

Memories of a British envoy to Abyssinia's Emperor Theodore.

In CHAPTER IV and V he describes the political situation in
Tigre land Massawa Habab and Barka.

A NARRATIVE OF CAPTIVITY IN ABYSSINIA
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(LATELY ON SPECIAL DUTY IN ABYSSINIA.)

On the morning of the 23rd, at a distance of about thirty miles from the shore, we sighted the high land of Abyssinia, formed of several consecutive ranges, all running from N. to S., the more distant being also the highest; some of the peaks, such as Taranta, ranging between 12,000 and 13,000 feet.

As the outline of the coast became more distinct, the sight of a small island covered with white houses surrounded by green groves, reflecting their welcome shadows in the quiet blue water of the bay, gave us a thrill of delight; it seemed as if at last we had come to one of those enchanted spots of the East, so often described, so seldom seen, and to the longing of our anxious hearts the quick motion of the steamer seemed slow to satisfy our ardent wishes. But nearer and nearer as we approached the shore, one by one all our illusions disappeared; the pleasant imagery vanished, and the stern reality of mangrove swamps, sandy and sunburnt beach, wretched and squalid huts, stared us in the face. Instead of the semi-Paradise distance had painted to our imagination, we found (and, alas! remained long enough to verify the fact) that the land of our temporary residence could be described in three words—sun, dirt, and desolation.

Massowah, latitude 15.36 N., longitude 39.30 E., is one of the many coral islands that abound in the Red Sea; it is but a few feet above high-water mark, about a mile in length, and a quarter in breadth. Towards the north it is separated from the mainland by a narrow creek about 200 yards in breadth, and is distant from Arkiko, a small town situated at the western extremity of the bay, about two miles. Half-a-mile south of Massowah, another small coral island, almost parallel to the one we describe, covered with mangroves and other rank vegetation, the proud owner of a sheik's tomb of great veneration, lies between Massowah and the Gedem peak, the high mountain forming the southern boundary of the bay.

a few two stories high, built of coral rock, the remainder small wooden huts with straw roofs. The first are inhabited by the wealthier merchants and brokers, the Turkish officials, and the few Banians, 32 European consuls; and merchants whose unfortunate fate has cast them on this inhospitable shore. There is not a building worth mentioning: the Pasha's residence is a large, ungainly mansion, remarkable only for its extreme filthiness. During our stay the offensive smell from the accumulation of dirt on the yards and staircases of the palace was quite overwhelming: it is easier to imagine than to describe the abominable stench that

pervaded the whole place. The few mosques are without importance—miserable whitewashed coral buildings. One, however, under construction promised to be a shade better than the others.

[Illustration: Fort, Mission House and Town of Massowah] The streets—if by this name we may call the narrow and irregular lanes that run between the houses—are kept pretty clean; whether with or without municipal intervention I cannot say. Except in front of the Pasha's residence, there is no open space worthy of the name of square. The houses are much crowded together, many even being half built over the sea on piles. Land is of such value on this spot so little known, that reclamation was at several points going on; though I do not suppose that shares and dividends were either issued or promised.

The landing-place is near the centre of the island, opposite to the gates of the town, which are regularly shut at eight P.M.; why, it is difficult to say, as it is possible to land on any part of the island quite as easily, if not more so, than on the greasy pier. On the landing-place a few huts have been erected by the collector of customs and his subordinates; these, surrounded by the brokers and tallow-scented Bedouins, register the imports, exacting such duties as they like, before the merchandise is allowed to be purchased by the Banians or conveyed to the bazaar for sale. This last-named place—the sine qua non of all Eastern towns—is a wretched affair. Still, the Bedouin beau, the Bashi-bazouk, the native girls, and the many flaneurs of the place, must find some attractions in its precincts, for though redolent with effluvia of the worst description, and swarming with flies, it is, during part of the day, the rendezvous of a merry and jostling crowd. The eastern half of the island contains the burial-ground, the water-tanks, the Roman Catholic mission-house, and a small fort. The burial-ground begins almost with the last houses, the boundary between the living and the dead being merely nominal. To improve the closer relationship between the two, the water-tanks are placed amongst the graves! but there are but few tanks still in good condition. After heavy showers, the surface drainage finds its way into the reservoirs, carrying with it the detritus of all the accumulated filth of the last year or two, and adding an infusion of human bodies, in all stages of decomposition. Still, the water is highly prized, and, strange to say, seems to have no noxious effects, on the drinkers. At the north and south points of this part of the island two buildings have been erected—the one the emblem of good-will and peace; the other, of war and strife—the mission-house and the fort. But it is difficult to decide which of the two means the most mischief; many are inclined to give the palm to the worthy fathers' abode. The fort appears formidable, but only at a great distance; on near approach it is found to be but a relic of former ages, a crumbled-down ruin, too weak to bear any longer its three old rusty guns now lying on the ground: it is the terror, not of the neighbourhood, but of the unfortunate gunner, who has already lost an arm whilst endeavouring to return a salute through their honeycombed tubes. On the other hand, the mission-house, garbed in immaculate whiteness, smiles radiantly around, inviting instead of repulsing the invader. But within, are they always words of love that fill the echoes of the dome? Is peace the only sound that issues from its walls? Though the past speaks volumes, and though the history of the Roman Church is written in letters of blood all over the Abyssinian land, let us hope that the fears of the people have no foundation, and that the missionaries here, like all Christian missionaries, only strive to promote one object—the cause of Christ.

Massowah, as well as the immediate surrounding country, is mainly dependent on Abyssinia for its supplies. Jowaree is the staple food; wheat is little used; rice is a favourite amongst the better classes. Goats and sheep are killed daily in the bazaar, cows on rare occasions; but the flesh of the camel is the most esteemed, though, on account of the expense, rarely indulged in

except on great occasions.

The inhabitants being Mussulmans, water is the ordinary beverage; tej and araki (made from honey) can, however, be purchased in the bazaar. The limited supply of water obtained from the few remaining tanks is quite inadequate to meet the wants of even a small portion of the community; water is consequently brought in daily from the wells a few miles north of Massowah, and from Arkiko. The first is brought in leather bags by the young girls of the village; the latter conveyed in boats across the bay. The water in both cases is brackish, that from Arkiko highly so. For this reason, and also on account of the greater facility in the transport, it is cheaper, and is purchased only by the poorer inhabitants. To avoid useless repetitions, before speaking of the population, climate, diseases, &c., a short account of the immediate neighbourhood is necessary.

