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MADAGASCAR.

By M. JOËL LE SAVOUREUX, French Consul.

(Read before the Society in Edinburgh, February 1893.)

BEFORE commencing this lecture, I desire to thank the Geographical Society for the honour they have conferred on me by the flattering invitation conveyed to me by General Sir R. M. Smith; but I must confess that I feel rather nervous at the idea of speaking from a platform which has been occupied by eminent and eloquent men of science far superior to myself.

However, I have two excuses for my boldness: first, that the country about which I propose to speak is little known by the general public; and second, that I lived there for nearly three years, so that I hope to succeed in interesting my audience by speaking of things not often mentioned, but which I know to be facts, having seen them with my own eyes, which, I believe, cannot always be said by lecturers.

Having said this, I will turn to my subject. You know the situation of Madagascar on the map: it is a large island on the south-east of Africa. I will not give many figures, which are tiresome in a lecture, and those who are interested in them can always obtain them from books. I will only say that the greatest length of this island from north-east to south-west is about 1000 miles, and its greatest breadth from east to west about 315 miles. To give a better idea of its extent—for figures do not convey much to those who are unaccustomed to geographical measurements—I will add that Madagascar is, after Borneo (and the insular continent of Australia), the largest island in the world, and I trust I may not wound British pride if I say that it has a larger area than Great Britain, or even than France. We have thus to speak of a country which, if only on account of its great size, is worthy of your attention.

What is the population? That is a vain question, for no one—rest assured—no one in the world can know it at the present moment, nor, perhaps, for many long years to come.

Later on in the course of this lecture you will understand why. Numerous travellers, both French and English, have given approximate figures, which vary between three and four millions. This estimate does not appear to me extravagant, and I think the truth lies between the two figures, though I am unable to speak with certainty. In any case, what a much larger population this great country could support!

Though we cannot correctly estimate the number of the Malagasy, we can still consider the importance of the island; I do not mean from the point of view of what it yields, which we will go into by-and-by, but from that of commercial intercourse and international politics.

There are two routes to India and the far East, one round the Cape of Good Hope, discovered by Vasco da Gama, and the other opened out by M. Ferdinand de Lesseps through the Suez Canal. The latter route

may be closed any day in consequence of European complications, but the former will always remain open, and is commanded by Madagascar.

I may remind you, by the way, without speaking of our historical rights, and of our protectorate over the whole island, recognised by England, Germany, and all the Powers interested, that France has, since 1885, possessed in Madagascar the Bay of Diego-Suarez, and the territory surrounding it, in full proprietary right. Many long years before that we occupied the little island of Sainte Marie, the islands of Nossi Be, Nossi Mitsio, Nossi Faly, Nossi Cumba, and not long ago we established ourselves in the Comoros. Finally, the island of Réunion (Bourbon), possessed by France for the last century, is only two days' steam off. The statesmen who direct the counsels of great colonising nations have never ceased to take an interest in this island, placed, as it is, at the bend of the great route leading to the far East.

But, before entering on what I may call the political history of Madagascar, I must revert to her geographical history.

The island, notwithstanding her large size, was not discovered until comparatively late, and then by mere chance, fourteen years after Christopher Columbus, landing on the 9th October 1492 at San Salvador, one of Lucayos, off the coast of America, revealed to Europe an unknown world. It was, in fact, on the 10th of August 1506 that some Portuguese vessels, commanded by Admiral Fernan Suarez, were, when returning from India, cast by a storm on to the Malagasy coast; but it was not till very much later that Europe realised the importance of the country thus accidentally discovered.

The name of the first Portuguese navigator who touched these shores has not been lost. It is associated with that of Diego Lopez de Sequeira, who was sent on a mission by King Emmanuel of Portugal. The French colony of Diego-Suarez is named after the two navigators.

It would be long and tedious to enumerate all the successive attempts made by different Powers to establish themselves in the island. However, it may not be without interest to mention, in passing, that this country was probably not unknown to ancient history. It is quite possible that the Phœnicians, in the course of their famous voyage of circumnavigation, may have seen Madagascar. A French author has tried to prove, to my mind paradoxically, that Madagascar was colonised by the Carthaginians. An English writer, whose name I forget, maintains, on the contrary, that the original Malagasy were Jews, but this hypothesis rests on no sound basis. What is more certain, because we have almost indisputable proof, is that the Arabs, and also, perhaps, the Chinese, frequented Madagascar from the seventh century B.C., and traded there long before the accidental discovery of Fernan Suarez.

Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveller, in the fourteenth century, collected information about this island from the mouths of Chinese and Arabs, and, curiously enough, it was he who gave its name to Madagascar a century before it was discovered by Europeans.

From whence did this name come? In my opinion it forms a valuable guide to the origin of the colonists who lived on Tani Bé, the "great country," as its inhabitants call it.

