausible pretext, I had volunteered for this mission; and the only other special correspondent then in the capital, on hearing of this, naturally insisted on joining me.

The Prime Minister, surrounded by his secretaries, courteously lent ear to all that Mr. Porter had to say. The old man appears to be a consummate actor. He was known to be in the depths of despair, yet he showed no signs of his anxiety. He beamed upon the consul, and said soothingly, 'Do not be afraid, my friend. You Europeans must not get timid. Rely on me; I will protect you. It is not true that the French are so near as you say. Take my word for it, my friend, they will never reach the capital. Do not you know that I am sending down reinforcements almost daily? You see how many Hovas there are in the capital and in the villages round; they will all fight, and the French can do nothing against these brave tens of thousands.' After some further conversation, the

Prime Minister said: 'If, despite what I have told you, you still think you are not safe, if you British desire to leave the capital, then—remembering as I do the old friendship that has existed between the English and the Malagasy since the time of Radama I.—I promise you that I will do all that I can to help you. You shall have men to carry you and your baggage, soldiers to guard you on the journey, all you require.' And so this poor old man, infatuated or kept in the dark himself, or wilfully seeking to deceive—who can tell which it was?—babbled on patronisingly, even as if his rule had been assured for ever, as if no revolution was imminent, and as if the French invasion was but a silly scare that existed only in the imagination of the cowardly.

The Prime Minister did not at all approve Mr. Porter's plan of sending two Englishmen to the French with a message. He pointed out that such action would be premature, the French being far off; and, moreover, that it would be 'so dangerous for these two Englishmen to travel in the direction of Mevatanana while so many soldiers are about.' 'Should they be killed,' he exclaimed, 'what a terrible matter it would be for us (the old humbug!), how it would grieve our hearts!' The Hova authorities, to give them credit, displayed the keenest solicitude for the safety of newspaper correspondents. So anxious were they lest we should get into mischief, that they would scarcely allow us out of their sight,

and yet they must have observed that we were not in the least degree grateful for their assiduous attentions.

At the conclusion of the interview, the Prime Minister emphatically declared that Madagascar would make no terms with France under any circumstances until all the Malagasy were *lany* (spent), and he asked Mr. Porter to repeat his words to the English in the capital. As nothing but polite speeches could be extracted from the Prime Minister, and he would furnish no information, it was decided that the proposed meeting should be deferred for a little while.

But self-complacent, to all outward appearance, as were those responsible for the then miserable state of things, they were known to indulge in bickerings, mutual threatenings, and lamentations when within the palace walls. According to a trustworthy informant of mine, this is what occurred at one Cabinet meeting. The Queen, who exhibited much emotion, spoke with her hand placed on her heart: 'What does it all mean? Thousands of men have I sent to the front; but what have they done? Generals have gone down, each saying he would fight until he and every man under him had perished. I ask, What have they done? What are you all doing? Am I to lose my crown? You said that you would defend my kingdom; are you doing so? Tell me all; speak from your hearts, and have no fear; my friends, tell me what I should do.'

For about half an hour there was a dead silence,

the councillors casting their eyes downwards, gloomily meditating. Not one rose to make the old meaningless boast of fighting to the death; that would have been too absurd in the face of the facts known to them all. But at last one spoke out boldly: 'You ask what you should do, Sovereign Lady; I will tell you—speak the truth. We were ready to fight for you, and you knew it was so. But how can anything be done unless the truth is told? The Government spreads reports of French defeats, of so many thousands of Frenchmen killed here or there, while but a handful of Hovas are said to have fallen. So too speaks the Government *Gazette*. And yet all men know that the French are coming nearer, ever coming nearer. How can we plan a defence if we are told these lies? You ask us to speak from our hearts fearlessly. I have done so. Be not false to your people!'

To this the Prime Minister rejoined in an indignant speech, which commenced with the words, 'You say that the Sovereign Lady lies—this is treason deserving death!' No one ventured to speak after him, and the Queen, declaring that she was too ill to stay longer, dismissed the meeting. It therefore appears that the Cabinet was divided against itself, and that the truth was kept back from some of the Ministers themselves. These Cabinet meetings were conducted in a very queer fashion, and disputatious notables were silenced by threats of immediate execution. On one occasion several ministers demonstrated their

own loyalty by falling on a colleague who had contradicted the Prime Minister. They gagged him and bound him to a chair with *lambas*, and there he had to remain until the end of the debate, when the Prime Minister magnanimously ordered him to be released.

Determined to prolong this hopeless pretence of defence to the very end, the Government now spread more incredible tales than ever, which yet deceived a few. Thus on June 18 we were told that the traitor Ramasombazaha (who, after having been sentenced to death for his conduct at Maravoay, was pardoned and reinstated in command) had, by means of a 'cunning strategic movement to the rear,' led the French into a trap, and, after slaying two thousand of the Algerian troops, had compelled the enemy to evacuate Mevatanana. According to another palace rumour the Hova engineers, by the opportune cutting of a dam, drowned 1,000 Frenchmen. At this rate there would soon be nothing left of the expedition.

In a season of threatening ruin and prolonged suspense men are apt to seek relief from the tension of anxiety by flying to various forms of dissipation, even as did Boccacio's Florentines in the days of the Black Death. Gambling happens to be the particular vice of the Hovas, and at this time the courtiers in the palace, I am credibly informed, devoted themselves to high play of the most reckless description, by which a few lost all their possessions. This wild folly was quite in accord with the rest of the doings

of these Hova rulers; even those Europeans who were once their greatest sympathisers now shrugged their shoulders, and called to mind the trite old aphorism, '*Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*'

The weary weeks went by, and until the middle of July no more information of importance reached us from the front. Isolated as we were, and knowing nothing of what was happening, we Europeans in the capital were at our wits' end to understand what the French were doing. It was evident that they were no longer advancing, and that all military operations on either side had come to a standstill for a time. We little knew that the French were wasting valuable lives and valuable time in the construction of that absurd wagon road of theirs across the malarious lowlands, which has been so severely and justly criticised. The only explanation I could think of was that they had established their advanced base at Mevatanana, and were securing their line of communication and completing all their preparations before moving on once more; when in all probability they would march right on to the capital without experiencing a single check.

But, as may well be imagined from what I have said of the character of the inhabitants of Antananarivo, these volatile and conceit-blinded people, thus temporarily reprieved, shook off their former misgivings, and to a great extent recovered their former jaunty confidence; which in no way reassured us, realising as we did that this lull of

false security must sooner or later be succeeded by a reaction of panic.

I now heard from several sources that the French were taking advantage of this suspension of hostilities to conciliate the natives. A peasant who had been made prisoner by the French told me that when he was brought before the French officers a *mon père*—the Malagasy term for a Roman Catholic priest—acted as interpreter and spoke kindly to him. He was set free, and the *mon père* enjoined him to go back to his village and explain to his people that they need have no fear of the French, for the latter regarded the Hovas as their friends, and were only waging war against the tyrannical Hova Government.

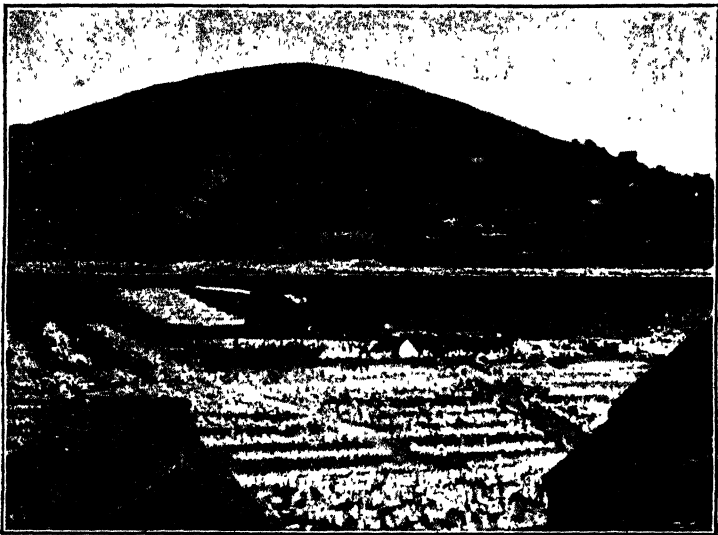
The only incident of note about this time was another attempt that was made to blow up the Queen's uncle. Agents of the mysterious revolutionary party again contrived to elude the guards, and opened fire on the door of the same well-detested gentleman's residence from a sort of mortar they had constructed themselves, and had loaded with large stones. They were interrupted and put to flight before they had effected an entrance.

Though the French were no longer advancing, it was evident that the discontent of the people was ever intensifying, and the Government now fully realised its danger. A large military camp was established on the dry rice-fields below the city. It daily increased in size, and, to judge from the

number of tents that covered the plain, at least 10,000 men must at last have been collected there. No preparations were made to send this force to the front, though it was largely composed of picked troops and veterans of the last French war. We therefore conjectured that it was intended for the protection of the Queen's party and the suppression of any attempt at revolution. These troops were reviewed by the Prime Minister on July 2. He addressed them in his usual confident style, and promised them that the French expedition would shortly be annihilated. He spoke somewhat sternly to the officers, and threatened them with severe punishment should they appropriate the money and food which had been collected by public subscription for the soldiers—a warning rendered very necessary by the notorious abuses to which I have already alluded.

I could only catch a glimpse of this review from a distance through a telescope, and a native who was present afterwards reported the speeches to me. For at that time no European was permitted to attend a simple parade, far less a review. It was not safe for a white man to walk through any of the camps; later on the soldiers became more actively hostile, and would no doubt have murdered some of us had we not kept out of their way. They were a ragged lot, and discipline there appeared to be none; when paraded before the Prime Minister or some other great man, they used to raise cheers and

brandish their arms, while their officers waved their swords with ridiculous gestures and simulated the slaughter of the foe. These were practically their sole manœuvres, for the drill their European officers had taught them was now neglected as foreign trickery unworthy of Hova warriors. They had determined to do things after their own fashion,



A REVIEW IN THE HOVA CAMP

and to fight or run away as they pleased without having any regard to *vazaha* methods. Unpaid and starving as the privates were, they were compelled to commit frequent robberies in the capital at night, in order to support existence.

But soldiers were not the only robbers we had then to deal with in Antananarivo. Burglaries

became unusually frequent, and attempts were even made to break into the vice-consulate and other British houses. The thieves prowled in bands on the moonless nights, and, as they always went stark naked, were difficult to see or catch. Many of them were the slaves of certain nobles of ill-repute and broken fortunes, who organised these plundering expeditions, and received the larger share of the proceeds. Some of the unscrupulous nobles of this class owned several hundreds of armed slaves, and it was these the Europeans had most to fear in the event of riots in the capital. A dissolute young man, one of the Prime Minister's nearest relatives, was the chief of one of these bands of city bravoos.

It is doubtful whether an Antananarivo mob would venture to face even a handful of armed Europeans; but, unfortunately, the majority of the British community had neglected to provide themselves with weapons of any description. Some of the missionaries were determined at all hazards to remain here with their wives and families, and to carry on their labours as usual. The girls' schools were not broken up, and the missionaries did not seem to consider that they incurred any responsibility in keeping all these young women in the capital at such a time. They argued that it was their duty to teach so long as the parents thought proper to send their children to school; and they would not even take it upon themselves to suggest to parents living in the country the advisability of

withdrawing their children from the city schools until the war was over.

The missionaries contended that it would be inexpedient for them to take any steps likely to inspire the people with alarm. They therefore, so far as their influence went, and they are apt to greatly overrate it, encouraged the prevailing treacherous feeling of false security, with the result that the inevitable subsequent panic was likely to be all the more dangerous. Some of these missionaries in their fanaticism not only refused to leave the capital, but declared that, however great the peril, they would not join the other Europeans in any scheme for mutual protection. A Quaker—whose wife and young daughters were here with him—told me that under no circumstances would he go into any house or behind any barricade, or into any place whatsoever in the company of men carrying arms. This surely is Quakerism carried to an insane conclusion. If the cowardly mob of Antananarivo had risen, the people with these notions would have allowed themselves to be slaughtered like so many sheep—a mean and shameful thing, one would have thought, for men of English blood; and it is in this manner that such as they often bring white men into contempt among the native races. A good many others considered that the Europeans would be safer if they were entirely unarmed, and thought that an infuriated mob would be more likely to spare a defenceless man; which proves how little they really know of the Hova, who

may be a good chapel-goer, but certainly has not a spark of any chivalrous sentiment, who throughout all this campaign never faced the enemy, and only selected the wounded and unarmed on whom to wreak his vengeance. Happily, many of the missionaries took a more sensible view of the question, and I am sure would have given a very good account of themselves if we had had to make a fight for it.

There could be no doubt that the anti-European feeling was daily increasing; though some missionaries, who would not hear a word said in disparagement of their beloved Hovas, strenuously denied this. It was no longer safe for an Englishman to visit the Friday market, or to go wheresoever natives were collected in large numbers. Even some of the most respected missionaries were received with insulting cries and threats as they travelled through their districts. Up to that date the people had not summoned sufficient courage to assault a white man, but they occasionally vented their spite on our native servants. For example, on July 3 the Hova soldiery fell upon an unfortunate boy who was carrying an Englishman's camera in the vicinity of their camp; they beat his brains out with the butt-ends of their muskets, and broke up the camera. A few days after this incident, to the consternation of the missionaries whose disciple he was, Andrianony, a native Quaker preacher of some repute, visited different portions of the large military camp outside

the capital, and preached inflammatory sermons to the soldiery, reviling the European residents as white rats and spies of the French, and urging the men to treat us all as such, including the missionaries themselves.

It was an ominous sign too that the Prime Minister, hitherto always so scrupulously courteous in his dealings with our vice-consul, now refused to receive him; and though Mr. Porter had laid before his Excellency several complaints of recent outrages on British subjects, he could obtain neither reparation nor reply to his official letters.

I had not yet abandoned all hope of getting to the front, and was at that time employed in making the acquaintance of influential people—of whom, by the way, the Queen's nurse was not one—who had the ear of Rainilaiarivony. I only succeeded in eliciting a variety of strange excuses from the Malagasy, who gave me every reason but the true one for refusing me the permission I required. I was told one day in all seriousness by one in authority, that it was the modesty of the Hova officers which chiefly stood in my way. 'Better to die than to be ashamed,' runs the Hova proverb. The Malagasy discard their conspicuous white *lumbas* in battle, and fight *in puris naturalibus*, but it seems that the officers strongly object to being seen in this condition by the civilised white man. That the Hova commanders had never, so far, allowed the French to get near them tends to confirm my

informant's statement; we may charitably assume that it was bashfulness which made them so nimble.

On July 12 I had a conversation with a Hova officer of high rank. I, of course, did not believe a word he told me about the situation at the front; but one remark of his is, I think, worthy of repetition. 'It is possible,' he said, 'that we will not give the French battle until they are close to the capital. We shall be ever nearing our base; they will ever be getting further from theirs. We can draw them on and on to their certain destruction. Perhaps we will even put off their annihilation until we have them on yonder rice-fields, in the presence of the Queen herself. The French will have 15,000 men at the outside. We shall have 30,000 men at the least. Now it must be a poor sort of a soldier who cannot kill at least one man in a battle. So we shall, of course, be able to kill all of them; and even if they kill an equal number of us we shall still have 15,000 men left.'

And now once more news began to come in from the front. For several days rumours of severe fighting had been current in the capital. On July 13 these were confirmed, and we knew that the Malagasy had suffered another serious defeat. According to my informants a force of 10,000 Hovas advanced from Malatsy on Mevatanana with the object of retaking that place from the French. On June 29, when about twenty miles to the eastward of Mevatanana, the Hovas were attacked by the French and

were repulsed with considerable loss. On July 1 the fighting was renewed, and the Queen's troops were soon put to rout by the terrific fire of the French. An eye-witness described the French bullets as 'sweeping through the Hova ranks like water pouring over a garden when a man swings a watering-pot to and fro.' A very pretty figure of speech; but, as a matter of fact, as I ascertained afterwards, the Hovas ran away almost before the French came within range at all. The slaughter, continued my informant, was tremendous, and those who escaped—whether officers or men—did so in a state of nudity; for according to the Hova custom, to which I have already alluded, they had taken off their clothes and left them in their tents before going into battle. Hundreds of the poor naked wretches were wandering over the bleak highlands, starving and exposed to the wintry gales and cold mists. The fate of many of them was to perish of fever and pneumonia. After the action all the Hova guns, ammunition, and stores fell into the hands of the French. Such was the account that reached us. It was incorrect in many particulars, and the Hova losses were grossly exaggerated; but, at any rate, many of the people looked upon it as a decisive action, and were of opinion that the Hova troops would not again venture to face the French in the open.

CHAPTER XIV

MEETING OF BRITISH SUBJECTS AT THE VICE-CONSULATE—THE MISSIONARIES DETERMINE TO REMAIN AT THEIR POSTS—THE VICE-CONSULATE PREPARED FOR DEFENCE—COLONEL GRAVES IS APPOINTED MILITARY ADVISER TO THE HOVAS—I MAKE A FINAL ATTEMPT TO GET TO THE FRONT

I ASCERTAINED, through one of the Queen's advisers, whose statement I have every reason to credit, that this defeat had at last opened Her Majesty's eyes to the hopelessness of further resistance, and that she therefore purposed to send an envoy to the French to treat for peace. It was not likely that anything would come of these overtures. It is quite foreign to Hova nature to conduct any business without much quibbling and procrastination. We knew that the proposed envoy would not be entrusted with anything approaching to full powers, and that every proposition made would have to be submitted to the Prime Minister for his leisurely consideration.

On the other hand, it was certain that the French would not consent to waste time in idle *pour-parlers*, but would insist on an immediate acceptance of their terms, unconditional surrender in all probability—an abrupt way of doing things, in which it was difficult to conceive of the Hovas acquiescing, unless they were in their last extremity.

