



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Stanford University Libraries



3 6105 120 089 300

WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND





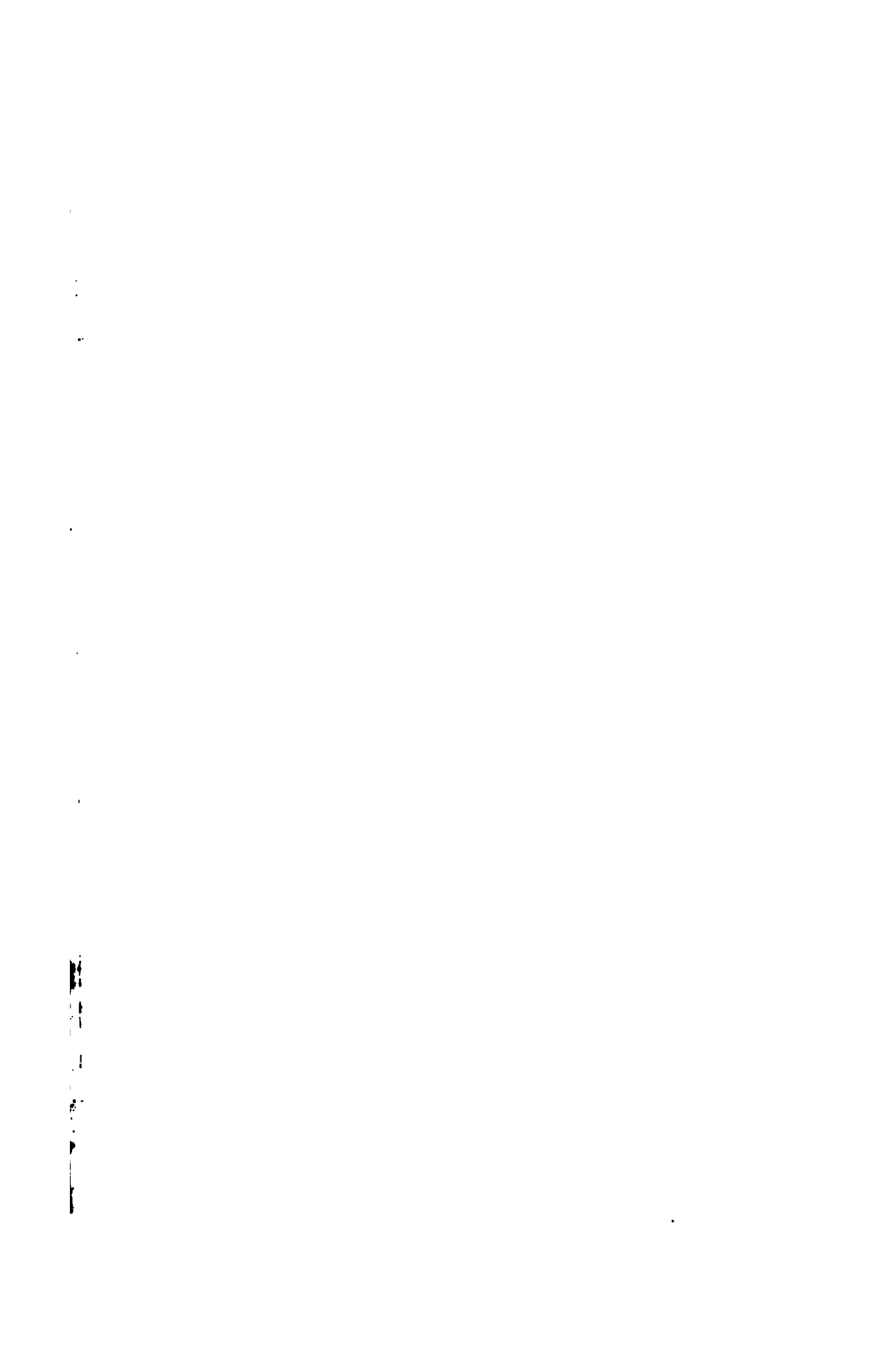
HOOVER INSTITUTION
on War, Revolution, and Peace

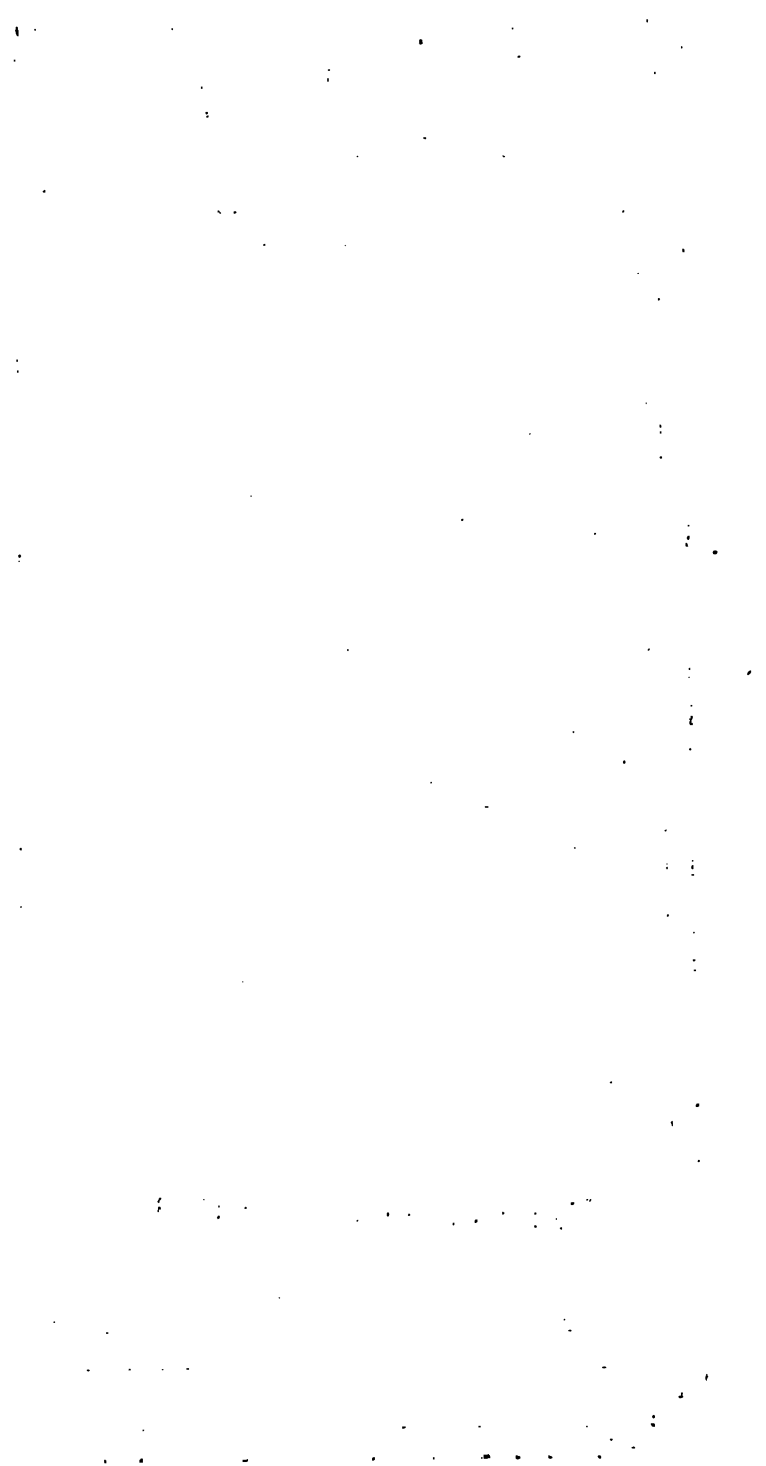
FOUNDED BY HERBERT HOOVER, 1919

1

1

**WITH THE ABYSSINIANS
IN SOMALILAND**







WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

BY

MAJOR J. WILLES JENNINGS

D.S.O., R.A.M.C.

Principal Medical Officer of the Force

AND

CHRISTOPHER LODISON

M.D., F.R.C.S.

Lecturer on Anatomy, Charing Cross Hospital Medical School

WHO ARRANGED THE MATTER FOR PUBLICATION

WITH A PREFACE BY

COLONEL A. N. ROCHFORD

C.B., C.M.G., R.A.

Inspector of Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery

AND SIXTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
TAKEN BY MAJOR JENNINGS, AND A MAP

LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27 PATERNOSTER ROW

1905

Sc

DTAB

712

PREFACE

ON my return to London, on the 8th May, 1904, after accompanying the Abyssinians in Somaliland, I was sometimes asked by those of my friends who had noticed my absence where I had been and what I had been doing. A satisfactory answer was beyond the limits of a casual conversation, so I recommend those inquirers, and all others who are interested in Abyssinia, to read this book, which embodies Major Jennings's diary of our expedition.

He has well described the operations in the field, and I venture to think that the information he has collected regarding the folk-lore, the characteristics, and customs of the Abyssinians will prove of great interest to the general reader.

A. N. ROCHFORD.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
Somaliland—The Mullah—Expeditions against him—Abyssinian Expeditions	
—Call to go—Marseilles to Aden—Berbera—Djibouti, description of—	
Dinner with the Governor—The railway to Dire Daouw—Rolling stock	
—Scene at the station—The journey to Dire Daouw	3

CHAPTER II

Dire Daouw—Fleas and bugs—March to Harrar—Camp at Adele—American and Manchester goods—Olive oil—Arrival at Harrar—Plans—Colonel Rochfort's Staff—Call on Ras Makunnan—Dinner with the Ras—Mr. Gerolimito—The King's birthday—The Ras's power—Harrar—Natives—Customs—Women—Mutilation of enemies—The streets—Refuse lying about—Houses—The hospital—Leper hospital: the staff, administration, and treatment—The fathers' impressions, ideas, and superstitions—"Snakes"	25
---	----

CHAPTER III

Country round Harrar—Temperature—Produce—Coffee—Cattle—Caravans and mules—Birds—Insects—The stink ant—Camp outside Harrar—Shooting—Colonel Rochfort leaves for Jigjiga—Arrival of Major Alone—Difficulties of preparing the Expedition—March to Feyambiro—Night in a native hut—The camp at Feyambiro—Occupations—The camel—Method of loading and names of mats, etc.—The camel's gait	51
--	----

CHAPTER IV

Convoing treasury chests to Jigjiga—The Gureis Mountain—The country about Jigjiga—Jigjiga—Abdullah Tahr—The wells—Watering—Composition of a caravan—Three months' stores—Departure of Duff and Dunn—Assistant-Surgeon Wakeman—Small Game—Shooting—Arrival of Alone—March to Sesebani, Gaho—Order of march—Harakley—Elevation of country—Jailee—The thorn bushes, description of—Tuli—"Interpreter"—Dagabur—Interruption of march	75
--	----

viii WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

CHAPTER V

	PAGE
Bad news from Farso—Colonel Rochfort—The proceedings of the Abyssinians—Dagabur—The wells—The country round—Ant-hills—Abdulah Tahr—Shooting oryx—Tracking a runaway mule—Arrival of Duff and Dunn—A lion tale—Good news from the Colonel—The march resumed—Sesebani—The wells—Arrival of Ogilvy—March to Dagaha Mado—Camp at Dagaha Mado—Ramsay-Fairfax . . .	103

CHAPTER VI

Dagaha Mado—The wells—Method of sounding—Passage of the Abyssinian army through Dagaha Mado—A swallowed leech—News from the Colonel—The Abyssinians and their animals—Departure from Dagaha Mado—Instructions for the advance—The Staff—Duff—Sergeant Tubb—Somali women—Somalis and Abyssinians—Shooting—My syce—Sesebani—March to Gabridchari—En, Aggal, Doohrie, Warandab, Gabridehari . . .	125
--	-----

CHAPTER VII

Gabridehari—The march resumed—Beribu—Shooting—Adeleh—The trees and water—Gerlogubi—The wells—Evidence of a higher civilisation—An Abyssinian opinion of the country—Orders from the Colonel—Operations of the Somaliland Field Force—Jidballi—March to Wardair—The mails—Expedition to Gumburru—The battle-field and Cobbe's zareba . . .	145
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII

Wardair—Despatch from General Egerton—Commotion in camp—Inspection of Walwal—Consultations—Decision to concentrate at Gerlogubi—Temporary reoccupation of Wardair—Failure of the water at Gerlogubi—Shortage of the Abyssinian supplies—Concentration at Gorahai—Drastic treatment—The plain of Gorahai—The bush, a nightmare—The district around camp—Arrival of Alone and Wakeman—The whole party together—The Abyssinian camp: plan of; stench of—Doctoring camels—The native's thick head—Baird—Dunn—Capitano Citerni and his dog . . .	161
---	-----

CONTENTS

ix

CHAPTER IX

	PAGE
ABYSSINIAN CUSTOMS : Method of obtaining information—Wakeman—Mobilisation and equipment—Soldiers—Ranks—Transport—Dress—Decorations—Fighting qualities and methods—Tribute system—Coinage—Calendar—Seasons—Posts—Education—Justice and crime—The Thief Catcher	181

CHAPTER X

ABYSSINIAN CUSTOMS (<i>continued</i>) : Dress, male and female—Sleep—Food—Drink—Industries—Musicians—Marriage : 1, by jury ; 2, by sacrament ; 3, by concubinage—Divorce—Marriages amongst the Gallas—Abyssinian baptism, circumcision, names, vaccination, religion—The priests—Fasts—Feasts—Medicine—Hystero-epilepsy—Booda . . .	201
---	-----

CHAPTER XI

THE SOMALI : The shikari—General impression—Jabber—Work—Dress—Men and women—Status of women—Food and Drink—Liars—Enmity between the Abyssinians and the Somalis : examples of—Hockey match and a free fight—NARRATIVE RESUMED : Ceremonial calls—Midgans—Extracts from the diary—My syce again : the last of him—Further accounts of the operations—Extended shooting expeditions—A three days' shoot—Oryx—Gerenuk—The Colonel's achievement . . .	225
--	-----

CHAPTER XII

Shooting expedition to Las Bullaleh—Incidents by the way—The lion zarebas—Ogilvy's success—Rhinoceros tracks—Shooting a bull rhinoceros—Quarrel in camp—The Basha Balina—Return to Gorahai—Movements of other members of the party—Councils of war—Decision to retire—Camp struck and the route of the different parties—Gorahai to Sesebani—Sesebani to Hargeisa—Tribesmen's quarrels by the way—A lion story—Hargeisa—Hargeisa to Berbera—The party complete again—Fairfax goes to Illig—Assembly at Aden—Return home . . .	249
---	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS

No.	Subject.	Page
1.	COMMISSARIAT STORES, BERRERA	9
2.	NO. 2 GENERAL HOSPITAL, BERRERA	9
3.	A CARGO OF HUMANITY, s.s. "FALCON"	11
4.	THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, DJIBOUTI	15
5.	ADAGALLA RAILWAY STATION	15
6.	SMILING SOMALIS	20
7.	DIRE DAOUW	20
8.	THE ENTRANCE TO RAS MAKUNNAN'S PALACE, HARRAR	31
9.	SOMALI WOMEN POUNDING COFFEE-BERRIES	37
10.	SOMALI WOMEN GRINDING CORN	37
11.	A STREET IN HARRAR	40
12.	THE MARKET, HARRAR	40
13.	GALLA GIRLS SELLING GHEE, HARRAR	44
14.	AT THE LEPROSY HOSPITAL, HARRAR	44
15.	WATER-CARRIERS, HARRAR	53
16.	ON THE ROAD TO FEYAMEIRO	64
17.	A DINNER OF THORNS	64
18.	GROUND-FLOOR PLAN OF A SOMALI HUT	65
19.	"FIRST, GET THE CAMEL DOWN"	71
20.	THE HERIO APPLIED	71
21.	THE TREASURY CHESTS ON THE WAY TO JIGJIGA	77
22.	JIGJIGA FORT	77
23.	AT THE WELLS, JIGJIGA	81
24.	THE KITCHEN AT JIGJIGA—SERGEANTS TUBE AND SHEPHERD	81
25.	SOMALI AND AOUL	89
26.	SOMALI AND GERENUK	89
27.	OUR MIDGAN GUIDE	94
28.	AT THE WELLS, DAGABUR	103
29.	AN ANT-HILL NEAR DAGABUR	109
30.	HEADS OF ORYX AND LESSER KOODOO	109
31.	SOMALI WOMEN WITH HANS	120

xii WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

No.	Subject.	Page
32.	A MAT HUT—SOMALI	120
33.	ABYSSINIANS STRAGGLING INTO DAGANA MADO	131
34.	RIVER-BED AND POOLS, EN	131
35.	WIVES AND THEIR MASTERS	136
36.	SMILING GALLAS	136
37.	STRIKING CAMP, SESEBANI	141
38.	THE DREARY MARCH	145
39.	BRITISH OFFICERS, GERLOGUBI	149
40.	A MIDDAY HALT	149
41.	PLAN OF THE ABYSSINIAN CAMP, GORAHAI	155
42.	FALLING INTO PLACE BEFORE MARCHING OFF	161
43.	A "DUST-DEVIL" APPROACHING, ABOUT TO STRIKE	168
44.	A "DUST-DEVIL" DEPARTING, HAVING STRUCK	168
45.	SAND-GROUSE FOR THE POT	170
46.	THE ABYSSINIAN CAMP, GORAHAI	170
47.	A CORNER OF THE ABYSSINIAN CAMP, GORAHAI	172
48.	GERASMATCH DUSTA ENTERING THE ZAREBA	182
49.	ABYSSINIAN CHIEFS AND FOLLOWERS IN "REVIEW ORDER"	182
50.	ABYSSINIAN SOLDIERS IN FULL DRESS	187
51.	FITUABARI GABRI, BALAMEBARAS AMEGUD AND BODY-GUARD	190
52.	TWO SHORN LAMES, FIZBAN AND GEORGIS	202
53.	POOL IN RIVER-BED, GORAHAI	202
54.	ABYSSINIAN RAIDING PARTY	216
55.	MORNING PRAYER—ABDULAHI CONDUCTING	225
56.	MORNING PRAYER—ABDULAHI CONDUCTING	225
57.	MORNING PRAYER—ABDULAHI CONDUCTING	225
58.	HABR AWAL SOMALIS	228
59.	DUFF AND BAIRD DISPENSING JUSTICE, GORAHAI	236
60.	HIS MAJESTY UGAZ HASHI, KING OF THE RER UGAZ	241
61.	A FAVOURITE SOMALI ATTITUDE OF REST	241
62.	Ogilvy AND LION	249
63.	PLAN OF ROUTE TO LAS BULLALEN	251
64.	SKINNING A VICTIM	253
65.	THE HEAD OF THE BULL RHINOCEROS SET UP	253
66.	Ogilvy AND WART HOG	256
67.	SOMALI AND LEOPARD (DUNN'S)	260
68.	A WILD PIG	260

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

Somaliland—The Mullah—Expeditions against him—Abyssinian Expeditions—Call to go—Marseilles to Aden—Berbera—Djibouti, description of—Dinner with the Governor—The railway to Dire Daouw—Rolling stock—Scene at the station—The journey to Dire Daouw

THE interior of the “great horn” of Africa, under the name of Somaliland, has been of special interest to our fellow countrymen during recent years. It may roughly be described as extending from a little north of the Equator on the south to the Gulf of Aden on the north, from the Indian Ocean on the east to the country of the Gallas and the Webbe Shabéleh on the west, and measuring some 500 miles in its greatest length from north to south and 400 miles in its greatest breadth from east to west. It is a dry land; a land of thorn trees, of desert and of prairie.

The British Protectorate comprises a strip of territory about 300 miles in length, running east and west along the southern shore of the Gulf of Aden and extending southwards, about 80 miles on the west side, and 200 miles on the east. Its southern limit is formed for the most part by the immense

4 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

waterless plateau of the Haud. To the south-west is the country of the Ogaden, Rer Ali, Habr Awal and other Somali tribes, and to the west are the Gadabursi Country, the Abyssinian province of Harrar and French Somaliland. The country to the south-west of the British Protectorate is recognised as the Abyssinian sphere of influence. To the east and south-west of the Haud is the Mudug district—the hinterland of the Italian Protectorate and the scene of a great part of the operations of the various Somaliland expeditions.

During Gu, or the wet season, from the beginning of March to mid-May, grazing is plentiful, and the tribes with their flocks and herds can move freely about. Their movements are more restricted during the subsequent periods of the lesser rains, and, during Jilal, or the dry season, from mid-November to the end of February, they are tied to the neighbourhood of the different wells and watering places. It is quite hopeless to attempt to come up with a force of run-aways during the rains, for the whole country is open to them; and during the dry season, the difficulties of supply and transport over vast waterless and pathless stretches render such an effort one of great hardship and doubtful of accomplishment.

Throughout the whole of Somaliland, as in other lands, it has apparently been the custom from time immemorial for the strong to dispossess the weak of whatsoever goods the strong desire. Camels, cattle and sheep are the Somali's possessions, and raid-

ing is his pastime. Not infrequently, indeed, a party of raiders, laden with spoil, has found, on returning home, that their own Karia, or village, has suffered during their absence from the depredations of another party of raiders, belonging, maybe, to the self-same tribe which had provided their own victims on that occasion. Here and there, however, more settled communities have been established under Mullahs or Sheiks who, from their religious character, or for other reasons, have been free from disturbance. The preaching of a holy war, or *jihad*, by one or other of these Mullahs has been undertaken from time to time, and will no doubt continue to be so in the future.

The movement of the Mullah Mohammed Abdulla Ibn Hassan, once called the "Mad Mullah," was primarily directed against the Abyssinians; but, as he gathered strength, he became able to enforce the principle that "whosoever was not with him was against him," with the result that, amongst others, some of the tribes which were nominally under British protection fell victims to his displeasure. His disturbance and plunderings of these tribes naturally brought him into conflict with the British authorities, and hence arose the necessity for the various expeditions which have been got together for his suppression. He was severely handled on various occasions by the expeditions of Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. E. Swayne in 1901-2, particularly in the fight at Erigo on October 6th, 1902. Altogether during

6 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

these two years his force sustained 2,600 casualties, and he suffered the loss of 40,000 camels, 3,000 cattle, 400 horses, and 285,000 sheep. More extended operations were undertaken during 1902-3 by Brigadier-General W. H. Manning, in which the Mullah again sustained many losses. His prestige, however, did not suffer as much as it would otherwise have done, since he managed to overcome a force of ten British officers and 183 men consisting of Sikhs, Yaos and others under Colonel Plunkett near Gumburu on April 17th, 1903.

During General Manning's campaign a force of 5,000 Abyssinians, under the command of Fituarari Gabri, was provided by the Emperor Menelik. Colonel A. N. Rochfort was associated with them, and they co-operated with the British force, by occupying the country along the Webbe Shabéleh and the south-western and western parts of the Haud ; the intention being to cut off the retreat of the Mullah, should he attempt to break away in that direction. The Abyssinians in various actions accounted for some hundreds of the Mullah's forces, and captured large quantities of camels and stock.

The Mullah, however, was still far from being brought to terms, so that during 1903-4 still more extensive operations were planned under the command of Lieut.-General Sir C. C. Egerton, K.C.B., D.S.O. ; while the Emperor Menelik again undertook to assist in Abyssinian Somaliland. On this occasion Colonel Rochfort was to be provided with a small staff, and

at the same time the Emperor Menelik requested the services of two British medical officers.

In this way it came to pass that on September 26th, 1903, Captain H. N. Dunn, R.A.M.C., and myself found that we had had the good fortune to be offered the appointments. It is needless to say that the opportunity of active service under such novel and interesting conditions was accepted on the spot. We had both served for some years in the Egyptian army, and Dunn had had five and I four years' work in the Soudan.

Our passages to Aden were booked the same day by the P. and O. steamer "Britannia," sailing on October 2nd, and although we did not join the vessel until October 9th, at Marseilles, the interval of time was fully occupied in the collection, arrangement and disposition of the necessary stores. It was necessary to take complete camp, field, and hospital equipment, together with supplies for four months. The lists of the medical and surgical stores taken, and those left in reserve, were made with the assistance of Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel M. W. Russell, R.A.M.C., and of Mr. Barnes. On September 29th we had the advantage of an interview, in London, with Lieutenant-Colonel Sir J. Lane Harrington, K.C.M.G., C.V.O., C.B., H.B.M. Agent, and Consul General at Adis Ababa. Colonel Harrington provided us with a copy of his "General notes on outfit, transport, etc., for Abyssinia," and in numberless matters gave us the benefit of his valuable advice and instruction.

8 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

So far as game shooting was concerned, a Rigby double-barrel reflex .450 rifle, with india-rubber butt-plate, 10½ lb. weight, 28-in. barrel, and carrying a solid nickel-covered bullet of 480 grains for big game, a .303 Mauser-Metford for small game, and a twelve-bore double-barrelled shot gun, were taken. In the end, however, apart from the fact that my own rifles and gun went astray at Aden, our party was obliged to be content with sharing rifles, in order to cut down the impedimenta as much as possible.

The details of the stores and equipments taken from home or purchased at Aden, Harrar, or elsewhere, need not be given in this narrative, and it is only necessary to introduce various criticisms by the way.

Our table on board the "Britannia" comprised General Sir Archibald Hunter, Captain A. Duff, Captain H. N. Dunn, Captain Lord George Murray, A.D.C. to General Hunter, Mr. J. L. Baird, of the Diplomatic Service, Lieutenant Ogilvy, R.E., and myself. Duff, Baird, and Ogilvy, like Dunn and myself, were on their way to be attached to the Abyssinian army.

At Port Said, on October 13th, General Hunter wired his "salaams" to Sir Reginald Wingate, Sirdar of the Egyptian army, and was good enough, on his own suggestion, to include Dunn's name and mine. He received the following in reply: "To General Sir Archibald Hunter, s.s. 'Britannia.' Very many thanks for your kind telegram. Your old comrades



COMMISSARIAT STORES, BERBERA.
 Photograph taken on the return journey. See p. 264.



No. 2 GENERAL HOSPITAL, BERBERA.
 Photograph taken on the return journey. See p. 264.



A CARGO OF HUMANITY. S.S. FALCON.

of the Egyptian army wish you and Jennings and Dunn every success and prosperity. *Bon voyage* and the best of luck from us all !”

We made a good and rapid passage, and disembarked at Aden, on October 19th, at 8 a.m. The same day we received instructions from Colonel Rochfort to leave at that place all medical stores surplus to our probable requirements, and were advised of a number of articles, the purchase of which could safely be deferred until our arrival in Harrar. Messrs. Cowasjee, Dinshaw Brothers, supplied us with the stores we wanted, and through them also our syces (grooms) and tent boys were engaged. At Aden also we obtained a supply of Maria Teresa dollars for use in Abyssinia, at the rate of \$100 per Rs.141-8.

There was no regular boat leaving Aden for Djibouti before the 22nd, so we received authority from the Port Commanding Officer to charter Messrs. Cowasjee, Dinshaw's s.s. "Falcon," to carry us on to Djibouti from Berbera, for which latter port the vessel sailed in the ordinary course on the evening after our arrival. The terms arranged for the journey were Rs.300 for the whole party, in addition to Rs.5 for each servant.

We arrived at Berbera on the 20th and a very busy scene we found there. Easy-going Eastern methods were out of fashion for the time being, and the place was transformed into a hive of industry, the co-ordination and harmony of whose working was

indeed remarkable. Berbera served as the base of the Somaliland Field Force, and the force at that time numbered roughly 6,000 fighting men, with some 12,000 coolies and others attached. The conglomeration of British and Indian soldiers, native levies, camp followers, camels, mules, ponies, donkeys, sheep, mule waggons, pony carts, camel carts, and the rest, formed a bewildering picture of colour and activity. Big ships were discharging into lighters and dhows; thousands of natives of all sorts and colours were buzzing and humming about like so many bees, or rather, one might say, were working like ants at giant ant-hills of compressed forage and sacks of oats; going and coming, passing and re-passing, hurrying on and returning; it seemed as if they moved in onward and recurrent streams in response to some unseen systole and diastole.

We went ashore and paid our respects to the Commandant, Major Rawlins, and, at the invitation of Major F. W. Gee, I.M.S., the officer in command, dined at the base hospital. Later on we rejoined the "Falcon" and started for Djibouti at midnight.

Our short sea voyage terminated at eight o'clock the next evening, when we arrived opposite Djibouti. To arrive *opposite* Djibouti was one thing, but to enter the port was quite another; in point of fact, we were provided with four hours of the most comical and diverting variety entertainment that it has ever been our lot to witness. It appeared that, as Djibouti was not the vessel's regular port of call, nobody was

quite sure of the entrance in the dark. The harbour lights were partly screened and somewhat confused by the presence of two Russian men-of-war—one of which was, I believe, the “Czarewitch”—coaling from lighters some two or three miles off-shore. We tacked and turned about in the dark, and great excitement prevailed on board; oaths and contradictory orders forming a choice accompaniment. “I see three lights,” yelled the skipper. “No, two—yes, three—one red, two white.” “There’s only one!” cried the mate. “There’s four now—yes, I believe it *is* four—two red, one white!” And so on and so on, ringing the changes on the numbers and the colours. “Dikali! d—n you!” shouted the skipper to the man at the wheel. “What the d—l are you saying?” to the man throwing the lead. “Enough of that confounded lingo. Let’s have it so that we can understand.” “Twelve bottoms, no fathom,” promptly replied the man with the lead; his best Anglo-Saxon becoming a bit mixed. The skipper and the mate turned their bull’s eyes fiercely on one another and then on the chart, roared and stamped about and swore immoderately. Finally, when everybody on board had been suitably anathematised, they gave it up in despair and dropped anchor outside until the morning, and fortified themselves after their efforts with something with soda water in it. Somewhere in the ribs are the “laughter spots,” and on that occasion our braces rubbed against them until they made them sore; next time we mean to wear belts.