And, first of all, did Madagascar ever form part of the African continent? Notwithstanding its proximity, I personally do not hesitate to answer "No." The population is not black, in spite of its having mixed for centuries with the slaves brought from the opposite coast of Mozambique. Their colour is chocolate or *café au lait*, sometimes lemon colour. They are not of the well-known Negro type—flat noses, thick lips, etc.; the preponderating tribe, that of the Hovas, has not even the crimped woolly hair of the other colonists, their hair being smooth and glossy. The flora is different from that of the opposite coast of Africa. The fauna is characteristic. In Madagascar one sees none of the animals, such as elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, giraffes, ostriches, etc., nor any of the deer, lions, tigers, panthers, and jackals, nor even the venomous snakes, which are peculiar to the great black continent. Looking at it from this point of view it is a privileged country. But the island has the lemurs, which are peculiar to Australasia (Australia and the isles of the South and the Pacific), and also humped cattle, that remind one of the zebu of India and the Malay Peninsula. Many plants which are common to Madagascar and the south of Asia and Australia are not found in Africa. Finally, the native language has a very close resemblance to the Malay dialect. To quote only one example, but a characteristic one: in Malay as in Malagasy the *l* and the *d* are often interchangeable—*lakana*, a canoe, and *an dakana*, like or near a canoe. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two letters by their sound, and this explains how it was that Marco Polo called the country Madagascar, while its name was pronounced *Malacassa* by the natives or foreigners from whom he gained his information. Note also that in English you say Malagasy, while we French say either Malgache or Madecasse.

This confusion between the *d* and the *l* adds further support to the hypothesis, in my opinion a true one, which brings the Malagasy from the peninsula of Malacca. How did they come so far from their native country? Some suppose that formerly a continent, since submerged, or at least a chain of islands, brought Madagascar into easy communication with the south of the Asiatic continent. Others think that the monsoon, a north-east wind which prevails from October to March, carried the Malay boats very easily to the shores of Madagascar. Even in our own times numbers of boats of very light tonnage leave the Persian Gulf and the North of India, and venture on this long voyage. When, in the month of April, the monsoon begins to blow in the opposite direction, they spread sail, and return to the shore whence they started.

To sum up, Madagascar, in my opinion, ought not to be considered as belonging to the African, but rather to the Asiatic continent. It is difficult to doubt any longer that the inhabitants are of Malay origin, mixed with Arab, Negro, and European blood. The Arab influence has introduced certain religious customs, such as circumcision, which has become universal in the island. The Arabs also, in their characteristic handwriting, have preserved for us numerous historical or legendary accounts of the north-west coast, and, curiously enough, also of the south-east coast. The introduction of Negro blood came from the com-

pulsory immigration of slaves from the coast of Mozambique. On the east coast particularly, the presence for centuries of the European element, and during the last fifty years of the French element at Nossi Bé and the neighbouring islands, and also at Sainte Marie, has modified the race in a very marked manner. But notwithstanding all this, the race is homogeneous, and the language throughout the island is the same, with differences analogous to those which exist in the United Kingdom between, for example, the English spoken in London and in Edinburgh. Considering the difficult nature of the internal communications, this is an almost certain proof of the common origin of the inhabitants.

In spite of this common origin, the population—except those which are subject to the Hovas, and occupy about one-third of the island—is in a disintegrated state. The tribes plunder each other, and carry off oxen and slaves. A state of perpetual warfare prevails, without any controlling force or authority to impose peace. The territories of some of these tribes have been visited by French and English missionaries, and also by a French explorer, M. Grandidier, who has published a voluminous and learned work on Madagascar.

The best and most recent map is the work of a Jesuit; but it scarcely comprises more than Imerina, the country of the Betsileos, and, I think, that of the Antsianakas. This is, however, at least at the present time, the most interesting part of Madagascar, because it is the part which is subject to the authority of the Hovas, a name which is well known to you.

Are the Hovas a people? yes; a nation? scarcely; a government? perhaps: but not as we understand a government. A very complete work on Madagascar by M. de Flacourt, which dates back 200 years, does not once mention the Hovas, who at the present time declare that “the kingdom of our queen has no limit but the sea.” He gathers from narratives and legends of Malagasy, and even of Hovas, that this tribe, thrown, no one knows under what circumstances, on the coasts of Madagascar, were badly received by the natives. They were for a long time treated as pariahs, and driven back into the forests of the interior, where they long lived in a miserable way.

How have these despicable creatures, spoken of by the other tribes, even in the present day, as dogs or swine, succeeded in establishing their supremacy over a full third of the island? We shall see. But first let me say that it is not from the Hovas themselves that we must seek to obtain their history. They know nothing of it except what they have heard from Europeans. Like all the Malagasy they possessed neither writings, monuments, nor archives of any description. There was no sacerdotal caste, like the one in Egypt, for example, whose chief mission was to keep up the remembrance of the great facts of the national history, the days of glory and of trial, the memory of heroes, and religious traditions. Nothing of that description is to be found in Madagascar—not even amongst the most gifted of the tribes.