Had it been known that the Queen and her advisers had any intention of suing for peace, the revolutionary party would, in all probability, have made an attempt to overturn the Government. Precautions were indeed taken to frustrate such a movement, for, on July 9, twelve of the revolutionary party were arrested, among them an illegitimate son and a nephew of the Prime Minister. At this juncture, therefore, Mr. Porter very rightly came to the conclusion that the time had arrived to hold the long-talked-of meeting of British subjects at the vice-consulate. He had of late written official letter after letter to the Prime Minister without eliciting a reply, so he now sent that dilatory old gentleman what practically amounted to an ultimatum, and insisted on having an immediate interview with him.

To our astonishment this request was granted, so Mr. Porter repaired to the palace, and pointed out to His Excellency that it was impossible for himself, as acting vice-consul, to give any definite advice or instructions to the British subjects, who relied upon him for guidance, unless the Prime Minister gave categorical answers to the questions Mr. Porter had repeatedly and ineffectually put to him.

The Prime Minister, in replying, expressed, as usual, his deep affection for the estimable British Government and people, and he then emphatically repeated the statement he had made at the last interview, to the effect that the Hova rulers never had entertained and never would entertain any idea of

coming to terms with the French. The Hovas, he said, were determined to fight, if necessary, until every man was dead. At the same time, clever at dissimulation as is this old man, he could not conceal the fact that he was by no means so confident as heretofore. He no longer cast ridicule on the suggestion of its being within the bounds of possibility that the French might in time overcome the Hovas. He appeared no longer to care whether the Europeans stayed in the capital or took themselves off. He even allowed—a wonderful concession for him—that the day might come when it would be out of his power to protect the European community. He could not deny that if the white residents postponed their departure they might find themselves in difficulties. They might be unable to procure bearers to carry them and their baggage to the coast; their very servants might be taken from them, as all able-bodied men would be called upon to fight. He went so far as to confess that he could not guarantee the safety of European property in the city. ‘The watchmen I may give you to guard your houses,’ he said, ‘may be stoned by the robbers.’

His Excellency was undoubtedly well-disposed to the Europeans in the capital, and did all he could to protect us; but his words at this interview showed that he had commenced to realise his own helplessness. He knew that sooner or later, when the French were at the gates, the city would, to some extent at least, be at the mercy of the revo-

lutionaries, or of the looting mob, and that our position would be one of considerable danger. It was obvious that all European women, children, and infirm people ought to be sent to the coast while the road was still open, and carriers were to be easily engaged. For those who stayed till the last moment, if they escaped at all, would have to do so on foot; but it is only a strong man who can tramp it through the difficult and unhealthy country which lies between the capital and Vatomandry.

Due notice was therefore given by Mr. Porter, and a meeting of British subjects was summoned for the afternoon of July, 11 at the vice-consulate. We hoped that some of the obstinate folk, whose presence here was purposeless and a cause of danger to others, would be brought to their senses. But I much doubted myself whether this would be the case; there was too much division in our little camp, and in a certain section of it a temper of pig-headed fatalism and ignorant conceit that posed as the highest sense of Christian duty and inspired wisdom.

Early in the afternoon the British subjects collected in the large office of the vice-consulate. There were nearly forty present, and they represented all classes of our community—missionaries of the London Missionary Society, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the Friends' Foreign Missionary Association; English traders and miners; Creole traders from Mauritius, and a few of our Indian fellow subjects, Parsees, Hindoos, and Mo-

hammedans. No natives were permitted to be present, but the editor of the *Madagascar News* was there on the understanding that he should not publish our proceedings in his paper. Members of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission were also there: for our Norwegian kinsmen, having no consul of their own, placed themselves under the protection of the representative of Her Britannic Majesty.

The meeting entirely failed in its object, as I had anticipated; but this was through no fault of our acting vice-consul, who, in convening it, had performed his obvious duty, and would have been held absolved of all responsibility for whatever might have subsequently occurred. First, Mr. Porter, after fully describing the situation, urged all Europeans residing in the capital to leave for the coast without delay.

Then a member of each of the mission societies in turn addressed the meeting. The tone taken by some of these gentlemen somewhat jarred on the rest of us. They seemed to take it as a personal affront that the vice-consul and other men of common sense should have been at the pains to have a thought for the safety of the missionaries and their families; and in one or two instances there was an aggressive sanctimoniousness in their remarks, as if they stood upon a higher pinnacle than other men, and could not entertain advice proffered by the unregenerate.

That the danger was sufficiently grave to justify

the action that had been taken by the vice-consul was not disputed by them; but each declared that he personally had thoroughly made up his mind not to withdraw from the capital with his family, and that such influence as he might possess would be exerted to bring his fellow missionaries to a like way of thinking. They quite recognised the insecurity of their position, and one speaker admitted that he would in all probability lose his life. They were prepared to die at their posts. They appeared to be wholly guided by a sentiment which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary men, for they were unable to show that any practical object was to be gained by their presence in the capital. They had something to say about their responsibility as custodians of Church property, but not a word of reference to their far more serious trust—the lives of the women and children committed to their care. They also urged that it was their duty, in the hour of peril, to remain with the people under their ministry; though it then appeared almost certain that when that hour should come, these good clergymen would be left alone, shepherds without flocks.

The representative of the *Daily Telegraph* was the only layman who made a speech, and he spoke warmly and to the point, demonstrating the folly of the attitude that had been taken up by the missionaries. No missionaries replied to their self-constituted spokesmen, but I am happy to say that the latter did not represent the opinions of all their fellows;

more especially was this the case with the L.M.S. men, several of whom had already sent their wives and children away, and, holding very different views, severely criticised what had been said on their behalf. Unfortunately the example set by the fanatical, and their outspoken opinion to the effect that any missionary following the vice-consul's advice would be a cowardly deserter who would never again be able to show his face in the country, deterred the wavering from adopting the right and prudent course. The directors of the London Missionary Society, who sent very sensible instructions to their agents in Madagascar, can scarcely approve of this novel doctrine, that it is the duty of missionaries to sacrifice their lives without purpose.

One Quaker missionary afterwards assured us that he possessed an inner voice, which had enjoined him to stand by his post, and had assured him that the lives of all his people would be preserved throughout this time of danger. Happily the majority of sane men do not hear these delusive voices that have led so many fanatics to their destruction.

As it happened, no Europeans were massacred in the capital; so on the day that the French entered, my Quaker friend with the inner voice waxed triumphant, and informed us he had known all the time that we should come safely through. It is very easy for one to be wise after the event with an 'I told you so;' but I had no more faith than before

in that inner voice; and, as I shall show later on, we, or rather they, the unarmed missionaries, had a very narrow escape indeed; while the subsequent murder of the poor Quaker missionaries in the neighbourhood of the capital, and other outrages on Europeans that occurred in various parts of the country, prove that the danger was very real.

The object of the meeting had thus completely failed, and no resolution of any sort was passed. The majority of the missionaries would not send their wives and daughters to a place of safety, neither would they take any steps to defend themselves if attacked. The rest of us, therefore, who had no relish for martyrdom, and preferred, if we had to die, to have a decent fight for it, commenced quietly to make our own preparations, without holding any more meetings on the subject. The vice-consulate, a brick house, having unfortunately the one great drawback of being roofed with thatch, was fixed upon as the rallying-point in case of the Hova mob breaking loose. Mr. Porter provisioned it from his store without arousing any suspicion on the part of the natives. It was supposed that he was merely bringing his goods to his official residence for greater security. We had a number of sacks, some filled with flour and sugar, others which could have been rapidly filled with earth, wherewith to block up the lower windows. Seven of us were living in the house or in the immediate neighbourhood, and had firearms of some description. I made it my business—with the vice-consul's sanction

—when visiting the city in search of news, to acquaint my Creole and Indian friends, who lived in the more crowded and dangerous quarters of the city, with this plan; they too then supplied themselves with arms and ammunition, and were ready to take refuge in the vice-consulate, should the danger become really serious.

In my opinion we could have held our own for some time against the cowardly mob of Antananarivo. The other missionaries were of course invited to join us when they thought proper to do so. I think a few of them would rather have died than avail themselves of our protection.

But the missionaries were quite prepared to take their own part after their own fashion. On July 15 a deputation of members of the London Missionary Society and the Friends' Foreign Missionary Association had an interview with the Prime Minister, and complained of the conduct of Andrianony, the Quaker pastor who had preached anti-European sermons in the various camps, and had incited the soldiery to murder the missionaries and other white men as French spies. His Excellency undertook that there should be no repetition of so disgraceful an incident. He visited the camps in person on the following day, and, addressing the troops, reminded them that the British and Norwegians were the friends of the Hovas, and animadverted strongly on the malicious words of the Quaker pastor.

As having incurred the displeasure of the Prime Minister, Andrianony became a marked man. It was known that he would be severely punished in some way, so that others would be deterred from following his example. But for many days nothing happened, and he was not deprived of his liberty. Then his end came rather suddenly. One day I saw him in the town, apparently enjoying excellent health; on the following morning he died mysteriously—of sheer fear, it was said. His death produced a good effect on the people, who saw in this event the wrath of Heaven falling on an impious wretch who had ventured to speak lying and wicked words of the good white teachers.

The only European at this time in the Hova service was Major Graves, once of the Royal Artillery. The suspicious Government had all this while kept him in the capital to train the artillery cadets, but in the last week of July, to our astonishment, it was decided to send him to the front. He was promoted to the rank of colonel, but it was not easy to understand exactly in what capacity he was to accompany the Hova force. He was not put over the heads of the native generals, and yet he was practically to be in command in action. He was presumably a sort of military adviser on other occasions, with very small authority to enforce the adoption of his advice. He was placed in the same position that Colonel Shervington had formerly held, and was to receive the same pay. It was also stated that

would be presented with a large sum should he succeed in recovering Mevatanana from the French.

He could scarcely have hoped to accomplish much by his presence with the troops. He must have known that it was too late to save the position, and that he could never venture to attack the enemy



HOVA ARTILLERY

with the sort of men he would have at his disposal. Should he attempt to prevent them from taking to flight, they would probably kill him. The jealous generals with whom he was supposed to co-operate would thwart him in every way. If disaster came, as come it must, he would certainly be blamed for it; he would be made the scapegoat.

I heard that he was to set out for the front on July 22 with 5,000 men and some Gardners and Hotchkiss guns. I made a determined effort to obtain permission to accompany him. On this occasion I very nearly succeeded, and my disappointment was all the greater when at last my refusal was sent to me in the form of a very polite letter from the Prime Minister. I then abandoned all hope of going to the front, and realised that my only plan was to sit down and wait till the front got to me, which it assuredly would some day.

CHAPTER XV

FURTHER DELAY OF THE FRENCH—ITS DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES—
 ENTHUSIASM IN THE CAPITAL—A STRANGE EXECUTION OF A TRAITOR
 —MY SPY BRINGS NEWS FROM THE FRONT—DEMORALISED CONDITION
 OF THE HOVA FORCES AT ANDRIBA—HOVA TACTICS—THE FARCE OF
 DEFENCE—A HOVA COURT OF JUSTICE

AND what were the French doing all this time? we used to ask ourselves. For two months they had been at sickly Mevatanana, and had made no attempt to advance further. We heard that their men were dying like rotten sheep, that their transport had completely broken down, and that they were altogether in terrible straits. We were at a loss to understand how any sane general could keep his force so long in the deadly lowlands instead of pushing on without delay, at any cost, to the healthy highlands, which were but a few days' march distant. It was certainly not the resistance offered by the Hovas that prevented him from doing so. We did not then know the story of the Le Febvre wagons or realise the extraordinary incompetence of the French War Office.

All we could be sure of was that some one must have been very much to blame for the delay which had led to this miserable situation of the French expedition. Rumours reached us from Tamatave—

and they proved to be correct—that fifty per cent. of the men had already been put *hors de combat* by fever and dysentery, the victims of gross mismanagement on the part of those responsible. A Réunion journal reached us, in which appeared a letter from a soldier, who described the troops as greatly discouraged by this rapid thinning of their ranks and by the prolonged inaction.

This delay was likely to prove as disastrous to the invaded as to the invader, and may still lead to an immense amount of misery, which would have been avoided had the French preparations not been so faulty. For the expedition had now to advance at a season when it could not but most harmfully interfere with the agricultural operations of the inhabitants, and a famine was consequently to be apprehended. In August the rice-fields of Imerina are prepared for cultivation; in September the rice is sown; in October it is transplanted; and in April it is harvested. The entry of the French into Imerina was certain to retard all work in the fields, whether the people ran away or stayed to fight, and this delay signified that the coming rainy season would in all probability destroy the young crop. It is true that the early crop had already been sown; this is what is here called the *vary-aloha* (the rice before). It is planted in winter in artificially irrigated land, and is gathered in long before the main crop is ready. But only a small portion—one-tenth perhaps—of the cultivated land

is thus treated, and the *vary-aloha* is altogether insufficient for the needs of the dense population of Imerina.

One had only to look from the capital over the leagues of rice-fields and the hundreds of large villages, which extend to the horizon in every direction, to realise how terrible a famine would result from a failure of the rice crop. For it must be remembered that there can be no importation of rice on an adequate scale into Imerina in time of dearth; the cost of transport from the coast, or from other parts of Madagascar, on the heads of carriers, amounts to four cents the pound or more, a prohibitive rate, seeing that in this country a pound of rice can be bought for less than half a cent. The French, therefore, had apparently so bungled their expedition as to bring a maximum of loss and suffering both on themselves and on the unfortunate Hovas.

The misfortunes of the French afforded the Hovas their opportunity, but they never availed themselves of it, though they did a lot of tall talking about what they intended to do. To harass the invading force by repeated night attacks and by falling on its line of communication was their obvious course, and there is no doubt that had they displayed any pluck they could have cut up the French columns on several occasions. But they never took any advantage of the enemy's mistakes and mishaps. Once, indeed, a general of whom great hopes were entertained was despatched with a considerable force,

with orders to intercept the ill-guarded convoys of the invader on the road between Maravaoy and Mevatanana. He set out with a great flourish of trumpets, but he never got within a hundred miles of a Frenchman. He remained with his army in a pleasant country far to the north of the road, where cattle were plentiful, and refused to budge thence until the termination of the war, despite all orders from his Government and pathetic appeals from other generals in distress.

I gathered from my informants (and the French have since confirmed this) that even the bravest—if such a term is applicable—of the Hova generals defended their country in a very half-hearted way. It seems that the Hova plan was to act purely on the defensive and to avoid attacking under any circumstances—a plan which their generals were inclined to carry out somewhat too faithfully. That in order to defend successfully one must act vigorously on the offensive when occasion offers is not an axiom of war, as it is understood in Madagascar.

The month of August opened, and still we heard nothing of French advance, but many tales reached us of their fearful sufferings and of the frequent burials of their dead outside Mevatanana. There would not be a Frenchman left alive on the island soon, cried the Hovas exultingly; General *Tazo* (fever) was fighting for them, and the Almighty had answered their prayers! When I suggested to one of these good Methodists that they ought not to leave all the

work to the Almighty, but should do some of the fighting themselves, and reminded him of the proverb as to God helping him who helps himself, I think he regarded me as a wicked blasphemer.

Encouraged by the check of the invaders, the Hovas were in excellent spirits. Even the soldiers looked less miserable. They were better fed than they had been, as money was collected for them in the native churches. They ought certainly to have given a better account of themselves against the fever-enfeebled Frenchmen. On nearly every occasion that I went into town I saw troops marching out of the city, to the sound of cannon and martial music, cheered by enthusiastic crowds. Riflemen and spearmen were diligently drilling in every quarter of Antananarivo; while groups of women, night and day, sang the impressive *mirary*, an extemporised chant of encouragement to their husbands and brothers going to the war, and an invocation to the God of victory. If a stranger had then been suddenly dropped into Antananarivo to observe all this, he would probably have been quite indignant had any one suggested to him that these people did not mean fighting. The Hovas are admirable humbugs.

The Government, too, at about this time, stimulated by the more hopeful aspect of affairs, showed that it had still some backbone left. It arrested a number of seditious persons, and executed or exiled the leaders. This prompt action intimidated 'the

friends of the French,' as the people called them, and for a time we heard no more of revolutionary movements. I was a witness of a strange scene one day in the neighbourhood of the Courts of Justice, after the condemnation of one of these conspirators. In the midst of a body of soldiers, who were apparently setting out for the front, I perceived an officer in a smart uniform, who was being carried on a palanquin. I noticed that he had rather a dejected air for one who was on his way to fight the enemies of his country, and that the friends who were seeing him off looked glum as mutes at a funeral. On inquiry I ascertained that this was a notable who had been found guilty of correspondence with the French, and was then on his way to execution. He had been appointed Governor of Volimena, a fatal honour reserved for criminals of rank. This appointment is a sort of Hova Chiltern Hundreds, but it not only implies the complete extinction of a man's political career, it amounts to a condemnation to death. He who is so appointed sets out from the capital in pomp, as befits a Governor, for the never-to-be-reached seat of his imaginary rule. In the course of the journey he disappears, but none save his executioners know at what place or moment or in what manner he is put away.

So everybody was lulled again into the old false security. The natives, and most of the missionaries to boot, had come to the conclusion that there was no chance of the French reaching Antananarivo that

year, and the city newsmongers spread a report—the wish being father to the thought—that the French force had already commenced its retreat to the coast. There were many signs to show that the Hovas honestly took this optimistic view of the situation. For example, at each Friday morning's market in the capital, I saw slaves sold at their full price—sixty dollars for an able-bodied man; from which I gathered that the upper classes were very far from anticipating a French annexation and the probable consequent abolition of the peculiar institution.

On August 6, the spy whom I had sent to the front, ostensibly to peddle the salt, snuff, and sugar with which I had provided him, returned to me with information as to the exact position of the French and Hovas. The former were still at Mevatanana, and were employed in making a road to Ampasihirihy, where was their furthest outpost, a village halfway between Malatsy and Mevatanana, and about twenty miles from either. French vedettes and scouts were occasionally seen within a few miles of Malatsy. The Hovas were in force at Andriba, where they had strongly entrenched themselves in an impregnable position, and were awaiting the French attack. They also had a small force at Malatsy. The two forces were thus face to face, and it was expected that the arrival in camp of Colonel Graves would precipitate a collision. The Hova soldiers, he said, were in a starving and very discontented condition; but their blackmailing officers were fat and happy,

and had appropriated all the rice which had been sent by the Queen and others as a present to the troops. I gave my peddler some more money to buy snuff and sugar, and sent him off once again to Andriba, with instructions not to return until the French had resumed their march on the capital.

