

**RAFARALAHY,**  
THE  
**MADAGASCAR MARTYR.**



**LONDON :**  
**THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;**  
SOLD AT  
**THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,**  
**AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ;**  
**AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.**

[279.]



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# RAFARALAHY,

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## MADAGASCAR MARTYR.

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HAVE you ever noticed on the map of Africa a large island lying at the east of that continent, called Madagascar. It is as large as England, Scotland, and Ireland, all together. The people in that island are of a dark colour; and they speak a language which you would not understand. They have not learned from the Bible that there is only one God, the Maker of all things, who is a spirit, and whom we have never seen: and therefore they have tried to make gods for themselves, which they might see, and feel, and speak to. They used to take pieces of wood, and cut them into any shapes they liked, and each



person bought one to keep in his house, that he and his family might kneel down before it, and ask it for what they wished, and thank it for the blessings which they enjoyed.

Perhaps some of you feel surprised that they should have been so foolish as to think that those senseless images which they had made themselves, could have given them anything, or done them any good. But we should have been just like those poor people if we had not learned better from the Bible.

Some Christians in England were very sorry to think of such ignorance, and they went to Madagascar to take them the Bible, and teach the people about the true God. The king was thankful for this kindness, and for about eight years the missionaries lived in Madagascar, and they invited the children to the schools which they opened, and as soon as they could speak the language the natives could understand, they began to preach to them.

But at the end of eight years the king died, and a cruel and wicked queen be-

gan to reign. She did not like that the people should be taught out of the Bible. This is not surprising, for that Bible condemned her cruelty and wickedness. She loved darkness rather than light, because her deeds were evil. She sent some of the teachers away from the island, and forbade the people to assemble together to pray, and hear or read the word of God, threatening to punish, with death, all who disobeyed her commands. Most of the people were very sorry when they heard this.

A young man, named Rafaralahy, thought that he would attend to her wishes, for he was frightened by the threat. He had been used to go on the sabbath, to the house of God, and sometimes had persuaded others to go with him; but now he left off doing so, gave up his religious books, and opened his shop on Sunday. He must have forgotten the words of Jesus, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 33. Do you remember, when Peter denied him, how sorry Jesus

was? He prayed for Peter. Do you think he prayed for Rafaralahy? Does he pray for his people now? Yes; he is at the right hand of God, and watches them and listens to their prayers, and asks God to answer them on account of His own sufferings and death. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25.

After Rafaralahy had been going on in this way for seven weeks, he was taken ill, and he began to think God was punishing him for having departed from his ways. God did, indeed, send this illness. He sends every affliction that happens to us; I think he must have done it that Rafaralahy might understand that he was angry, and be led to seek his forgiveness. Rafaralahy asked God to pardon him, and help him to serve him again, as he used to do, and not be afraid of the queen. Jesus had told him not to "fear those who could kill only the body;" you know that the precious never-dying soul is of far greater value than the fainting body.

Rafaralahy had given up his Bible, and other religious books to the queen, to be



burnt. Now he longed for them again, and wished he could read at least a few chapters of that holy Bible, which was once his comfort and joy.

When he was recovered, he went to the missionaries, and asked for a part of the Bible. They offered him a New Testament, but when he thought of the queen's anger, if she should discover it, he chose a copy of the Book of Psalms instead, which, being smaller, was more easily hidden under his dress. A few weeks after, having grown more courageous, he went again, and asked for the Testament and some spelling books.

He began to teach his servants to read, and told them they were sinners condemned to eternal punishment, unless they asked forgiveness from God through the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several of the friends he loved listened to what he said. He felt very anxious for his dear mother's conversion, and often spoke to her, and, above all, he prayed often and earnestly to God to change her heart. Children! have any

of you parents who do not love Jesus? Oh! follow his example, and pray for them.

This seems to have been a blessed part of Rafaralahy's history. He was always trying to do good to others, and that is the surest way to promote our own happiness. He was very kind to some of his friends who had been put into prison by the queen, on account of their religion. He used to visit them himself, or sometimes send his servant to ask how they were, and give them anything they wanted.

He was pleased to do what he could for them, especially because they were the disciples of his beloved Saviour. He was also very kind to all the poor. He had a field in which he used to sow rice, and give away the greater part of it to those who needed it. The people of Madagascar live very much on rice, and depend upon it as we do on bread.

The queen had prevented the people for some time from holding public worship, but Rafaralahy felt that it was right that those who love God should meet

together to pray, and read the word of God, and join in singing His praises. He took a house in the quiet country, where they would be least likely to be discovered and interrupted, and there he and the Christian friends who were near, often assembled together, and spent an hour in encouraging each other in the service of God.

Near to Rafaralahy's house there was a little cottage in which three lepers lived. You will remember to have read of lepers in the Bible. They are persons who are ill with a disease which obliges them to keep away from others, lest they should be ill too. They live alone, and their friends take their food, put it on the ground near their house, and then call them to come and fetch it; but they do not stay to converse with them. They are afraid of doing so.