It seems as if everything had been imported into this island; first its inhabitants, then its fauna and flora, a great part at least of the latter coming from Southern Asia; the language is a Malayan dialect. The writings, grammar, history, books, in fact all that is intellectual

(little enough), scientific, literary, artistic, or industrial, is entirely due to strangers. The principal clothing of the people is of cotton from England or America; France sends them her favourite musical instrument, the accordion; weapons come from England or Germany; and it is Mauritius which provides the Malagasy with their beverage, cheap rum. Finally, their money is French, but divided in the English manner into coins of 2 shillings, 1 shilling, and 6 pence. We have thus to deal with a race that at present produces scarcely anything itself, and except cottages, made of the leaves and stalks of palms, *lambas* (stuffs), made of silk or cotton, and a little wicker-work industry, owes nearly everything to strangers.

I am obliged to pass over the attempts, more or less successful, made by the French to establish themselves permanently at Madagascar, and hasten on to the nineteenth century, from which the political history of the Malagasy in general, and of the Hovas in particular, who are undoubtedly the most interesting tribe, really dates. Let us briefly sum up. Shall I first speak to you at length of Andriampoimerina, who founded the Hova kingdom, at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one? No; first, because we have only the vaguest data to go upon concerning his personality and his acts; and secondly, because the account would weary you. Let us speak rather of his successor, Radama I. (1810), who when conquering the country of the Betsimisarakas brought his people back to the seashore, to the very coast where their ancestors had probably landed. He also conquered territories in the south, east, and north-east. It must be said that in his conquest Radama was largely assisted by the advice, money, and arms of the English, supplied by the Governor of the Mauritius, Sir Robert Farquhar.

His wife, who succeeded him in 1818, did not possess the enlightened mind of her husband. She soon yielded to the influence of the conservative party and the fetish priests, who were represented by many favourites; nevertheless, it was in her reign that the first Protestant English mission was founded, in 1830.

Ranavalona I. has been named by some historians the "Female Caligula." This severe epithet has perhaps not unjustly been conferred on her, seeing that, according to a very moderate estimate, no less than forty thousand persons died during her reign of thirty-four years, for their religious and political faith only.

It is hard to realise the atrocious cruelties that were perpetrated during this horrible reign. In the beginning all relations of the deceased king who might have some right to the throne were massacred, as well as all their adherents, or such as were suspected of being such. The Europeans were all dismissed; and their commercial, industrial, or religious settlements, as well as their churches and schools, were destroyed. The native converts nearly all perished. Every individual suspected of sympathising with the foreigner was arrested and subjected to the terrible trial of the *tanguin*, resembling the judicial trials and ordeals of the middle ages. The *tanguin* is the stone of a fruit of the size of a small pear, which, when grated, is a strong poison.

The fetish priests used to prepare the drug—I say "used to,"

because for the last twenty years at least, this horrible custom has disappeared. The accused was denuded of all his clothes, and tied so tightly that he could not move a limb. The poison was then administered to him in the shape of three pills wrapped in the skin of a fowl. If the accused succumbed, it was because he was guilty, and nearly all his possessions then fell into the hands of the Queen, the remnant being given to the informer. The wife, children, and sometimes the nearest relations of the victim were sold as slaves. Sometimes it happened that the accused could not retain all the pills, under which circumstance his case was considered doubtful, and subjected to a new trial. If the accused could not retain any of the pills he was released. The victims who were poor nearly always succumbed, under such circumstances, to the trial. But the rich ones had a very fair chance of coming out of the test as white as snow, unless there was some good political reason for their disappearance. In fact, in consideration of a certain sum given to the sorcerers, these used to diminish the dose in such a way as to render it inoffensive, or they authorised the relations and friends of the accused to give him some lukewarm rice water in such quantities as to provoke nausea, which led to the desired result.

The son of Ranavalona I., who died in 1861, was a very intelligent young man. Radama II. had been under the influence of Europeans, and especially of Frenchmen. He at once threw open the gates of Madagascar wide, and perhaps too early, to Western intercourse. The old Hova party, nobles and priests, made him pay dearly for this imprudence, for, two years after his accession, this king of thirty-four was strangled in his palace with a scarf of white silk, such as is reserved for the use of princes and nobles only.