The distance from Mevatanana to Andriba is only fifty miles, so we now daily expected to hear that the French, having at last pushed on, after their unaccountable delay, had attacked the Hova position. It was on the Andriba heights that the Hovas had prepared for their first great stand. The position was admirably adapted for defence, could not be turned without great difficulty, and had been skilfully fortified. Here, too, the Hovas had at least five times as many cannon as the French could bring against them, and these were guns of bigger calibre and much longer range. As I was afterwards told by French officers, the place would have been impregnable, even if held by indifferent troops. Those who still had faith in the Hovas expected great things of them at Andriba.

Andriba is only 150 miles from the capital; the front being thus so much nearer, it was not so easy for the Government to suppress news, and we were better informed than we had been heretofore. On August 16 I heard from two sources that the French were slowly advancing, making a road before them all the while, and that a Hova reconnaissance of 600 men had been driven back by a

large body of French, to within a few miles of Andriba itself. The Hovas, it appears, had abandoned Malatsy without a blow, and now the French outposts were within sight of Andriba.

I saw some men who had come from Andriba; they gave me a pitiable description of the condition of the Hova troops in that place. They had altogether lost heart, and were suffering terribly, not only through insufficiency of food and clothing, but by reason of the lack of medical supplies. Fevers and various forms of disease were raging in the camp, and yet there were but four or five incompetent native surgeons to tend the sick and wounded. The Government, actuated by its profound mistrust of all Europeans, had refused to accept from sympathising British subjects the proffered gifts of drugs and medical comforts which would have been of such inestimable benefit to the wretched soldiers. English surgeons who volunteered their services without pay were officially snubbed, and a lady of the English Medical Mission, who is an army nurse of great experience, in vain applied for permission to establish a base hospital for the wounded between the capital and Andriba. The rulers of the country were quite indifferent to the sufferings of the troops who were expected to fight for their defence.

The French could not then have been fully aware of the utter demoralisation of the Hova force, else they would not have delayed all this while at the

cost of so many lives. At that time two thousand men could have marched up to the capital without difficulty. Had not the Hovas been in desperate straits, they would not have sought the assistance of one of the hated Europeans, and have begged Colonel Graves to proceed to the front. Things had come to such a pass that General Raimanjalahy, in command of the troops at Andriba, sent the following message to the Prime Minister: 'I can do nothing. My men will not stand. They run away so soon as they perceive that two or three of their friends have been killed. Nothing will stop them. Will you send them more severe instructions? Will you also, if possible, send me a European officer? he may be able to prevent the men from running.'

As burning at the stake is the penalty for cowardice in battle, it is not easy to understand how the Prime Minister could send 'more severe instructions,' but His Excellency promptly despatched the required European officer. Colonel Graves reached his command, and was chiefly occupied in strengthening the defence of Andriba. He did this work very skilfully, according to the French officers. He, too, said that the neglected men had lost heart, while the vain and well-fed, but inconceivably cowardly, officers blustered and swaggered like so many victorious bantam cocks. On his arrival he found everything in a very sorry plight, and his first step was to send an urgent appeal to the Government for supplies of ammunition. I was

told that the men had only four cartridges apiece. The Government, on receiving the Colonel's letter, displayed unwonted energy; many hundreds of carriers were at once impressed, and large quantities of ammunition were forwarded to Andriba.

From all I heard, I thought it extremely unlikely that the defenders of Andriba, of whom it was said there were about 12,000, would show fight. I have already explained that the plan of the Hova generals was to act purely on what they were pleased to call the defensive; that is, they threw up earthworks at some naturally strong position and there awaited the enemy; but so soon as the enemy attacked them, these nimble Hovas, after firing a few rounds, ran off to some other strong position, fifty or sixty miles away, there to make similar preparations, and thence to run away again when the invaders appeared in sight. They behaved, in short, much as the Chinese do at the approach of danger. They seemed to imagine that by a mere display of strength and noisy demonstrations they could bluff and overawe the French, and frighten them back into the sea, without doing any fighting whatever. They were astounded to find that European troops marched undismayed right up to their formidable defences. A Hova said to me, 'These Frenchmen must be very brave men. We see that in the battle, even after some of their men have been slain, the others still come on.'

In Antananarivo the farce was still kept up.

The rulers spouted heroics, and the citizens bragged of dying to a man in their country's defence. On August 19, when walking down the principal street, I encountered a howling mob of southern tribesmen. They were passing through the capital on their way to the front; most of them were drunk, and they shrieked and shook their spears threateningly as they hurried on. Outside the palace they halted and had an audience with the Queen. They vowed that they would never yield, and that the invader should not advance save over their dead bodies. They implored the Queen to give them a knife and a tomahawk each, with which weapons they undertook to slay the French wholesale; rifles they did not ask for, not being familiar with their use. The Queen and the Prime Minister did not neglect so good an occasion for making their wonted pathetic and stirring speeches. They uttered some fine patriotic sentiments, and tearfully thanked these brave and loyal tribesmen from the south. And yet all the while the sovereign and her consort and every spectator present knew full well that these same boasting warriors were but arrant cowards, who hated the Government which had impressed them, had no intention whatever of fighting, and would desert at the earliest opportunity. It was an excellent illustration of Hova humbug.

After witnessing this scene I happened to enter one of the European stores, and there the reverse side of the picture was presented to me. A slave

came in with a paraffin lamp, which he pressed us to buy for a small sum; he had offered it in vain at every other store in the street. The lamp belonged to his master, who had been ordered to the front, and was not rich enough to purchase exemption from service. The man said that his poor master was *revaka* (worn out mentally and physically) at the horrible prospect of fighting, and that he was selling the lamp so as to procure a few cents wherewith to purchase his *vatsy* (rations). Despite all the braggadocio and simulated enthusiasm at the public meetings and in the presence of the Queen, this was, as a matter of fact, the spirit in which the majority of these poor Hovas unwillingly betook themselves to the war.

Cabinet meetings were now of frequent occurrence. I was told that at these meetings the ministers, with the object of arriving at the probable designs of the enemy and devising the best methods of frustrating the same, conducted their deliberations somewhat after the fashion of a debating society. Thus some minister, of presumably military experience, would undertake to represent the French general; he explained what he intended to do, how he would fall on the Hovas here, lead them into a trap there, turn a position thus, and so forth; he threw himself thoroughly into his assumed character, and exerted an extraordinary ingenuity in plotting the destruction of the Hovas in divers ways—ways often fantastic and absurdly impossible. Then some other minister spoke

as representative of the Hovas, and set forth in detail the precautions that should be taken to defeat the above schemes of the invader. This was no doubt all very entertaining and instructive, but as no action was ever taken as a result of these debates, the Hova cause was not much furthered. The terms of peace at the close of the war, the nature of a protectorate, and other political questions were threshed out in a similar way by wordy, but ignorant, orators on either side. There is something very childish in the Oriental subtlety with which the Hovas are credited.

It was interesting to walk in the town in those exciting times and pick up the gossip of the stores and markets. In the streets too there were often strange sights to be seen. On one or two occasions I saw justice (?) being administered in the Hova Law Courts. One of these courts of justice is in Andahalo, the main street. Justice has no roof over her head in Madagascar, and this court is merely an open place with stone seats at the side of the street. On August 23, as I passed by, I saw from the large crowd collected in front of the tribunal that a case of great interest was then being tried. Sitting in a row were seven solemn-looking Hovas in black European dress. They had the appearance of churchwardens; but I was told that these were the seven judges engaged in trying the notable named Rajesy, who had been accused of carrying on a treasonable correspondence with the French. The judges seldom spoke; but after listening to the evidence of either

side they promptly found the prisoner guilty, and condemned him to be shot. Then Rajesy declared that he would not die alone. He said that he was but the tool of others greater than himself, who now wished to sacrifice him, and he denounced as French spies six of the most important men in the State, among others a general, a cabinet minister, and a secretary of the Prime Minister's, a man whose defection would have been a severe blow to His Excellency. It was understood that the Prime Minister promised to spare Rajesy's life if he could prove his words and reveal all he knew of the conspiracy. No doubt many a guilty conscience was uneasy in anticipation of the coming revelations. Nothing came of it all, however. Rajesy was released, though he never produced his proofs, and held his tongue. The many influential people who were compromised succeeded in hushing up the matter.

Even those among the Europeans in the capital who had been the staunchest champions of Hova independence began to realise now that the sooner the French reached the capital and brought this wearisome business to a conclusion, the better it would be for every one concerned. No one could regret the downfall of the corrupt and ludicrously incapable Hova Government, which yet appears to have attracted to its unworthy self some sentimental sympathy in England. The peasantry in the district round the capital confessed to those whom they could trust that they were weary of the exactions of their

Government, and disgusted with its ineptitude. They would have welcomed the French had they been satisfied that the conqueror would treat them justly.

But at the end of August most of the European residents were of opinion that the French would not reach Antananarivo that year. They argued that because the invaders had progressed so very slowly hitherto they would advance no faster in the future, and that the rainy season would overtake the expedition before it reached the confines of Imerina. When some of us pointed out that General Duchesne would in all probability despatch a flying column to the capital from Andriba, or from whatever other place he might have selected as his advanced base, the idea was scouted. Had the French really made so complete a fiasco of this expedition as these people believed, it is doubtful whether their attempt would have been renewed. The French people would have become thoroughly sick of Madagascar. In that case the invaders would at any rate have succeeded in spoiling the island and retarding its progress for many years. The conceited rulers would have flattered themselves that their own valour and military genius had stayed the invader, and the *Madagascar News* was even then babbling about the whole world gazing with admiration at the wonderful tactics of the Hova Prime Minister. Puffed up with conceit, the Hova Jacks-in-office would have despised all Europeans, and would have

made it difficult, or at least unpleasant, for them to carry on their business in the island. The Government, relieved of any fear of European interference, would have enjoyed a happy irresponsibility, and the wretched people would have become the victims of a tyranny and corruption far worse than they had ever known before.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FRENCH CAPTURE ANDRIBA—THE 'FRIENDS OF THE FRENCH'—HOVA RECRUITS—THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOARDS—A WIZARD WARRIOR—THE FRENCH ADVANCE FROM ANDRIBA—APPOINTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SUCCESSOR—DESTRUCTION OF FRENCH PROPERTY—THE FRENCH IN VONIZONGO—WE HEAR THE FRENCH CANNON

IN Antananarivo we used to have alternate waves of panic and blind confidence. Towards the end of August there were signs of another tide of panic. The *tsimandos*, or Queen's messengers, hurried in daily with their reports from the front, and it became known that at the palace alarming news of some description had been received. It was rumoured that the French, having captured Andriba, were now close to, and on August 23 the Prime Minister and several of the court visited the rice-fields outside the capital, examined the dykes, and decided where they should be cut, with the object of flooding the plain when the French were near.

The information they received revived the hopes of the traitors, and despite the imprisonment and execution of several of their party, seditious placards were again posted on the walls by sympathisers with the French. There was one plausible young Hova who used to call on me regularly, with much affecta-

tion of secrecy, creeping in when no natives were about with the air of a conspirator, to tell me the latest palace news—of course in consideration of sundry dollars. He was a type of a considerable class in the capital, a young man of good birth, who had been educated in a mission school, and spoke English fairly well. His ambition in life was to creep into the inner circle in the palace, and obtain some post which should enable him to obtain a competency by the usual blackmailing methods. He had attached himself to one of the Prime Minister's secretaries, and had already exhausted his limited means in bribing men of position. So far he had only achieved a very subordinate position, and was chiefly employed as a spy on foreigners.

He little suspected that I knew so much about his career, and he used to speak to me with an air of complete frankness, the while carefully impressing it upon me that he risked his life in calling on a *vazaha*, more especially such a *vazaha* as myself, who was regarded, so he assured me, by the Hova Government as a French spy of the most dangerous character. He was of service to me, for I used to tell him anything I was anxious to have repeated in the palace. On his part he was shrewd enough to tell me a good deal that was true, but rarely anything that I had not already heard from other sources—a fact which I naturally concealed from him, for evidently one of his objects was to discover how much I knew and whence I obtained my information.

He came to me on August 23, and for the first time communicated to me a fact which had not already reached me. 'Andriba,' he said, 'has been taken by the French, and it is all up with us.' Then he went on to speak of the revolutionary party, doubtless to pump me as to what I knew of its doings. 'Half the town,' he whispered, 'now belongs to the French party. There may be an outbreak at any moment.' 'But the troops encamped round the town,' I put in, 'will not they fight for the Queen and Prime Minister?' 'They would do so,' he replied; 'but now the friends of the French, posing as patriots, and many other people too in the town, are calling out that these soldiers should at once be sent to the front to drive back the French. As soon as the troops have gone the friends of the French will rise.' I asked him what the 'friends of the French' hoped to gain by their machinations. 'They wish to put another lady, one of their own party, on the throne in the place of the Queen,' he said, 'and when the French come in they will say to them, "See how we have helped you!" and they hope that this new queen will be left in power by the French; in which case these people will get many honours and hold all the high offices.' From what I ascertained, on far more trustworthy authority, afterwards, I gather that the young man described the then position of affairs very accurately.

Some days after my conversation with the young Hova we had official confirmation of the fall of

Andriba. As usual it was found impossible to make the Hovas stand to their guns when the enemy were once within range. On this occasion they made a very feeble show of resistance, and fled so soon as the first French shells fell within their lines, some of the officers setting the example of flight to their men. This strong position, in whose impregnability the Hovas placed such confidence, and in the construction of whose defensive works they had spent so much labour, was thus abandoned without a blow ; and I was informed that though Colonel Graves and some of the officers were for attempting another stand near Kinazy, Rainanjalahy proposed to retreat with the whole force to the neighbourhood of the capital, as there his men would be more under control, and it would no longer be so easy for them to desert daily in large numbers. Colonel Graves reported to the Government the disgraceful conduct of several officers of high rank ; they were, I believe, condemned to death, but of course purchased their lives with handsome bribes. These were the same bold fellows who so distinguished themselves at the great *kubary*, when they boasted loudly before the Queen, gesticulated, capered, thrust and cut the air with their swords to show how they would slay the French, and otherwise bubbled over with patriotic ardour. It was also rumoured—and it was possibly the fact—that the soldiers, so as to have an excuse for saving their own skins, bribed their officers to run away.

In the face of all this the Government had

the effrontery to represent the flight from Andriba as being a most creditable feat of arms, almost equivalent to a victory; and that inspired organ of the Government, the amusing little *Madagascar News*, as usual quoted long passages from Lord Wolseley's book to show that the Hova force in carrying out 'this strategic retrograde movement' was fulfilling its 'proper function as rear guard to the army of the north-west'—an army which had no existence save in the editor's imagination; and it was complacently urged that the heroic defence of the Malagasy troops and the military genius displayed by the Prime Minister could not fail to command the admiration of the civilised world.

It had now become obvious that, despite the hopelessness of further resistance, there would be no submission on the part of the Hova Government, and that many more lives would be callously sacrificed, for no object save that of prolonging by a few weeks, or months at most, the existence of an oppressive rule. At the palace they—that is, the courtiers who did none of the fighting—still bragged of a resistance to the last man in the last ditch. Fresh levies were now called out. It was pitiable to see these so-called soldiers setting out for the front, miserable peasants taken from the fields, which at that season urgently needed their labour, men who had received no military training whatsoever, and of whom few had ever held a musket. As they arrived in the capital so were they sent off; their *lambas*, red with the soil

of their farms, their sole clothing. The weapons served out to them were as a rule rusty old flintlocks, the majority of which were quite useless, some even having no locks. And yet there was a large reserve of excellent rifles in the capital, which the Government, or rather the Prime Minister, grudged to the men who were expected to defend their fatherland.

For, like all Hovas, the Prime Minister was loth to part with any property that had once come into his possession, and his avarice had intensified with years. He loved to see an abundance of military stores piled around him in the arsenal; and there he would hoard the ammunition until it had spoilt, and the rifles until they had rusted away, rather than have them served out to soldiers who were intended for service at a distance from the capital. He had himself amassed vast quantities of useless rubbish, which he loved with all his senile heart. One who used frequently to accompany him on his visits to his private storehouse gave me a wonderful description of this place. Here for years the 'Grand old man of Madagascar' (*vide* the *Madagascar News*) had accumulated goods of every description, all to perish where he had laid them up; moths were in the bales of cloth, weevils were in the grain, vermin were everywhere; and as he entered this dismal treasure-house of dust and mould, to look around and exult in his useless possessions, hundreds of winged insects that are bred from decay and dirt fluttered round his head.

Finding that their prayers for the defeat of the

French had been unavailing, the Hovas, in some districts, began to turn to their old gods; there was a revival of paganism, and men resorted to the ancient sorceries. The people appeared to be trying each creed in turn, and certainly displayed more zeal in praying for their country than in fighting for it. A few days after we had heard of the fall of Andriba a large contingent of Betsileo tribesmen entered the capital. I saw them dancing up the chief street, howling defiance of the French, and comporting themselves generally like men maddened with fanaticism. They were under the command of one Rainijaonary, a noted warrior and wizard. He led his excited followers up to the palace, and was received by the Queen and Prime Minister. He craved permission to exterminate the invaders with his spells, and explained his plan, imploring the Government to give it a trial, as it could not fail to be successful. His Betsileo had all been anointed with a magic fat, which he guaranteed would make them bullet-proof, and as a further protection they wore curiously carved collars of wood or leather, which acted as powerful charms. All that he required was that a knife and a bit of rope should be given to each of his men. It was his intention to blind all the French with his incantations; then his men would seize them, bind them with ropes, and despatch them at their leisure with the knives.