12 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

Daylight came to our aid in due season, and we got through easily enough, landing at eight o'clock on the morning of the 22nd.

There is a good, well-sheltered anchorage for ships at Djibouti a mile long and half a mile broad. The harbour lights which so confused our skipper and mate consist of a fixed white light 105 feet above high water and visible for 15 miles, a fixed red light 84 feet high and visible for 9 miles, and two other powerful white lights in the town.

No train left for Dire Daouw, the inland terminus of the railway and two marches distant from Harrar, before the 25th, so we had to make the best of things in the little French port until then. We stayed at the Hôtel des Arcades, a three-storeyed building in the main street. Our bedrooms were on the first floor and were approached by two flights of stairs which the new-comer is strongly recommended to negotiate for the first time by daylight, seeing that no two steps are alike. During the afternoon following our arrival we called *en troupe* on M. Dubarry, the Governor, and gratefully accepted his kind invitation to dinner on the morrow.

In many respects Djibouti is far ahead of Berbera, and there is no doubt that by means of its 308 kilometres of railway it has snapped up a lot of the trade that formerly went through Berbera. The European quarter of the town lies on a low promontory which, being lapped by the sea on three sides, gives one at first the impression of its being an island; and

indeed, the low-lying ground between it and the mainland is very much invaded by the water at high tide.

The native quarter is on this low-lying land, and many parts of it are regularly inundated at high water. Bearing this fact in mind, and the native habit of throwing rubbish about anywhere as well as the primeval character of the sanitary arrangements in general, it is no wonder that the stench of the place is very abominable. It is quite certain in fact that, were it not for the drying, bactericidal power of the tropical sun, many parts of the native quarter would soon be unfit for human habitation. The huts are rudely constructed of mats, rags, sticks, dried grass, mud and such-like materials. The chief merchandise consists of dates, grain, and of dried sticks for firewood, which latter commodity is as scarce there as in many places inland.

The natives, like those at Aden and Berbera, affect "amber," and bedeck themselves with necklaces consisting sometimes of long strings of beads, or perhaps, of only two pieces, each as large as a hen's egg, threaded together with a leather lace. Several of the natives offered pearls for sale at most extortionate prices.

Beggars clamouring for "baksheesh" are as plentiful in Djibouti as elsewhere, and they are peculiarly frank in one respect. If their importunities are not rewarded, thinking that their appeal is not understood, they will exhibit an open hand half-full of small

14 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

change and point to it with the other. They seemed to wonder that the simple European should turn away, the notion having occurred to him that they were not half so poor as "by Allah!" they said they were.

The market of the European town, overlooking the native quarter from a height of from ten to fifteen feet, contained a number of wooden shelters and stalls on which carrots, potatoes, grain, and a few melons, with fish and meat, were exposed for sale—the meat, that is to say, was exposed so far as the flies allowed it to be.

In the centre of the town is the square—"Place Menelik"—the sides of which are mostly lined with shops belonging to the ubiquitous and indispensable Greek, and containing every conceivable article of merchandise. There is a splendid road—a perfect bicycle track, though a short one—made of madreporé coral, crushed and rolled, leading from the town to the railway station over a bridge which spans a little inlet of the sea. It is lighted by standard oil lamps about fifty yards apart, and a low wall runs on either side. There is a hospital near the railway station, and a dispensary in the town, at which two French military doctors administer to the wants of the sick. The European part of Djibouti, taken altogether, is a smart, clean little town, and many of the houses are good and well built, particularly the Governor's, which was, I think, one of the best houses we had seen since leaving Suez.



THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, DJIBOUTI.



ADAGALLA STATION.



SMILING SOMALIS.



DIRE DAOUW.

The drinking water comes from about five miles inland, and is pumped up and stored in reservoirs hewn out of the rock. None of us had time to visit the site of the reservoirs, but M. Bastianello, agent for the Compagnie de L'Afrique Orientale, said that the supply is practically unlimited, although, nominally, it depends upon the amount of rainfall. He said that there were no natural springs, and that the collection of the water is the result of percolation through the soil. The water has a brackish taste, owing to the presence, it was said, of magnesium salts in solution. It is brought to the town in iron pipes and rises to the first-storey level of the town houses, approximately 67,200 gallons being delivered daily.

The kindly hospitality of M. and Madame Dubarry was very welcome to us, and we did full justice to their generous fare. After dinner M. Dubarry made us a happy and most friendly speech, to which "Diplomaticus" (Baird) replied in first-rate style. M. de Carlan, Secretary to the Governor, Madame de Carlan, and M. Bastianello, were also of the company. Madame de Carlan added to our collection of dogs, which, up to that time, consisted of three mongrel members, by presenting Duff with a terrier.

Our hotel accounts for the three days and nights, exclusive of tips, amounted to 40 frs. each. The cost of transport from Djibouti to railhead was £18 10s. per ton, and my lot of twenty-nine articles, comprising camp,¹ hospital and field equipment, four months'

16 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

rations, and private baggage, weighing 14·77 cwt., cost £13 13s. 3d. The charge for the dogs was 10s. each.

It may be of interest to give a few details of the Djibouti-Dire Daouw railway, which, as a piece of engineering, reflects a lasting credit upon the French authorities.¹

The quay at Djibouti is 500 metres square, and the depth of water at the jetty is from 7 to 8 metres. In addition to the usual station residences there are two workshops and a large storage shed about 15 by 30 metres. The railway is a metre gauge, and the rails weigh 20 kilos per metre, and are each 10 m. long. The sleepers are iron, of a special "Menelik" type, and weigh 30 kilos each, there being thirteen of them per rail, and, on the average, 1,333 per kilometre of line. The bed of ballast is 2·80 m. wide and ·35 m. deep. There are iron telegraph posts along the left side, going from Djibouti, carrying four wires, one from Djibouti to Dire Daouw direct, one between the different stations, and two for general usage. The telegraph posts consist of three interfitting tubes, the whole weighing 75 kilos, and they are placed at 70 m. distance from one another. There are apparently two kinds of engines in use on the line, both burning Cardiff patent fuel; one a compound engine with four axles weighing 35 tons, and the other with three axles weighing 29 tons. There

¹ For some of the details given we are indebted to *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, No. 16, Août, 1903.

are some bogie waggons of four axles, weighing 10 tons each and carrying a load of 22 tons, and others with two axles, weighing 5 tons each and carrying a load of 10 tons. The passenger carriages are first and second class combined, and third class. Our train was made up of one of the heavier engines, a guard's van, four open trucks, one third and two first and second class combined carriages. Including these, I noticed altogether, at different places along the line, nine engines, of which three were undergoing repairs, twenty-one covered trucks, sixty-six open trucks, four first and second class carriages with combined couplings and buffers, and one third class carriage, half a dozen trolleys, and a miscellaneous amount of railway material. At many places along the line, sometimes only about five kilometres apart, there are wells sunk to variable depths in the rock which serve for the water supply. Fourteen parties of railway gangers were seen along the line. Each party numbered six or seven natives (one of whom carried a rifle and mounted guard) and was in charge of a European, apparently either a Frenchman, an Italian, or a Greek. These figures doubtless are not a complete summary of the railway material, as two or three naps helped to pass the time on the journey, and darkness came on a short time before reaching Dire Daouw. The figures will, however, indicate with sufficient nearness the present powers of the line. Unfortunately the traffic along the railway at the present time is far from making it a remunerative

18 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

undertaking ;—the cost of working was said to be 115,000 francs per month, and the receipts only some 15,000 francs ! The line certainly taps a rich district, but its prospects are so involved in political considerations that speculation upon them would be foolish.

We booked our passage and cleared the luggage at Djibouti on the 24th, so that all that remained to be done at the station at six o'clock the next morning, on our departure, was to pay for the dogs and light kit. This was a very complex affair at Djibouti, and the attendant uproar and excitement beggar description. English, French, Greeks, Arabs, and Somalis all talked at once ; the railway officials, being possessed of horns, blew vigorous blasts both fore and aft ; the engine whistled and let off steam ; the dogs barked ; and crowds of yelling natives filled in the details of the pandemonium.

Our party on the train was joined by Lieutenant C. L. Hussey, U.S.A.N., going to Adis Ababa to negotiate a commercial treaty between Abyssinia and the United States.

After leaving Djibouti, the railway crosses a desert plain intersected by numbers of little torrent beds, and their existence has necessitated a lot of bridging work. A light bridge of 12 metres' span leads over the bed of the Schébélé at k.19, where the ravine is over 70 feet deep and about 170 yards wide. Near Holl-Holl station at k.52 we had an opportunity of seeing the fine metal viaduct which runs over

the confluence of the Louré and Holl-Holl river beds some 100 feet below. After the first few kilometres from Djibouti the way mounts rapidly into the maritime range of hills, and at k.60 attains the plateau of Sermangelé at an elevation of 1,900 feet. The whole scene up to that point, and for some distance beyond it, is arid and desolate in the extreme. There is nothing but a vast extent of black volcanic stones littering the ground ; here, small and sparse, there, huge and massed together ; not a blade of grass or a stunted shrub serves to break the monotony of the horizon. Doubtless during the rainy season, when the stony river beds are occupied by raging torrents and the vegetation spreads downwards along them towards the coast, the outlook is less dreary.

Our journey was often laborious. There was a lot of "puffy, pushy, pulley, but no goey" about it, as a native was heard to remark. The engine, another suggested, "eaty too much coal and drinky too much water ; he broken winded." Our progress, however, was of a "Scotch express" character as compared with that of a certain train on an Egyptian railway, concerning which a story, that had not suffered in the repetition, went the round in the Soudan. It was to the effect that one morning a man booked his ticket in the ordinary way, but when the train arrived he was not allowed to join it, being told that "Your ticket is for to-day's train ; this is yesterday's train, and to-day's train doesn't come in till to-morrow, so you can't go."

About k.70 the first faint green of struggling vegetation appeared, and stunted scrub and meagre mimosas began to show between the boulders. The ground in that district is red, and soon afterwards becomes quite gravelly; the hillocks are less abrupt, and a few small cacti put in an appearance. Near k.90 a strong post is perched on a rocky height overlooking the country in all directions, and there the red, yellow, and green Abyssinian flag greets us, and we enter the territory of "the King of Kings." Across the river of Daonauli at k.106 we reached the station of that name, and stopped for lunch. Situated in an amphitheatre of high hills, it is a picturesque spot, and I noticed mountain ash, tamarind, and the Dead Sea apple growing. The green globular fruit of the Dead Sea apple, by the way, is a useful commodity to the malingerer; incised, it exudes an irritant juice, of the colour and consistency of milk; and Egyptian conscripts in the Soudan have been known to introduce it into their eyes in order to set up an inflammation, which they hoped would provide occasion for their being invalided home.

From Daonauli we had a capital spin as far as k.125, after which, with a hundred twists and turns, we threaded our way uphill again—in one place nearly looping the loop on a high semicircular embankment—until we attained the plateau of Lassarat near k.140, at a height of 2,660 feet. In that neighbourhood we caught glimpses of large open plains of greyish earth, covered with a short stubble, on

which flocks of sheep and goats and several camels were grazing. Thereabouts, too, half a dozen gazelles were noticed, a couple of jackals, a big bustard, and a lot of small white and coloured birds that we could not identify. A mountain chain, which is crossed at k.190 at an elevation of about 2,700 feet, separates the plain of Lassarat from that of Oouarouf, and as the railway threads its way through the hills and along their precipitous sides, the scenery is quite grand in places. Across the plain of Oouarouf kilometre succeeds kilometre with the same dead level country all round; the rocks have disappeared, and the sandy ground, covered with daremo grass and a tufty, scrubby growth, stretches away into the distance. Thousands of sheep and goats with large herds of cattle were grazing there, and, were it not for the presence of scores of camels amongst them, one could readily imagine oneself back again on the South African karoo. For some reason best known to the canine mind, Bess, one of our "lion" hounds, chose that time to try to commit suicide by jumping out of the window. Ogilvy, however, caught her by the hind-quarters, and hauled her back again, very short of breath and shame-faced, but otherwise none the worse.

Over Oouarouf the line crosses the Rivers Mello, Bellakore, and Arraoua. After k.240 the way rises again, and the dwarfed and stunted mimosæ are replaced by trees of a larger size until the country becomes quite thickly wooded. A fringe of pine and

22 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

other trees follows the serpentine course of a deep river bed near k. 263, and later on, so far as one could see through the rapidly gathering darkness, mimosæ of large timber formed the majority of the trees. Shortly after 7 p.m. we arrived at the end of our railway journey and pulled up at Dire Daouw, k. 308, having performed the journey from Djibouti in thirteen hours. We proceeded to M. Michael Michaelidis's locando, and made it our head-quarters for the night.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

Dire Daouw—Fleas and bugs—March to Harrar—Camp at Adele—American and Manchester goods—Olive oil—Arrival at Harrar—Plans—Colonel Rochfort's Staff—Call on Ras Makunnan—Dinner with the Ras—Mr. Gerolimato—The King's birthday—The Ras's powers—Harrar—Natives—Customs—Women—Mutilation of enemies—The streets—Refuse lying about—Houses—The hospital—Leper hospital: the staff, administration, and treatment—The fathers' impressions, ideas, and superstitions—"Snakes"

THE railway and customs officials were off duty on Sunday, October 25th, so our departure for Harrar had to be postponed till the 26th.

Dire Daouw is about 3,300 feet above sea level, and, although it is excessively hot by day (with flies innumerable), it is quite cool at night, and the air has a bracing feel in it. Everywhere over the wide prospect the sandy soil is covered with mimosa bush, amongst which the numerous native huts appear like tiny craft upon a broken sea.

M. Michael Michaelidis's locando is made of boards, in the crannies between which large families of bugs and fleas have taken up their habitation, and from which they freely issue to extend to the visitor, without any formality, a very devoted and particular attention.

26 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

The locando is built on a concrete foundation, and there are tents and wooden outhouses to accommodate extra visitors if required. At the back is a "tahl" or hut for stabling mules, and the whole is enclosed in a zareba of thorn bush, except along the roadside. There is a brick-built one-storey hotel near the station, as well as sundry Greek restaurants, where, apparently, drinks only are obtainable. The railway at Dire Daouw employs thirty Europeans, and they appear to be well housed. Two good private vegetable gardens were noticed, containing potatoes, cabbages, lettuce, spinach, carrots, tomatoes, beans, peas, silk vegetable plant, and a few prickly pears.

There are some good roads in Dire Daouw, varying from fifteen to thirty feet in width, and some of them have side paths which are planted with young palm trees. The place is abundantly supplied with water from two natural springs, over one of which the French have erected a small masonry pyramid with four taps from which the water is continually running, the overflow filling two troughs for cattle and mules. The second spring fills two concrete reservoirs, each measuring about seventeen by five metres, and said to be eight metres in depth, and covered in by a double, sloping, wooden roof, the overflow being used for domestic purposes.

