

Madagascar had derived at least part of its present population, promised me great facility in acquiring their language. This promise, however, was not realised, for I found afterwards that, though in many respects retaining the same simplicity of structure and arrangement, it was in some instances more defective, but in others, especially in the structure and application of its verbs, far more extensive and complex, than the Polynesian language.

The village of Tamatave did not equal my expectations. Almost the only good houses are those belonging to the foreign residents and Hova officers. The dwellings of the people are of an inferior kind, few of them new, and many much dilapidated. We saw also but few people, and, on inquiring the cause, were told that though the population was about 3000, most of the men had been removed to Hivondro, a place about nine miles distant to the southward, where they had been employed for some time past in erecting a fort or stockade as a defence against the hostile visit which they had been told might be expected from a large number of English ships of war.

As regards the mischief produced by unfounded reports, the Malagasy are much to be pitied. Shut out from all intercourse with the rest of the world, they are extremely liable to be imposed upon by such reports, and to suffer severely in consequence, as was the case in the present instance. So great was their concern about the arrival of a hostile fleet of probably thirty ships, that a number of troops had been sent from the capital on the occasion, and such was the haste with which they had been sent, the fatigue of the service, the want of proper supplies, and the effect of the climate, for it was in the unhealthy season, that numbers of the men and, it was said, one fourth of the officers had died.

The Betsimasaraka, or people belonging to this part of the