The Queen and the Prime Minister approved of this notable scheme; they ordered knives and ropes to be

distributed among his men, and sent Rainijonary to the front with their good wishes. Some timid natives, on hearing that the Queen and Prime Minister, far from having rebuked these pagans, sanctioned their heathenish practices, were much concerned lest the court should change its religion and institute another persecution of the Christians. On the Sunday following this incident, at one church at least, near Antananarivo, there was no attendance at service, the congregation having no thirst for martyrdom. The faith of a Hova is that of a Vicar of Bray ; and in all probability one result of French supremacy will be the secession to Roman Catholicism of the majority of the Protestant converts. French-speaking natives and boys educated in French schools will undoubtedly be preferred for Government appointments, and there is likely to be an indirect but effective boycotting of the London Missionary Society, so that its influence will gradually fade, and its work will be closed so far as Imerina is concerned.

On September 3, my man, who used to visit the Hova camp in the guise of a pedlar, returned to the capital, and informed me that the French were still at Andriba, their most advanced post being at the village of Antafofo, 16 miles south of Andriba and 130 miles from the capital. It was difficult for me to surmise what the French could be doing. Seeing that they had been nearly three months in occupation of Mevatanana, and had therefore had ample time, one would imagine, to bring up their supplies,

organise their transport, and rectify the blunders which were responsible for their long delay, I had expected that their advance, when it was resumed, would be a rapid one. But they appeared to be as deliberate as ever in their movements. They had been three weeks on the road to Andriba (50 miles from Mevatanana), and they now seemed to be in no hurry to push on from that place, for they had again halted for at least a fortnight.

The consequence was that the excitement in Antananarivo soon quieted down again. So slow had been the invader's progress that the inhabitants were getting quite accustomed to it. But the upper classes in the capital now appeared to realise that the French would arrive there sooner or later. This change of opinion was indicated by various unmistakable signs—the current price of slaves, for example. A few weeks earlier they had been freely bought at their full value; but now sellers were many, purchasers few, and only nominal prices were realised.

For a whole month after the fall of Andriba there was a singular dearth of news, and even of false rumours, in Antananarivo; and then of a sudden all tongues began to tell once more of French advance and Hova defeat. The details of the fighting did not reach us, for the Government was at more pains than ever to suppress information from the front. Even the men who carried the Hova dead into the capital, for burial in the tombs of their ancestors, were placed

under a close supervision lest they should report what they had seen on the field of battle, and the Government issued orders that all funerals of soldiers should take place at night. I received no definite news until September 17, when my peddler returned hurriedly from the front, to inform me that the French were pushing on in earnest at last, and were driving the disorganised Hovas before them.

It is curious that at such a juncture the matter which more than any other exercised the minds of the people was the appointment of his successor by the Prime Minister on September 10. This was to be Ratelifera, the Prime Minister's nephew, to whom sixteen honours were awarded, and who now became, according to the *Madagascar News*, Lieutenant-Commander-in-Chief. People debated anxiously whether he would prove an able ruler when his time came — a superfluous question, one would have imagined, with the French within a few days' march. Grand *kabarys* were held to honour him; he harangued the troops, and assured them that he would lead them to victory; and the L.M.S. sent a deputation to congratulate him upon his appointment. This young man, I afterwards ascertained, was the leader of the treasonous French party, and the Queen's bitterest enemy.

The Government now professed to be more than ever determined on resistance to the end, and bestirred itself to take what its admirers lauded as vigorous measures. In the first place, some officers

were sent to the front with instructions to try by court-martial soldiers accused of cowardice, and to burn the guilty. This example did not encourage the troops to give a better account of themselves in their next encounter with the French; but it succeeded, as might be expected, in terrifying them into mutiny and general desertion. At this time, too, with the object of giving some heart to the garrison, deserters were burnt alive in the rice-fields in full view of the capital.

Among the vigorous measures that were now taken were some worthy of mention. As the men did not show much stomach for fighting, it was decided to form regiments of children; notices were sent to the numerous mission-schools in the capital, calling out for service all the scholars capable of bearing arms, and these were sent to one of the neighbouring camps to be trained. Hitherto the property of French subjects had been respected in the capital; but now Government officials broke into the stores of expelled French subjects and divided their goods. An act of wanton destruction was also perpetrated on September 18. A body of soldiers, acting under the Queen's orders, destroyed the handsome observatory erected by the Jesuit Fathers, which contained a powerful telescope and valuable astronomical and meteorological instruments. The excuse put forward by the Government was that the French had stored powerful explosives and destructive machinery of some mysterious description in the observatory, with

the object of blowing up the Queen's palace, which had been secretly placed in connection with the observatory by subterranean wires! It was intended also to raze to the ground the handsome French Residency; but, happily, this was not carried out. These people, who had not the heart to fight like men, took a keen delight in these acts of paltry malice.

On the evening of September 17, Colonel Graves came into the capital post-haste from the front, having accomplished the journey in two days; and at dawn on the following day he returned to the Hova camp. It was understood that he had come to complain to the Prime Minister of the disgraceful conduct of the Hova officers, who, in every action, had encouraged their men to run away, and that he insisted on being placed in sole command of the Hova forces. The reticent Government issued no notification on the subject, and the lips of Colonel Graves were sealed by order.

The disaffection of the people now once more began openly to declare itself; gangs of robbers infested the roads throughout Imerina; incendiarism and burglaries were on the increase in the city; and the anti-European feeling, of which we had heard little for some time, was again manifesting itself. A notice printed at Tamatave for circulation in Imerina, and bearing at its foot the name of Mr. Abraham Kingdon, was not calculated to make the position of Englishmen in Antananarivo more

secure. It was fortunately suppressed, but I saw a copy of it about this time. It was a vehement document, accusing the Prime Minister of many base crimes, and calling upon the inhabitants to welcome the French as their liberators. The time had now come when no one doubted longer that the French were coming, and the city had entered on one of its periodic stages of panic; it was therefore all the more advisable that Europeans should be as little in evidence as possible.

On the morning of September 20, hearing that an abominable outrage had been committed during the previous night, I accompanied our vice-consul to the British cemetery, which is in a grove of mango trees about a mile outside the town. We were horrified to find that all the graves had been opened, the coffins had been broken into and emptied, and the gravestones, crosses, and ornamental ironwork had been shattered into fragments. A large number of men, well supplied with tools, must have been employed to have effected so complete a destruction. It is possible that the men hoped to find money buried with the dead, but it was evident that the tombstones had been broken up in a spirit of wanton spite. Hard by the burial-place was a camp through which I had often passed, where the Prime Minister had stationed a portion of the force which was to protect the capital against revolutionaries. This undisciplined rabble had no work to do, and the men used to insult and scowl at every passing European.

It was supposed that the wreckers of our cemetery came from this camp. The Prime Minister was appealed to, and promised to discover the guilty. The violation of sepulchres is the most heinous of crimes, according to the Hova code, and is punishable with death.

It was no longer possible for me to send my peddler to the front for information; but the French were now so near that the Government was unable to suppress all news as heretofore. On the morning of September 21, fugitive peasantry from the north came into the town and announced that the French were at Fihaonana, a village only thirty miles distant. It was rumoured that the Queen and Prime Minister were preparing to fly. We knew nothing definite, but we had little doubt that the Hova army had been completely routed. It was also reported that all the tribes of the south and east had risen in revolt against the Hovas, and it seemed that the entire island would soon be in a state of anarchy. The Hovas are too conceited a people ever to allow that they can be in the wrong. Looking round for some one to blame for all the disasters that were overtaking their country, they pitched upon Great Britain as a scapegoat. They now accused the perfidious English—notably their false friends the missionaries—of having brought destruction on the brave and blameless Hova people, as these had first promised them assistance, and encouraged them to resist the French, and had then left them in the lurch. The editor of the *Madagascar*

News, though himself an Englishman, took his cue from the Hova Government that employed him, and aroused the indignation of Europeans by publishing articles well calculated to stir up a dangerous anti-English feeling among the ignorant populace.

On the evening of the 21st, the Hova Government for the first time allowed the fatal truth to be told. The Queen summoned a *kabary* of the people outside the palace. She said: 'The French are now in Vonizongo, but a day's march from the capital. You told me that you would fight for me, but you have not done so yet. As for me, I will not desert you. I will resist to the end, and if God wills it, I will die in my palace.'

On September 22 and 23, as the end was evidently drawing nigh, a few of the European residents considered it prudent to leave the capital, and had considerable difficulty in procuring carriers. Among these was the editor of the *Madagascar News*, who, having published a final issue of his paper, in which he announced that the Hova generals were doing their best, and that the Hova cause looked hopeful still, quietly departed for Vatomandry, and there remained until a British vessel called and carried him away to Mauritius.

On walking through the main streets on September 24, I found that the capital was in a state of intense, but so far suppressed, excitement. All realised at last that further resistance was hopeless, and yet that the Government was determined to play

the farce out to the bitter end. In the streets I encountered crowds of howling savages, Sakalava and tribesmen from the south, who were to take part in the defence of the capital. The people strongly censured the Government for bringing these wild levies into Antananarivo, where they were likely to prove a source of danger to us all. I met several *tsimando* coming in from the front, but they were being escorted to the palace by soldiers with drawn swords, who prevented any one from holding communication with them. I saw hundreds of barrels of powder and cases of ammunition being carried up to the palace; for four days there was a considerable stream of these pouring into the town, it being the intention of the Queen, so it was said, to blow up the palace and all the principal buildings as the French entered the city.

It had been intended to hold a great *kabary* this day in the Andahalo market-place, at which the Queen was again to address the people, and the platforms and throne for the Queen had already been erected; but some *tsimando* suddenly brought in alarming news, and the function was postponed. The alarming news spoke for itself; for while I was in one of the stores near Andahalo we suddenly but distinctly heard the repeated booming of distant cannon. The invaders were in touch with us at last, and that evening we could see in the north the camp of what remained of the retreating Hova army. I think most of us were heartily glad thus to have

proof that this wearisome campaign was drawing to a close at last. I was exceedingly fortunate this day to find a man willing to travel for me to Vatoman-dry, so I entrusted him with a letter and telegram for the *Times*. I knew that this would be my last opportunity before the arrival of the French.

CHAPTER XVII

COLONEL GRAVES RETURNS TO THE CAPITAL—HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGHTING—PREPARATIONS FOR THE FINAL STAND IN THE CAPITAL—THE MISSIONARIES TAKE REFUGE IN THE HOSPITAL—THE QUEEN ADDRESSES THE PEOPLE—REPORTED ANNIHILATION OF THE FRENCH COLUMN—PLOT TO MURDER THE QUEEN—COLONEL GRAVES LEAVES THE HOVA SERVICE

ON the morning of September 25 I was awakened by the rolling of many drums, and an intermittent and weird howling as of many packs of wolves. On looking through a telescope I found that the troops had been mustered in the numerous camps on the hills north of the city. The officers were haranguing the men after their usual fashion, cutting and thrusting the air with their swords at the end of each eloquent period—a signal for the wild applause of the soldiery. We soon ascertained the cause of this demonstration. Messengers from the front had just brought in disastrous news which spread like wildfire through the city. The Hova army had again been driven back, and the French were at Ambohimirimo, within five hours' journey of the capital. On going into town I found that Colonel Graves had come in, and had written to the Prime Minister representing the utter hopelessness of the situation.

The Colonel had at last despaired of making any

resistance with such troops as these. We were able to gather from some of the facts which he communicated what the boasted final stand, if there was one, was likely to be. He declared that the Hovas had never made anything approaching to a stand, and always fled in panic on the bursting of the first French shell in their midst. When repulsed on the heights of Abohimena, so maddened with terror were the poor wretches, that three hundred of them in the course of their flight cast themselves over a precipice and were killed. On September 12 Colonel Graves had with him a force of about 7,000 men; by September 22 desertion had reduced these to 2,200, and on September 23 a muster showed that there were only 1,313 left.

The deeds of the warrior and wizard Rainijaonary, the leader of the Betsileo contingent, of whose scheme for destroying the French by magic I have already spoken, fell far short of his boastings before the Queen. When these wild tribesmen arrived in camp Colonel Graves harangued them, told them that the Queen expected great doings from such brave men, and urged Rainijaonary to attempt a night surprise on the French camp—which was about 4,000 yards off—that very night. The chief and his men responded with enthusiastic shouts; they were delighted at having so early an opportunity for displaying their valour. At eight o'clock at night these determined men set out; at dawn they reappeared in camp shouting bravely and announcing that they

had performed prodigies of valour. It turned out that they had merely gone about 200 yards in the direction of the French camp, and then laid themselves down to sleep for the night.

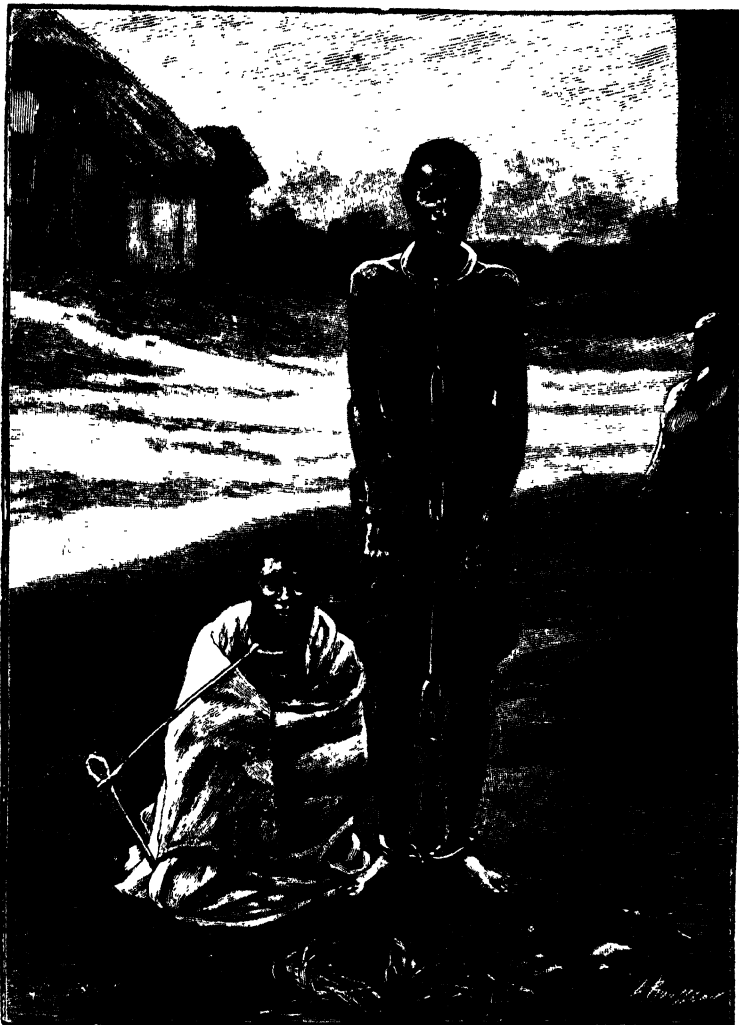
But despite all this, vigorous preparations were now being made for that grand final stand of which we had heard so much; but there was no plan, no head, and every step was, as usual, taken too late. Colonel Graves, whose services were at the disposal of the Government, and who could now have rendered most valuable assistance, was snubbed: the Prime Minister kept him waiting in the capital day after day without replying to his repeated letters; the grateful Hovas, of course, insinuated that he had betrayed them, and declared that had it not been for him they would have repulsed the invader. It is a thankless task indeed to serve the Hovas.

It was only at this last moment, when the French were but twenty miles off, that the Government ordered all the provincial governors to hasten to the capital with two-thirds of the troops under their command. Those who arrived did so, of course, a month or so after the French had entered into possession, and were just in time to be disarmed by the latter. The felons who usually wander about the streets in heavy chains, begging from the passing Europeans, had their shackles removed, so that they might take part in the defence.

All the natives were of opinion that the resistance round the palace would be of the most determined

character, and several Europeans were of the same opinion. The Hovas, said those who knew them best, are the most obstinate people in the world when they have once made up their minds to any course of action. They certainly have displayed plenty of obstinacy of the passive sort, more especially in their diplomacy. It was this grand capacity for resolutely doing nothing and for saying 'No,' that earned the Prime Minister his reputation as a subtle statesman, much in the same way that a dull fellow by silent gravity becomes a sage in the estimation of the vulgar. But it still remained to be seen whether the Hovas would be obstinate in the active sense. There was a lot of tall talk about; but we had heard this *kabary* cackle too often to put much faith in it; and I thought it probable that this scheme of heroic final stand, which was convulsing the capital, would bear as small result as the proverbial mountain in labour

On the other hand, it was certain that it was now that the Hovas would fight, if they ever fought at all, for the war had come home to them at last; and even those who up till then had displayed complete indifference were exasperated to find that the invaders were in holy Imerina itself, and were menacing the sacred person of the Queen. It was indeed a strange situation; and it was difficult to say which was the most likely to occur—a stubborn resistance, a bloody revolution, or a sudden submission on the part of the Hovas and a peaceable entry of the French.



Hova Felons in Chains

There is an incalculable element in every Hova that made this state of uncertainty the more complete. As it turned out they did make a stand of a sort, and there was fighting for four days outside the capital, the Hovas actually holding their ground until they were exposed to the French fire, before they ran away. But the natives so vastly outnumbered the French, that had they been armed with spears alone they ought to have been able by an overwhelming rush to 'wipe out' the little column of sick men that cautiously pushed its way up to the capital surrounded by these opposing hordes.

All missionary work had now come to a stop. No Europeans had been molested so far; but even those who at the time of the meeting in the vice-consulate ridiculed the idea of danger now realised that for the next few days our position would be anything but one of security. I have already explained that Mr. Porter had informed all British subjects that whenever they liked to do so they could take refuge in the vice-consulate and remain there until the crisis was over. Several of the missionaries availed themselves of Mr. Porter's offer; our little garrison was fairly well armed, was excellently provisioned, and we had all ready to barricade the house securely at a moment's notice. On the other hand, the majority of the missionaries and all the ladies decided to take refuge in the English mission hospital, which is on a hill three-quarters of a mile to the north of the city. To some of us it did not

appear at all right that a lot of unarmed people, whose principles forbade them to defend themselves, should thus shelter themselves under the Geneva flag, a flag only intended for the protection of the sick and wounded and those tending them. They must have known, moreover, that their presence in this place seriously imperilled the legitimate inmates by attracting the Hova mob that was thirsting for the blood of white men, and desired to gratify that thirst with the least risk. As a matter of fact, as I shall show, a plan was formed to massacre all these helpless Europeans, thus foolishly collected at this place. I must give the Prime Minister credit for having ever done his utmost to protect the Europeans in the capital. When he heard that the missionaries had left their homes for the hospital, he issued an order to the effect that any man caught robbing any empty English house should immediately be put to death.