Before proceeding further I must now go back a little. From the reign of Ranavalona I., mother of Radama II., dates in Imerina a rule analogous to that which existed in France during the seventh and eighth centuries, and which I will call the reign of the *Maires du Palais*. The Hova clerical and reactionary oligarchy has succeeded from 1828 to the present day—except during the reign of Radama II.—in placing on the throne a princess more or less young, who has married directly, sometimes after divorce from his first wife, a great chief, who takes the title of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the troops, and who governs in the name of the Queen his wife, whose power is only nominal. This is then a dictatorship, maintained by the prestige of the Queen's name, and by the influence of some great and rich families. Consequently, at the death of Radama II., the Prime Minister, Rainivoninahitriniony, who was accused of having provoked the crime, lost no time in marrying the widow of the king, who was reigning under the name of Rasoaherina ("Beautiful and Strong"). The brother of the Prime Minister having succeeded in dethroning him, and some say in getting rid of him entirely, occupied his place with regard to the Queen, and on her death married the princess who succeeded her, Ranavalona II. When this Queen died, he married the princess who succeeded her, in 1883. He was then sixty years old, his new wife being only twenty-two. This "husband of the Queens" is at this moment the Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony, and his wife, the Queen, is named Ranavalona III.

After all I have related, and in spite of what many European political writers say, you must think that the Hova people, at least as regards government, cannot progress as civilised nations do. I have already mentioned the regions under the direct control of the Hovas, but I must add that they have isolated posts in Menabe, also among the Antaimoro and the Sakalava of the west and north. The frontier of Betsileo has never been crossed by a Hova, at least without losing his head. The scattered posts of which I have just spoken are absolutely insufficient, not only for the maintenance of public order and the prevention of brigandage and raids of tribe on tribe, but even for the exercise of a minimum of administrative action, and to secure such elementary justice as is suited to a savage people. Moreover, people are often attacked in their homes and slain in its defence, and their wives and children are reduced to slavery. It is pure anarchy, such as existed during the decay and invasion of the Roman Empire.

As to the degree of civilisation pervading the governing class of the Hovas, I should not like to insist too much upon this point, nor on the sincerity of their conversion to Christianity, whether under the Protestant or the Roman Catholic form: anyhow, the great mass of the people have remained faithful to the social and idolatrous traditions of the good old times of Ranavalona I. A woman will go to the temple or to mass in the morning, and in the afternoon will prepare the poison with which to kill her rival. She will pray to God for success in her crime. A man dies, having been a Christian from his birth. After the funeral rites at the temple or the church, his friends and relatives will carry away the body to bury it in the land of his ancestors, with all the Pagan rites. That is to say, the corpse, wrapped in valuable *lambas*, will be placed in a cottage; the women will undo the numerous little plaits of their hair, and will chant litanies to keep away the evil spirits which are trying to seize upon the soul of the deceased, or will sing praises of his good qualities with a great deal of exaggeration. According to the rank or fortune of the deceased, a larger or smaller number of bulls is sacrificed in his honour, and the feast—for it is a real feast—will last five, eight, or fifteen days. The invited guests, friends and relations of the deceased, live at the expense of his heirs. Rice, beef, and rum are bountifully distributed. With a thermometer standing at from 35° to 40° centigrade, (95° to 104° Fahrenheit) you can imagine the noisome odours which are evolved after some days of this sort of thing. At Antananarivo the kings and princes are interred with great state, and in their stone coffins a considerable sum of money is placed. Tens of thousands of pounds sterling are buried with the bodies of Radama I. and of Ranavalona I. Beyond the capital, and more particularly in the country of the Betsimisarakas, with which I am most familiar, the tomb consists of the trunk of a tree hollowed out and split into two, the upper part serving as a lid. These funeral boxes are piled one on another without being closed. The poorest class of people are, however, content to bury their dead under a few inches of earth in woods, which are declared sacred, but from which putrid emanations freely proceed.

You will naturally say, "These are the manners of a primitive people."

It is just the same with the relations between the sexes, which, I will say in a few words, are very lax. Five francs given to the Government for a marriage or for a divorce is all that is necessary. Among certain tribes young people who wish to marry live for a short time under the same roof. If they are not satisfied with each other after this trial, they recommence life elsewhere. I pass lightly over this subject.

The money paid to the governors or officers of the Queen for marriages and divorces is only a small part of their income; and here I touch feelingly the blot in the Hovan Government, if indeed it can be called a government. The Hovan official is not paid at all. He must live on the country. He must extract from those he governs, God only knows by what means, the money and food necessary for himself and his subordinates. In order to live and present a creditable appearance, the Hovan officers—especially the high officials, who are very vain—are obliged to press the people and to use the *Fanampoana*, a terrible word which means “Queen’s *Corvée*.” All free men are subject to this *Corvée*. If a governor, or even the smallest official of a village, invokes the *Fanampoana*, it may be only for his private requirements, every one has to submit; he must either comply or pay what the chief requires. In virtue of the *Fanampoana*, the Prime Minister works thousands of Malagasy in the gold-mines, paying them only in rice; and I am not sure even of that. In virtue of the *Fanampoana*, the same Prime Minister employs in the cultivation of his own sugar plantations all slaves condemned by common law. One can imagine the abuses which men permit themselves to indulge in when they combine in their own persons military, civil, and judicial powers, are not paid for their services, and have the control of the *Fanampoana*.