It is thirty miles from Dire Daouw to Harrar, and we marched sixteen miles on the 26th, halting for the night at Adele. We were up at 5 a.m., and got the baggage cleared, loaded on to thirty-four camels, and

started off at 10.30. We ourselves followed on mules, at 1.30 p.m., along a well-made road, partly macadamised in places, but interrupted here and there by river-beds not yet bridged. The way soon begins to climb the mountain pass, and there two of us broke off from the main road and followed a steep, broken bridle-path amongst the boulders and bush. After climbing up 1,500 feet or more we again struck the main road, which at that point is cut out of the steep mountain-side, the rocks rising precipitously on the one side and presenting on the other, in some places, a sheer fall of many hundred feet. The road in that part is not metalled, and at present is unsuited for heavy traffic ; in two places there had been considerable wash-aways by mountain torrents. The rock is gneiss or disintegrating granite, and the soil is rich and deep, varying in colour from a greyish-red to a purplish-black ; in some of the ravines it appeared to extend from twenty to thirty feet below the surface. The summit of the pass, where the made road ends, marks the commencement of a most luxuriant vegetation—pine trees are plentiful, euphorbia cacti abound everywhere, fine green grass and shrubs clothe the mountain-side, and here and there we caught glimpses of stretches of dhoura shami.¹

We did not come across any water, but in two places there were women carrying empty gourds and water-skins, which, from their size, would probably not have to be carried far when filled. Peacock-blue

¹ Millet or jowari.

28 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

starlings, hornbills, and hosts of different small birds were seen as we went along, and their plumage for the most part was rich and iridescent like shot silk.

Adele was reached at 6 p.m., and we halted near a lake, about one and a half miles long and of about the same width, which abounded with coot, geese, duck, teal, big and little grebe, dabchicks, and many other birds. Here we found a couple of tents, which Mr. J. Gerolimato, H.B.M. Vice-Consul at Harrar, had sent for our use. The night was bitterly cold and there was quite one-sixth of an inch of ice outside the tents at five o'clock the next morning.

From Adele the road crosses a marshy ground and runs beside Harrar Mayar, a lake similar to that of Adele and equally full of wild birds. Near Harrar Mayar we joined the road from Harrar to Adis Ababa, and encountered hundreds of natives, both men and women, laden with faggots, flasks, gourds, reeds, deeshas¹ of milk, and other produce. We also met at least twenty camel convoys laden with bales of American cloth, ironmongery, and other merchandise going towards Adis Ababa.

Touching American goods, I tried to ascertain during our stay in Harrar why so much American sheeting and relatively so little Manchester was on the market.² American grey sheeting—which, being

¹ A deesha is a milk-vessel. See note on p. 99.

² The customs duty on goods entering Harrar is from 8 to 10 per cent. with the exception of articles of general use, on which we were told less was paid.

unbleached, is, of course, grey and not white, as commonly described—is, I was informed, cheaper and stronger than the Manchester and does not possess the same unpleasant smell when wet. The American sheeting was said to wash whiter than the Manchester, and, moreover, it bears the “Camel” brand, which familiar sign goes a long way with the conservative native. The Manchester *bleached* sheetings, however, seem to be in larger demand than the American bleached, and, in spite of the alleged preference of the natives for the “Camel” brand, I saw American sheeting stamped “Reedy River” and bearing a fish brand, largely used in the construction of Abyssinian tents, and it is certain that comparatively few of the natives are familiar with fish. Talking of cotton, although it has nothing to do with this narrative, reminds me of the enormous export of cotton seed that takes place from Egypt to England and that a lot of it has subsequently an interesting history. The seed is crushed in England and the oil extracted, the remains of the seed being made up into various kinds of cattle cake. The extracted oil is re-exported to Italy and stored in vats or casks in which olive oil has previously stood. Having no flavour of its own, the cotton oil rapidly acquires the aroma of the olive oil, and is then re-imported into England as “pure and unadulterated” olive oil.

Our party was met some distance outside Harrar by Mr. Gerolimato, who conducted us to his residence, the Vice-Consulate, and entertained us to lunch.

30 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

There too we were warmly received by our commanding officer, Colonel H. N. Rochfort, C.B., R.H.A.

We arrived at Harrar at 12.45 p.m. and towards evening rode to our camping ground some two and a half miles to the east of the town. We remained there until November 20th, employed in organising and arranging various matters connected with the forthcoming expedition, and it is not necessary in this place to pursue the chronological order of narration. The general idea of the military operations at that time was that the Abyssinian army should collect at Jigjiga and march to Gerlogubi, so as to close the south-western parts of Somaliland against the Mullah and prevent his using the different wells in that district, or breaking away in that direction. In sanguine moments we hoped that he would find himself compelled to try to break through our force, but knowing the sensible methods of his "madness" such a hope never rose to the level of an expectation.

It may be convenient for future reference to give the names of the officers forming the British section of the staff. At that time there were in camp outside Harrar:—

Colonel A. N. Rochfort, C.B., R.H.A., in command, J. L. Baird, Esq., Diplomatic Service, Captain A. A. Duff, 3rd Gordon Highlanders, Captain (now Major) H. N. Dunn, R.A.M.C., Lieutenant D. Ogilvy, R.E., and myself. Subsequently the camp was joined by Major H. M. Alone, West Indian Regiment, and at a later time during the march by Lieutenant I. St. C.



THE ENTRANCE TO RAS MAKUNNAN'S PALACE.



SOMALI WOMEN POUNDING COFFEE BERRIES TO REMOVE THE HUSKS.



SOMALI WOMEN GRINDING CORN.

Rose, King's Royal Rifles, Lieutenant G. Ramsay Fairfax, late R.N., and Assistant Surgeon W. A. M. Wakeman, Indian Medical Service. Capitano Carlo Citerni, the Italian Attaché to the Abyssinian army, accompanied us, and there were two British sergeants, F. Tubb, of the Hampshire Regiment, and R. Shepherd, of the Tower Hamlets Volunteers, attached to the staff.

It was not, however, until February 2nd, 1904, with the Abyssinians at Gorahai, that our whole party was in camp together at the same time.

Our camp near Harrar consisted of two zarebaed enclosures—one for Colonel Rochfort and his staff, and one for the syces and animals. The Somalis are capital hands at pitching tents when they like, and can cut and make a zareba in no time. The camp was abundantly supplied with sparkling, cool, and apparently pure water from a natural spring in the waddy (valley) about 300 yards away. An aqueduct from the same spring conveyed water to the neighbouring gardens and banana, dhoura, and coffee plantations.

The day after our arrival in camp we accompanied Colonel Rochfort to the Vice-Consul's, drank coffee, and there awaited His Highness Ras Makunnan's pleasure. After a time word was sent to us that His Highness was ready to receive us. We were received at his house, a building situated near the centre of the town and not far from his palace, which, latter, is not a favourite and is seldom occupied by the Ras.

On arrival we were conducted across a small court-

yard, up a stone staircase into a thickly-walled room. The room had three doors, and there were two windows at one end and a third at the side. The walls of the room were quite bare, except for a kitchen clock which was surmounted by a Japanese fan and fixed on the wall near the entrance door. The floor was carpeted with four Turkey carpets. In the centre of the room, with three chairs on either side of it, was a small wooden table covered with a white linen tablecloth, while at the end, between the windows, were two pillows separated by a red cushion on which the Ras sat during the interview. An ordinary brass lamp, hanging from the middle of the ceiling, completed the furniture of the apartment.

The Ras received us at the door, advancing to meet us as we entered, and touching our hands. Mr. Gerolimato and a native interpreter accompanied us. Whilst we severally occupied chairs, the Ras sat tailor-fashion on the cushion. He spoke with much suavity of manner and in a subdued tone through Mr. Gerolimato and the interpreter, emphasising what he said by a graceful movement of his left hand, upon which, when he was not speaking, he rested his chin. Arrangements for the Expedition were sketchily discussed and planned, compliments were exchanged and healths were drunk in Tej.¹ On our departure the Ras touched hands, as on arrival.

On November 2nd the Ras sent the Colonel a

¹ Tej is a fermented drink made from honey and water to which the leaves of the gesho plant are added as a flavouring (chap. x. p. 204).

present of a large jar of Tej, and invited us to breakfast with him the following noon. In accordance with these commands we assembled the next morning at the Vice-Consul's and, accompanied by him, proceeded to the breakfast. We were received in the same room and in the same manner as on the former occasion, the only difference being that after our reception the Ras sat with us at the table. He was dressed in a white cotton mantle over the usual white cotton underwear, and he wore black patent leather shoes and black socks. Suspended by a ring from his neck in front was an Abyssinian gold chain, and the British coronation medal hung from his left breast. His manner is uniformly graceful and calm, and he thoroughly enjoys a joke. The conversation, as before, was conducted through Mr. Gerolimato, who translated what the Colonel or others of us said into Arabic, addressing himself to the Ras's interpreter who rendered it to the Ras in Amharic, and then back again in the reverse order.

From the reception room we passed into an adjoining dining room, the walls of which were bare, except that on one of them was daubed the representation of a lion. The table was set with three bullas (decanters) of Tej and one of Araki,¹ three flower vases of Swiss coloured glass, two of which contained various coloured paper flowers, one of them having a variegated wobbly bird perched over the flowers, while the third held a

¹ Araki is distilled Tej, to which oil of aniseed is added (chap. x. p. 205).

34 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

bouquet of real marigolds. There were three wine glasses, one tumbler, and the usual knives and forks allotted to each place. The Colonel was put at the head of the table, and the Ras, with the interpreter behind him, sat on his right hand. About twelve covers *à la française* were served, and they challenged comparison. Gerolimato, who had a magnificent appetite, went through them all, and was closely followed by Ogilvy. In addition to the ordinary European bread we were given teff, or injerra, a kind of sour brown bread made in large flat cakes, light and aerated. Tej was plied freely, and the breakfast was first-rate from start to finish. Toasts in dry champagne followed ; the Ras drank to our success, and promised us his help, and the Colonel in reply drank to the health and long life of the Ras and thanked him for his kindness and for his promise of co-operation in the field. Araki, as a liqueur, and coffee, were then served, and shortly afterwards we adjourned to the reception room, where the Ras's son, a refined and intelligent little fellow of about eleven years of age, joined us for a short time.

Another celebration took place during our stay in Harrar, namely, on the King's birthday, November 9th. Our only regret was that the Colonel and Duff were no longer with us, having previously left for Jigjiga.

The celebration took the form of a reception at the British Vice-Consul's—our kindly host appearing in full dress and looking worthily vice-regal. We

arrived at 9.30 a.m., and immediately afterwards seven Indian merchants arrived. Champagne glasses were filled and the King's health was drunk. Very soon afterwards Ras Makunнан's approach was announced, and the Indian merchants, headed by the representatives of Messrs. Goolamally, Mohamedaly and Company, withdrew, and the rest of us descended with the Vice-Consul from his reception room on the first floor to the door of the courtyard to meet the Ras on his entrance, saluting him and his chiefs in turn, and receiving their courteous bows and handshakes. Ras Makunнан, who was mounted on a mule, dismounted at the courtyard gate and left his retinue and quite a hundred armed Abyssinians outside. The Vice-Consul, the Ras, his six Chiefs and interpreter, followed by Baird, Dunn, Ogilvy and myself, then ascended the steps to the reception room. The Chiefs were dressed in black embroidered mantles with white and beautifully soft homespun underwear, and were all barefooted. A seventh chief arrived almost immediately afterwards, and champagne and sweet biscuits were then served to each of us. The Ras rose from his seat beside the Vice-Consul, and this was the signal for all to rise, while he proposed "King Edward VII and success to the Expedition." The Vice-Consul replied through the interpreter, proposing the Emperor Menelik's health and after that the Ras's. These toasts were drunk in quick succession, and were followed by conversation and chatter.

36 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

The commander-in-chief of the Abyssinian Expeditionary Force, Fituarari Gabri with his A.D.C., Balambaras Assegud, and the commander of the rearguard, were amongst those present.

After the Ras and his suite had departed, the French Consul and the Italian Consul, with Capitano Citerni and Signor Pastacaldi, arrived, and M. Gerolimato entertained the ten of us to an excellent breakfast, at which his plum pudding was second to none.

In a later chapter something will be said concerning the administration of the law in Abyssinia, but we may remark in passing that Ras Makunna has plenary powers for Menelik (with the exception of capital punishment) in Harrar and the Harrar Province, and so far as we could learn then or afterwards, he exercises his powers with singular equity, and his judgments seem everywhere to command respect. The amount of crime is small, but there are reasons for this, as we shall see hereafter, and it is to be remembered that by crime we mean crime as it is according to the Abyssinian code. During the twenty-four days of our residence near Harrar we were a great deal in and about the town, and, although it swarms with inhabitants, I never saw a fight or a disturbance of any sort, or even a case of drunkenness.

Harrar is a walled town and has five gates, which are opened at 6 a.m. and locked at 6 p.m. Each gate is placed in charge of an armed guard, and is surmounted by a flagstaff topped with a cross.

Inside the walls, it is a rookery ; and the dirt defies description. Its thirty or forty thousand inhabitants, cooped up within, are truly thick upon the ground ; the streets are chock-a-block with them, idle and industrious—the women particularly being the industrious—young and old, and they all jabber together. Here and there you come across a picturesque group of potters, a woman grinding coffee or corn, a man weaving shammas, and so on. Altogether, it is a noisy, dirty, characteristically Eastern scene.

The natives of Harrar and the Harrar Province are made up of Abyssinians (Habshis, as they are called), Harraris, Gallas, and various types of Somalis. There is also a good number of Indians who take the place of the “Sparrow” Greek of other places. In Harrar itself the blend known as the Harraris predominates in point of numbers. All Abyssinians go about armed, but the Gallas and the Somalis in Harrar itself are not allowed to be armed, although in the country districts they may carry spears.

In 1887 Menelik, then King of Shoa, after the massacre of the Italian scientific expedition near Gildessa, conquered Harrar and Harrar Province and subdued the semi-independent Gallas, who were then the ruling race in the country to the south and south-west of Harrar. The Gallas at the present time are the chief field and garden workers. In common with the Abyssinians they appear to have been derived from a blending of the Hamitic invaders

38 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

of the country with the race of Aryans who had previously been its possessors. The Somali comes of the grafting of a Semitic element upon this stock, and in their extension the Somalis have progressively pushed the Gallas more and more northwards and to the north-west.

One of the first things that strike the European visitor is the head-shaving custom of the Somalis. They go about with the head and the nape of the neck exposed to the rays of the tropical sun, and are apparently none the worse for it. It is eminently an advantage from the point of view of cleanliness. The rest of the body is clothed in the usual tobe or shamma, a double-width cotton sheet of about fifteen feet long.