Rafaralahy was very sorry for the affliction of the three lepers who lived near to him. He often wished that they had heard of Jesus; that they might believe on Him, and so be happy after death, and be happy here on earth too: for they

could pray and sing, and read the word of God together, without fear of the queen. She would not be likely to hear of it, as no one ever ventured to come and see them.

At last he thought he would teach them to read: and taking some spelling-books in his hand, he asked them if they were willing to learn. They were very thankful, and paid so much attention, that in a few weeks they could read the three Testaments which Rafaralahy gave them. It was indeed kind of him to take so much trouble, and expose himself to so much danger for their good. He was very pleased that they listened to him attentively when he told them about the dear Saviour; and that they felt that they were sinners, and asked God to forgive their past guilt, and make their hearts holy. One of them died soon after, feeling very happy because he hoped to be received into heaven, as a sinner pardoned through the sufferings of Christ. The others continued to read and value their Bibles, but they soon lost their kind teacher



The queen was told by one of her people, that many persons were meeting from time to time at Rafaralahy's house, and there worshipped the true God. You are very much surprised, perhaps, that any one should have been so unkind. Do you remember that Jesus said to his disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you?" John xv. 19. Wicked people cannot be expected to love the disciples of the holy Jesus.

The queen sent some men to take Rafaralahy, and put chains upon him. When they did so, they asked him very often, what were the names of those who had met together in his house, that they might take them, and treat them in the same way: but he would not tell them. He answered, "Here am I, let the queen do what she pleases with me, but I will not accuse my friends."

After he had been in prison for a few days, some men were sent to take off his iron chains, that he might be put to



death. He saw the men come in, and when he heard them ask, "Which is Rafaralahy?" he answered very calmly, "I am." They took off his chains, and told him to go with them, which he did. He talked to them as he walked along, of the love of Jesus, and told them he was going to see Him, and said that he felt very happy to think of it. When they came to the place where they meant to kill him, he asked that he might be quiet for a few minutes, and kneeled down and prayed to God for his country, and for his poor dear friends who loved Jesus, and then asked God to receive his soul, which was so soon to leave his body.

When he rose from his knees, they were going to throw him down on the ground, that he might be killed the more easily; but he said they need not do that, as he could lie down himself; and when he had done so, they thrust their spears into his body, and he died immediately. And in a moment his happy spirit was with God, and he could worship Him without any fear. How pleased he must

have been to find amongst the happy spirits in heaven the poor leper whom he had led to the dear Saviour, now free from every pain! and how joyfully would he welcome many other persons whom he had spoken to of Jesus whilst on earth! How thankful he must have felt to God who had enabled him to persevere through every difficulty in his way to heaven, and to teach others to choose the same road, even though it might lead them to a painful and shameful death! As he felt that heaven's happiness was "an exceeding weight of glory," he would see how small were the afflictions and persecutions he had endured. It was of little consequence to spend a few more years in comfort and pleasure on earth, compared with the enjoyment of the perfect bliss of heaven. And when the veil of sin was taken from his heart, and he saw distinctly what the love of the Saviour really was, he felt that even martyrdom was poor return for the mercy he had received.

Children, you have heard of Jesus. He has done as much for you as for

Rafaralahy. Do you love him as much? are you as willing to suffer for Him? Perhaps you think, you cannot tell, because you are not called to die for Him: but cannot you show your love as Rafaralahy did before he was imprisoned? Are there not some persons living near you who do not love the Saviour. Go and tell them that "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. And when you have any money given you, think of those who, not having any knowledge of the true God, are bowing down to idols; and see if you cannot help to send them the Bible, that they may not die in such awful ignorance.

But there is another thing which you can give, of more value than money. You have very likely been told that God listens to the prayers of the youngest children. When you kneel down to-night at his foot-stool, pray for the poor people in Madagascar, that they may be led to forsake their idols, and believe in Jesus; and that those who have done so,

may be enabled to imitate Rafaralahy, and sooner die than give up their love to Christ. And then you will not, I should think, forget to thank God for the goodness which "has planned a better lot for you." There are no punishments and threats to hinder you from coming to Christ: nothing but the depravity of your own hearts. Oh! will it not be fearful, if, at the last day, there should be found around the Saviour many who have urged their way through fiery persecution, whilst you, who had an easier, smoother path to heaven, chose the broad road which leadeth unto death.

You must have noticed, as you read this short history of Rafaralahy, that his love to Christ grew stronger and stronger. This is always the case with real piety. It is just what Christ spoke of in the parable of the mustard-seed, Luke xiii. 18, 19. Rafaralahy's love to God was at first only like a small seed, and at one period seemed quite lost; but it showed life after a little time, and at last grew very large and strong. Are there some readers who sometimes wish to know if they

have *real* love to Christ? See, then, whether your love is increasing? Does it spread in your heart, and make a difference in your temper, and govern your conduct?









### SOLOMON'S CHOICE.

King Solomon of old  
A happy choice had made ;  
'Twas not for life, 'twas not for gold,  
Nor honour that he prayed.

He chose that better part,  
That leads to heavenly joys ;  
A wise and understanding heart,  
And God approved the choice.

If this is what we seek,  
We cannot ask amiss ;      [speak,  
The youngest, poorest child may  
And ask the Lord for this.