I heard this day on good authority that a number of French agents had been arrested. They had French flags in their possession, and also letters which revealed the existence of a widespread conspiracy. The majority of the officials in the palace were said to have betrayed their Queen, and to be in the pay of the French; and so complete was the system of communication they had arranged with the enemy that instructions sent from the palace to officers at the front were read in the French camp before they reached the individuals to whom they were directed.

On this same afternoon a *kabary* was held outside the palace; while the old cannon on Andahalo, presented to the Hovas by George IV. of England, fired at intervals. The Queen addressed the people from the palace verandah, more especially directing her remarks to Prince Rahamatra and some other officers who were about to proceed to the front. She said to them: 'I am the descendant of twelve kings. How often have you all declared to me that you would defend the kingdom they created! But you have not done so. Alas, I have been betrayed by my own people!' Then she wept before them, and finally, suppressing her sobs, she wrapped her *lamba* round her, and with a proud gesture cried out: 'Are there no men among you who will fight? As for me, I am but a woman; but I would far rather die in my palace than yield to the French.' Then the great crowd shouted with one voice, 'We will fight for our Queen and our country until we are all killed.' The Prime Minister next addressed them in these words: 'Speak from your hearts; you are free to speak what you will. We do not compel you; answer me—will you fight or will you not fight?' and again they shouted in reply, 'We will fight until we are all killed.' The Europeans in the capital could not but feel a deep sympathy for this poor misguided Queen, who now, when it was too late, so clearly realised in her misery that she had rejected the advice of true friends for the fatal counsel of creatures who had betrayed their trust for French gold.

For several nights we had seen a glow in the sky to the north and west, where the Hovas were burning the grass before the enemy's advance; but on the night of September 25 we plainly distinguished three steadier belts of light, indicating the position of three French camps apparently fifteen miles away. Each morning at this season of the year, Antananarivo stands out like an island over a sea of mist, which covers all the rice-grown plain and obscures the distant hills. On the morning of September 26, shortly after dawn, we heard the booming of cannon in the west; but when the mist had cleared all was silent again, and the anxious crowds, which occupied every place commanding a view of the westward road, could distinguish no signs of the battle.

I went into town, and was told that the Prime Minister had granted permission to all women and children to leave Antananarivo, and that numbers had already hurried away in an easterly direction, to take refuge in the forest. At first I observed little excitement in the town, but about midday, while I was in one of the Mauritian stores in the main street—Ambatonivaky—there suddenly arose a tremendous commotion. Thousands of men of all ages—Hovas, Betsileo, and savage tribesmen from remote portions of the island—armed with guns, spears, swords, and knives, frantically excited, waving their weapons, shrieking, fantastically dancing and gesticulating, rushed up the street in a continuous

stream towards the palace. On looking beyond the city I saw that every track leading from the country was crowded with people, sinuous white streams of *lamba*-clad peasants pouring in from all directions. Then in every quarter of the city there arose above the shouting of the men a huge volume of sound—the *mirary* war-song, sung with fierce energy by many hundreds of groups of women. It was a most extraordinary and indescribable scene; the entire population had been seized by a sudden frenzy. And now once more we heard the booming of cannon in the distance, and all the people howled in derision at the sound.

When I inquired the meaning of this demonstration, a native replied, 'It is good news! all is settled now, the land is again at rest;' and I was informed that Queen's runners had just come in from the fight with the astounding intelligence that the Hovas had completely routed the French, and had annihilated one of the enemy's columns. It was stated that the French had displayed a white flag and wished to surrender, but that despite this the Hovas had cut them down to a man. Such is the Hova idea of chivalrous warfare, and the gentle islanders would undoubtedly have acted in this fashion had they ever had the French at their mercy. This wild story was at once accepted as true by the whole of the gullible population; it had evidently been invented and diligently circulated by the crazed Government with the object of encouraging

the citizens to make one last hopeless stand. I returned to the vice-consulate through crowds of poor people drunk with the exultation of victory, a pitiable spectacle for European observers, who knew how very soon would succeed the reaction of despair.

The excitement and noise of triumphant song and shouting continued until nearly dusk, when a sudden stillness fell upon the city. The truth had leaked out, and the people realised that there had been no repulse of the invader; but that, on the contrary, the French had been advancing all day, and that their camp was now at Ambohidratrimo, to the north-west of the city, and only ten miles off as the crow flies. The natives in the neighbourhood of the vice-consulate for half the night stood in silent groups on the hillside, gazing gloomily at that strange sight to them, the intermittent flashing of the electric search-light in the French camp.

On September 27 the word went round the town that there was to be no surrender, and that all men must die fighting. The troops were very busy this day throwing up barricades and carrying guns to every commanding corner of the city; several twelve-pounders and mortars were posted on the road just above the vice-consulate. The previous day's ebullition of joy was now succeeded by something approaching to a panic. Crowds of women and children, and slaves loaded with the property of their masters, were hurrying out of the capital towards the south and east. The people were violently

excited and terrified; and though men stalked through the streets with savage aspect, brandishing knives and spears and vowing the destruction of the French, their demeanour was probably but one more feature of this gigantic Hova sham. I am of opinion that, though they durst not confess to the sentiment, they would have felt much relieved if the Government had ordered them to lay down their arms and welcome the French.

Europeans now refrained from walking in the principal streets; for, in the then temper of the populace, the less we were in evidence the better. The lay members of our little community were at a loss to understand why the missionaries had not left the capital a few days before, when the road to the coast was still open. The girls' schools at which they taught were all closed, and their presence in the capital at such a time could be of no possible service, while it would much hamper the action of the men were an attack made upon us by the Hovas.

My young Hova friend, who had a post in the palace, was ordered to the front; so he called upon me this day to bid me farewell. The prospect of fighting is terrible to the modern Hova; so he approached me with gloomy looks, and I think there were tears in his eyes. When I heartily congratulated him that he had at last been asked to strike a blow for his country, he stared at me as if overwhelmed with dismay and astonishment at my callousness. 'I may be killed, my friend,' he said in

tragic tones ; ‘ and yet I am such a young man to die ! ’ Finding that he could get no sympathy from me, he proceeded to communicate to me the latest palace news. He told me that all there was in a state of pitiful confusion, the officers quarrelling as to the plan of defence, accusing each other of treachery, and almost coming to blows at times ; while the poor Queen wandered about her apartments, unable to sleep, rarely taking food, and weeping bitterly. My young friend anticipated that, unless the French came in very soon, civil war would break out in the city. The few honest advisers of the Queen, he said, knew well that to attempt a stand in the capital could only result in fruitless loss of life ; but none dared tell her the truth, or counsel her to sue for terms.

I knew that this was not altogether a correct description of the position of affairs ; for, as it happened, I had just heard, for the first time, from one who was behind the scenes, and in whose word I could place implicit faith, the complete story of the infamous plot which had been brewing in the palace for some months, and which was now coming to a head. I have already explained that the Queen was surrounded by members of the native French party. These treacherous advisers, who had succeeded in gaining her confidence and poisoning her mind against her loyal friends, were bent on bringing about her destruction, their ultimate object being to place a young woman of their own clique on the throne as

her successor. This party acquired supreme influence when the Prime Minister conferred sixteen honours on his nephew, the arch-traitor Ratelifera, who was thus virtually placed in command of the capital. Ratelifera and his associates devised just such a scheme as one would expect from Hova brains. Wishing to curry favour with the invaders, they persuaded the Queen to reject the services of all officers, foreign and native, who might have made the defence of some effect. They hoped to represent themselves to the French as being the useful traitors to whose machinations the collapse of the Hova resistance was entirely due, and then to claim their reward from the grateful conquerors.

But they played a double game. For some weeks before the entry of the French the Queen had realised the hopelessness of further resistance, and was anxious to save the lives of her people by coming to terms with the French. This did not at all fit in with her advisers' plans, so they kept her in durance in her palace, compelled her to continue the resistance to the end, and even intimidated her into holding *kabarys*, at which she declared openly that she would never surrender. They made her commit herself in a variety of ways; it was their aim to throw all the blame for the war on the Queen, and so insure her deposition by the French and the raising to the throne of their own candidate and puppet. Thus it happened that the invaders were opposed only by the sham defence of traitors, and it is no

wonder that the final stand was such a burlesque of battle.

Towards the end the Queen's life was in great danger. The conspirators came to the conclusion that their object could be best attained by putting her to death before the French came in. At least one attempt was made to take her life; and I was told that she was so afraid of poison that she lived entirely on cakes of chocolate, as these could not be tampered with by her would-be murderers. She contrived to communicate with friends outside the palace, and it was arranged that she should escape in disguise on the night of September 28, when the French were close to, walk to the French camp, and deliver herself up to General Duchesne. But she was so closely watched that she was unable to effect this design, and the poor terrified woman had to wait in her palace through the bombardment, surrounded by those of her own countrymen who were her cruellest and bitterest foes. As this story has been told in some of the French papers in a very garbled form, I think I am justified in now giving the true version. As I was myself in the plot to save the Queen, and had arranged to assist her in her flight and accompany her to the French camp, I can vouch for the facts.

On September 27 we heard no firing, and we learnt afterwards that the French made no advance that day. None but the *tsimando* were now permitted to go to and fro between camp and capital, and as

they were strictly guarded when in the city, and were forbidden, under pain of death, to communicate any news to the people, it was impossible for us to obtain any trustworthy account of the recent fighting.

In accordance with the laws of war, Colonel Graves might have been shot by the French had they captured him, and it would have been exceedingly rash on his part to await their entry. As a matter of fact, the chivalrous French would have let him go scot free; but we could not know that then. Colonel Graves had now been three days in the capital, and was quite willing to conduct the preparations for its defence; but the Prime Minister refused to see him, and sent no reply to a letter, in which the colonel offered to resign his commission and leave the country if his services were no longer needed. Consequently, on September 27 the colonel adopted the only course possible to him: he left the town and rode off to the coast. As soon as it was known that he had gone, the Government sent soldiers in his pursuit, but happily they did not overtake him. He left his wife in Antananarivo, to follow him so soon as the French had entered and the roads were open. She took refuge in the mission hospital, where, as I have said, many missionaries and all the European women and children were collected. She did not stay there long, for on September 28, in the middle of the night, having been provided with bearers by the

Queen, she set out alone, at considerable risk to her life at such a time, to undertake the long journey to the coast. She had to do this because some of the missionaries (not of the Anglican Mission) resented the presence of this lady in the hospital. These thoughtful people were of opinion that it might compromise the missionary societies with the French if they sheltered an Englishwoman whose husband had fought for the Hovas!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE OF SEPTEMBER 29—STRANGE HOVA EVOLUTIONS—THE FRENCH CAPTURE THE HEIGHTS OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL—HOVA ATROCITIES—HUMANITY OF THE FRENCH—BATTLE OF SEPTEMBER 30—HOVA FORCE DRIVEN INTO THE CAPITAL—BOMBARDMENT OF THE PALACE—A FLAG OF TRUCE—SURRENDER OF THE CAPITAL—QUIET OCCUPATION OF THE CITY BY THE FRENCH

SEPTEMBER 28 was another strangely quiet day, and we saw no signs of the approaching French; but at night we distinguished the fires of a large French camp a few miles to the west of Ambohimanga. It was therefore evident that the enemy had turned off from the main road—which follows the embankment of the Ikopa river—and were advancing on the city from the north.

September 29 was a day of excitement. Early in the morning we heard continuous firing in the neighbourhood of Ambohimanga. The sound of artillery fire and musketry volleys became ever louder, and told us that the French were steadily advancing and driving the Hova army before them. In the city it was impossible to obtain any information as to what was taking place. Guards were posted at the corners of each street, and none but those provided with permits from the Government were allowed to pass; all natives were stopped by

the soldiers and searched for concealed letters ; later in the day Europeans were ordered to keep to their houses. I had been to the hospital in the morning, and on my way back had some difficulty in persuading the guards to let me pass. Gradually the fight approached the town, and I had, at last, an opportunity of witnessing what the Hovas call a battle ; it was typical, I should imagine, of all the other engagements which had taken place between Majunga and the capital.

The French attack was from the north and north-east ; consequently I obtained from the vice-consulate, which stands on the north-eastern slopes of the city, the best possible view of all the proceedings. At the foot of these slopes stretches the belt of rice-fields, here three-quarters of a mile in breadth. On the further side of the rice-fields, and skirting them, is a range of hills from 200 to 300 feet in height, on one of whose spurs are the buildings of the British Mission hospital. Beyond this range, and divided from it by a deep valley, is another range, steep and bare of trees like the first. This further range is about three miles from the city, and is visible from it through the gaps of the nearer hills. These two parallel ranges formed the last defences of the capital. The whole northern face of the city was crowded with the citizens who had come out to see their army make its final effort to keep back the invader.

At 7 A.M. the Hovas, retiring before the advancing French, occupied the summit of the fur-

ther range—there must have been some five thousand of them—and opened a rapid musketry fire on an enemy still invisible to us, and which, to judge from the sound of its replying cannon, was some miles off and far out of the range of Hova weapons. And now commenced a curious spectacle; evolutions that no one could understand were performed. Bodies of men were marched up hills and then marched down again. I saw 1,000 Betsileo spearmen rush up a height at the back of the hospital; having reached the summit they waved their spears and raised a great shout, and then they quietly came down again, soon to recommence the same performance on some other height.

At 9 A.M. the French cannon sounded considerably nearer, and we saw the Hova infantry flying in panic from the further range towards the city. The artillery cadets stuck to their guns a little longer; they alone of the Hovas displayed any courage. It was just what Colonel Graves's accounts of previous engagements had led me to expect. The Hovas made but a ridiculous pretence of defence. It was a sham fight, with plenty of noise and meaningless manœuvring; but as soon as the reality approached, as soon as the defenders found themselves within range of the French shells, and even before that, they bolted to some other position, where they could make another demonstration of battle without incurring any personal risk. It was not war, and it was not magnificent.

Between 10 and 12 A.M. there was a lull in the firing, as the French scaled the further range of

hills, now abandoned by the Hovas, without encountering any opposition. At midday we caught our first glimpse of the enemy, for whom we had been waiting all these months—a long dark line of infantry and baggage mules streaming along a ridge on the sky line three miles away. From here the French shelled the Hova positions on the nearer range of hills, and soon silenced the Hova guns. Some of the shells passing over the ridge burst in the rice-fields beneath us, throwing up clouds of red dust and scattering the crowds of spectators. Not a shot was fired on either side after one o'clock. For three hours we saw the French pouring along the ridge in a continuous stream. It had been a fatiguing day for the troops, and having won the further heights they were content to rest there for the night. Their camp was near the village of Ilafy, and was concealed from our view by a spur of the hill.

Now that the French were in camp and out of sight, the Hovas plucked up courage, thronged in their thousands up the near hills from which they had fled a few hours before, and set up a great shouting. Towards sunset we saw an excited mob hurrying across the rice-fields. Like hounds pressing upon a creature at bay, the shrieking men and women were running round a man whom at first we took to be their leader. He was cutting about him vigorously with a sword; then the howling pack closed in upon him, and we saw no more of him. We did not realise what was taking place until

some men came up and exultingly announced that the Hovas had taken a French soldier prisoner and had killed him. He proved to be an Algerian, and he died fighting game till he fell pierced by a dozen spears. The gentle Hovas then perpetrated abomi-



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nable mutilations on his body, cut off his head and hands, and paraded these triumphantly through the streets up to the Queen's palace. This was no isolated case, and it appears that two other wounded men were captured by the Hovas on the same day, and treated in like fashion.

For some weeks the natives had testified to the humanity of the French, who had evidently done their utmost to conciliate the inhabitants of the villages on their line of march from Mevatanana. There was practically no looting, and the most rigid discipline was maintained. The French treated their prisoners with a good-natured contempt. An informant of mine, who was one of 200 soldiers captured in some skirmish, tells me that he and his comrades were placed in a line, disarmed, given food, patted on the back, and told to be off to their homes. The people who, but a few months back, crediting the terrible stories told by the *Madagascar News*, had looked upon all Frenchmen as bloodthirsty ogres, now felt somewhat reassured, and it was obvious that, during this day's fight, non-combatants stood in little fear of the invaders. As the French marched along the ridge to their camp the villagers came out to stare at them, and I saw one old woman quietly pounding rice in front of her cottage as the enemy passed her. The French defiled for hours under a hill from which the Hovas had not been dislodged. On the summit of this hill, and within a few hundred yards of the French, were two seven-pound guns and some hundreds of Hova riflemen; these men looked quietly down on the enemy without firing a shot; the French, on their part, completely ignored them, and marched calmly by as if no foe were within 100 miles. This was despising one's enemy with a vengeance. It was just the sort of absurd situation one

observes in a stage fight, but not what one expects to find in what professes to be real warfare. The French during this day's fight and the next opened fire only on those who had fired on them first.

I was not surprised to find that the fatuous inhabitants of Antananarivo claimed this day's engagement as a victory, for, observing that their own troops once more crowned the nearer hills, and that the French were no longer visible, they jumped to the conclusion that the latter had been repulsed. The whole town was frantic with joy, and at intervals throughout the night we heard a loud roar—thousands of deluded men shouting together in exultation.

The orders of the Government with regard to foreigners were not rigidly enforced. I was enabled to visit various points on the north side of the city during the day, and found that two batteries of seven-pound guns had been posted on the road behind the vice-consulate, one of which was in the enclosure of the Faravohitra church, a position which commanded every road by which the French were likely to advance. I saw that a good deal of energy had been expended in useless preparations, barricades had been thrown up across all the principal streets, and the mud walls which border the thoroughfares on the northern slopes had been pierced with loopholes, behind which, when the time came, it was perfectly certain that no one would make a stand.