About four miles north of Massowah is Haitoomloo, a large village of about a thousand huts, the first place where we meet with sweet water; a mile and a quarter further inland we came upon Moncullou, 34 a smaller but better built village. A mile westward of the last place we find the small village of Zaga. These, with a small hamlet east of Haitoomloo, constitute all the inhabited portions of this sterile region. The next village, Ailat, about twenty miles from Massowah, is built on the first terrace of the Abyssinian range, 600 feet above the level of the sea. All these villages are situated in the midst of a sandy and desolate plain; a few mimosas, aloes, senna plants, and cactuses struggle for life in the burning sand. The country residences of the English and French consuls shine like oases in this desert, great pains having been taken to introduce trees that thrive even in such a locality.

The wells are the wealth of the villages—their very existence. Most probably, huts after huts have been erected in their vicinity until the actual prosperous villages have arisen, surrounded as they are on all sides by a burnt and desert tract. The wells number about twenty. Many old ones are closed, but new ones are frequently dug, so as to keep up a constant supply of water. The reason old wells are abandoned is, that after a while the water becomes very brackish. In a new well the water is almost sweet. The water obtained from these wells proceeds from two different sources: First, from the high mountains in the vicinity. The rain filters and impregnates the soil, but not being able to soak beyond a certain depth, on account of the volcanic rocks of the undersoil, forms a small stratum always met with at a certain depth. Secondly, from the sea by filtration. The wells, though about four miles from the shore, are only from twenty to twenty-five feet deep, and consequently on or below the level of the sea.

The proof of an undercurrent of water, due to the presence of the high range of mountains, becomes more apparent as the traveller advances into the interior; though the soil is still sandy and barren, and little vegetation can as yet be seen, trees and shrubs become more plentiful, and of a larger size. A few miles farther inland, even during the summer months, it is always possible to obtain water by digging to the depth of a few feet in the dried-up bed of a water-torrent.

It often struck me that what artesian wells have done for the Sahara they could equally accomplish for this region. The locality seems even more favourable, and there is every hope that, like the great African desert, the now desolate land of Samhar could be transformed into a rich date-bearing land.

Taken as they are; these wells could certainly be improved. On our arrival at Moncullou, we found the water of the well belonging to the consular residence scarcely used, on account of

its very brackish taste; we had the well emptied, a large quantity of saltish sand removed, and we dug deeper until large rocks appeared. The result was that we had the best well in the place, and requests for our water were made by many, including the Pasha himself. Unfortunately, the forefathers of the present Moncullites never did such a thing to their wells, and as all innovations are distasteful to a semi-civilized race, the fact was admired, but not imitated. Arkiko, at the extremity of the bay, is much nearer the mountains than the villages situated north of Massowah, but the village is built almost on the beach itself; the wells, not a hundred yards from the sea, are also much more superficial than those on the northern side, consequently the sea-water, having a much shorter distance to filter through, retains a greater proportion of saline particles, and I believe, were it not for the presence of a small quantity of sweet water from the hills, it would be quite unpalatable. In the neighbourhood of Maasowah there are several hot mineral springs. The most important are those of Adulis and Ailat. In the summer of 1865 we made a short trip to Annesley Bay, to inspect the locality. The ruins of Adulis are several miles from the shore, and, with the exception of a few fragments of broken columns, contain no traces of the former important colony. The place was even hotter than Massowah; there was no vegetation, no trace of habitations on that desolate shore. Fancy our surprise, on reaching the same spot in May, 1868, to find piers, railways, bazaars, &c.—a bustling city had sprung out of the wilderness.

The springs of Adulis [Footnote: A short time before our departure for the interior, some of the water of the hot springs of Adulis was collected and forwarded to Bombay for analysis.] are only a few hundred yards from the sea-shore, surrounded by a pleasing green patch covered with a vigorous vegetation, the rendezvous of myriads of birds and quadrupeds, who, morning and evening, swarm thither to quench their thirst.

At Ailat [Footnote: Water collected and sent to Bombay, November, 1864.] the hot spring issues from basaltic rocks on a small plateau between high and precipitous mountains. At the source itself the temperature is 141 Fahrenheit, but as the water flows down the different ravines, it gradually cools until it differs in no way from other mountain streams. It is palatable, and used by the inhabitants of Ailat for all purposes: it is also highly esteemed by the Bedouins. On account of its medicinal properties, numbers resort to the natural baths, formed of hollowed volcanic roots, for the relief of every variety of disease. From what I could gather, it appears to prove beneficial in chronic rheumatism and in diseases of the skin. Probably in these cases any warm water would act as well, considering the usual morbid condition of the integument in those dirty and unwashed races.

The population of Massowah, including the surrounding villages (as far, at least, as I could ascertain), amounts to 10,000 inhabitants. The Massowah race is far from pure; being a mixture of Turkish, Arab, and African blood. The features are generally good, the nose straight, the hair in many instances short and curly; the skin brown, the lips often large, the teeth even and white. The men are of the middle height; the women under it. So much for their physical appearance. Morally they are ignorant and superstitious, having apparently retained but few of their forefathers' virtues, but a great many of their vices. A very good distinction can be made, in the male portion of the community, between those who wear turbans and long white shirts, and those hard-working wretches who, girded with a single leather skin, roam about with their flocks in search of pasture and water. The first live I know not how. They call themselves brokers! It is true that three or four times a year caravans arrive from the interior, but as a rule, with the exception of a skin or two of honey, and a few bags of jowaree, nothing is imported. What possible business can about 500 brokers have? How ten dollars' worth of honey and fifty of grain can give a brokerage sufficient to clothe and feed,

not only themselves but also their families, is a problem I have in vain endeavoured to solve! In the East, children, instead of being a burden to poor people, are often a source of wealth: at Massowah they certainly are. The young girls of Moncullou, &c., bring in a pretty good income to their parents. I know big, strong, but lazy fellows who would squat down all day in the shade of their huts, living on the earnings of two or three little girls, who daily went once or twice to Massowah laden with a large skin full of water. The water-girls vary in age from eight to sixteen. The younger ones are rather pretty, small, but well made, the hair neatly braided and falling on the shoulders. A small piece of cotton reaching from the waist to the knee is generally the only garment of the poorest. Those better off wear also a piece of plaid thrown gracefully across the shoulders. The right nostril is ornamented with a small copper ring; as a substitute, a shirt-button is much esteemed, and during our stay our buttons were in constant demand.

If we take into consideration that Massowah is situated within the tropics, possessing no running stream, that it is surrounded by burning deserts, and that rain seldom falls, the conclusion we could beforehand have arrived at is, that the climate is essentially hot and dry.