The married Somali women wear their hair in nets as a sign of the married state, whilst the Abyssinian women have it plastered with ghee and plaited into various furrows and ridges of an ornamental character running from the front of the head to the back. Instead of a system of old-age pensions for women, they are employed as beasts of burden to carry loads of faggots and such-like. The older and the uglier they are, apparently the bigger the load, as big sometimes, or even bigger than a donkey-load. I remember once, in Egypt, having seen a woman and a camel harnessed to a plough. That was a combination full enough of significance, but it was hardly so fantastic as one other which I saw, namely that of a camel and a pig harnessed together. Child-bearing

and hard work are the things expected of the women in Somaliland as in most other Eastern countries.

Although the Gallas are for many reasons accounted a higher race than the Somalis, it is in some respects difficult to imagine their being superior to anybody. In particular they retain the practice of carrying out the most horrible mutilations upon their fallen enemies. On November 13th in the presence of Basha-Balina, our Abyssinian Attaché, and of Johannes Fiesah, our interpreter, I had the opportunity of carefully examining one of the victims of their barbarity. The man, Adam Bollali, a native of Farso, was apparently of about thirty years of age and, as far as he appeared able to judge of the lapse of time, the fight after which his mutilation took place occurred ten or twelve years ago, and he thought that it was quite a year before his wounds healed.

Hockey just outside the eastern gate is a great game with the younger Harraris. There appear to be no off-side and no limit as to numbers, but the sides are fairly evenly divided, and the play is good. They hit fair and square, and play barefooted.

Ogilvy compared the streets of Harrar to Scotch burns run dry, and a better description could hardly be given. The main street is from six to seven feet broad, rugged, with drops of about one and a half feet at every ten or fifteen yards, and with boulders great and small strewn everywhere. Because of the steepness of many of the streets, and the unsuspected drops that await the traveller, the mule saddles in

common use are fitted with a breastplate and crupper to prevent their sliding backwards over the tail, or forwards over the neck. The minor streets and passages may best be spoken of as "places," and every place, passage, or street is crammed with natives. There is a peculiar raven¹ in Harrar with a white collar behind a white poll, while asphogel, or vultures, and scavenger birds are numerous enough, as well they may be. Some of the dirt in the streets is collected by women in open baskets, and tipped just outside the walls, but beyond this fraction of prophylaxis there is no such thing as sanitation. In some of the *culs-de-sac* in the heart of the town, and even in the highways, fresh horns, heads, bones, and entrails of animals lie about, making the place filthy beyond description. The pariah dogs eat what they can, and the rest is left to the merciful dealings of a tropical sun—fortunately, a vigorous, germ-destroying sun which can well-nigh convert the smell of a pole-cat into the aroma of a nosegay—and, strange to say, malodorous as the place is, I do not remember to have been distinctly conscious at any time of the peculiar fœtid odour of decaying animal matter.

As illustrating the power of this tropical sun, one may recall a time when cholera broke out in the Soudan in 1896, and spread with great rapidity whilst the troops remained near the river-bank on the damp, warm, organically impregnated soil, often shaded by palm trees. But when the men

¹ Cor. vulture. *Somaliland Précis*, p. 130.



STREET IN HARRAR.



HARRAR MARKET.



GALLA GIRLS SELLING GHEE, HARRAR.



AT THE LEPER HOSPITAL, HARRAR.

were moved a little distance into the desert, and the drying actinic rays of the sun had full play, the disease very quickly died out.

Almost all the houses in Harrar are made of mud, and of the roughest undressed stones, mostly having holes for windows, and no chimney or any other means of ventilation, except the door. The window-hole apparently serves both as a window and smoke exit. Some houses are plastered with mud, and a few of them are whitewashed. The roofs are flat, and are nearly all made of sticks and twigs plastered with mud. There are a few typical native huts within the town, either of the cylindrical, beehive, or cone-shaped types, with stick-and-mud walls and peg-top roofs of sticks or thatch. A few houses are solidly and well built after the European pattern, notably those of the British, French, and Italian Consuls. Ras Makunnan's house and palace are particularly well built, the latter being the best building in the town. The Abyssinian church, built of stone and plaster, with a roof made of old kerosene tins, consists, as is usual in Abyssinian churches, of two concentric circular walls, one eight feet inside the other. On the occasion of our visit we were not allowed to penetrate within the inner wall, but we caught sight of a painted representation of an altar.

Dunn and I, accompanied by Mr. Gerolimato, visited the Harrar hospital on October 29th. It is maintained solely at Ras Makunnan's expense, and is built of stone. It consists of six wards on the

42 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

ground floor facing the front, and three double wards on the first floor facing the back. The floors are concrete, and the walls are whitewashed on the inside. The ordinary spring, wire, and hair mattresses, sheets, blankets, iron bedsteads and bedside tables are in use. The latrines and urinals are in a separate out-building at the back, with a modified cesspool arrangement. In front there is a flower garden ; on the left side is the dispensary ; on the right are the operating theatre and offices, while the cookhouse is at the back to the left. Utensils and drugs are supplied to the patients, but with the exception of milk they find their own food ; and laundry work is done outside. A French Guadeloupe medical man administers the whole establishment.

There are two prisons in Harrar, but not having obtained a proper permit I was not allowed to go over them. The prisoners I saw, with the exception of one who had shackles on both his feet, were fettered in twos by their adjacent ankles, and their only exercise, it was said, was to be marched to an enclosure close by and back again. As far as one could make out, the majority of them were murderers. The place was kept clean, as Eastern prisons go, and the prisoners were well looked after.

The fathers at the French leper hospital were our kindly hosts on three occasions, and we had a visit from them at our camp. They established the hospital nearly three years ago, and have built nearly all of it themselves. It consists of forty-nine

huts and one large main building with stone-and-plaster walls and a thatched roof. The staff consists of:—

The Rev. Père Marie Bernard	} Missionnaires Capu-
The Rev. Père Bernardin	
E. H. Frère Thiotinna	
E. H. Mère Gervasie	} Religieuses françaises.
Sœur Gertrude	
Sœur Zoë	

The fathers told us that there were about eight thousand lepers in Abyssinia; the anæsthetic variety, they said, being more common than the tuberculated. Their patients are mostly Gallas, and there were at that time sixty cases under treatment. Segregation is not enforced anywhere in Abyssinia and leprous patients mix more or less indiscriminately with the healthy, and their admission to the hospital is quite voluntary; they come and go as they please, but as a rule they remain under treatment until their condition and appearance have undergone considerable improvement.

The fathers appeared to have no doubt as to the contagiousness of leprosy. Husband and wife, they said, certainly transmitted it to one another, and union between two leprous patients produced a doubly severe form of the disease. They were very uncertain as to its hereditary transmission. Healthy parents, they said, sometimes had leprous children, and leprous parents, healthy children. Leprosy some-

44 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

times developed early in infancy, but in these cases they felt sure that contagion was commonly present. Altogether they considered the contagiousness of the disease was beyond doubt. But what they said about its hereditary transmission, beyond perhaps establishing a certain special inherited degree of vulnerability, did not appear to make it very different from the hereditary transmission of a predisposition to the acquirement of false teeth, eyeglasses, or wooden legs.

The fathers did not believe in the alleged fish causation of leprosy. As a matter of fact, the Abyssinians, the Gallas, and the Somalis rarely eat fish, and for the sufficient reason that during a great part of the year many of the rivers do not contain water, much less fish. Round about Harrar, for example, practically all the water from the river beds is diverted for irrigation purposes. A little rises up here and there, soon to disappear again by soakage through the sand. There is apparently an impervious, rocky stratum at no great distance below the surface of nearly all these sandy river beds, for, by scraping and digging for, perhaps, only a foot or two, water will soon collect in the hole and form a little pool, and it is commonly collected in this manner by the natives.

Chaulmoogra oil is mostly used by the fathers in the treatment of leprosy, and the sores had simple dressings applied to them. They were then experimenting with some new remedy, but professed that they were not at liberty to disclose the nature of it.

The hospital management and conduct, and the treatment of the patients, are most excellent. The only objection which could be made was that the hospital was too near the town of Harrar. Unfortunately, many patients from distant parts, when their health and appearance have improved by treatment in the hospital, go out into the town and mix with the Harraris, and so tend to multiply the number of cases within the walls.

As an example of the up-to-date equipment possessed by the institution, on the occasion of our third visit on November 12th, the Rev. Père Marie Bernard gave us an exhibition of his magic lantern slides, having had a room darkened for the occasion. He took us into his developing room and showed us his photographic apparatus, which was most elaborate and complete. Indeed, it was more in advance of the times than any other set of apparatus I have seen. He threw upon the screen some first-rate pictures taken during an expedition into distant parts of the country, speaking likenesses of its inhabitants and their customs, and ended by displaying a portrait of three of us who had visited the hospital five days previously.

To this exhibition of their skill, the fathers' simple, amazing credulity—to us, superstition—formed a strange contrast. On our visit on November 7th they had related to us stories of almost fabulous monsters—snakes of prodigious appearance and proportions—in the existence of which they firmly

believed. They said that they had even visited the cave in which these monsters dwelt ; that it was in the hills not far away, and that therein they had found human skulls and the skulls and bones of many other animals, chiefly conies (hyrax). These snakes, they reported, are of immense length and of prodigious girth, with one or two horns on their heads, and on their foreheads a powerful electric searchlight. These dazzling lights, the fathers said, they themselves had seen from the hospital. The snakes scour the hillside when there is no moon. The natives believe in their existence, and, rather than interfere with them, seek to propitiate them by leaving them alone. Such is the account we received. None of us, I fear, were possessed of a faith simple enough to credit the existence of the reptiles. To us they constituted an airy nothing—a flame of fancy of the superstitious. Perhaps this fiery-headed demon is the terrestrial representative of the famous sea-serpent.

In connection with this I should relate that on November 8th fifty fresh mules arrived in camp, and about 7 p.m. stampeded and broke out of the zareba. With the aid of four candle lamps, we managed to recover them. We wondered, then, whether the natives had seen four fiery-headed monsters creeping in and out amongst the trees and spreading themselves over the face of the land ; and on our visit to the hospital on the 12th, we were not altogether surprised when the fathers volunteered the statement that

since our last visit they had seen the snakes again. On comparing notes as to where and when, we were convinced that on that occasion, at any rate, our lamp-bearers rounding up mules had been transmuted into the fiery demons whose kingdom is the moonless night.



CHAPTER III

.

CHAPTER III

Country round Harrar—Temperature—Produce—Coffee—Cattle—
Caravans and mules—Birds—Insects—The stink ant—Camp out-
side Harrar—Shooting—Colonel Rochfort leaves for Jigjiga—
Arrival of Major Alone—Difficulties of preparing the Expedition
—March to Feyambiro—Night in a native hut—The camp at
Feyambiro—Occupations—The camel—Method of loading and
names of mats, etc.—The camel's gait

IN many respects Harrar has a fine natural position.

It is built on a limestone eminence some 6,000 feet above sea level ; the nearest of the neighbouring hills are a mile or so distant to the south and west, and the ground opens out all round. Fields of bananas, coffee, and dhoura shami,¹ ripening now to harvest, stretch away to right and left between the avenues of euphorbia and mimosa that mark the situation of ravines or mountain river beds. Thousands of humped and ordinary cattle, sheep, mules, donkeys, and camels, are scattered over the untilled ground. Everywhere is a waving mass of green of all shades, splashed here and there with vivid colours—with all the colours of the rainbow, in fact, except blue,

¹ Dhoura shami is millet, and is to be distinguished from dhoura Hindi (Indian corn, or mealies). It was ripening to harvest at the end of October.

indigo, and violet—and presenting an appearance like that of the autumnal Virginian creeper. On coming closer, these splashes of colour are seen to be the tassels or bats of a variety of mimosa, and they hang like earrings from the terminal branches, strikingly resembling a swarm of butterflies alighting on the twigs. These ripening legumes of the *mimosæ* occur in crops together, and pass in colour from green to yellow and from orange to red. The country around Harrar is very densely populated, and everywhere there are large numbers of native huts.

From the south and west of the town, a mile or more distant, are the following hills, naming them from south to west: Gindayla, Hakin, Tinkatabar, and Warwari, whilst in the distance to the north-west, thirty-five miles or so away, is a large table mountain, Kondudo.

Near the base of Gebel Hakin,¹ Ras Makunnan has a country house, and close beside it is an Abyssinian church. Up the mountain, about 150 feet higher than the Ras's house, is a large spring, and a partly natural and partly ancient artificial reservoir. There is not, I believe, any conduit from the reservoir to the Ras's house. There are neither springs nor wells in Harrar, but adjacent to the gates of the town are natural springs, yielding a plentiful supply.

During the time we were in Harrar it was hot during the day—the shade temperature at noon

¹ Gebel, a mountain.



WATER CARRIERS, HARRAR.



ON THE ROAD TO PEYAMBURO.



A DINNER OF THORNS.

varying from 84° to 100° —nevertheless, we felt it oppressively hot only on one day, when it was cloudy. Unfortunately I did not possess a maximum and minimum thermometer, so that I obtained no night record of the lowest temperature. After sunset it quickly became chilly, and dining in the open, as we did, it was necessary to wear an overcoat or a sweater. On various occasions I took the temperature from 2.15 a.m. to 5 a.m., and it varied from 51° to 62° . The Afreets or “sand devils” were rather troublesome at times, but whilst in the neighbourhood of Harrar we never saw any equal to those of South Africa or the Soudan.

The district around Harrar is absolutely impassable, except for pack transport. The road from Harrar to Adis Ababa is a rough, fairly open track from what we saw of it, but the best of the other roads are broken, rocky, and commonly steep paths—gullies, doubtless, during the rainy season—and overhung in many places with luxuriant vegetation. From the site of our camp the path to the town drops about 100 feet, then crosses two small rivulets, and in the end climbs 400 feet or so up a twisted ladder-like ascent to the eastern gate.

The slopes and valleys round Harrar, as has been intimated, are under excellent cultivation. The water from the river beds is led into the fields and gardens by irrigation channels. Dhoura shami, bananas and coffee are the chief crops, but vines (fruiting twice a year), cotton, castor-oil plants, tobacco, chillies,

54 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

pepper and onions are freely grown. The fruit, however, is of a poor quality. A few sycamores and limes are interspersed amongst the all-pervading prickly acacias or mimosæ. Honey is one of the staple foods of the natives, and it is collected in cylindrical baskets, about two feet by six inches in diameter, which are hung horizontally from the branches of the wanga trees; and in going about one saw large numbers of them. It was impossible to suppress a feeling of regret that the force of circumstances had formerly compelled the Egyptian Government to abandon the administration of the province. The numbers of live stock that the country supports, and the variety and abundance of its possible harvests, are so great that, with enterprising development during a considerable period of peace, it would, without doubt, be converted into a garner that would be rich in store, both for its own inhabitants and for those of other lands.

A plant which the natives call khat or jat¹ grows freely in the Harrar district. In appearance the leaves are very much like those of coca or tea. The natives in Somaliland, as in the Soudan, gather the green leaves and chew and swallow them, eating as much as seven or eight handfuls in a day. They say that "it quenches thirst, wards off hunger, and keeps them wakeful." At any rate they appear to be able to go for a long time on it without having anything else.

¹ *Katha Edulis*, natural order Celastrinæ (W. S. Fenwick).