As soon as the mists had risen on the morning

of September 30 I saw that the nearer range was covered with Hova troops, possibly 10,000 in all, and that several guns had been carried up to the more commanding positions in the course of the night. Great numbers of countrymen had come in to take part in the final defence. The northern slopes of the town and the hills for miles around were white with the *lamba*-clad Hovas. Including the carriers and other non-combatants, quite 100,000 natives must have been visible from the French position. The further range of hills which, as I have explained, was just three miles away, was lined with the French troops, on whom the Hovas opened fire as soon as the mist had sufficiently cleared. The French returned the fire, and for about two hours the artillery and musketry on either side made a good deal of noise, but produced small effect, for the Hovas took good care not to expose themselves; their riflemen kept well below the crest of the hill, and invariably fired wildly in the air. The artillerymen behaved more creditably, and, according to the French, their practice was very good, but their ammunition was of poor quality, and few of their shells burst.

At about nine o'clock we saw the French descending the near slopes of the further range in skirmishing order, apparently with the intention of storming the Hova position under cover of the guns on the ridge. They had a broad valley to cross and a steep ascent before them. We lost sight of them for about half

an hour, and then heard them firing repeated volleys from the valley bottom. Many of the Lebel bullets passed over the hill and fell into the town. At the vice-consulate we were directly in the line of fire, and one bullet fell amid a group of missionaries who were watching the action from the lawn. The Hovas had mounted two guns on a hill behind the mission hospital, and here some of the cadets, though soon deserted by the riflemen, fought pluckily for about two hours. They served their guns in steady fashion, and did not retire until the French, having got the range, had dropped six or seven shells in their midst and made the position untenable. This battery was a source of considerable danger to the mission hospital; for, while the French were engaged in silencing these guns, one French shell fell on the hospital roof and another burst in the courtyard.

Shortly before eleven it seemed to me that the French had nearly attained the summit of the near range, for their volleys were more frequent and were heard much more distinctly than before; while, on the other hand, the independent rifle fire of the Hovas became still more wild and rapid, and the spearmen appeared to be pushing rocks over the edge of the steep slope, and throwing down stones on a storming party beneath. At about this time quite half the defenders ran away in the direction of the town.

But at eleven a change came over the scene. The French fire ceased entirely for a while, and the

Hovas on the hill evidently perceived something which encouraged them greatly; for they all shouted joyously, and their drums began to beat, so that the fugitives gained heart again, and swarmed back up the heights with defiant yells. The whole city, of course, caught the contagion, and shouted victory, and, as had happened so often before, this extraordinarily credulous populace came to the conclusion that the French had been exterminated. It soon became apparent to them all, however, that the cessation of the enemy's fire had no such significance. For once again we heard the regular volleys from the Lebel rifles, this time to the east of us, and at half-past twelve we saw the Hovas flying in our direction from every height. The hill to the east of us, crowned by the ruins of the Jesuit observatory, was evidently the chief point of the French attack. The plan of the attack, which was explained to me afterwards by the French generals, appears to have been very well carried out. The troops on the ridges opposite to us had merely made a demonstration to attract the attention of the Hovas, while the main body, after effecting a long detour under cover of the hills, turned the Hova position, and, to the surprise of the Hovas, suddenly appeared before the observatory heights.

The Hovas were in force on this hill, and here, right in front of the palace, under the very eyes of the Queen, they made what was undoubtedly their best stand. But the French volleys soon entirely

cleared the hill of its defenders, who fled to the city, leaving two guns behind them, which the Sakalava allies of the French at once turned upon their former oppressors. Then we perceived the dark groups of Frenchmen gathering on the summit of the hill. From here their sharpshooters began to clear the other heights occupied by the Hovas, and by one o'clock the whole of the near range of hills was held by the French, and only the belt of rice-fields lay between them and the capital. The two batteries behind the vice-consulate now came into action for the first time, and drew the enemy's fire in our direction, several shells passing unpleasantly near us.

A large house near the observatory and two villages were now in flames, and dense clouds of smoke were driving across the battlefield when the final act commenced. A Hova battery at the foot of the palace opened fire on the observatory hill. The French, having brought some guns to the hill-top, proceeded to bombard the palace at a range of about a mile and a half. The palace is not visible from the vice-consulate, so I went up to the battery at the Faravohitra church, whence I obtained a good view of this duel between the palace and the observatory. The soldiers in the battery—artillerymen, riflemen, and Betsileo spearmen—received me in a very friendly manner. The poor fellows had been for two days without food, and were grateful for a little silver wherewith to purchase some sugar-cane and raw *manioc*. I had to pass through other Hova

posts in the course of the day, and wherever I went I found the soldiers well-disposed; but they all begged vociferously, and it was difficult to tear oneself away from them.

The French guns fired at long intervals; one shell knocked the corner off one of the palace towers, and another fell in the palace courtyard, which was closely packed with troops, so that a number of men were killed and wounded. French troops now again appeared on the ridges opposite to us at the back of the mission hospital; the Faravohitra battery opened fire upon them, and the three or four shells which the French sent back in reply soon cleared the neighbourhood of the vice-consulate of all native spectators. Never was a town bombarded after a more humane fashion. The French opened fire only on the palace and Faravohitra batteries that opposed them; it was their aim to bring about the submission of the defenders with the least possible loss of life and destruction of property. I understand that they employed only two melanite shell, and it was one of these that, falling upon the troops in the palace yard, completed the business.

At 3.30 we saw a Hova on horseback, accompanied by some half-dozen men, one of whom bore a large white flag, ascending the hill in front of us towards the French lines. The French staff received this flag of truce, and firing ceased on both sides. I went up to Faravohitra, and perceived that the Hova flag had been lowered from the palace tower, so all

knew that this dilatory war had at last come to an end, and that there had been a surrender on the part of the Queen.

The Hovas had made a more determined final stand than most of us had anticipated, and French officers have told me that this was the one occasion on which the Queen's soldiers showed fight, and that their resistance surprised the invaders. The last stand was by no means heroic, but it was not altogether contemptible. The conditions were such that the Hovas could not but display what little mettle they possess. They vastly outnumbered the French; they were fighting their last fight for the Queen, and fighting in her very presence; so they offered a resistance that would have been of more avail some months before. That they did not so completely disgrace themselves as they had invariably done in previous engagements, was greatly due to the fact that the principal Hova officers—most of whom richly deserve hanging—were not present at this action to set an example of running away. It was evident to any one who watched the conduct of the artillery cadets, that Hovas properly trained, led, and fed, would make fair soldiers. That up to now they have given so poor an account of themselves is not to be wondered at.

A few hundred of the French troops now descended from the heights and slowly defiled along the narrow winding paths to occupy certain commanding positions in the capital. But the bulk of the force

encamped that night on the hills, and entered the city on the following morning. I walked across the rice-fields to the mission hospital before sunset, and found that the French wounded, about fifty in all, were being brought in. The French were very grateful for the assistance afforded by the mission doctors and nurses, and a good feeling was at once established between the British subjects and the French soldiery. I met some of the troops coming into town, men of the line regiments, of the Foreign Legion, *Tirailleurs Algériens*, and Dahomeyans. They were thoroughly worn out, blackened by the sun, lean and haggard, ragged, and extremely dirty. It was evident that they had been having a very hard time of it of late. Many of them could scarcely limp along, and most of the younger Frenchmen had evidently suffered severely from fever. The town was quiet this night, and, so far as I could see, there was no disorder whatever. The arrangements for the occupation were admirably made. The men were distributed among the schools and other large buildings, while some bivouacked in the large open space of Andohalo, in the centre of the town.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FRENCH SOLDIERY IN ANTANANARIVO—PLOT TO MURDER MISSIONARIES—ANTANANARIVO'S NARROW ESCAPE—BLUNDERS OF THE FRENCH WAR OFFICE—HEAVY MORTALITY FROM SICKNESS—ATTITUDE OF THE HOVAS AFTER THE WAR—GENERAL DUCHESNE AND THE MISSIONARIES—THE FRANCO-MALAGASY TREATY—THE PRIME MINISTER DEPOSED—HIS SUCCESSOR—DIFFICULTIES BEFORE THE FRENCH

ON the following morning, October 1, I walked through the city, and found that the French soldiers were getting on very well with the natives, and were paying at an exorbitant rate for everything they bought from them; in the market a fowl that had been worth only fourpence a few days before, would now sell readily for two shillings. I doubt whether troops have ever behaved better than these in a conquered country. There can be no doubt that, despite all reports to the contrary which reached us in the capital, this campaign was conducted throughout in the most humane manner by the French. The excesses committed by a few black soldiers at the opening of the war were never afterwards repeated. General Duchesne maintained a most rigid discipline, and soldiers found guilty of looting were punished with the utmost severity. The behaviour of the troops in the capital was admirable, and

astonished every one ; no serious complaint of any sort was made against them, and, so far as I could gather, not a Hova was ill-treated. The Algerian troops, the Dahomey savages themselves, short though the training of the recently raised Dahomeyan corps had been, and even the men of the Sakalava levy, were as orderly as the Europeans ; while the Kabyle mule-drivers, very unprepossessing-looking ruffians, went quietly about the streets scowling at ' the Methodist Kafirs,' but never venturing to molest any one.

The soldiers paid for everything they required, and as no tariff had been established they were being outrageously fleeced, not only by their recent foes, but by the Mauritian Creoles, who considered 600 per cent. a fair profit. The men had six months' pay in their pockets, which in the course of a few days was nearly all absorbed by these Antananarivo sharks. It is twenty-three years since I saw this Foreign Legion and these African regiments engaged on active service in Algeria. Their discipline must have vastly improved since those days, for I do not think that my old comrades could have been made to conduct themselves so quietly as did these men. But I found the French Tommy Atkins much the same pleasant, cheery, honest fellow I had known him of old. Among the excellent troops of the Foreign Legion I made some strange encounters. There were Englishmen with a past in their ranks, and I met a very agreeable descendant of the Stuart

kings, who bore their name and was very proud of it, but whose family had been naturalised in France for generations. The French column that captured Antananarivo had several languages, in addition to the European tongues: Algerian, Arabic, Zanzibari, Sakalava, and various African dialects were to be heard in the streets; and it was curious to find that many of the West Coast negro troops habitually spoke English and understood very little French.

I was told by French officers that the lowering of the palace flag on the previous afternoon was a very fortunate event for the population of Antananarivo, as the French were just on the point of taking the city by storm. Had this been done the slaughter would have been fearful, for the troops were naturally exasperated at the atrocities committed by the Hovas—atrocities which they had hitherto had no opportunity of avenging, and had they entered the city fighting it would have been impossible to have kept them in hand. The Algerians, more especially, whose dead comrades had been mutilated by the Hovas, were intensely excited and eager for the final assault. They would have fired the town, and scarcely left a house standing; they would have slaughtered all the inhabitants they came across, including the Europeans, between whom and the Hovas the wild Arab soldiery would have drawn no distinction.

And yet some of the missionaries still maintain that they acted rightly in keeping their wives and

daughters in the capital, and exposing them to such risks as this. Had it not been for the Queen and the Prime Minister, the anti-European feeling would have long before assumed a dangerous activity, and that all the white people happened to have escaped the various perils to which they were exposed throughout the war by no means proves that the course adopted by these missionaries was anything but a very foolish one. These people, indeed, very nearly attained the martyrdom for which they apparently thirsted, for we were informed, when it was all over, that the anti-English feeling was intense in the city during the week which preceded the entry of the French, and that a number of natives, headed by men of some influence, had made arrangements to massacre all foreigners. An attack on the missionaries collected in the British hospital, where all the white women were, was to have been made on Sunday, September 29. It was only the appearance of the French upon the neighbouring hills that day that prevented the execution of this plan. The Antananarivo mob had tasted blood, having murdered and mutilated the wounded French soldiers. The shrieking crowds that rushed about the streets on Sunday evening, brandishing the severed limbs of their victims, did not look much like the gentle Hovas of romance. The populace was mad with fury; but there was a cowardly method in its madness, for be it observed that the hospital was to have been the object of its attack, and not the Vice-Consulate

which was occupied by such Europeans as had an objection to being slaughtered like sheep, and had taken the precaution to arm themselves and prepare the building for defence.

Since I left the island the long-suppressed anti-European feeling has broken loose. Despite the presence of the French troops a plot was formed to kill all the white men in the capital, and a large party was specially told off to attack Faravohitra, where most of the London Missionary Society's missionaries have their residences. This conspiracy happily proved abortive, but deplorable news has reached us from the country outside the capital. Missionaries have been brutally massacred, others have had to fly for their lives, leaving their homes and property to be destroyed by savage mobs, while those in remote districts are still in some danger. It appears from the latest accounts that great numbers of the people, in their hatred of all things European, have abjured Christianity, and are reverting with a fanatical zeal to the worship of their ancient idols.

On inquiring into the details of the French attack on September 30, I found that the population of Antananarivo had a far narrower escape than any one imagined at the time. When the heights to the north-east of the town fell into the hands of the French, the officers in the palace were for continuing the defence in the town itself, and massed all the troops they could rally in the palace enclosure and on the open places in the neighbourhood. The

Queen, anxious to spare the lives of her people, of whom she had seen many killed by the French shells which burst in the palace yard, ordered her officers to strike the royal flag flying on the palace tower; but they persistently disobeyed her commands, and it was only when at last she asserted her authority and sent one of her personal attendants to carry out her behest, that this signal of surrender was made. The flag was lowered but just in time; had it remained flying two minutes longer, the consequences would have been terrible. Up to that moment the French had fired only a few projectiles into the city; but the order had now been given to load all the guns with melanite shell, and a general bombardment was about to commence, preparatory to the storming of the city, when the Hova flag was seen to drop. It appears that 10,000 barrels of gunpowder and an immense quantity of ammunition were stored in the palace. The French, of course, knew nothing of this; but, as their fire was to have been principally directed on the palace, it is almost certain that a melanite shell would have ignited this vast accumulation of powder, and brought about a most destructive explosion. The palace and all the buildings in that quarter of the town would have been levelled to the ground. The Queen and the whole Hova Government, the soldiers massed round the palace, and the dense crowd of spectators would have been swept away. It is not improbable that 10,000 people would have been killed. The catastrophe would

have been so complete that the French would have had no need to carry out the second part of their programme—the storming of the city at the point of the bayonet, which was to immediately succeed the shower of melanite shell.

The French flying column that had so easily captured the Hova capital consisted of only 3,000 men, of whom not more than half were white troops. They had marched from Andriba, a distance of 150 miles, in a fortnight. The French losses in the whole campaign amounted to about twenty killed and one hundred wounded. The Hova losses are not known, but they could not have been very heavy. On the other hand, the rate of mortality from climatic diseases was perhaps the highest known in modern warfare.

I learnt from the French that, in addition to the 10,000 men or more who defended the heights visible from the vice-consulate, 30,000 more Hovas at least occupied the strong positions beyond, and that on September 30 a large body of Hovas with artillery attempted in a half-hearted way to fall upon the French rear, thus bringing the attacking column between two fires; at one time, indeed, the column was entirely surrounded by the swarms of armed natives. Seeing how greatly the Hovas outnumbered their enemy, and that their artillery carried quite 600 yards further than the small field-pieces of the French, they could certainly have annihilated General Duchesne's little force had they been able to muster

up even a little courage. General Duchesne told me that the Hovas generally had a good conception of defence, but when it came to putting their plans into execution their efforts were always contemptible.

There can be no doubt that General Duchesne deserves great credit for the conduct of this difficult campaign. Those who led the expeditionary force are in no way to blame for the numerous blunders that were committed, and which have cost France so many of her soldiers. The home administration is altogether responsible for these, and General Duchesne succeeded in carrying out his instructions and reached the Hova capital, despite the almost impossible conditions and limitations forced upon him by the ignorant heads of the French War Office. In the first place, the men of the 200th regiment were far too young to endure the privations of a campaign in such a climate as that of Madagascar. It was criminal folly to make these young lads of twenty carry eighty pounds of baggage and accoutrements under the burning sun, and to set them thus laden to construct a broad wagon road across the malarious lowlands from the coast to Andriba—an indefensible scheme whose sole object, so far as one can see, was to test the Le Febvre wagons—‘la fièvre wagons,’ the soldiers now call them—and to enrich the patentees of that not very remarkable vehicle. It is stated that the enforced delay among the swamps, while this needless road-making was in progress, caused the death of quite

1,500 European soldiers. An officer of rank in the expeditionary force told me that some time back he asked Lord Roberts what transport he would consider necessary if he were undertaking such a campaign as the French meditated in Madagascar. In reply, Lord Roberts recommended exactly three times as many carriers and mules as were actually



SOLDIERS OF THE FRENCH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

employed by the French Government. 'Your General was quite right,' said my informant. 'Provided with that amount of transport we could have dispensed with that fatal wagon road, we could have pushed on rapidly to the healthy highlands, and we should have saved the lives of many hundreds of our soldiers. French officers often speak with ridicule of the immense following of one of your Indian expeditions, but we are now beginning to realise that

yours is the only way of conducting a campaign in a tropical or unhealthy country.'

It is doubtful whether in any modern campaign white soldiers have been called upon to perform such arduous work under a tropical sun as were these young troops during the deadly march on Andriba. Though prostrated with fever and dysentery, they had to toil with pick and shovel on that pestilential road; they could scarcely stagger under their heavy packs, and before they reached Andriba upwards of 10 per cent. of their number were dead, and 60 per cent. were on the sick list. I was informed later on that quite a third of the white men engaged on the expedition perished.

But despite all their sufferings the *morale* of the men appears to have been remarkably good; there was but little grumbling and discontent; and their patient endurance was beyond praise, more especially when it is remembered that, in consequence of Hova poltroonery, they never had the excitement of real fighting to keep up their spirits. The final rapid march on the capital, with a column of only 3,000 men, was a brilliant performance, and would have been a very rash one in almost any other country of the world; but three months' experience of Hova warfare had satisfied General Duchesne that such an enemy could be despised, without running any great risk. Some of the criticisms of the conduct of this campaign, which have appeared in the French papers, are very unfair. French war correspondents, by the

way, appear to be somewhat luxurious folk. Those sent out to accompany the expedition only got as far as Suberbieville, and thence returned home in disgust. Their grievance appears to have been that though General Duchesne had given them permission to purchase their rations from the commissariat, he refused to supply them with horses and carriers, for the very good reason that he had insufficient means of transport for his own men. Curiously enough the only correspondent who followed the expedition throughout was a German, Herr Wolf, the well-known traveller, and the representative of the *Berliner Tageblatt* in Madagascar, a more resolute and self-reliant person than his French colleagues, who procured coolies in Zanzibar to carry his supplies, and tramped it with the troops all the way to the capital.