From November to March the nights are cool, and during that period the day, in a good house or tent, is pleasant enough. From April to October the nights are close, and often very oppressive. During those hot months, both in the morning before the sea-breeze springs up and in the evening when it has died away, all animal creation falls into a torpid state. The perfect calm that then reigns is 37 fearful in its stillness and painful in its effects. From May to August sand-storms frequently occur. They begin usually at four P.M. (though occasionally they appear in the morning), and last from a few minutes only to a couple of hours. Long before the storm is felt, the horizon towards the N.N.W. is quite dark; a black cloud extends from the sea to the mountain range, and as it advances the sun itself is obscured. A few minutes of dead calm, and then suddenly the dark column approaches; all seems to disappear before it, and the roar of the terrible hurricane of wind and sand now coursing over the land is almost sublime in its horrors. Coming after the moist sea breeze, the hot and dry wind appears quite cool, though the thermometer rises to 110 or 115 degrees. After the storm a gentle land breeze follows, and often lasts all night. The amount of sand carried by the wind in these storms can be imagined by the mere mention of the fact that we could not discern, at a short distance from us, such a large object as a tent. It seldom rains; occasionally there are a few showers in August and November.

As far as Europeans are concerned, climates like the one we have just described cannot be considered as unhealthy; they debilitate and weaken the system, and predispose to tropical diseases, but seldom engender them. I expected to find many cases of scurvy, due to the brackish condition of the water and to the absence of vegetables; but either scurvy did not exist to a great extent or did not come under my observation, as during my stay I did not meet with more than three or four cases. Fevers affect the natives after a fall of rain, but though some cases are of a very pernicious type, the majority belong to the simple intermittent or remittent, and yield rapidly to a proper treatment.

Small-pox now and then makes fearful ravages. When it breaks out, a mild case is chosen, and from it a great many are inoculated. The mortality is considerable amongst those who submit to the operation. On several occasions during the summer I received vaccine lymph, and inoculated with it. In no case did it take; owing, I suppose, to the extreme heat of the weather. During the cold season I applied again, but could not obtain any. The greatest mortality is due to childbirth—a strange fact, as in the East confinements are generally easy. The practice in use

here has probably much to do with this unfavourable result. After her confinement the woman is placed upon an alga or small native bed; underneath which, fire with aromatic herbs is so arranged as almost to suffocate the newly-delivered woman. Diarrhoea was frequent during the summer of 1865, and dysentery at the same period proved fatal to many. Diseases of the eyes are seldom met with, except simple inflammation caused by the heat and glare of the sun. I suffered from a severe attack of ophthalmia, and was obliged in consequence to proceed to Aden for 38 a few weeks. I have met with no case of disease of the lungs, and bronchial affections seem almost unknown. I had occasion to attend upon cases of neuralgia, and one of gouty rheumatism. For several years locusts have been committing great damage to the crops. In 1864 they occasioned a scarcity and dearness of the first necessaries of life, but in 1865 the whole of Tigr'e, Hamasein, Bogos, &c. had been laid waste by swarms of locusts, and at last no supplies whatever reached from the interior. The local Government sent to Hodeida and other ports for grain, and rice, and thus avoided the horrors of a complete famine. As it was, numbers died, and many half-starved wretches were ready victims for such a disease as cholera. This last-named scourge made its appearance in October, 1865, at the time we were making our preparations to proceed into the interior. The epidemic was severely felt. All those who had been suffering from the effects of insufficient or inferior food became an easy prey; few, indeed, of those who contracted the disease rallied; almost all died. During our residence at Massowah, out of the small community of Europeans five died, two from heat apoplexy, two from debility, and one from cholera. (None came under my care.) The Pasha himself was several times on the point of death, from debility and complete loss of tone of the digestive organs. He was at last prevailed upon to leave, and saved his life by a timely trip to sea.

The Bedouins of the Samhar, like all bigoted and ignorant savages, have great confidence in charms, amulets and exorcisms. The "medicine man" is generally an old, venerable-looking Sheik—a great rascal, for all his sanctified looks. His most usual prescription is to write a few lines of the Koran upon a piece of parchment, wash off the ink with water, and hand it over to the patient to drink; at other times the writing is enclosed in small squares of red leather, and applied to the seat of the disease. The Mullah is no contemptible rival of his, and though he also applies the all-efficacious words of the revealed "cow," he effects more rapid cures by spitting several times upon the sick person, muttering between each ejection appropriate prayers which no evil spirit could withstand, should his already sanctified spittle not have been sufficient to cast them off. Massowah boasts, moreover, of a regular medical practitioner, in the shape of an old Bashi-bazouk. Though superior in intelligence to the Sheik and the Mullah, his medical knowledge is on a par with theirs. He possesses a few drugs, given to him by travellers; but as he is not acquainted with their properties or doses, he wisely keeps them on a shelf for the admiration of the natives, and employs simples, with which, if he effects no wonderful cures, he still does no harm. Our conf'ere is not at all conceited, though he no doubt imposes upon the credulity of the aborigines; when we met in "consultation," he always, with becoming meekness, acknowledged his ignorance.

Massowah, as I have already stated, is built on a coral rock; the same formation exists on many parts of the coast, and forms cliffs, some of them thirty feet above the level of the sea. Further inland, towards Moncullou and Haitoomloo, volcanic rocks begin to appear, scattered here and there as if carelessly thrown on the sandy plain; at first isolated landmarts over the level space, they soon become more united, increasing in number, size, and importance, until the mountains themselves are reached, where almost every stone declares the predominance of the volcanic formation.

The flora is scanty, and belongs, with but few exceptions, to the Leguminosae . Several

varieties of antelopes roam over the desert. Partridges, pigeons, and several species of the Natatores at certain seasons, arrive in great numbers. Apart from these, nothing useful to man is met with amongst the other members of the animal creation, consisting principally of hosts of hyenas, snakes, scorpions, and innumerable insects.

We remained at Massowah from the 23rd of July, 1864, to the 8th of August, 1865, the date of our departure for Egypt, where we went in order to receive instructions, when a letter at last reached us from the Emperor Theodore. Massowah offered no attractions: the heat was so intense at times that we could hardly breathe; and we ardently longed for our return to Aden or India, as we had given up all hopes regarding the acceptance of our mission by the Abyssinian Emperor. No pains were spared, no stone was left unturned, no possible chance left untried to obtain information as to the condition of the captives, to supply them with the necessaries of life, or induce the obstinate potentate to call for the letter it was said he was so anxious to receive. The very day of our arrival at Massowah, efforts were made to engage messengers to proceed to the Abyssinian court and inform his Ethiopian Majesty that officers had arrived at the coast with the answer to his letter to the Queen of England. But such was the dread of his name, that it was with great difficulty, and only on the promise of a large reward, that any could be obtained. On the evening of the 24th, the day after our arrival, the messengers were despatched with the letters to the Abouna and the Emperor from the Patriarch, one from Mr. Rassam to the Abouna, and one to the Emperor, the messengers promising to be back in the course of a month or so.