The common potato, according to A. W. Wylde,¹ was reintroduced into Abyssinia by the late Professor Schimper, and it is to be found wherever people from Amhara or Tigre are settled. The French fathers at the leper hospital told us that they introduced potatoes into Harrar, but the natives refused to touch them, being under the impression that whoever ate of them became barren. The natives based their inference on the fact that the friars who introduced them had no children of their own.

Many were the times that we dropped in on Mr. Gerolimato, our kind friend and wise adviser, and sipped comfort from his inimitable brew of coffee. There is no coffee in the world, it seems to me, that excels the Abyssinian mocha or long-berry coffee. Being in practice a total abstainer, I have sometimes been tempted to think myself a judge of tea and coffee, and have never tasted coffee that could be placed in the balance against mocha. I well remember the first time that I regaled myself with it, and how cheering, invigorating, and delicious it was. At Karkoj on the Blue Nile, in November, 1898, it was administered *ad libitum*, with most beneficial results, to hundreds of our Soudanese troops who were down at the time with a somewhat malignant type of remittent fever.

The long-berry coffee grows to perfection in the Harrar neighbourhood. Two crops are gathered each year, and occasionally, in favourable seasons, five

¹ *Modern Abyssinia*, p. 265.

56 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

crops in two years. The trees are a lovely green, and are nursed by picking off a certain number of the young berries and shoots, but they do not appear to be regularly pruned. The unripe berries that are picked off are dried and eaten like the ripe ones, but furnish an inferior quality of coffee. The ripe berries, when picked, are cherry-red or brownish in colour, and they are laid out in a single layer on the ground or on the roofs of the houses for ten to twenty days in the sun to dry. They are then either removed from their husks by being pounded in a wooden mortar with a wooden pestle by the women folk, or are kept for six months or so in the house, when they become of a yellowish colour. After removal of the husk the sooner the berries are roasted and ground and the coffee made, the more aromatic and delicious the decoction is.

The cattle, sheep, and goats around Harrar appear to be without number. The cattle are mostly humped, and are perfectly tame, readily standing to be stroked. The cows are very much used for milking, and the clarified butter, or ghee, in common use is made from the surplus milk. Many of the oxen serve for ploughing, and the yokes in vogue are coeval with the cobwebs of antiquity.

The sheep have white bodies, with black heads and necks, and a short, fat tail, and so numerous are they that in some parts of Somaliland they were estimated by Captain E. J. C. Swayne to number two hundred per head to every adult male.

In preparing a caravan from Harrar you see, and talk, and think, and dream of mules, just as in Somaliland you do of camels. The routine for the mules in camp is to be taken out to graze in the early morning, watered at midday, grazed again in the afternoon, and driven back to the zareba about 4.30, where they are tethered by a picket rope from the fetlock. The Abyssinian grass-cutters, who attend to them, bring in bundles of grass and give them to the mules in the evening with a feed of barley. They are slow movers, but are very comfortable to jog along with, and are as quiet as lambs and as docile as you might wish. How they would behave in the face of a steam-roller or a motor-car I do not know, but at first sight of a camel they jib and shy to some effect, though they rarely cut and run. Familiarity, however, in a caravan soon breeds reassurance.

It would, I should imagine, be difficult for a mule to get away from the powerful curb of the Abyssinian bit in common use. In one case, at Jigjiga, a mule's tongue was nearly severed transversely by the bit, being held only by a few blood-vessels at the base and some strips of muscle fibre. It was drawn together by the insertion of six silk sutures, and in the course of two or three weeks had healed completely. A Harrar pack mule costs from thirty to thirty-five dollars, and in fairly even country will do three miles an hour with a load of a hundred and sixty pounds.

The donkeys I saw were nearly all mouse or dun-coloured, with a black stripe extending from the tip

58 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

of the tail to between the ears, and crossed at the withers by another black stripe which passes down the shoulders.

All the horses, if one may say so, are ponies, since they are not higher than about 13.3 hands. They are used chiefly as riding animals.

The country and bush about Harrar abound with all sorts of wild birds, and some of them are particularly beautiful. A few have been already mentioned, and many of them will crop up in our narrative, for they often supplied a tasty and important addition to our larder. The peacock-blue starling is very common, also another brilliantly-coloured variety of this bird with an orange breast. The green pigeons in that district have canary-coloured breasts, and are scarcely as large as those in the Soudan, but they appeared to be in greater numbers—indeed, at times, Ogilvy and I saw over a hundred of them together in a flock. They are first-rate eating, but, being very wild, they are not easy to get. They appear to feed on coffee-berries and dhoura, although one day I opened the crops of four of them and found nothing but coffee-berries. Speaking of pigeons, I remember to have seen some of them which inhabit the hills and temples about the Nile at Luxor alight upon the water exactly as if they were seagulls. The incredulity with which some of the officers of the North Staffordshire Regiment received this statement was, I remember, only dissipated when they themselves saw the birds alight on the river.

There are living things in Abyssinia and Somaliland besides men and birds and beasts,—insects to wit. There are millions of them ; those which creep abound, those which hop are without number, and the multitude of those which fly is not sensibly diminished by slaughter. Even the common and impertinent house-fly is not put to the blush by the presence of rarer and more pestiferous neighbours. He swarms upon your face and hands, peeps into your eyes and into the crevices of your clothing, and seeks to investigate the inside of your collar with that self-assurance and contempt of your convenience which has marked him out all the world over as a genius amongst his kind. He also commits suicide in your inkpot with a disregard of life that is truly Oriental in its character. At times legions of insects attend you by day and by night from one end of your journey to the other. Heat and drought and sand and thorns are as nothing to them, and in point of odour the “stink ant,” wherever you find him, is the worst pest of all. He has another name, no doubt, but that is the one he possesses in Somaliland. For atrocious fœtor I have never met his equal. Asafœtida is attar of roses beside him. In colour he is black ; in size about treble that of an ordinary black ant ; but in point of fragrance he is a leviathan. Enclose one in a soluble capsule and put it down a drain, and I venture to say that a leak anywhere within a considerable radius would be revealed at once. Medical officers of health are welcome to this

60 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

suggestion gratis. Let the incredulous import one and be convinced.

Nothing worse than the barking of the hyænas disturbed our nights in camp outside Harrar, but these wily and rackety nocturnal visitors were very constant in their attentions, and we did not manage to get even with them, although one night two of us made a serious effort by sitting up for several hours over a goat by way of bait, hoping to get a shot at them. Somehow or other the bait did not "make plenty shout," as the man who had supplied it prophesied that it would. The natives objected to the presence of this goat within the zareba, and tried to make out that the stampede of the mules on the night of November 8th was due to its presence.

Rock rabbits or coneys abound in the Harrar district, and are comparatively tame. Dunn acted as naturalist to the expedition, and for rapidity in skinning an animal he would be hard to beat. One of his first traps yielded nothing fiercer than a mouse, but he was as happy as if it had been an otter, and had its skin off in a trice. On November 8th, Mr. Gerolimato, Dunn, Baird and I breakfasted at 5.30, and ambled on our mules about ten miles to the Errer River for a day's outing. We caught about a dozen tiny, bony fish, and ate the bread of idleness. The way was along a rough bridle path, up and down mountain passes and over river beds, winding through the dhoura fields and coffee plantations. In shooting for the pot it was no uncommon thing to lose a large

proportion of the birds by their dropping into the dense mimosa thickets, where it was impossible to get at them ; and our dogs as retrievers were more keen than expert.

On November 10th Dunn, Ogilvy and I went for a day's shooting to Bussy Dimo, about five miles south-west from camp. We intended to bivouac, so took two spare mules with kit and enamelled iron crockery. A waterproof sheet, with a couple of blankets, a Balaclava cap, a sweater, a Jaeger sleeping suit, a cavalry canteen, and a water-bottle and cup apiece, made up our kit, and we had a common cooking-pot. The pot was packed by the cook with three cooked chickens, boiled rice, potatoes, and twelve hard-boiled eggs. The chickens were as tough as india-rubber, and the contents of the pot resolved themselves into a sort of mongrel kedgeriee, of which fragments of chicken were the resisting portions, while bits of egg-shell having been evenly distributed, made havoc of the whole mess. For breakfast the next morning, however, some eggs purchased from a neighbouring kraal gave us a first-rate omelette, and, with freshly cooked partridge and quail, made up a delicious meal. We shot over ground broken by deep nullahs and pretty thickly covered with mimosa and dry grass. My shikari, an Abyssinian enlisted for the occasion, was half blind in one eye, and could hardly see with the other, so that I had to do my own retrieving. We bagged eighteen head amongst us, consisting of a quail, eight partridges, two diccup

or goggle-eyed plover, three hares, and four Kirk's dig-dig.

Basha Balina, who accompanied us as Abyssinian Attaché, joined us on November 6th, with Johannes Fiesah, our Abyssinian interpreter. Johannes Fiesah spoke Amharic, Arabic and French, but the Basha spoke Amharic only. The Conti Molli, Capitano Citerni, and Signor Mocchi lunched with us on November 6th, and we had the good fortune to be accompanied by Capitano Citerni on our expedition.

The British party did not long remain together in camp as the arrangements for the Expedition proceeded. Colonel Rochfort left for Jigjiga on November 7th, and Major Alone bivouacked beyond Harrar on November 10th, and joined us the next day. Accompanied by Captain Dunn, he left for Feyambiro on the 14th, to establish a camel dépôt at that place. Feyambiro is some thirty miles from Harrar in the Fafan Valley, and the Colonel decided to establish the camel camp at that place, as it was warmer and more suitable for the purpose than Jigjiga. Baird and Ogilvy were left behind the rest of us at Harrar to join the Abyssinian forces as they concentrated at Babilli, and they were instructed to accompany them *viâ* Farso and Dagaha Mado to Sesebani, where our intended line of advance and theirs converged.¹

Those who are familiar with the getting together of an Expedition in these countries, know how the

¹ See Map.

difficulties increase in a sort of geometrical progression, and a reference to them will better be deferred to a later stage in our narrative. A few minor alterations and additions to our own personal stores and equipment were necessary. The tent, for example, had to be fitted with proper pockets and windows, and with a door at the back to supplement the insignificant ventilators with which it was originally provided. A stout wooden box was made to hold the Congo medicine chest, because the sun, playing on so good a conducting material as aluminium, would be liable to injure the thermometers and possibly other contents of the chest. Messrs. Goolamally, Mohamedaly & Co. made us an excellent double-candle lamp-box to hold two candlesticks, four globes, and twelve candles, and also provided us with a considerable number of stores, on which, thanks to the Colonel's advice, we had saved transport from Aden. At one time it was debated as to whether our allowance of flour should not be reduced from three-quarters to half a pound per day, replacing the quarter pound by captain biscuits or by some other suitable form of biscuit, with the idea of having a more compact and accessible material for use on the march. It was not possible, however, to obtain such biscuits in Harrar, and we could only add fifteen pounds of wheaten biscuits.

By November 20th the arrangements for the Abyssinians had proceeded so far that according to the

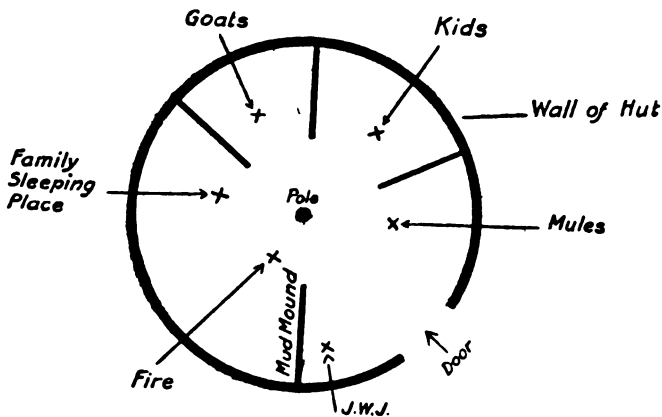
64 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

Colonel's instructions I struck camp outside Harrar and started for Feyambiro. The mess stores and kit were loaded on to twenty-eight donkeys and sent off at 9.30 a.m., my syce and I following on mules at 11 o'clock, and our camels, carrying hospital equipment and stores, coming on behind. We filed along the same narrow path that had been taken on November 8th to the Errer River, and then up and down the roughest and steepest mountain tracks I have ever travelled. The scenery is magnificent, but the road is a nightmare to a man on the march. The crops in the valleys were much riper than those on the high veldt or on the hillsides, showing plainly the difference in temperature between the two situations. The paths in the valleys are nearly all lined with cacti, and everywhere were fields of dhoura, with patches of coffee and bananas. The country is evidently thickly populated, for every now and then we came across great numbers of native huts.

The laden donkeys went by a different path from ourselves, so that by evening we were well ahead of them, and shortly before dark came within a mile or so of Feyambiro village. I billeted myself, syce and mules for the night in a Somali's circular mud hut. There was some hesitation at first about giving us accommodation, but at the magic word "back-sheesh," everyone became a candidate for the privilege. The accompanying rough diagram shows how we disposed ourselves within the hut.

I was accorded the royal bed, or rather stall, for

there was no difference between the spaces accorded to persons and to animals. The fire on the hearth was on my left, and to the right was the door through which the mules had been squeezed to be placed beside it on the other side. In front of the fire sat Mrs. Somali cooking a dishful of dhoura porridge on stick embers, and she rekindled the fire from time to time by the addition of more sticks and by blowing vigor-



GROUND-FLOOR PLAN OF THE SOMALI HUT

ously through a hollow reed about three feet long. She was naked to the waist, and the details of her dress below that would not occupy much space in description. She had an eight months old baby on her lap which had already had its head shaved. Beyond her was the family sleeping-place, next to that the space for the goats, then that for the kids, whose neighbours, my mules, completed the domestic circle. The divisions, roughly speaking, radiated from the

central pole of the hut, which supported a framework of sticks covered with thatch. The hut was of the beehive shape, and the compartments mentioned above were separated from one another by dried mud elevations about a foot in height. I sat on this little mound and ate the hot porridge, using a spoon which I had with me; and the porridge, with fresh cow's milk added, was excellent fare. As soon as my meal was finished, five children came in, and it is fair to say that as regards manners *en famille* they would give points to a good many Christian children. Three of the children were by our hostess and two by another wife, who lived in a second hut a few yards away—it being customary to allot a separate dwelling to each wife. On entering, each child salaamed its mother or stepmother; as the case may have been, by stooping and taking her hand and resting it in theirs, and then kissing the back of it and afterwards the palm. The mother then raised each child's hand to the child's forehead and kissed the back of it as it rested there. The children next pressed my hand in turn, and then filed out to the other hut, where their supper was ready. The syce fortified himself from the bowl of porridge after I had had what I wanted, and then passed it on to Papa Somali, who, after helping himself with no sparing hand, gave it to his wife, who took what there was left, and at the same time fed the baby, alternately from the platter and from the breast.