Not to rebel and rise against this cruel tyranny, the great mass of the population must be of a submissive, gentle, and patient disposition.

In truth, the Malagasy, taken generally, is amiable and benevolent to strangers (*Vazaha*), whom he considers to be superior beings; he is ready to accept the rule of the strongest. He has good qualities—for example, family pride, honesty in commercial transactions, a desire for justice, and a certain feeling of social obligations—all qualities which unfortunately have not always been developed or encouraged by the European colonists. On the contrary, they—French as well as English and others—have taught the natives their faults and their crimes, rather than their talents and virtues; perhaps because they did not possess any of the latter.

Great progress has, however, been made in the well-known part of Madagascar during the last twenty years, and it would be unjust not to give the credit of this to the English and French missions. Unfortunately, when one says Protestant in Madagascar, this generally means English, while Catholic means French; but this is not always the case, and missionary work has not been the less successful on both sides. The village in which a mission has been established presents, as I have myself seen, quite a different appearance from others. The principal street is cleaner, the people behave in a more seemly way, and the religious service is edifying.

The activity of the English missionaries has been singularly fruitful; and if they would only abstain from politics, they might become powerful agents in the way of civilisation. The London Missionary Society (Independent) was the first to come to Madagascar, and is still the strongest. After it came the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (Episcopal); then came the Quakers, who, I think, have amalgamated with the London Missionary Society. Lastly, the Norwegian Lutherans have a mission there.

The English missions have succeeded in making Protestantism an established religion. That is to say, in the Hova country all the Government agents, from the Queen and the Prime Minister down to the smallest custom-house officer, are obliged to attend religious services. In some places, indeed, the people are forcibly compelled to present themselves at church.

A few of the most recent figures will give an idea of the effect produced during the last seventy-three years by the Protestant propaganda on a population which numbers nearly 800,000 souls. There are 1325 parishes, with 277,114 members; 1175 schools, with 82,656 scholars of both sexes, and 5926 native preachers, most of them formerly officials.

At Antananarivo the English missions have established and are carrying on a theological institution, a kind of university, where the high dignitaries of the State Church and all the high officials are trained; a normal school designed to train teachers; another called the "Palace School," for the education of the sons of the nobility; a high school for girls; and many other less important establishments, besides a dozen churches.

Side by side with these English missions there is a Norwegian mission which is working on parallel lines.

The first English Protestant missions were established seventy-three years ago. The first French Catholic mission was not established till 1861, and has therefore been in existence only thirty-two years. It has, however, obtained considerable success. Here are the figures:—400 parishes, 115,000 members; 600 schools, with 20,000 pupils. From these figures it appears that Protestant influence in Madagascar is from the religious point of view greater than Catholic. I believe that the two religions can exercise a beneficial effect on the Malagasy people, and may gradually prepare them to receive what are commonly called the benefits of civilisation. The people are not opposed to this.

Unfortunately, the coast where the tribes live who are most disposed to submit to the influence of foreigners—I refer to the east coast—is unhealthy. It has been said of Tamatave, the principal port, and not without reason, that it is the cemetery of Europeans. If you go to Antananarivo, the capital, you will no longer be exposed to the constant danger of marsh-fever. It is true that the journey is a very expensive one. The bearers—for walking or riding must not be dreamt of—are paid 12s. or 15s. each. If you wish to travel without great inconvenience you will require twenty; it is a journey of seven or eight days, in sun or rain, at the rate of eight hours a day. And why all this difficulty to reach the capital? Because the Hova Government refuses

to permit the opening of a direct road from the principal port to Antananarivo. Radama I. said, "I have two invincible generals, *Hazo* and *Fazo*" (Forest and Fever). The tradition remains; the Hovas still believe that the forest and fever will prevent Europeans from reaching Antananarivo, and that is why they leave their roads blocked by swamps and virgin forests.

And yet, if the Government of Imerina would only half open the gates of this country, what riches would flow through to benefit both it and foreigners? Its wealth is beyond calculation. For in Madagascar you can plant sugar-cane, cocoa, vanilla, coffee, rhea; and all these will grow luxuriantly in a virgin soil, in a deep mould, provided that the owners can be guaranteed against the loss of their harvest by war or revolution—provided they can be assured of even the indigenous products of the Malagasy soil, some of which are obtained without any cultivation, such as india-rubber, raphia, copal gum, and others by very cheap labour, such as wood, skins, gold, iron, and copper, to say nothing of rice and the numerous useful vegetables of the tropics. I must not forget to mention the innumerable flocks and herds of cattle which form a most important article of commerce with the Mauritius and Réunion, these two islands having no animal food except the humped bull of Madagascar.

This country, it must be said, has remained closed up to the present time through the fault of the Hovas, who, jealous of their independence, and, in my opinion, ill-advised by Europeans, imagine that they can trade—for they are most keen traders—with the *Vazaha*, the white men, without giving them anything in exchange for their goods.