Mr. Rassam, in his letter to the Emperor Theodoros, informed him, in courteous language, that he had arrived at Massowah the day before, bearing a letter from H.M. the Queen of England to his address, and that he was desirous of delivering it into his Majesty's hands. He also informed him that he would await the answer at Massowah, and requested, should his Majesty send for him, kindly to provide him with an escort. He, however, left to Theodore the option of sending the prisoners down with a trustworthy person to whom he could deliver the letter from the Queen of England. He concluded by advising his Majesty that his embassy to the Queen had been accepted, and should it reach the coast before his (Mr. Rassam's) departure for Aden, he would take the necessary steps to see that it reached England in safety.

A month—six weeks—two months, passed in hourly expectation of the return of the messengers. All suppositions were exhausted: perhaps the messengers had not reached; possibly the King had detained them; or they might have lost the packet whilst crossing some river, etc.; but as no reliable information could moreover be obtained, as to the exact condition of the captives, it was impossible to remain any longer in such a state of uncertainty. Mr. Rassam, therefore, despatched with considerable difficulty two more messengers, with a copy of his letter of July 24, accompanied by an explanatory note. Private messengers were, at the same time, sent to the Emperor's camp to report on his treatment of the captives, and to different parts of the country, from whence we supposed information might possibly be obtained. A short time afterwards, having succeeded in securing the names of some of the Gaffat people who had formerly been in communication with Consul Cameron, we wrote to them in English, French, and German, not knowing what language they understood, earnestly requesting that they would inform us as to what steps they considered most advisable in order to obtain the release of the captives.

Again we waited on the desert shore of Massowah for that answer so long expected; none came, but on Christmas-day we received a few lines from Messrs. Flad and Schimper, the two Europeans with whom we had communicated. All they had to say was, that the misfortunes

which had befallen the Europeans were due to the Emperor's letter not having been answered, and they advised Mr. Rassam to send the letter he had brought with him to his Majesty. However, Mr. Rassam thought it unbecoming the British Government to force upon the Emperor a letter signed by the Queen of England, when, by his refusing even to acknowledge its presence at Massowah, he clearly showed that he had changed his mind and did not care any more about it.

In the meanwhile some of the prisoners' servants had arrived with letters from their masters; other messengers despatched from Massowah were also equally successful; stores, money, letters were now regularly forwarded to the captives, who, in return, kept us informed as to their condition and the movements of the King. So far our presence at Massowah was of the utmost importance, since without the supplies and money we were able to provide them with, their misery would have been increased tenfold, if even they had not at last succumbed to privation and want.

The friends of the captives and, to a great extent, the public, unaware of the efforts made by Mr. Rassam to accomplish the object of his mission, and of the great difficulties that were to be contended with, attributed the apparent failure to causes far removed; many suggestions were advanced, a few even tried, but no result followed. It was said that one of the reasons his Majesty did not vouch us an answer was, that the mission was not of sufficient importance; that his Majesty considered himself slighted, and therefore would not condescend to acknowledge us. To remedy this, in February, 1865, Government decided on adding another military officer to our party, and, as the press reported at the time, it was confidently expressed that great results would follow this step. Hence, Lieut. Prideaux, of her Majesty's Bombay Staff Corps, arrived in Massowah in May. As might reasonably be expected, his presence at the coast did not in the least influence Theodore's mind. The only advantage gained by the addition of this officer to the mission was a charming companion, who was doomed to spend with me in a tent on the sea-beach the hot months of hot Massowah. More months elapsed: still no answer! the condition of the prisoners was very precarious; they saw with great apprehension another rainy season about to set in; their letters were written in a most desponding tone; and though we had done our utmost to supply them with money and a few comforts, the distance and the rebellious state of the country made it difficult to provide more abundantly for their wants.

At last, in March, we determined on a last effort; should it fail we would request our recall. We had heard of Samuel, how he had been in many respects mixed up in the affair, and we knew that he enjoyed in some degree the confidence of his master; so when we were informed that one of his relations was willing to convey a letter and he assured us of an answer before forty days, once more our hopes were excited and we trusted in the possibility of success. The forty days expired, then two, then three months; but we heard nothing!! It seemed as if a kind of fatality attended our messengers: from whatever class they were taken—simple peasants, followers of the Nab, or relatives of one of the Emperor's courtiers—the result was invariably the same; not only they did not bring back any answer from the Emperor, but not even one returned to us. The prolonged delay of Mr. Rassam's mission at Massowah without any apparent good results having been achieved, was so contrary to all expectations, that it was at last decided to resort to other means. In February, 1865, a Copt, Abdul Melak, presented himself at the consulate of Jeddah, pretending to have just arrived from Abyssinia with a message from the Abouna to the Consul-General, purporting that if he could bring from H.M.'s Consul-General in Egypt a written declaration to the effect that, should the Emperor allow the Europeans in chains to depart, no steps would be taken to punish the offence, he, the

Abouna, would engage himself to obtain their liberation, and become their security. That impostor, who had never been in Abyssinia at all, gave such wonderful details that he completely imposed upon the Consul of Jeddah and the Consul-General. The fact that he pretended to have passed through Massowah without entering into communication with Mr. Rassam was by itself suspicious; but had these gentlemen possessed the slightest knowledge of Abyssinia, they would at once have discovered the deception when he purchased some "suitable" presents for the Abouna, before proceeding on the mission that had been intrusted to him. In Abyssinia tobacco is considered "unclean" by the priests; none ever smoke; and even admitting that in his privacy the Abouna might have now and then indulged in a weed, he would have taken great care to keep the matter as quiet as possible. Therefore to present him with an amber mouthpiece would have been a gratuitous insult to a man who was supposed to have rendered an important favour. It was, indeed, the very last testimonial any one in the slightest degree conversant with Abyssinian priesthood would ever have selected. As it is, the man started, and lived for months amongst the Arab tribes between Kassala and Metemma, on the strength of a certificate that described him as an ambassador and recommended him to the protection of the tribes that lay on his road. We met him not far from Kassala; he acknowledged the deceit he had practised, and was delighted when he heard that we had no intention of requesting the Turkish authorities to make him a prisoner.

Government at last decided on recalling us, and appointed Mr.

Palgrave, the distinguished Arabian traveller, in our stead. In the beginning of July we went for a short trip to the Habab country, situate north of Massowah; on our return, we were met in the desert of Chab by some of the Naib's relations, who informed us that Ibrahim (the relative of Samuel) had returned with an answer from his Majesty, and was expected daily; that all our former messengers had obtained leave to depart; but what was still more gratifying was the intelligence, brought down by them, that Theodore, to show his regard for us, had liberated Consul Cameron and his fellow-captives. On July 12, Ibrahim arrived. He gave full details about the release of the Consul; a story which was corroborated a few days afterwards by another relative of his, also one of our former messengers. I believe, from what I afterwards learnt, that Theodore himself was party to the lie, as he publicly, in presence of the messengers, gave orders to some of his officers to go and remove the Consul's fetters; only the messengers improved on it by stating that they had seen the Consul after the chains had been removed.