The flying column that marched from Andriba was composed of picked men who had not suffered so much as the others from fever and dysentery; nevertheless, a large proportion of these poor fellows entered the capital in the most miserable condition possible, fearfully anæmic and emaciated. Many of them could scarcely crawl along, some lay down in the streets to die; and pitiable spectacles were often to be seen. I met, for example, a straggler tottering into the city, almost bent double, his knapsack on his back, his rifle on his shoulder, while from the top of his helmet down to his feet he was covered with a black mass of flies, clustering on him as if he

were already a corpse. The frequent burial parties told their own tale. Utterly worn out as the troops were on their arrival, they neglected the most ordinary hygienic precautions, and portions of the city were in a filthy state. Some of the men, for the first few days, drew their drinking-water from a stagnant pool in Andahalo, which is poisoned with sewage, and is only used for washing purposes by the poorest inhabitants. The summer was advancing, and it is strange that a serious epidemic did not break out in Antananarivo, a city where typhoid and dysentery often prevail.

Many of the missionaries who had been toiling for years in Madagascar now confessed that they were beginning to despair of this false race, which in the hour of national peril proved itself so contemptible. The seed has indeed fallen among thorns in this land. These intensely conceited people appeared to feel no shame for the utter fiasco of their defence which succeeded to so loud bragging; and a Hova of rank actually asked me whether so magnificent a battle as that of Antananarivo had ever been fought in Europe. They would not allow that they were capable of cowardice, and attempted to lay all the blame for their defeat on the Almighty. One said to me, 'We Hovas are by nature so ferocious and so brave that even if the French outnumbered us ten to one they could never defeat us. It is therefore certain that the Lord, for some good purpose, has turned aside our bullets in this war,

and made the arms of our spearmen weak for a time, so that the *vazahas* should be able to reach Antananarivo.' I replied that though the Lord may have weakened the arms of the Hovas, He certainly did not weaken their legs. On September 30 I saw several tens of thousands of them running away at a very fair pace indeed.

But I must confess that there was good reason for some of these poor men running away. The treasonable party that was in the ascendancy, though in possession of a great number of rifles and plenty of ammunition, took care not to serve them out to the more loyal Hovas. The Governor of Isoavina was summoned to come into the capital with 500 men to take part in the fight of September 30. When he reported himself at the palace, the Government distributed seventeen rifles among his men, with but twenty rounds of ammunition for each rifle, and then sent this contingent to defend the Observatory Hill, the most important position of all. The best troops were not employed in this action, but were kept in the palace court, as, too, were most of the artillery cadets, who begged in vain that they should be sent out to fight.

On September 30 the whole plain to the west of the capital was white with tens of thousands of *lamba*-clad fugitives, struggling along the narrow paths, tripping over each other, falling into rivers, as they hurried in panic to the distant hills to escape the invaders. On October 1 not an eighth of the

population remained in Antananarivo. For many days these people were afraid to return, and the neighbouring villages were likewise almost deserted. Accustomed as Hovas are, when victorious in their own wars, to seize all property and to kill or enslave the inhabitants, it was difficult to persuade them that the French would not act in a similar manner. The result was that, though prices had more than quadrupled, the scared peasants brought but little produce into market, and the surrounding rice-fields were neglected at the very season when the cultivators should be preparing the land. Cowardly, suspicious, and treacherous as the Hovas are, they could not understand the clemency of their conquerors, and General Duchesne's attempts to conciliate them at first produced no effect, for they regarded the very humanity with which he invariably treated them as but a cunning trap set to procure their ultimate destruction. It was believed throughout the country that all such Hova men as the French did not kill would be impressed by them as soldiers and sent to fight in foreign lands, and that the women would be distributed among the French black troops. That pernicious paper, the *Madagascar News*, the native edition of which was largely read in Imerina, was said to be responsible for much of the reasonless terror which then prevailed.

This feeling of apprehension, of course, gradually wore off, and the Hovas, keen traders as they are

above all things, soon realised that the French occupation signified for them an opportunity for enriching themselves such as they have never enjoyed before, and a security from official extortion which will leave them free to hoard their earnings. It was curious to note the change that came over the manner of the inhabitants of the capital on the entry of the French. They abandoned their former insolent bearing, and were remarkably civil to all Europeans. They doffed their hats and saluted us with a 'Bon jour, monsieur,' or other French greeting; and, curiously enough, many of those who had hitherto always worn European dress, now took off their trousers and boots, in token of their humility, and went about barefooted and in *lambas*, like their slaves.

The French were under the impression that all British subjects had followed the advice given to them by the vice-consul at the meeting of July 11, and were very surprised to find on their entry that so many missionaries and other aliens were still in the city. The French officers were evidently of opinion that the presence of our missionaries in the capital encouraged the Hovas in their resistance, and that it was the obvious duty of British residents, as subjects of a Power friendly to France, to leave the city before the commencement of the bombardment. It is generally believed by Frenchmen that the Protestant missionaries in Madagascar have for years been intriguing against France. I can only speak of

what occurred during my five months' residence in Antananarivo. I found that all the missionaries scrupulously avoided any meddling in political matters. When the French came in, the London Missionary Society and the Friends' Mission hastened to send a deputation to General Duchesne, who received them with great courtesy, and listened with patience to their somewhat lengthy speeches. They assured the General that they were bound by the principles of their societies not to interfere in politics, but to recognise and render loyal obedience to the existing Government of any country to which their agents were sent. Their work, they pointed out, was calculated to advance the civilisation of the people and the material prosperity of the country, and ought therefore to meet with the sympathy and appreciation of the Government. In reply General Duchesne said that he hoped the missions would at once resume their work, as this would tend to allay the fears of the people. Our missionaries, having gained the confidence (so far as the false Hovas have confidence to give) of a large proportion of the natives, can be of much service to the conquerors, and they asserted that they would do their utmost to reassure the Malagasy as to the intentions of the French.

I remained in the capital for two weeks after the entry of the French, and saw a good deal of the officers to whom the pacification and settlement of the country was intrusted. A proclamation of General Duchesne's, written in Malagasy, was posted all over

the town. It informed the people that, the war being over, the French and Hovas were friends, and that while the Queen retained her position as sovereign, the French and Hova Governments would for the future jointly administer the country for the benefit of the inhabitants. It also enjoined the natives to return to their homes and ordinary avocations without fear, for not only would their persons be safe, but the possession of their rice-fields, cattle, and other property would be secured to them. They were ordered to bring in all their rifles. The Prime Minister was put under arrest, but was brought out on October 3, guarded by French soldiers, to hold a *kabary* and speak reassuring words to the people.

The Queen's surrender was unconditional. The exact provisions of the new treaty, signed on October 1, were not made public, as they had not been ratified by the French Chamber; but we were told that France would control the internal affairs of the island, as well as all external relations, and that the revenue would for the future be devoted to the development of the country's resources, instead of enriching a few officials, as was the case under the hopelessly corrupt *régime* of the Hovas. Had the Hova rulers not so promptly submitted to the conditions imposed upon them by their conquerors, they would not have fared so well; for it seems that the French Government, repenting of its moderation, had sent despatches to General Duchesne countermanding the original instructions, and enclosing the draft of a new

treaty, which contained provisions far more rigorous for the Hovas. These despatches, however, reached the General in Antananarivo some days after the existing agreement had been concluded. The French authorities failed to keep the treaty secret; for no sooner had the plenipotentiaries appended their signatures than the Hova Government surreptitiously printed and published two hundred copies of it, of which I was enabled to procure one. These copies were at once called in by the French, and several Hova officials were imprisoned for this indiscretion. The French have now apparently set aside this treaty, and have come to an ingenious arrangement with the Queen, whereby their protectorate is so comprehensive that they become the virtual possessors of the island without assuming the responsibilities of annexation. 'Protexation' is the appropriate name coined by a London paper for this notable scheme. It is a clever plan in theory, but it remains to be seen how it will work in practice.

The French treated the Queen with the greatest respect. No troops were quartered in her palace; she was permitted to maintain all her former state; and General Duchesne, before holding his first interview with her, begged her to order her royal flag to be again hoisted on the palace as a sign to all the people that she was still sovereign, an act of courtesy which produced an excellent effect. General Duchesne soon won the good opinion of both foreigners and natives; and his soldiers, despite his iron disci-

pline, evidently entertained a great regard for him. If everything goes on as smoothly under the rule of the civilian political officers as it did then under military law, administered by courteous French generals, the people of Antananarivo will be most agreeably surprised. But the French Government has, unfortunately, acquired a reputation in Madagascar for sending out entirely unsuitable men to fill the most important posts; and the only political officer who had reached Antananarivo when I was there was one who had already made himself dreaded by the natives, and who soon undid much of the good work wrought by General Duchesne.

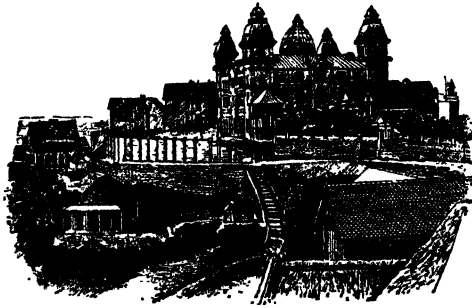
The French certainly acted rightly in promptly putting under arrest that tricky old gentleman, the Prime Minister. Troops were billeted on his relations, and as some of these persons had been the principal betrayers of their Queen and country, we were all very pleased to find that, instead of receiving from the French the honours they expected, they were treated with the contempt they deserved. The supporters of the native French party were bitterly disappointed to find themselves snubbed by the conquerors, whom they were so anxious to serve. The intrigues in which these traitors had been engaged were not likely to commend themselves to a gallant soldier like General Duchesne.

For a fortnight after his arrest the fate of the Prime Minister was undecided, and then it was realised that his dreaded name was still a power in

the land, and that until his future position was clearly defined the people would be afraid to come in and lend any assistance to the French. The Hovas were in a state of uncertainty as to who was to be their master for the future. They saw that the Hova flag still floated over the palace, and that the Queen still reigned; but it puzzled them that they had been ordered to hand over all their arms to the French; that the proclamations issued to the people were sometimes in the name of the French Republic, sometimes in that of the Queen; that the Prime Minister was a prisoner guarded by the French soldiers, and yet that so far he had not been formally deposed, and despatched orders—dictated by the French—to the Provincial Governors. Most of the people hated, and all of them dreaded, the Prime Minister, and they feared lest he might some day be released by the French and recover his full power, when, in that vengeful spirit that characterises this old man, he might execute or exile all those who had had friendly relations with the foreigners. It was certain that this apprehension could not be allayed, and that the people would never come in freely until the French had distinctly declared that Rainilaiarivony would be imprisoned for life; for so long as he was allowed any freedom, old man though he was, he would work mischief, and there would be a passive opposition to the French throughout the land. He cannot break through his habits of thirty years, and were he to be reinstated as Prime Minister, he would act as he

always has acted ; affably promise everything and perform nothing ; openly give the governors such instructions as the French might recommend, and secretly countermand them. With his great influence and his skill in intrigue and the art of boycotting, he would be able to make it impossible for the French to carry out any of their projected reforms in the internal administration of the island.

But the French guarded him closely, and at last,



THE PRIME MINISTER'S PALACE IN ANTANANARIVO

on October 15, they formally deposed him. A proclamation of the Queen, dictated no doubt by the French acting resident, was posted in the capital, and widely circulated throughout the country. Its effect was to reassure the thousands of Hovas, who, dreading the vengeance of Rainilaiarivony, and not daring to return to their homes in the capital, were hiding in the forest and the wilderness. The following is a literal translation of this somewhat naïve document :—

We, Ranavolomanjaka III., by the grace of God and the will of the people Queen of Madagascar and

guardian of the laws of this land. This is what we proclaim to you, O people. You all have known and have seen how Rainilaiarivony, Prime Minister, has devoted himself to the good government of this country, and has done all in his power to bring you happiness, my subjects. But now you have observed that he has become weakened by age, and that his body is often ailing. We have, therefore, decided to appoint in his place, as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, Rainitsimbazafy, 15 honours, Minister of the Interior; and this is what we would have you know, O people. Moreover, we thank Rainilaiarivony for the services he has rendered to this kingdom and to our Crown for all these many years. And this also we proclaim to you, O people. Our own object is that there should be peace and prosperity among you. Therefore, observe well, one and all of you, these our commands; let each scrupulously obey the orders of Rainitsimbazafy, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, else he will be followed up as a rebel, and severely punished in accordance with the law of the land. Thus has spoken Ranavolomanjaka III., Queen of Madagascar. Signed in our palace at Tsarahafatra on the 28th day of Adimizana (October 15), 1895.

The new Prime Minister appears to have been wisely chosen—that is, he will be a mere puppet in the hands of the French. He has always been considered a good-natured, lazy man, with no ambition. He is well liked, and—an extraordinary thing in a man of his class—has never acquired a reputation

for oppressing and fleecing the people. He is now advanced in years, exceedingly stout, and more indolent than ever ; so he is not at all likely to engage in intrigue, or prove himself troublesome in any way. When the Queen heard that the French had decided on making this appointment, she sent in haste for General Duchesne, and inquired whether she would be compelled to marry the aged Rainitsimbazafy, even as she had been forced by Hova custom, on her accession to the throne, to accept against her will the late Prime Minister as her consort. She was greatly relieved when the courteous General explained that in the matter of marriage she would be left perfectly free to follow her own inclinations. The deposed Prime Minister was removed from the capital, and for some time resided, closely guarded by French soldiers, in his country house at Tsarasotra, a few miles to the north of Antananarivo. He has recently been taken to Algeria, and so will work no more mischief.

Rasanjy, who was chief private secretary of the late Prime Minister, now holds the same appointment under Rainilaiarivony's successor. Rasanjy will thus probably become the most influential of the Hovas ; for he is a man of strong will, ambitious, energetic, well educated, and one who has had more relations with Europeans and understands their ways better than any other native. Employing the usual Hova methods, he has taken advantage of his high position to amass a large fortune in the course

of a few years ; but he is far too shrewd a man to intrigue against the French or to engage immoderately for the future in practices which would insure his speedy downfall under the new *régime*. He has for years pulled all the strings of the Hova administration, and is acquainted with every trick of the corrupt officials. He is, therefore, likely to prove of service to the French in the difficult task before them.

The Hovas in the capital rapidly reconciled themselves to the French occupation, and disgusted their former admirers by proving in a variety of ways that their 'Methodist' religion was but one of the many features of the gigantic Hova sham, as hollow as their vaunted civilisation, patriotism, and warlike character. In consequence of the efforts of our Nonconformist missions, Antananarivo on a Sunday used to bear a strong outward resemblance to some sober suburb of London ; and the wealthy Hovas apparently set themselves to ape the manners of our respectable lower middle class, donning black coats and trousers, assuming a serious air, and attending numerous prayer-meetings in their chapels. They were pointed out to me as admirable observers of the Sabbath, as they undoubtedly were. Our act of Charles II. is very lenient when compared with the stern law of the Hovas, which makes Sunday labour of any description, even the drawing of water from a well, a serious offence punishable with fine and imprison-

ment. It was curious to observe how on the arrival of the French this rigid Sabbatarianism at once vanished. On the first Sunday after the occupation the citizens promptly adapted themselves to the laxer ways of their conquerors. It was a day of busy buying and selling of commodities in the streets, and the sanctimonious Hova neglected his chapel to fleece the poor French soldier of his pay.

Several Hovas, who did not form part of the ruling class, eagerly inquired of me whether the French intended to put down the numerous abuses that then prevailed, more especially the oppressive system of *fananpoana*, or forced labour. In the course of a conversation with General Duchesne and General de Torcy I was assured by them that *fananpoana* would be at once abolished, a reform which will do more than anything else to reconcile the people to the French rule. A properly organised forced labour, such as exists in Kashmir, will probably be found indispensable. Thus there will be a *corvée* for road making, Government transport, and similar public services, the villagers being compelled to supply so many days' labour each year to the State at a fair rate of pay. Any attempts at blackmailing on the part of native officials will be punished in a manner that will soon teach these gentlemen how to carry out their duties according to *vazaha* ideas.

Slave-hunting by the Sakalava and slave-dealing on the west coast will no doubt be suppressed as

soon as possible : but the French have no intention, for the present at any rate, of interfering with the system of domestic slavery in Imerina. A sudden emancipation of the slaves would be attended by nothing but evil. Slavery among the Hovas, moreover, is of a very mild description, and is often slavery only in name. Many men indeed, as I have already pointed out, voluntarily deliver themselves into slavery, as their lot becomes lighter than that of the freemen ; they have, as slaves, to serve but one master, and are exempt from the dreaded military service and from Government *fanampoana*.

The French ought to find little difficulty in controlling the Hovas, for they will not have to contend with any strong patriotic feeling or religious fanaticism, and at least nine-tenths of the population detest the Hova *régime*. The Hovas themselves will rapidly adapt themselves to the new conditions. But the French, though they may soon bring peace and just government to Imerina, are likely to encounter great difficulties when they attempt to settle the vast non-Hova region lying outside the central province. So intensely hated is the Hova rule, so weak has become its hold on the tribes nominally subject to the Queen, that it is doubtful whether the French will find it possible to carry out their original plan of administering the country through the existing Hova machinery. The French may be compelled to assume the direct government of the provinces, employing a large and costly staff

of European officials; for it seems as if no Hova governor will ever again be able to enforce his authority outside Imerina. Imerina is useless as a field for European colonisation, all the richest lands and the gold-fields lying in Tanala and other now practically independent districts of the island. The French have therefore gained but a barren conquest in Imerina, and it will be a long time indeed before they can make of Madagascar a flourishing colony.