However, especially with the Hovas, there is first a political and social organisation, and then a very keen desire to assimilate the learning which Europeans can afford them. In fact, if I may judge from some Hovas I have seen and known very well, who had been instructed in English or French manners and customs, some of them think that if they can acquire a certain number of ideas, manners, and words, they may pass for civilised people. We must not look deeper than this.

Yet, with time and the teaching which they receive from all sides, it is not impossible that the Hovas, under the direction of France, may eventually assume in Madagascar the rôle of Piedmont in Italy, and succeed in accomplishing the unity of the island.

In the course of this lecture I have had occasion to speak of fetishism as the religion of the Malagasy. It is indeed their religion, if fetishism deserves the name. In the course of a journey across the country, you may meet with raised stones similar to our Breton cromlechs. On the rough parts of the stone are hooked rags of linen cloth or other similar objects. Further on you will be shown sacred woods, isolated trees, or fountains. The sacred woods are specially interesting, because they are the homes of monkeys, snakes, and very large spiders, who know that they will never be disturbed by the hand of man.

I remember an old fetish mango-tree, among the roots of which devotees used to slip some pieces of silver—a five-franc piece being cut into fragments—in order to appease the evil spirits.

Some robbers took the place of the spirits, and since then the tree, though still held in great reverence, receives only valueless offerings, such as the feet and comb of a cock which has been eaten by the devotees, or cups made of radish leaves, which have been filled with rum by the faithful—also emptied by them.

Here is another form of fetishism. A Malagasy slave, pursued by his master, hides himself behind a bush. Those who are seeking him notice that a partridge is quietly roosting in that bush. "He is not there," they say, "for were he, certainly the partridge would have flown away." And they pass on to another. The grateful Malagasy takes the partridge for his fetish. Never in all his life will he kill or eat one, and his family will observe the same rule. This is one example. But fetishism does not apply only to people or animals: it also includes inanimate objects, such as a tree or a stone.

I have just been speaking of a slave, which leads me to the great and painful question of slavery in Madagascar, or at least in the part of the country which we know. Without doubt slavery is a disgrace to humanity, and it is as degrading for the master as it is for the slave. It is to be hoped that slavery will disappear from Madagascar, as it has done from every country where European civilisation has really penetrated. But allow me to repeat the words of a Hova marshal of the fifteenth degree, in answer to the refusal of a Resident of France to give up one of his slaves who had sought refuge with a Frenchman. "If in France," said this Hova, who had received an excellent education in one of the English schools, "if in France some one stole a cloak of yours, you would consider him a thief; and if you saw your cloak on the back of some other individual, you would claim it through the police; in the same way I claim my slave, who is my own property." It is unnecessary to repeat to you all the reasons the Resident of France brought forward—he, however, did not give up the slave—to convince this high official, who was one of the very best productions of Western education in Madagascar. But I just mention this fact to show what difficulties are encountered by civilisers, whether missionaries or officials.

This question of slavery deserves a few minutes' attention. I will not wait to enlarge upon the difference between State slaves and the slaves of private individuals. The former are a privileged class, can attain to the highest honours, and therefore have no reason to envy the free man. But the others! They are in truth life-long servants, without wages, unconscious of their degradation, and scarcely giving to their master—when they do even this—more than a tenth part of their time. Many slaves prefer their position to that of the free man, because, were they free, they would be compelled to enter the military service without pay, for an indefinite time, and, should they acquire any possessions, these would be at the mercy of the officials of the Queen.

I knew the history of a slave, who himself possessed slaves and enriched himself by trade. His master offered to set him at liberty if he would lend him £1000 sterling. The slave refused his liberty, though he lent the sum, preferring rather to run the risk of its loss than to become a free man, and to incur the duties, responsibilities, and expenses incumbent on him as such. Is not this example a common one?

It is true that a slave may be ill-treated—often cruelly—and even sold by his master. But let us look at the other side of the picture. The masters have much trouble—I do not pity them, as they do not pay their servants—to secure the services of their slaves, however numerous they may be. I have known a great Malagasy lady, who nominally possessed 400 slaves, but could scarcely find four to carry her—she was impotent—or to serve her.

It is a sad fact that nearly half the population of Madagascar, as far as we know it, are slaves—prisoners of war, insolvent debtors, victims of an intrigue or of political vengeance condemned as criminals; and, finally, the sons of slaves, born in slavery, may be depended upon to recruit the ranks. The importation of slaves from Mozambique has been prohibited for the last fifteen years.

It must be admitted that this is a deplorable state of affairs, even though the condition of slaves in Madagascar is comparatively easy. But slavery is a social institution terribly difficult to exterminate. I call to witness one of your own countrymen, Admiral Sir Gore Jones, who, after having visited Madagascar, declared in his report, published in 1883, that the universal liberation of slaves would mean the ruin of the country.