The reply Theodore had at last granted to our repeated demands was not courteous, nor even civil—it was neither signed nor sealed; he ordered us to proceed through the distant and unhealthy route of the Soudan, and, once arrived at Metemma, to inform him of our arrival there, and that he would then provide us with an escort.

We did not like the letter; it seemed more the production of a madman than of a reasonable being. I select a few extracts from this letter, as they are really curiosities in their way. He said:—

"The reason I do not write to you in my name, because of Abouna Salama, the so-called Kokab (Stern) the Jew, and the one you called Consul, named Cameron (who was sent by you). I treated them with honour and friendship in my city. When I thus befriended them, on account of my anxiety to cultivate the friendship of the English Queen, they reviled me.

"Plowden and Johannes (John Bell), who were called Englishmen, were killed in my country,

whose death, by the power of God, I avenged on those who killed them; on account these (the three above mentioned) abused me, and denounced me as a murderer.

"Cameron, who is called Consul, represented to me that he was a servant of the Queen. I invested him with a robe of honour of my country, and supplied him with provisions for the journey. I asked him to make me a friend of the Queen.

"When he was sent on his mission, he went and stayed some time with the Turks, and returned to me.

"I spoke to him about the letter I sent through him to the Queen. He said, that up to that time he had not received any intelligence concerning it. What have I done, said I, that they should hate me, and treat me with animosity? By the power of the Lord my creator, I kept silent."

Although the steamer Victoria only arrived in Massowah on the 23rd of July, we had as yet received no letters from Consul Cameron, nor from any of the captives. By the Victoria we were informed that Mr. Rassam was recalled and Mr. Palgrave appointed. Under the new aspect matters had suddenly taken, Mr. Rassam could but refer to Government for instructions. We therefore at once started for Egypt, where we arrived on the 5th of September. Through her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General, Government was apprised of the receipt of a letter from Theodore, granting us permission to enter Abyssinia; that the letter was uncourteous, and not signed; that Cameron was released, and though Cameron had always insisted on our not proceeding into the interior with or without safe-conduct, we were ready to go at once, should Government consider it advisable. Mr. Palgrave was told to remain, Mr. Rassam and his companions to go; a certain sum of money was allowed for presents; letters for the governors of the Soudan were obtained; and, our necessary stores and outfit being purchased; we returned to Massowah, where we arrived on the 25th of September.

There we heard that messengers had arrived from the prisoners; that they had been taken to Aden by a man-of-war; and that they had verbally reported, that far from having been released, hand-chains had been added to the captives' previous fetters. As we could not find anybody to accompany us through the Soudan (on account of its unhealthiness at that time of the year) before the middle of October, we thought it advisable to proceed at once to Aden, in order to gain correct information from the captives' letters, as to their actual condition, and to confer with the Political Resident of that station, as to the expediency of complying with the Emperor's requests, under the totally different aspect matters now presented. Although Captain Cameron, in several of his former communications, had repeatedly insisted that on no account we should enter Abyssinia, in the note just received he implored us to come up at once, as our declining to do so would prove of the utmost danger to the prisoners. The Political Resident, therefore, taking into consideration Captain Cameron's earnest appeal for Mr. Rassam to acquiesce with Theodore's request, advised us to proceed and hope for the best. After a short stay at Aden we again returned to Massowah, and, with the utmost diligence, made all our arrangements for the long journey that lay before us. Unfortunately cholera had broken out, the natives were unwilling to cross the plains of Braka and Taka, on account of the malarious fever, so deadly at that time of the year, and it required all the influence of the local authorities to insure our speedy departure.

CHAPTER V.

From Massowah to Kassala—The Start—The Habab—Adventures of M. Marcopoli—The Beni Amer—Arrival at Kassala—The Nubian Mutiny—Attempt of De Bisson to found a Colony in the Soudan.

On the afternoon of the 15th October, all our preparations being apparently complete, the mission, composed of Mr. H. Rassam, Lieut. W.F. Prideaux, of her Majesty's Bombay Staff Corps, and myself, started on its dangerous enterprise. We were accompanied by a nephew of the Naib of Arkiko; and an escort of Turkish Irregulars had been graciously sent by the Pasha to protect our sixty camels, laden with our personal luggage, stores, and presents for the Ethiopian monarch. We also took with us several Portuguese and other Indian servants, and a few natives of Massowah as muleteers. On a first march something is always found wanting. On this occasion many of the cameleers were unprovided with ropes: boxes, portmanteau-bags, were strewn all over the road, and night was far advanced before the last camel reached Moncullou. A halt was in consequence absolutely necessary, so that the actual start was only made on the afternoon 45 of the 16th.

From Moncullou our route lay N.W. across the desert of Chab, a dreary wilderness of sand, intersected by two winter torrents, generally dry: but by digging in their sandy beds it is possible at all seasons to obtain some muddy water. The rapidity with which these torrents fill up is most astonishing.

During the summer of 1865, we had made a trip to Af-Abed, in the Hababs' country. On our return, whilst crossing the desert, we experienced a very severe storm. We had just reached our encamping-ground on the Southern bank of one of these water-courses, and half the camels had already crossed the dry bed of the river, when, on a sudden, a tremendous roar was heard, shortly afterwards followed by a fearful rush of water. In the former empty bed of the torrent now dashed a mighty stream, tearing down trees and rocks, so that no human being could possibly cross. Our luggage and servants were still on the opposite bank, and although we were only a stone's throw from the party so suddenly cut off from us, we had to spend the night on the bare ground, with no other covering than our clothing.

In the very centre of the desert of Chab, arises, Amba Goneb, a conical basaltic rock several hundred feet high, an advanced sentry detached from the now approaching mountains. On the evening of the 18th, we reached Ain, and from the glaring and dreary desert passed into a lovely valley, watered by a small winding stream, cool and limpid, shaded by mimosas and tamarinds, and glowing with the freshness and luxuriance of topical vegetation. [Footnote: The distance from Massowah to Ain is about forty-five miles.] We were fortunate enough to leave the cholera behind us. Apart from a few cases of diarrhoea, easily checked, the whole party was in excellent health; every one in high spirits at the prospect of visiting almost unknown regions, and above all at having at last bid adieu to Massowah, where we had spent in anxious expectation long and dreary months.