CHAPTER XX

A NIGHT ALARM—I SET OUT FOR TAMATAVE—I MEET THE DISBANDED GARRISON OF FARAFATRANA—A MULE TRANSPORT SERVICE—TAMATAVE—SICKNESS AMONG THE TROOPS—THE ATTACK ON FARAFATRANA—IMMIGRATION INTO MADAGASCAR—I SAIL FOR MARSEILLES—A MELANCHOLY VOYAGE—INEFFICIENCY OF THE FRENCH MILITARY MEDICAL SERVICE—HOME

THE capital had become a much pleasanter place since the arrival of the French ; but I must confess that I was not sorry to leave Antananarivo and its Hovas. Herr Wolf, the German explorer, and myself arranged to travel together to Tamatave. It was reported that bands of discharged Hova soldiers were robbing native travellers on this road ; but despite this I found no difficulty in engaging all the carriers I required. General Duchesne warned us that our journey would be attended with some risk ; so far he had received no news from Tamatave ; and the Queen's *tsimando*, who had been despatched thither on October 1, to announce the capitulation of Antananarivo and the conclusion of the treaty of peace, had not yet returned, though they should have done so some days before. It was therefore possible, he pointed out, that Farafatrana had not surrendered, and that the Hovas under Rainandrian-

pandry were still fighting outside Tamatave. He recommended us to postpone our journey, and to accompany the officers of the Diego Suarez Delimitation Commission, who were to set out for Tamatave in a few days.

We had little time to spare, however, if we would catch the next mail steamer, so we held to our original plan, and started at dawn on the 14th. We knew that for the first three days we should encounter no difficulties, as we should be on the Vatomandry road, which had been kept open throughout the war, and by which Europeans had been constantly travelling to and from the coast; but, from the point where the Tamatave and Vatomandry roads separate, the route had been closed to Europeans for ten months, and it was uncertain whether the inhabitants were well-disposed or whether supplies would be procurable.

On the night preceding our departure, Antanarivo was aroused by a sudden alarm. Messengers had come in to inform General Duchesne that a large Hova army was approaching the city from the south. There was a general call to arms; the French field-pieces were carried up to the palace, and all was made ready for defence. The report proved to be entirely without foundation; and it is indeed extremely unlikely that the Hovas will now make any serious attempt at insurrection.

The road from the capital to Tamatave—a distance of about 200 miles—has often been described.

First we traversed the bleak, treeless highlands of Imerina; then the beautiful forest belt, where many rushing streams cleave their way through the dense vegetation; next an undulating, open, sultry country, with groups of traveller's-trees in every hollow; and lastly, from Andovoranto to Tamatave, we followed the coast, generally travelling along the park-like strip of land, covered with short turf and well wooded, which separates the surf of the Indian Ocean from the smooth water of the great lagoons—a pleasant country to the eye, but reeking with the deadly malaria. For the first few marches we found the villages almost deserted; the people were still uncertain as to how the French would treat them; and, as my companion had for bearers a number of Zanzibar Mussulmans, who had marched with him from Majunga, these unfamiliar figures were sometimes taken for the much-dreaded black soldiers of the French expedition, and the villagers fled at their approach.

On October 15 we reached the large village of Moramanga, and had an interview with the Hova Governor of that place: we delivered to him some despatches which had been entrusted to us by General Duchesne, commanding him to have the road ready for the party of French officers which was shortly to set out for Tamatave. Neither the Governor nor any one else we met for the first two days could give us any definite news; but there appeared to be an impression that the Hovas at Farafatrana

were still shelling Tamatave. However, on the afternoon of October 16, we fell in with numerous bodies of Hovas travelling up the road, and learnt that they had formed part of the garrison of Farafatrana. They told us that that place had capitulated a few days back, and that all the disbanded Hova soldiers were now on their way to the capital. We encountered a great number of these troops, but were never molested by them.

Later in the day, when in the heart of the forest, we met a great train of baggage bearers, and then a Hova gentleman travelling in a palanquin, and accompanied by a large retinue. This proved to be the famous Rainandrianpandry himself, who had been holding the strong position of Farafatrana for all these months against the French. He looked somewhat alarmed when he saw us, and, suspicious Hova that he is, did not reply truthfully to the questions we put to him. For example, he calmly informed us that there had been no fighting between his force and the Tamatave garrison for a considerable time, whereas, as a matter of fact, he had shelled Tamatave as late as October 9, and had not capitulated until October 11. This obstinate old man must have known, on October 4 at the latest, that the treaty of peace had been signed; but he took it upon himself to imprison the Queen's *tsimando*, who had been sent from the capital to convey this intelligence to him. He intercepted all communication between the capital and Tamatave, so

that the French in the latter place might be left in ignorance of the success of General Duchesne's column; he disregarded the Queen's orders to the effect that he should capitulate and at once return to the capital, and he deliberately continued to carry on the war on his own account. It was only on October 9 that the news of the capture of Antananarivo reached Tamatave, when it was brought by a French gunboat that had called at Vatomandry. British subjects in the capital were in the habit of sending frequent runners to Vatomandry, so the news was known there sooner than at any other place on the coast.

The excess of zeal displayed by Rainandrianpan-dry on this occasion has cost him dear. Had it not been for his injudicious course of action, had he promptly obeyed the Queen's summons and reported himself at the capital, he would now have been Prime Minister; for the French, knowing him to be a man of intelligence, and one who, when Governor of Tamatave, had been esteemed by Europeans and natives, had selected him as the most fitting official to succeed the deposed Rainilaiarivony. He has now been restored to favour, and is the *aide-de-camp* of the new Prime Minister.

Having bidden farewell to the one Hova general who did not run away, we resumed our journey, and shortly came to the place where the road divides. Leaving the Vatomandry road on our right, we followed the rough track that leads through the forest

to Tamatave. As we were the first Europeans who had been seen on this portion of the route for ten months, our arrival at some of the villages caused a good deal of consternation, and often a general scampering away of the women and children. But all the people knew that there was now peace between the French and the Hovas, and evinced no signs of hostility ; on the contrary, those we encountered were offensively servile in their professions of friendship.

While making this journey we observed that the road from the capital to Tamatave could, at a comparatively small cost, be made practicable for laden mules. For the greater portion of the way it is, even now, all that can be desired, and it is only here and there, in the forest more especially, that the path will have to be widened, that trees will have to be cut down, and that corduroy tracks will have to be carried across belts of swampy ground. Ferries will, of course, be needed at some of the rivers. Two small cuttings would open a waterway through the lagoons between Andovoranto and Tamatave, and the transport for that portion of the route could be conducted by lighters. Messrs. Porter, Aitken, & Co. are organising a mule transport service. This should greatly reduce the present exorbitant cost of carriage. As was proved by the condition of the transport mules when the flying column entered Antananarivo, mules do well in Madagascar, and appear to be liable to none of the sicknesses which make it

impossible to employ them in so many parts of South Africa.

On October 18 we had further proof that all resistance on the part of the Hovas was at an end, and that communication had been reopened between capital and coast, for we met several hundreds of carriers tramping up the road, unescorted, laden with army rations—biscuit, tinned beef, wine, and rum—for the French garrison in Antananarivo. On reaching Toamasina, a coast village, we, the first Europeans that had come down from the capital since the war, met the first Europeans travelling from the other direction. This was a party of French officers, among them Dr. Besson, the popular Acting Resident at Tamatave, who was making a tour in this district with the object of reassuring the inhabitants, many of whom had fled after the capitulation of Farafatrana. False statements had been diligently spread among them, presumably by intriguing Hova officials, and had led them to believe that the French were impressing all able-bodied Hova men for service in the army and navy, and that all the women would be carried away to France. Dr. Besson held a *kabary* while we were in the village, and his declarations were received with acclamations by the assembled people. He told us that, in consequence of Rainandrianpandry having detained the messengers from the capital, the French in Tamatave had become very anxious as to the fate of the flying column. It was reported, on what appeared to be

good authority, that the Hovas had made a real stand at the end, and, after four days' fighting round the capital, had cut up General Duchesne's little force.

At last, on October 20, as we travelled along the seashore, we saw ahead of us the now famous heights of Farafatrana ; then perceived the masts of the shipping in the harbour, and before dusk passed the French outposts and entered Tamatave itself—a lively little town, like some West Indian port, with pretty bungalows for the Europeans, hotels and cafés, and sandy streets thronged as we came in, for it was a Sunday, with soldiers, sailors, and a mixed population of Creoles, Chinese, Indians, and Arabs ; a pleasant place to look upon after that sort of shoddy Clapham, dreary, Puritanical, hypocritical Antananarivo. Our arrival caused some sensation. We were the first travellers who had come in from the interior since the war, and we were eagerly questioned, for at Tamatave no account of the capture of the capital had yet been received, and none knew the terms of the treaty. All the inhabitants were delighted that the tedious war had come to an end at last ; the town was *en fête*, and while we awaited the homeward steamer we had to take part in the constant feasting and merrymaking—the lunch parties on board the men-of-war, the balls at the Residency, and the other entertainments given by the hospitable French officers ; while October 21 was set apart as a general holiday and day of rejoicing, with

a review of troops in the morning, a *gymkana* meeting on the dunes in the afternoon, and a *retraite aux flambeaux* and illumination of the town at night.

But unhappily it was not all rejoicing at Tamatave; for here, as elsewhere in Madagascar, the mortality among the troops, more especially among the boy volunteers of the 200th regiment, was very high, and the military burial parties which passed through the town were alarmingly frequent. I observed that many of the men were extraordinarily emaciated and anæmic. The surgeons say that the Madagascar fever induces malarial cachexia in a far shorter time than any other tropical fever of which they have had experience; and it is certain that many young soldiers, within three weeks of landing on the island, robust and ruddy, looked like worn-out, bloodless old men. This cachexia produces a great mental depression, and a remarkable number of the sick soldiers committed suicide. Another melancholy fact was brought before my notice later on when I was at Majunga. The hospitals there were full of invalided troops who had been sent back from Mevatanana and Andriba. Once a month the homeward-bound Messageries steamer carried off a number of these, and it was observed that invariably, a few hours after the departure of each vessel, an unusual number of deaths occurred among the sick left behind; for, until almost the last moment, it was not known whose fortunate lot it would be to sail for France; and then, when the list was

published, many a poor fellow, hitherto buoyed up by hope, finding that he was doomed to wait at least another month in Madagascar, lost heart and died.

The Tamatave people were evidently very disappointed that Farafatrana, which had successfully defied the French throughout the whole of this war as well as the last, should have held out until the termination of hostilities. It was humiliating to them to have this perpetual menace at their gates, and to have the enemy's shells occasionally dropping into the town itself; they would naturally have been gratified to see this formidable Hova position taken by storm. It was arranged, Admiral Bienaimé had publicly announced, that Farafatrana and Antananarivo should be captured as nearly as possible at the same time. The Farafatrana heights, which the Hovas had strongly fortified, are five miles inland from Tamatave. All previous attacks on Farafatrana had been made from the front, very ill-advisedly; for a great belt of swamp, with a river winding through it, and commanded by all the Hova batteries, rendered a direct attack extremely difficult—hopeless, indeed—if the defenders did their duty. It was therefore decided at last to turn the position, and to attack Farafatrana from the right.

The inhabitants of Tamatave now looked forward to witnessing the capture of the Hova stronghold, after a resolute assault and brilliant fighting; and they would no doubt have enjoyed this exciting

spectacle had it not been for the delay of the mail steamer, which was bringing much-needed reinforcements for the little garrison of Tamatave. In anticipation of the arrival of this steamer, all preparations were made for the assault. The attacking force consisted of about 500 men, *Infanterie de Marine*, and *Tirailleurs Malgaches*, with four field guns. All the able-bodied Malagasy in the town, including the servants of Europeans, were impressed as porters. On the morning of October 5, the five French gunboats off Tamatave and the guns of the Tamatave fort commenced to bombard Farafatrana. The Hova artillery replied, and with one big gun made very fair practice, their shell falling in the town, and soon scattering the crowds of spectators on the dunes, but strangely enough killing no one. The same evening the attacking column set out from Tamatave, and by daybreak on the following morning (October 6), after a march of sixteen miles, reached the village of Vohidrotra, to the north of Farafatrana, which the French occupied after a slight brush with the enemy, the Hovas behaving almost as well as they did at Antananarivo—that is, they stood until they were nearly within range of the French rifles before they ran away. The column halted at Vohidrotra for the remainder of the day, and was preparing to advance on Farafatrana on the following morning when, to the disappointment of the soldiers, a messenger arrived from Admiral Bienaimé, with orders that operations should be

suspended until the expected reinforcements had arrived.

It would have been extremely rash to act otherwise. Admiral Bienaimé had so small a force at his disposal that the departure of the attacking column left Tamatave almost empty of troops, and practically undefended. Had the assault on Farafatrana failed, as it well might have done—for many thousands of Hovas were defending that almost impregnable position—Tamatave would have been at the mercy of the enemy. As it was, in the night of October 7 the Hovas, under the impression that all the French troops were at Vohidrotra, attempted to surprise the town, and approached within 300 yards of the French lines. They were soon repulsed, but they might easily have ‘rushed’ Tamatave had they possessed any courage, for there were not 200 men left to oppose them. Tamatave, Vohidrotra, and Farafatrana continued to exchange shot and shell until the morning of October 9, when the gunboat *Rance* returned to Tamatave from Vatomandry with the welcome news of the fall of the capital. It was all up now with Rainandrianpandry’s scheme for carrying on a private war on his own account with the French, while the rest of the island was at peace. Admiral Bienaimé ran up the white flag on his vessel, and sent a flag of truce to the Hova general to inform him that there had been an unconditional surrender on the part of the Queen, and that peace had been concluded. He therefore demanded the immediate

surrender of Farafatrana with all the Hova arms and baggage. The ever-procrastinating Rainandrianpandry requested, and was granted, a forty-eight hours' delay, and then, on October 11, the capitulation of Farafatrana was effected.

It had been my intention to take passage to the Cape on the Castle steamer, but those capricious gentlemen who look after the health of Mauritius were putting into quarantine every vessel that had called at Tamatave, merely because there had been two doubtful cases of measles in the town. It is the custom of those two mutually jealous little islands, Mauritius and Réunion, to damage each other's commerce by this system of petty boycotting. Consequently the Castle steamers, which call at Mauritius on their way to the Cape, held no communication with the shore while they were at Tamatave, and refused to embark passengers at that port. I was, therefore, compelled to take passage on the Messageries steamer *Yang-Tse*, which sailed from Tamatave for Marseilles on October 26.

The Madagascar boom appeared to have already commenced after a fashion ; for this steamer landed some 200 passengers at Tamatave, who had come hither to seek their fortunes, among them French planters who intend to grow coffee in the Tanala district and elsewhere. It is to be feared that the country will remain in too unsettled a condition for some time to allow of this. But the majority of the

new arrivals were not of the most desirable sort—penniless Creole adventurers from Mauritius and Réunion, Indians, Chinamen, and Arabs. I heard that many South African miners also were on their way hither, and it is pretty certain that the large majority of the emigrants to this island will be subjects of Great Britain of various colours. At Zanzibar and Aden I was accosted by several Singhalese and others, who knew that I was a passenger from Madagascar. They were anxious to ascertain what chances of employment they would have in the new country, and one Aden barber told me that he had decided to set out for Antananarivo by the next steamer. There, by the way, he will have to compete with a high official. The most fashionable hairdresser for Europeans in the Madagascar capital is a secretary in the Hova Foreign Office, who, in the intervals of his political duties, is ready to come to one's house and cut one's hair in consideration of a few chips of silver. He is anything but the proverbially communicative Figaro, for, much as I tried, I entirely failed to extract State secrets from him while he was plying the comb and scissors.

The *Yang-Tse* called at all the French stations in Madagascar, and afforded me an opportunity of seeing the magnificent harbour of Diego Saurez, ill-famed Majunga, beautiful, but unhealthy Nossi Bé. We also called at Mayotte and at Djibouti, the new French settlement in the Gulf of Aden, a dreary

spot, between which and Abyssinia a considerable trade is now carried on by caravan. It was a melancholy voyage, and there were none of the usual concerts and sports, for the majority of our passengers were sick and dying men. We embarked about 300 invalided officers and soldiers at Tamatave and Majunga. Most of the men to a great extent recovered their health and spirits at sea, but the death-rate from fever and dysentery was very high; we sometimes lost several men in a day. The funerals were very unceremoniously conducted, and we should have known nothing about them had it not been for the occasional stopping of the engines for a few seconds at night, which told us that another body was being lowered over the side. The worst cases were sent on shore at Zanzibar, where they were well looked after in the excellent hospital. The military medical service and the sanitary arrangements on board the steamer were execrable. The orlop-deck, on which most of the sick men lay, was not a pleasant place to see or smell, and had we not fortunately experienced cool weather in the Red Sea the death-rate would have been much higher. I was astonished to find that with few exceptions the officers seemed indifferent to the comfort of their men, and rarely visited the fetid den in which they lay. As an example of how things were done, I may mention that on our first night out the windsails that ventilated the sick quarters were for some reason or other all tied up at

the neck, so that no air could reach the unfortunate men below, who must have undergone great sufferings. The high temperature and poisonous atmosphere would not improbably have killed some of the weaker men had not a passenger, an English sea-captain, taken it upon himself to walk round the deck and adjust the windsails, employing the while some indignant and forcible expressions that astonished the officers present.

It is little wonder that the people of Marseilles, seeing these successive batches of human wrecks landed in their port by the Messageries steamers, have come to regard Madagascar as the white man's grave. The island has now earned an evil reputation it does not deserve, for a climate should not be judged by the health of young troops who have been engaged in an arduous expedition, more especially if the expedition has been organised by officials in Paris, who, it must be charitably supposed, are entirely ignorant of the conditions of life in a tropical country.

We called at Aden, Suez, and Port Said; and then, after steaming through the beautiful straits of Messina and Bonifacio, at dawn on November 19 saw before us the gleaming rocks of the French coast and the blue mountains of Provence. There was great excitement among the impressionable Frenchmen, and even the dying soldiers begged to be brought up on deck, so that they could gaze for the last time at their beloved native land. Wan shapes

that we had not seen before now crawled up from below into the light of day, ghastly white, more like skeletons than human beings. Early in the day we reached Marseilles, from which a twenty-two hours' journey brought me into the fogs of London.

THE END