For the first three-quarters of an hour my eyes stung severely and watered profusely from the smoke

which filled the hut ; after that time, however, the irritation almost suddenly ceased, and no further discomfort was experienced. Before long I lay down on the dried skin of an ox, which was laid on the mud floor, and with the saddle for a pillow was asleep in no time. Wylde,¹ in his book, speaks of spending the night spearing bugs with a mimosa thorn ; personally, I was not troubled with them, probably because they were baffled by my peppering my bed freely with Keating's powder, a supply of which one should always take the precaution of carrying in the saddle-bag. The sand-flies were a bit waspish for a while, but failed to keep me awake long ; in fact, except for about five minutes when the baby squealed for its early morning feed and the sand-flies disturbed me, I slept soundly the whole night. The interruption referred to occurred about 2.30 a.m., when Mrs. Somali got up and piled fresh faggots on the fire whilst Mr. Somali droned a lullaby. Then the mother gave the baby its natural anodyne and it bleated gently off to sleep.

We were up at six the next morning, and the syce was sent back to hurry up the convoy. He met the cook about two miles back coming on with some bread and cold chicken for me, the latter being thatched with dead ants. Perhaps the formic acid from the ants gave the meal a piquancy in the place of salt ; anyhow, as roadside fare, it was very good. Passing through the village of Feyambiro, we reached camp at ten o'clock,

¹ *Modern Abyssinia.*

and found it to be situated two hours' mule march on the Jigiga side of the village. Large spreading mimosa trees provided a certain amount of shade and afforded a canopy beneath which we could have our midday meal. The tents were pitched south-south-east to avoid the afternoon sun. About half a mile away, in the dry river bed, were some marshy pools, out of which Dunn had been getting a couple of ducks nearly every morning. There were hundreds of guinea-fowl, partridges, and francolin about, besides several ducks, and a lot of dig-dig; in fact the bush seemed to be alive with small game and birds of all kinds. It was an easy matter each day for one or other of us to go out and shoot what was required for the pot, but there was no occasion to kill more than that, as the natives will not eat birds. A Somali, being a Mohammedan, will not eat any part of an animal that has been killed by an Abyssinian, who is a Christian; it must have been killed by himself or by another Somali; and the reverse is the case with the Abyssinians. White ants swarmed all over the place, and stink ants favoured the neighbourhood with their presence. Every afternoon whilst I was in camp there the sky was overcast, and the heat was accordingly moderated. There was a small party in camp, so we had plenty of time for odd jobs, besides tramping after what game there was to be had. A sodden pair of boots, obtained by walking after duck amongst the pools gave one a favourable opportunity for doing a little cobbling, in driving

eighteen good hob nails into each sole—which nails, it may be said, are a very necessary part of one's outfit in these countries. Dunn wanted his hair cutting, so being possessed of a good pair of clippers, I obliged him in that respect, and cut it so short that, "saving his grace," he looked like a coot. There were no sick in camp except the camels, of which about a dozen or so had sores of various kinds that needed dressing twice daily. We obtained fifty pounds of raw cotton for the dressings, and, at Dunn's further suggestion, purchased ten rolls of American sash or gauze. The cotton was very useful as a swab, and the sash, like the cotton, being very light, would come in very useful in the event of our having many wounded to look after and the other dressings running out.

The camel is a mulish beast—much more so than the mule—and obstinacy or stupidity, or both, enter very largely into his composition; and we had plenty of opportunities for observing his characteristics during the time at Fafan camp. He has an ungainly figure at the best of times, but the contortions and fantastic shapes which he assumes whilst being broken in, and the unearthly gurglings and groanings which he utters as an accompaniment to the operation, are but faintly suggested in the ordinary respectable appearance and behaviour of a well-drilled transport camel. Kindness is good, but I would go far to see the camel which could be broken in without a liberal use of brute force. The waste, howling wildernesses

70 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

of interior Somaliland, judging from the enormous numbers of camels existing there, would seem to be their paradise. There you come to know the camel, and to appreciate his enduring and patient qualities. To the Somali he is all in all, food and drink, the product of his labour and his toil, his current coin, his merchandise and bank, his inheritance, and the object of his ambition. What other beast, which can be purchased for Rs.50 and will carry a load of 260 lb. or more, will go on till he is worn out, living meanwhile on thorns, and needing a drink only about every five days?

When there is good green grazing, and they are not at work, the camels may be watered only once in every two or three months. When at work they are reckoned to drink about five gallons at each watering. Practically everywhere in Somaliland there is food for them, either in grass or in the various acacias or thorn bushes. The morning dew on the grass is considered harmful, and consequently on the march their daily feeds are taken, one during the heat of the day, and the other half an hour before sundown. They have an aversion to sheep and goats, and are therefore not grazed in company with them. As a rule, a herd, when grazing, will be led by an old camel carrying a large wooden bell or "Kor" hung round its neck as in the one forming the subject of the illustration opposite page 64.

The method of loading a camel in Somaliland is quite different from that adopted in Abyssinia. No saddle,



"FIRST GET THE CAMEL DOWN."



THE HFRIQ APPLIED.



THE TREASURY CHESTS ON THE WAY TO JIGJIGA.



JIGJIGA FORT.

or wooden framework, or cross-stick arrangement is used, but mats are tied to the camel, and upon them the load is fixed. The camel is brought down to the ground by the simple process of pulling his legs out from under him, and he is kept in that position whilst the mats are fixed in place. Three mats are generally used, each about nine feet by four, and they are applied over his back and hump, coming well down on each side, and are fastened by two ropes, both of which pass underneath the camel, one behind and the other in front of the resting pad. The first, smooth mat is called the "kebid," and is made of chewed galol bark fibre; the second, or middle mat, is the "ahous," and is made of plaited grass, smooth on one side and rough on the other, like an ordinary woollen mat; the third or outermost mat is the "abjit," and is made of plaited grass like the ahous. The ahous and the abjit are applied with their rough surfaces together, and the three mats make up the *hério* (pronounced *hayrēō*). The rope tying the mat on to the camel is called the "yell," that fastening on the load is the "sōrūtharri," and the leading rope is the "hōgan." In the case of riding (Arabian) camels, the rein or nose rope, which passes through the right nostril, is spoken of as the "moharka," the single bridle is the "sonarrida," the saddle is the "kōrāh," and the belly rope, or girth, is the "wiggiritka."

Marching as we commonly did in the moonlight night, either in the late evening or the early morning, the camels step out well to keep themselves warm,

and, carrying a maximum load of 260 lb. or more, usually arrive in camp fresh and fairly frisky. A single long night march, in place of two shorter, early and late, day marches, saves the camel-man the labour of a double turn of loading and unloading, which is no inconsiderable item. I puzzled myself for a long time in trying to reduce to definite terms the difference between the gait of the camel and that of the mule. It appears to resolve itself into this: in a mule, as in the horse, the near fore leg moves first, closely followed by the off hind leg, then the off fore leg and the near hind, and so on ; but in the camel, the two off legs are off the ground together alternately with the two near legs, but the hind legs get up a little quicker and come down a little sooner than the fore legs, thus allowing the opposite legs (near fore and off hind, or *vice versa*) to be momentarily on the ground at the same time, and this circumstance prevents the camel's gait from being more oscillatory than it otherwise would be. There is, in fact, scarcely any motion at all in the camel's hind-quarters from the hips to the pad when he is taking regular strides.

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

Convoying treasury chests to Jigjiga—The Gureis Mountain—The country about Jigjiga—Jigjiga—Abdullah Tahr—The wells—Watering—Composition of a caravan—Three Months' Stores—Departure of Duff and Dunn—Assistant-Surgeon Wakeman—Small Game—Shooting—Arrival of Alone—March to Sesebani, Gaho—Order of march—Harakley—Elevation of country—Jailee—The thorn bushes, description of—Tuli—"Interpreter"—Dagabur—Interruption of march

ON November 24th we heard from the Colonel at Jigjiga that either Dunn or myself was to convoy the treasury chests to Jigjiga, and the other was to have a look at the Babilli road. At the same time the Colonel told us that the date on which the Abyssinian army would move was still uncertain, and that Alone would not be required to move till November 26th, or possibly later. As a matter of fact, Alone did not march for Jigjiga until December 4th.

Dunn and I tossed for choice, and as the luck fell to me I started for Jigjiga, twenty-two miles distant to the south-east, at 7.15 a.m. on November 25th, taking two camels, led by a Somali, for the transport of my bed and the four locked and sealed money

76 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

boxes, two other camels ridden by armed Somali sowars, and a fifth—riding—camel for my own use. Our road lay along a level plain through a bushy country until 8.15, when we crossed a small dry river bed, beyond which the trees became larger, and the ground covered with long sun-dried grass. Apparently there was not much water in that district, as the grass was not grazed, and there were few cattle-tracks, and no signs of native life.

About nine o'clock, turning more directly eastwards, we left the level country and approached the first hills, coming across large herds of magnificent cattle and numbers of natives. At 10.30 we began the first ascent, and passed a convoy of sixty-eight camels coming back empty from Jigjiga. At the top of this first ascent the road turns northwards for some distance, inclining slightly downhill, and enters a district of dhoura plantations and grazing grounds. The road, however, soon turns south-eastwards again and leads to the ascent of the Marda Pass, which is marked by a gap or nek in the Gureis mountain-range; a range which was, I believe, formerly the Abyssinian frontier in this part of the country. We halted at one o'clock about half-way up the pass, and lunched under the shade of a wahbi¹ bush; concerning which bush one of the Somali sowars explained to me in dumb pantomime that the Midgan and some other tribes boil down the root to a concentrated form, and use it as a poison for their iron arrow points. The slopes of

¹ The names of all trees and bushes are written phonetically. .

the mountain are thickly wooded, and at the summit of the Pass the aneroid registered 8,900 feet.¹

The reverse slope of the mountain is studded with daar and kiddy cacti, and with sugsug, maria, and waddy thorn bushes. From the vantage point of the summit of the Pass, looking south-south-east, there stretches out before one a vast rolling plain of rich ripe grass like a table of illimitable length spread with a cloth of gold. Far off in the south-east, dimly outlined on the horizon, perhaps sixty miles or so away, are five mountain-summits, but to the east and north-east, for all we could see, the vasty plain might stretch away to the antipodes. To the south-west, however, the plain rapidly narrows down to a strip—a mere finger's breadth it looked, but in reality eight miles wide—where it becomes squeezed in between the mountain-range on the one side and a chain of low hills, springing from the plain and running southwards, on the other. Our camp at Jigjiga was pitched on the northern slope of one of these low hills about eight miles from where we stood. Amongst the thorn bush around the base of the mountain there were extensive patches of the wild potato or Somali moh, which is a useless shrub,

¹ This figure is higher than that given in the *Précis of Information on Somaliland* (part ii. p. 172), in which the height of the Pass is given as 7,200 feet, and that of the adjoining mountain as 8,000 feet. On the 28th the Colonel, Duff, and I climbed the Gureis Mountain, and estimated the height of the summit to be 9,900 feet, so that, although my readings may have been somewhat too high, the heights here given must be more nearly accurate than those mentioned in the *Précis*.

78 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

and worse, for it is not only obstructive, but destructive, being furnished with sharp-curved thorns that tear your clothes to rags. Its fruit is something like a tomato in appearance, and grows on the summit of the plant in the form of a golden globe about an inch and a half in diameter ; but no part of the plant is edible for either man or beast.

When about five miles from camp I saw two pauw, or big bustards, in the grass, about 150 yards off. After dismounting I took one of the Somali sowars' Martini-Enfield carbines and a cartridge and shot the male bird. They are magnificent birds, with a black and grey crest and a grey body, and are splendid eating. This one was weighed afterwards and turned the scale at sixteen pounds. A few of his feathers and hackles were kept for the manufacture of salmon flies in the future.

In borrowing a native's rifle, by the way, it is always a wise precaution to look down the inside of the barrel before loading, and in doing so on this occasion I found it to be plugged with some cotton stuff.

We reached camp at 3.45 p.m., and not long afterwards the Colonel and Duff came in.

The days at Jigjiga, from November 26th to December 5th, were hot and thirsty, and the nights were cold. At 4 a.m., which was the coldest part of the night, the temperature varied between 35° and 37° F. The midday temperature in the shade was usually 93° or thereabouts. The sky was commonly

cloudy, and on December 3rd and 4th a few drops of rain fell. There were sundry visitations of "dust devils," and one of them on December 3rd brought our mess tent down about our ears and carried off various papers into the unknown.

The syce and servant with the mules and kit arrived in camp the next day, November 27th—and in reference to kit, let me say that the cork mattress and pillow were left in store at Harrar. An extra blanket underneath one is more comfortable and softer than the mattress, and by stuffing the head of one's valise with a big towel, leaving more at each end than in the centre, a very nice and springy pillow is obtained. In Somaliland, also, a case should always be taken for the mackintosh, otherwise it will get very much torn by the thorns when passing through the bush, as mine did.

On November 26th we had news by runners of the recovery of the British animals recently looted by the Mullah at Bohodtle, and of our occupation of Galadi. The Colonel sent back word to urge on the Abyssinians, laying great stress on the vital importance of immediate concentration and advance; unfortunately, there appeared to be a hitch in their arrangements.

The wells of Jigjiga lie just beyond a fringe of trees about a mile to the north of the site of our camp, and a quarter of a mile farther on is the village, consisting of a conglomeration of native huts situated outside a fort, or wooden stockade,

erected by the Abyssinians, and protected by strong banket work inside.

Abdullah Tahr, the Governor of Jigjiga, a Yemen Arab, executed some of the details incidental to the fitting out of our convoys, and he was always a loyal and friendly ally ; not the least appreciated indication of which was the delicious hot coffee and milk that he used to send us after our long morning's marches. He was a most affable person, and he had, withal, a remarkable taste in dress. One day, when we overtook him on the march, I was able to take a careful note of his attire, and found it to consist of the following : on his head was a yellow cotton turban over a brownish, knitted Balaclava cap ; a native-made, unbleached shamma, or tobe, was wound round his shoulders ; a blue cloth livery coat with brass buttons bearing on their faces the crowned lion of Judah, and a pair of khaki drill pantaloons, loosely kept up by a leather belt to which was attached a silver-mounted dagger in a silver embossed sheath, formed the basis of his uniform ; brown socks fell in folds round his ankles, and he had on patent leather boots, unbuttoned and on the wrong feet ; and, finally, he wore a pair of blue goggles and carried a coloured parasol.

There are some hundreds of wells at Jigjiga, but when we were there only thirty-one of them yielded a good supply of water, and these apparently are never dry. During the dry season it is estimated



AT THE WELLS—JIGJIGA.



KITCHEN AT JIGJIGA.—SERGEANTS TUBB AND SHEPHERD.



SOMALI AND AOUL (SÖEMMERING'S GAZELLE).