From Ain to Mahaber [Footnote: From Ain to Mahaber (direction E. by N.) about twenty miles.] the road is most picturesque; always following the winding of the small river Ain, here and there compressed to only a few yards by perpendicular walls of trachyte, or basalt; further on expanding into miniature green plateaus, bordered by conical hills, covered to the very summit by mimosas and huge cactuses, alive with large hordes of antelopes (the agazin), which, bounding from rock to rock, scared by their frolics the countless host of huge baboons. The valley itself, graced by the presence of gaudy-feathered and sweet-singing birds, echoed to the shrill cry of the numerous guinea-fowls, so tame, that the repeated reports of our fire-

arms did not disturb them in the least.

At Mahaber we were obliged to remain several days awaiting fresh camels. The Hababs, who had now to supply us, frightened by the presence of the hairy nephew of the Nab and the Bashi-hazouks, made themselves scarce, and it was only after much parley and the repeated assurance that every one would be paid, that the camels at last made their appearance. The Hababs are a large pastoral tribe, inhabiting the Ad Temariam, a hilly and well-watered district, about fifty miles north-west of Massowah, included between longitude 38.39 and latitude 16 to 16.30. They represent the finest type of the roving Bedouins; of middle height, muscular, well made, they claim an Abyssinian origin. With the exception of a darker hue of the skin, certainly in other respects they do not differ from the inhabitants of the table-land, and have but few characteristics of the aboriginal African races. Some fifty years ago they were a Christian tribe—nominally, at least—but were converted to Mohammedanism by an old Sheik, still alive, who resides near Moncullou, and is an object of great veneration all over the Samhar. Once their doubts removed, their suspicions lulled, the Hababs proved themselves friendly, willing, and obliging. Gratitude is no common virtue in Africa, at least as far as my own experience goes. Its rarity brings back to my memory a fact that I will here record. On our previous trip to the Ad Temariam, I had seen several patients, amongst them a young man, suffering from remittent fever, and I gave him some medicine. Hearing of our arrival at Mahaber, he came to thank me, bringing as an offering a small skin of milk. He apologized for the absence of his aged father, who also, he said, wished to kiss my feet, but the distance (about eight miles) was too much for the old man's strength. I may as well mention here that a young commercial traveller, Mr. Marcopoli, had accompanied us from Massowah. He was going to Metemma, vi[^]a Kassala, to be present at the annual fairs held at that place in winter. He took advantage of our short stay at Mahaber, to proceed to Keren, in the Bogos, where he was called by business, intending to join again our party a few stages ahead. We looked at our map, and estimated the distance from our halting-place to the Bogos at the utmost eighteen miles. As he was provided with excellent mules, in four or five hours he naturally expected to reach his destination. He accordingly started at daybreak, and never halted once; but night was far advanced before he perceived the lights of the first village on the Bogos plateau: so much for travellers' maps. The poor man's anxiety had been great. Soon after dark he perceived—or, as I suspect, imagination worked to a high pitch of excitement through fear, conjured to his fancy the phantom of some huge animal—a lion, a tiger, he did not know very exactly; but, at all events, he saw some horrid beast of prey, glaring at him through the brushwood, with fiery and bloodshot eyes, watching all his movements for a suitable opportunity to fall upon his 47 helpless prey. However, he reached Keren in safety. He found that we were expected by the Bogos people, who believed that we were proceeding by the upper route. Flowers were to be strewed in our path, and our entrance was to be welcomed by dances and songs in our praise; the officer in command of the troops was to receive us with military honours, the civil governor intended to entertain us on a large scale: in a word, a grand reception was to be offered to the English friends of the mighty Theodore. The disappointment was no doubt great when Mr. Marcopoli informed the Bogosites that our route lay in an opposite direction to their fair province. On that the military commander decided on accompanying Mr. Marcopoli back, and paying us his respects at our halting-place. Marcopoli was delighted; he had a too vivid recollection of his lion not to be overjoyed at the idea of having companions with him.

Late in the evening they started, the Abyssinian officer and his men having before marching indulged in deep draughts of tej to keep out the cold. On their way down, the "warriors" cantered about in the most frantic manner; now riding at a full gallop up to poor Marcopoli,

the lance in rest, and dexterously wheeling round when the weapon almost touched his breast; then charging upon him at full speed and firing off their loaded pistols quite close, and only a few feet above his head. Marcopoli felt very uncomfortable in the society of his bellicose and drunken escort, but not knowing their language, he had nothing to do but to appear pleased. Early in the morning, at our second stage from Mahaber, these specimens of Abyssinian soldiers made their appearance, and a batch of more villanous-looking scoundrels I have never seen during my stay in Abyssinia: evidently Theodore was not very particular as to whom he selected for such distant outposts, unless he considered the roughest and most disorderly the fittest for such duties. They presented us with a cow they had stolen on the road, and begged us not to forget to mention to their master that they had come all the distance from Bogos to pay their respects to his guests. After having refreshed themselves with a few glasses of brandy and partaken of a slight collation, they kissed the ground in acknowledgment of the pleasant things they had received in return for their gift, and departed—to our great satisfaction.

On that 23rd we started from Mahaber, going due west, and following for eight miles longer the charming valley of Ain. Afterwards, we diverged to the left, going in a south-west direction, until we reached the province of Barka; when again our route lay west by north, until we came to Zaga. From this point to Kassala the general direction is west by south. [Footnote: The distance from Mahaber to Adart on the frontier of Barka is about fifty miles; from Adart to Kassala about 130 miles.] From Mahaber to Adart the road is very pleasant; for several days we continually ascended, and the more we advanced into the mountainous region the more agreeable and pleasant did we feel it, and we enjoyed the sight of splendid and luxuriant vegetation.

On the 25th we crossed the Anseba, a large river flowing from the high lands of Bogos, Hamasiën, and Mensa, and joining the river Barka at Tjab. [Footnote: Tjab, lat. 17° 10', long. 37° 15'.] We spent a pleasant day in the beautiful Anseba valley, but aware of the danger of remaining after sunset near its flowery but malarious banks, we pitched our tent on a rising ground at some distance, and the next morning proceeded to Haboob, the highest point we had to gain before descending into the Barka through the difficult pass of Lookum. After this abrupt descent of more than 2,000 feet, the roads generally slope towards the low land of Barka. From Ain to Haboob [Footnote: The Anseba, at the point we crossed, is about 4,000 feet above the level of the sea; Haboob about 4,500.] the country is well wooded, and watered by innumerable small streams. The soil is formed of the detritus of the volcanic rocks, specially of feldspar; pumice abounds in the ravines. The channels of the rivulets are the only roads for the traveller. This mountain chain is, on the whole, a pleasant spot, more delightful for the reason that it rises between the arid shores of the Red Sea and the flat, hot, and level plains of the Soudan. The province of Barka is a boundless prairie, about 2,500 feet above the level of the sea, covered at the time of our journey with half-dried grass some five or six feet high, and dotted here and there with small woods of stunted mimosas.