However this may be, the slaves, who are obliged at least once a year to present themselves before their masters, are content to serve the *Vazaha* or white race for a comparatively small wage. On the day of the *Fandroana* or Fête of the Bath they give a piastre (4s.) to their master. This is on the 22nd November, the Malagasy New Year's Day, when all high officials, in full-dress uniform, wait in a hall of the palace for one or two hours in front of a curtain behind which they are assured that Her Majesty is taking a bath. All at once the curtain is raised, and the Queen appears, clothed in her most beautiful garments, and sprinkles her attendants with water proceeding from the same sacred source whence she ought, according to tradition, to take the water for her own bath. These New Year ceremonies are so long and so complicated that I can not undertake to relate them. Some of them are horrible to think of; for instance, the one which consists in eating beef killed ten days previously. Faugh! It is usual on these occasions to distribute gifts in the form of pieces of meat. The day following the *Fandroana*, at Tamatave, I was certain to discover a live bull in my garden, and to find under my verandah presents of joints of meat which would have been the envy of even an Edinburgh butcher.

During these *fêtes* of *Fandroana*, blood—of course I mean the blood of bulls—flows in streams down the lanes of Tamatave, and it is just the same with the rum of Mauritius, in spite of the official prohibition of the Hova Government. Besides this, all affairs of State, both political and administrative, are on the occasion of these revels set aside for at least three weeks. But it would be most unfair to judge the Malagasy people, or even the Hovas, from these horrible scenes.

One ought to see them in their daily life, enjoying their present existence, without care or thought for the morrow, trying to do the minimum of work necessary to gain their bare pittance of rice, but quite

incapable of resisting gluttony, intoxication, or even other passions, when they have a few coins (a five-franc French coin cut up into pieces) in the corner of their *lamba*. If not pressed by hunger or thirst, the Malagasy of the coast—I am not alluding to the Hova, who is eager for gain, and generally understands very well what he is about, but the Betsimisaraka—will spend the whole day stretched on mats in a cottage, or even outside on the ground, lying like a lizard, exposed to the fierce sun, sleeping; dreaming, chatting, or listening to the song of one of his companions. The Malagasy have usually a wonderful ear for music, and I have often heard my bearers humming very correctly an air that they had learnt from hearing it once played on the piano.

Oh, the beautiful nights in the Tropics! In every cottage a fire is burning, the smoke of which keeps off the mosquitos; laughter is heard on all sides; sometimes a musician brings out the sweet notes of an accordion; sometimes a voice is heard singing to the accompaniment of the *valiha*, a kind of harp made of bamboo fibre and producing a muffled sound. Or again, after the rice, squatting on the ground in the midst of an audience, a story-teller commences, with the fluency and volubility which are characteristic of the Malagasy, some story of this description, which, of course, I abridge:—

“The crocodile, king of animals, had tasted of every species of his subjects—fish, flesh, and fowl. Only one kind had escaped his voracious appetite; he had never eaten a guinea-fowl. The guinea-fowl is very suspicious, and up till now had refused to appear at his court. What could he do to induce it to come within his grasp? The courtiers of the crocodile suggested a stratagem. The king of animals should feign death, and his court should invite the queen of guinea-fowls, with all the chiefs of her tribe, to be present at the funeral obsequies. In the course of all the ceremonies and *fêtes* which were a necessary part of the mourning his Majesty would easily find an opportunity of seizing one of these birds as it passed. They carried out these designs. The guinea-fowls could scarcely be so uncivil as to refuse the invitation, so they came on the day they were invited, but remained at a respectful distance. On a bank of sand the king crocodile was lying motionless with closed eyes, surrounded by all his courtiers, who assumed a sad and dejected appearance. The queen of the guinea-fowls, addressing the apparent corpse from the distance, called out, ‘O king of animals, are you really dead?’ The crocodile never stirred. A second time the guinea-fowl asked the same question. Still no movement. Then said the guinea-fowl, ‘If you are really dead, just prove it by opening your eyes.’ The innocent crocodile raised his eyelids, and away flew the guinea-fowls, enjoying their laugh at his expense.” And the audience laugh also, ceaselessly discussing this story, which, when told by a Malagasy, lasts at least two hours by the clock.