From Barka to Metemma we find alluvium as the general formation. Water is scarce; even a month after the rainy season all the rivers are dried up, and water is only obtained by digging in the sand of the dry beds of the river Barka and its tributaries. When we passed through these plains many spots were still green; but a few months later we should have crossed a parched-up prairie little better than the desert itself.

Our pretty songsters of Ain were no more to be seen. The guinea-fowl was seldom met with, and only a few tiny antelopes wandered over the solitary expanse. Instead, we were aroused

by the roar of the lion, the laugh of the hyena, and we had to protect our sheep and goats, as the spotted leopard was lurking around our tents. On the 31st of October we reached Zaga, a large sloping plain situated at the junction of the Barka and the Mogareib. Water can be obtained at that spot by digging wells in the dried-up beds of the rivers, in sufficient quantity to have induced the Beni Amer 49 to make it their winter encamping-ground.

We had that day made a very long march, on account of the absence of water on the road. Starting at two P.M., we only reached our halting ground (the bed of a dried-up winter torrent, a few hundred yards below the Beni Amer's camp), a couple of hours before daybreak. We were so sleepy and tired that during the latter part of the stage it had been with great difficulty that we managed to keep in the saddle; and no sooner did our guide give us the grateful intelligence that we had arrived, than we stretched on the ground the piece of tanned cowhide we carried with us, and covering ourselves with our cloaks, lay down to rest until daybreak. I offered to Mr. Marcopoli to share my "bedding," as his own had not arrived, and in a few minutes we both fell into that deep slumber that follows the exhaustion of a long weary march. I remember my disgust at being violently shaken by my bed companion; who, in a faint and trembling voice, whispered into my ear: "Look there!" I understood at once his look of anguish and terror, for two splendid lions, not more than twenty paces from us, were drinking near the wells that had been sunk by the Arabs. I thought, and told my companion, that as we had no fire-arms with us; the wisest plan was to go to sleep and remain as quiet as possible. I set him the example, and only woke up late in the morning, when the sun was already high up and pouring its burning rays over my uncovered head. Marcopoli, with an absent terrified look impressed on his countenance, was still sitting near me. He told me that he had not slept, but kept watching the lions: they had remained for a long time, drinking, roaring and beating their sides with their tails; and even when they departed he kept listening to their dreadful roar, sounding more distant as the first rays of day appeared.

We had, no doubt, had a narrow escape, as that night a lion had carried away a man and a child who had strayed from the Arab encampment. The Sheik of the Beni Amer, during the few days we remained at Zaga, with true Arab hospitality, always placed at night a strong guard around our tent, to watch the large fires that they kindle in order to keep at a respectful distance these unwelcome night rovers.

We had agreed with the Hababs that we would exchange camels at this spot, but none could be obtained for love or money. It was lucky for us that the Bedouins had by this time found out that all white men are not Turks, otherwise we should have been cast helpless in the very centre of Barka. The Beni Amers could never be induced even to acknowledge that they had camels, though more than 10,000 were grazing under our very eyes.

The Beni Amers are Arabs, speak the Arab language, and have preserved up to the present day all the characteristics of their race. A roving Bedouin of the Yemen and a Beni Amer are so much alike that 50 it seems hardly credible that the Beni Amers possess no record of their advent on the African coast, or of the causes that induced them to leave the land of their ancestors. Their long, black, silky hair has not acquired the woolly texture of that of the sons of Ham, and the small extremities, the well-knit limbs, the straight nose and small lips, the dark bronzed complexion, distinguish them alike from the Shankallas and the Barias, and from the mixed races of the plateaus. They wear a piece of cloth a few yards in length, folded round the body, with an elegance peculiar to the savage. Even with this dirty rag, they must be admired, like the Italian beggar, not only for their beautiful forms, but also for the look of impudence and roguery displayed in the bright glare of their dark eyes. The Beni Amers retain

to a high degree that nuisance so well described by a distinguished traveller in the East, and, like their brethren of the Arabian shore, they are une race bavarde et criarde . They pay a nominal tribute to the Egyptian Government, and the reason we could not obtain camels was that, troops being moved about, they feared that on their arrival at Kassala they would be pressed into the Government service, and not only receive no pay, but most likely in the end lose the greater number of their camels. This tribe roams along the banks of the Barka and its many tributaries. Zaga is only their winter station; at other times they wander over the immense plains north of Barka in search of pasture and water for their innumerable flocks. All over the district of Zaga camps appeared in every direction; the herds of cattle, especially camels, seemed without number: this all indicates that they form a wealthy, powerful tribe.

We encamped near their head-quarters, where resides the Sheik of all the Beni Amers, Ahmed, surrounded by his wives, children, and people. He is a man of middle age, conspicuous among his cunning followers by a shrewd and crafty look. He was friendly to us, and presented us with a few sheep and cows. His camp covered several acres of ground, the whole enclosed by a strong fence; the wigwams are built in a circle a few feet from the hedge; the open space in the centre being reserved for the cattle, always driven in at night. The chief's small circular wood and grass huts contrasted favourably with the dwellings of his followers. The latter, constructed in a circle, are formed by thrusting into the ground the extremities of small branches; a few pieces of coarse matting thrown over them complete the structure. They cannot be more than four feet high, and their average circumference is twelve feet; nevertheless, some eight or ten unwashed faces were seen peeping through the small door, staring with their black, frightened eyes at the strange white men. Small-pox was raging at the time with great virulence; fever also was daily claiming many victims. I gave medicine to several of the sufferers, and good hygienic advice to Sheik Ahmed. He listened with all becoming respect to the good things that fell from the Hakeem's lips: he would see; but they had never done so before, and with Mussulman bigotry and superstition he put an end to the conversation by an "Allah Kareem." [Footnote: "God is merciful"] On the 3rd of November we were again on the march. On the 5th we arrived at Sabderat, the first permanent village we had met with since leaving Moncullou. This village—in appearance similar to those of the Samhar—is built on the side of a large granitic mountain, cleft in two from the summit to the base. Numerous wells are dug in the dried-up bed of the water-course that separates the village. The inhabitants of this divided village often contend between themselves for the possession of the precious fluid; and when the rushing waters have disappeared, human passions too often fill with strife and warfare the otherwise quiet bed of the stream. On the morning of November 6 we entered Kassala. The Nab's nephew had preceded us, to inform the governor of our arrival, and present him with a letter recommending us to the care of the authorities, written by the Pasha of Egypt. To honour us according to his masters firman, the governor sent all the garrison to meet us a few miles from the town, with a polite apology for his absence, due to sickness. The senior partner of the Greek firm of Paniotti also came to welcome us, and afforded us the hospitality of his house and board. Kassala, the capital of Takka, a walled town near the River Gash, containing about 10,000 inhabitants, is on the model of most modern Egyptian towns, public as well as private buildings being alike of mud. The arsenal, barracks, &c. are the only structures of any importance. Beautiful gardens have been made at a short distance from the town, near the River Gash, by the European portion of the community. Just before, and immediately after the rains, the place is very unhealthy. During those months malarious fever and dysentery prevail to a great extent.

Kassala, formerly a prosperous city, the centre of all the trade of the immense tract of country included from Massowah and Suakin to the Nile, and from Nubia to Abyssinia, was, at the

date of our arrival, almost deserted, covered with ruins and rank vegetation, destitute of the most common necessaries of life, the spectre of its former self, haunted by its few remaining ghost-like and plague-stricken citizens. Kassala had just gone through the ordeal of a mutiny of Nubian troops. Pernicious fevers, malignant dysenteries and cholera had decimated both rebels and loyalists; war and sickness had marched hand in hand to make of this fair oasis of the Soudan a wilderness painful to contemplate. The mutiny broke out in July. The Nubian troops had not been paid for two years, and when they claimed a portion of their arrears, they only met with a stern refusal. Under these circumstances, it is not astonishing that they became ready listeners to the treasonable words and extravagant promises made to them by one of their petty chiefs, named Denda, a descendant of the former Nubian kings. They matured their plot in great secrecy, and every one was horrified one morning to learn ⁵² that the black troops had broken out in open mutiny and murdered their officers, and, no longer restrained, had followed their natural inclinations to revel in carnage and plunder. A few Egyptian regulars had, luckily, possession of the arsenal, and held it against these infuriated savages until troops could arrive from Kedaref and Khartoum. The Europeans and Egyptians gallantly defended their part of the town. They erected walls and small earthworks between themselves and the mutineers, and continually on the alert, though few in number, they repulsed with great gallantry the assault of the fiends thirsting for their lives and property. Egyptian troops poured in from all directions and relieved the besieged city. More than a thousand of the mutineers were killed near the gates of the town; nearly a thousand more were tried and executed; and those who attempted to escape the vengeance of the merciless pasha and fled for safety to the wilderness, were hunted down like beasts by the roving Bedouins. Though order was now restored, it was no easy matter to obtain camels. It required all the power and persuasion of the authorities to induce the Shukrie-Arabs to enter the town and convey us to Kedaref.

We heard at Kassala the miserable end of Le Comte de Bisson's mad enterprise. It appears that the Comte, formerly an officer in the Neapolitan army, had married at an advanced age a beautiful, accomplished and rich heiress, the daughter of some contractor; it was "a mariage de convenance," a title bought by wealth and beauty. In the autumn of 1864, De Bisson reached Kassala accompanied by some fifty adventurers, the scum of the outcasts of all nations, who had enrolled themselves under the standard of the ambitious Comte, "on the promised assurance that power and wealth would be, before long, their envied portion." De Bisson's idea seems to have been to personify a second Moses: he came not only to colonize, but also to convert. The wild roving Bedouin of the Barka plains would, he believed, not only at once and with gratitude acknowledge his rule, but would soon, abandoning his false creed, fall prostrate before the altar he intended to erect in the wilderness. About a hundred town Arabs were induced to join the European party,—a useless set of vagabonds, who adorned themselves with the regimental uniform, accepted the rifle, pistol, and sword, drew their rations, were punctual in their attendance and always ready to salaam, but showed much dislike to the drill and other civilized notions the Comte and his officers endeavoured to impress upon them. Their departure from Kassala for the land of milk and honey was quite theatrical; in front rode on a camel, a gallant captain (who had taken his discharge from the Austrian service,) playing on the bugle a parting "fanfare;" behind him, the second in command, mounted on a prancing charger, and followed by the European part of the force, who with military step, and shoulder to shoulder, marched as men for whom victory is their slave. Behind came Le Comte himself, clad in a general's uniform, his breast covered with the many ⁵³ decorations which sovereigns had only been too proud to confer on such a noble spirit; next to him rode gracefully his beautiful wife, looking handsomer still in the picturesque kepi and red uniform of a French zouave; behind, closing the march, the well-knit

Arabs, with plunder written in their dark bright eyes, marched with a quick elastic step and as much regularity as could be expected from men who abhorred order and had been drilled for so short a time. Need I say that the expedition failed utterly? The Arabs of the plains declined to accept another pontiff and king in the person of the gallant and noble Comte. They were even vicious enough to induce those of their brethren who had accepted service, to return to their former occupations, and forget to leave behind them on their departure the arms, clothes, etc., which had been dealt out to them on their entering the Comte's service.

The return to Kassala was humble: there was no trumpet this time; the brilliant uniforms had given way to soiled and patched raiments: even the general adopted a civilian's dress; the lady alone was still smiling, laughing, beautiful as ever; but no Arab in gaudy attire closed the hungry-looking and worn out cortege. De Bisson had failed: but why?—Because the Egyptian Government had not only afforded none of the assistance that had been promised to him, but all at once stopped the supplies he considered himself entitled to expect. A claim of I do not know how many millions was at once made on the Egyptian Government. A commissioner was sent out, who it appears took a very different view of the question, as he declared the "Comte's" pretensions absurd and unreasonable. The Comte soon afterwards, with his wife, returned to Nice, leaving at Kassala the remnant of his European army; the few who had not succumbed to fever or other malarious diseases.

At the time of the mutiny of the Nubian troops, a few not in hospital or on their way to Khartoum or Massowah, fought well; two even paid with their lives their gallant attempt at a sortie, and they had gained for themselves, by their bravery in those difficult times, the respect they had lost during the long days of inaction. De Bisson was instrumental in spreading the most fallacious reports as to the condition of the captives held by Theodore, and even when an army was already marching to their rescue, "correct" accounts appeared of the repulse of the British by Theodore; at another time a mendacious report was spread that a great battle had been fought in Tigr'e between Theodore and a powerful rebel—a battle which was said to have lasted three days without any marked success having been gained by either side; and that Theodore, having perceived in the enemy's camp some Europeans, had sent orders for our immediate execution; the fulfilment of the sentence resting with the Empress, who was residing at Gondar, and that his (De Bisson's) agent was using his influence to stay the execution. Absurd and ridiculous as were these reports, they were not the less productive of great distress to the families and friends of the captives. During the five days we spent at Kassala, I am happy to say that I was able to relieve many sufferers; amongst them our host himself, and one of his guests, a young, well-educated Egyptian officer, laid at death's door by a severe attack of dysentery. A Nubian colonel called on us one morning; he strongly advised us to stop before it was too late. He had heard much about Theodore's doings, and assured us that we would meet but with deceit and treachery at his hands. On our telling him that we were officers and bound to obey, he said, nothing more, but bid us good-by in a sorrowful voice.

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