The love of singing is specially remarkable amongst the bearers of the *filanzana* and also among the boatmen. To give some idea of these songs, which for many long hours form an accompaniment to the rhythmic movement of the paddles, I will choose one of the least vulgar. The river flows gently; the crocodiles sleep in the mud, diffusing a strong

scent of musk ; the bamboos bend their graceful arches over the water, joined by creepers with many-coloured flowers ; on the surrounding hills the Travellers' tree spreads its gigantic fans ; the heat is oppressive and the way long. Suddenly a rower, improvised leader, intones a rhythmic song of this description, which forms an accompaniment to the paddles :

“Rafaravelo climbed a tree, the wind blew, and the branch broke ;
 But there was something stronger than the wind,
 It was the wall which arrested the fall ;
 Something stronger than the wall, the rat which gnawed it ;
 Something stronger than the rat, the cat which ate it ;
 Something stronger than the cat, the cord which hung it :
 Something stronger than the cord, the knife which cut it ;
 Something stronger than the knife, the fire which melted it ;
 Something stronger than the fire, the water which extinguished it ;
 Something stronger than the water, the boat which cleaved it ;
 Something stronger than the boat, the rocks which shattered it ;
 Something stronger than the rocks, the crab which destroyed them ;
 Something stronger than the crab, the man who caught it ;
 Something stronger than the man : God.”

The subject may be developed without end, according to the imagination of the leader. The melody is sweet, and the paddles follow the rhythm. You see that the song contains neither elevated poetry, nor profound philosophy, nor any high-minded sentiments, and yet I have chosen quite the best of its kind. I have already spoken to you about the natural religion of the Malagasy, which is idolatrous ; but I should like to revert to it, because you might think, after all I have already said, that they have no spiritual ideas ; and this would be false. They believe in a God—very vaguely, it is true, and their ideas are obscured by the conviction that this God employs for the most part maleficent agents. God's name is on their lips at every moment—never to ask for spiritual blessings, but to obtain a good harvest, to ask for children (the great desire and pride of every Malagasy), to escape a danger, or to be cured of an illness. The Malagasy offers to the Supreme Divinity the first of all his goods—rice, rum, or clothing. “To thee, Andriamanitra, our first fruits,” or according to the dialect, “Andrianahary,” names of which the most learned students of Malagasy have never been able to give me the exact meaning, but which designate a Supreme Being and a Creator with attributes the translation of which is uncertain.

The Malagasy in general believe, if not in the immortality of the soul, at least in its survival, but without any very clear idea as to rewards or punishments. Moreover, they believe that the soul can be separated from the body during twelve or fifteen months before death. When the person stricken with illness imagines that this misfortune has come to him, and that he has lost his soul, as Peter Schlemysl in the German story lost his shadow, he calls the *Sikidy* or sorcerer. When I compare the soul to a shadow, I am only repeating the belief of the Malagasy. For them, at least among most of the tribes, the soul is the almost imperceptible shade between the actual shadow and the

penumbra; so that when a sorcerer wishes to injure any one, he has only to pass close to his enemy, and, without appearing to have any design, to place his foot on the shadow, and behold, the soul is captured! How can it be regained? For a sufficiently high remuneration the *Sikidy* will undertake this. There are two ways: according to the first, the soul resembles a bee, which has flown away towards a neighbouring mountain, and it is caught again in a basket containing a cake of honey. The second way is this:—In a corner of the cottage belonging to the ancestors some cooked rice attracts the hungry soul. All the outlets of the cottage are carefully closed. The *Sikidy* holds in his right hand a hollow gourd, in the other a leaf of ravenala. He whistles gently. The soul approaches; the hum of her wings is perceptible only to the keen ears of the sorcerer. He pursues her as a butterfly-chaser pursues his prey. She escapes him; he continues to pursue the soul into every corner, whistling always, with constantly quickening movements. At last the soul, exhausted with the fatigue of this hot pursuit, allows herself to be driven into a corner of the cottage, and in hopeless despair takes refuge at last in the gourd. What triumph! The *Sikidy*, having carefully closed up the gourd, returns, followed by his family, to the invalid. His clothes are raised, and under them the *Sikidy* gently introduces his gourd, and opens it; the fugitive soul is then compelled to re-enter his former domicile. The *Sikidy* receives his present and departs. If the invalid dies afterwards, this is evidently his own fault.

Would you care for another story? A young man becomes insensible. His soul goes away to the south, to a mountain frequented by souls, and finds itself surrounded by a crowd of souls, who press round it for news. The poor soul, exhausted, as it has had nothing to eat except a shadow of rice, succeeds in making its escape, and returns to its own country just at the moment when the body to which it belongs is about to be buried, and hastens to re-enter it, to the great joy of the whole family.

But now you have had enough. I could have spoken to you on many other interesting questions—on legislation, on the Hova army, on dress; I could have suggested different ways of turning the natural riches of the country to profit; I could have given more curious details of Malagasy customs and ceremonies, both public and private; I could have described the landscapes, etc.; but this lecture has already exceeded the usual limits, and I hasten to conclude. Madagascar is a country with a future. Not only will the dominating tribe of the Hovas be called on sooner or later to impose order and unity on the other tribes of the island, but also—thanks to the protecting influence of France—Europeans will find there an ample market for their produce, and an extensive field for their commercial, agricultural, and industrial enterprises. I should like to see all those who now listen to me at Tamatave, or at Antananarivo, twenty-five years hence. Will you come?