SOMALI AND GERENUK (WALLER'S GAZELLE).

that at least 50,000 cattle, with camels, sheep, mules, ponies, and donkeys in great numbers, beside hundreds of natives, water daily at the wells, some of them coming from long distances to the water. It is a grand spectacle and one always to be remembered. The flocks and herds, each usually under only one shepherd, take and wait their turns at the wells, their lines converging all round from a distance of several miles. When those in front have watered they retrace their steps, and as often as not those behind open their lines to let them through, exchanging greetings as they pass by rubbing noses with them; and the different herds never appear to get mixed. Each well is about thirty feet in depth and is lined with strong branches that afford foot purchase to the four men who stand straddle-legged across the rectangular shaft and pass the water up to each other. The shaft opens in a splay or cup-shaped mouth at which a fifth man stands, who throws the ovoid or long, bell-shaped vessel up to a sixth man at the trough, who, in his turn, catches the full vessel and returns an empty one, the contents of which he has poured either in the drinking trough or into the "hans"¹ of women waiting their turn at the well.

The plains about Jigjiga, covered with grass and bush, present many pitfalls to the traveller in the form of jackal and fox holes of which numbers are concealed in the grass.

¹ See note at end of chapter.

82 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

On the 28th the Colonel, Duff and I climbed to the summit of the Gureis Mountain. We left the mules at the top of the pass and then scrambled up a thousand feet or more to the summit of the mountain—first through open bush and then over grass, and nearly all the way over large and loose stones, for Africa maintains its reputation in these latitudes for stony kopjes. From the top of the mountain the whole plain unrolled itself beyond the hills where our camp was, and disclosed a marvellous stretch of open grass veldt.¹ A gigantic stone caps the top of the mountain and the grass grows luxuriantly right up to it, and if water were obtainable it would be difficult to imagine a stronger natural position than it presents. We noticed a cloud of dust about fifteen miles away to the east and allowed ourselves to hope that it was a party of Abyssinians marching to Babilli, although herds of cattle going to water, or a flight of locusts, would equally account for what we saw.

On November 28th Dunn came into camp from the camel depôt on the Faf, as the Colonel had decided that Duff and he, with a caravan of 170 camels, should leave on the 30th for Gaho. With this in view Duff handed over to me the duties of Mess President on the 27th, and I took them with a reservation that the first man who made a complaint should

¹ The Somalis burn the grass veldt, exactly as the Boers do, to improve the forthcoming crop.

take over the job from me. For the same reason on the 29th the charge of the treasury chests was transferred, together with a large number of instructions as to mules, camel-men, camels, grass-cutters, escort ropes and stores of all sorts, to be obtained, taken, left or discharged, at all of which details Duff is a master.

It may, perhaps, be of interest to those who are not familiar with the composition of a caravan in such countries as these, to indicate, as an example of what is required, that of our small caravan from Jigjiga. Everything in these desolate regions, including water, on many long marches, has to be taken with one.

Each camel-man leads two camels, so that for every two camels additional supplies and transport have to be provided for one camel-man, and one camel will carry supplies for two men for three months.

There were 104 men in camp, excluding eight officers¹ and two sergeants, and for these 116 camels were required ; but in the end our party amounted to 215 men (of whom 111 were camel-men) and 223 camels, as is shown below.

The party of 104 men and 116 camels was made up as follows. Men :—

¹ These figures relate to all the officers and men attached to Colonel Rochfort's staff, and the fact that they were not all in the same place does not affect the total numbers.

84 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

Nationality		Number	Duty	Wages Rs. per Month
Somali	.	1	Head cook	50
"	.	1	Under "	30
"	.	1	Blacksmith	60
"	.	1	Headman	60
"	.	2	Section headmen	25 to 30
"	.	1	Ration man	30
"	.	1	Baker	30
"	.	1	Saddler	30
"	.	9	Camel sowars	30
"	.	13	Escort	30
"	.	25	Scouts	25
"	.	16	Officers' syces	25
"	.	1	Kitchen boy	15
"	.	1	Sheep boy	15
"	.	2	Boys for sergeants	15
Abyssinian	.	2	Interpreters	50
"	.	26	Grass-cutters and mulemen	20
		<u>104</u>		

A head camel-man received Rs.40 per month.

" " 18 " "

The wages we had to give are higher than those that small parties of travellers have to pay.

Camels :—

29 camels required for Water.

24	"	"	Officers' kit, tents, etc.
2	"	"	Sergeants' " "
4	"	"	Ammunition.
2	"	"	Kitchen.
6	"	"	Medical stores.
11	"	"	Grain for riding camels.
2	"	"	Treasury chests.
6	"	"	Spare rations.
30	"	"	Mess stores.

116

One hundred and sixteen camels require fifty-eight camel-men, making $104 + 58 = 162$ men, exclusive of officers and sergeants.

	Men	Months	Camels	Camel-men
Rations for 162 for 3	require	81	which require	41
" "	41	"	"	20
" "	10	"	"	5
" "	2	"	"	1
	215 men		107	
			add 116 transport camels	
			223 camels	111 camel-men

add 58 already ac-
counted for

In addition to these, twenty-five mules were required for the scouts, sixteen for the officers' mounts, and two for the sergeants', as well as two ponies—one for the Colonel and one for Duff, the officer in command of the scouts.

All the men were Somalis with the exception of the grass-cutters and the interpreters, and the scale of daily rations for each man was 1 lb. of rice, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of dates, and 2 oz. of ghee, and the amounts for ninety days totalled up as follows :—

Rice, 216 men \times 90 days (1 lb. per day) = 19,440 lb., say 20,000 lb.
 Dates " \times 45 " ($\frac{1}{2}$ " ") = 9,720 " " 10,000 "
 Ghee " \times 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " ($\frac{1}{8}$ " ") = 2,430 " " 2,500 "

Finally we carried forty-eight 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ -gallon water-tanks and five 8-gallon tanks. The magnitude of the stores and transport necessary for so small a party in a three months' campaign will suffice to suggest the requirements of a force of from five to ten thousand fighting

86 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

men, such as constituted the British Somaliland Field Force. These considerations may perhaps induce some caution in those critics at home (to whom sooner or later *the bill* comes) to whom the rounding up of the Mullah in a country some five hundred miles long by some four hundred wide appears to be so much easier a business than it does to those who take a part in the attempt.

On the 29th, when all was ready for Duff's caravan to leave on the morrow, the Somali camel-men took it into their heads to strike. They wanted to be armed with rifles and given better wages, and the Colonel refused their demands. They marched off about half a mile from camp, and there halted and held a vigorous debate amongst themselves. After three-quarters of an hour or so they returned to camp, and took up their work as if nothing had happened. In the twilight their chatter was so noisy and their activity so pronounced that it might have been thought they were fighting amongst themselves; and perhaps the Colonel almost wished that a few of the more turbulent would fall upon and slay each other, and so have done with their jabber. As a matter of fact we had no more trouble with them for some time, and they worked excellently. They had taken their measure of the Colonel, and found, as ignorant folk often do, that justice tempered with mercy is an attribute of the strong, and not of the weak.

Duff, Dunn, and their caravan started in good

order the next morning. Duff's programme was to march to Sesebani and there await the Colonel, failing other instructions. Their route was as follows :—Leave Jigjiga November 30th, arrive at Gaho December 1st ; leave Gaho December 3rd, arrive at Dinwale the same evening ; at Jailee on the morning of December 4th, at El Jid in the evening ; at Tuli on the morning of December 5th and at Dagabur on the evening of December 6th ; halt there a day, and then to proceed by two night marches to Sesebani.

Dunn was to join the Abyssinians if required ; but as it was an almost unheard of thing for an Abyssinian to go sick on the march, it was not expected that it would be necessary.

After Duff's party had left there were only the Colonel, myself, Sergeant Shepherd, and thirty-five men remaining in camp at Jigjiga, with seven mules, a pony, and forty-nine camels. One of the men, to wit, my useless servant Said, was sacked the next day and paid up to date, receiving \$19·4 in all—a sum which included his pay of Rs.40 a month and his fare of Rs.9·8 from Dire Daouw to Djibouti, and from there to Aden.

On December 1st we were joined by Assistant-Surgeon W. A. M. Wakeman from Adis Ababa, and it is impossible to introduce his name without expressing one's deep indebtedness to him for many services, particularly for his help in obtaining a large number of the details of Abyssinian life and habits that are given in later chapters. By means of his intimate

knowledge of Amharic and Arabic, and of the character and mode of thought of the people, it was possible to gain confidences and information which would have been quite unobtainable by myself. Mr. Wakeman entered the Indian Medical Department in 1894, and served successively in the Reserve Brigade in the Tirah campaign of 1895, as surgeon on an Indian marine vessel from 1896 to 1897, as assistant to the port health officer at Bombay on special plague duty, and for nine months in the military hospital at Aden, after which he went to Abyssinia, being attached to Colonel Harrington's first Abyssinian mission in 1898. He has been in Abyssinia since then, and in 1902-3 he accompanied Mr. A. E. Butter on his expedition for the survey of the southern frontier of the country, returning afterwards to resume his duties at the British Agency at Adis Ababa.

Sergeant R. Shepherd, of the Tower Hamlets Volunteers, did good service in South Africa while serving in Lord Methuen's force, and at the action of Klip River he came specially to notice. His reputation as a reliable and handy man was well maintained with us, and his books and accounts were a model of neatness and accuracy.

It was an easy matter at Jigjiga to supplement our tinned stores by what guinea-fowl, partridges, or hares we wanted. When you had shot them, however, it was as well to hang them in a place safe from the jackals. One day I brought in five guinea-fowl and a hare, and gave explicit instructions to the Somali

cook to hang them out of the reach of the jackals in the grass shelter used by the camel sowars. Instead of that he hung them on the kitchen screen, and the result was that they all disappeared. It was as useless to lament as to try to extract "sunbeams from cucumbers," so the simplest thing to do was to go out next morning before breakfast and shoot some more. We took good care that the jackals did not get off scot-free, and amongst us shot a good many of them. There was indeed little else to shoot at by way of rifle practice, or possibly we should not have bothered about them, although they had fairly good brushes and skins.

On December 3rd I decided to trek off for the day in the direction of the Hargeisa Road and try to get a shot at aoul. Sergeant Shepherd had a cup of tea and biscuit ready at 3.15 a.m., and at that time the men were already up and regaling themselves preparatory to the day's fast, as it was during Ramadan. Duff's Mannlicher rifle, some cartridges, a pair of Zeiss No. 8 field-glasses, a water-bottle, biscuits, a small tin of potted meat, a tin-opener, and a loading rope formed one's usual equipment on such a morning's shoot. I rode a saddled mule, my syce another, and an Abyssinian muleman led the way on foot. We marched at first by the light of the moon and then by starlight, getting to the ground, about eight miles distant, with the first streak of dawn. We saw herds of aoul grazing in the open grassy plain, but as the grass was patchy in places and was only about eighteen

inches long, having been topped by the cattle, camels, or gazelles, stalking was difficult. I dropped into the grass, leaving the mules with the muleman and syce, and after crawling for a quarter of a mile or more, got within about 280 yards of the nearest buck, which was looking intently in my direction. I was, however, so breathless and unsteady that it was impossible to take a shot for some time; and before I had steadied down sufficiently, he sounded the alarm, and the whole herd—about forty in number—made off. At last, after many ineffectual attempts, a lucky stalk brought me within 250 paces of a big buck, which I dropped at the first shot. He was a good specimen, and his horns measured $19\frac{3}{4}$ inches along the outer curve, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches from tip to tip, and 5 inches in circumference at the base. He was our only spoil that day. There were several large herds about, but, with so many on the alert, it was a difficult matter to get anywhere near them, because when one broke away, the rest immediately followed suit.

Major Alone arrived at Jigjiga on December 4th, and the Colonel and I, with a caravan of forty-nine camels and escort, left in the track of Duff for Sesebani the next day. Alone and Wakeman were to return to Harrar on the 6th and bring up the reserve supplies, as by this time the Abyssinian forces, with whom were Baird, Ogilvy, and Fairfax, had reached Babilli.

The Colonel, preceded by a party under the com-

mand of Abdullah Tahr, marched at noon on December 5th, sending forward six camels and twelve full water-tanks to our next stopping place, only nine miles farther on, as he intended the first stage to be a short one. The moon had been full the day before, and the rule is to march with a waxing moon by night and with a waning moon in the early morning, so as to avoid the interval of darkness; hence on December 6th we had to be on the move by 3 a.m.

After the usual cup of tea and biscuits we despatched the water camels and the rest of the caravan, whilst we ourselves followed a little after four o'clock. Gaho was reached at 9.15, after an easy march of twenty miles south-east from Jigjiga, except for the last few hundred yards, when the road turned westwards. There is a good, well-beaten track all the way, inclining downhill, and the aneroid showed a fall of 700 feet from Jigjiga, so that the elevation of Gaho is probably 4,300 feet; and the night seemed distinctly warmer than the one before. On our way we saw at least a score of gerenuk, but there was no chance of getting a shot at them. I noticed also a lot of parrots and parroquets in different places. The air at Gaho was delightfully dry and bracing, and there was a pleasant breeze, but all the grass and trees looked very dry, and we were told by the natives that there would be no water left in the wells in a month's time. There were then only five or six of the wells out of the hundred or more in existence which contained water, and in none of them was it

more than a foot deep. The wells there are simply cone-shaped holes about fifteen feet deep, and the presence of so many of them over a relatively small area gives the ground a sieve-like or honeycombed appearance. The natives stated that the water was strongly aperient, and recommended, as a combination, the climate of Gaho and the water of Jigjiga. When the wells fail the flocks and herds are moved to Biade, near the Fafan, about thirty miles to the north-west, and in a general way only a few nomadic families are found in the Gaho district. A striking thing about the climate of Somaliland, as compared with that of the Soudan, is the absence of thirst which one experiences. In most places in the Soudan one is consumed with a parching thirst, and immediately on drinking, moisture oozes from every pore. In Somaliland, however, a sip or a few mouthfuls now and then were all that was required, and the skin was always dry.

At Gaho we pitched our tents, according to custom, to windward of the animals, and the next morning, December 7th, shortly after three o'clock, started for Harakley, sixteen miles distant, in the same order of march as before. The Colonel and I arrived at 8.45, and found that Abdullah Tahr, who as usual had been with the advance guard, had his delicious coffee awaiting us, and with it and cold guinea-fowl from the day before, biscuits, and jam, we made a good breakfast, and had a good sleep besides, before the arrival of the baggage camels. One day on the

march is like another, and these details reproduce themselves. The tents are pitched, the branches cut, and the zareba made ; the animals are picketed, watered, and fed ; you have a scrub, do a little tailoring or darn a sock—fine drawn and no tinkering—if you have the opportunity and the energy, you enter up your diary with strange blessings on the man who invented pens, ink, and paper, for it is done in the sweltering heat beneath what shade you can find whilst you sit in a semi-nude condition. One other little daily incident of racial interest was that since leaving Harrar it had often been necessary to give a lift to Bess, our would-be lion-hound, but none of the Somalis, as good Mohammedans, would pollute their bodies by touching her for fear of imperilling their souls. Their anxiety concerning the destination of the soul, however, did not extend to one that happened to be in possession of a female, since they were willing enough that a girl should hand the dog up to me.

The road from Gaho to Harakley is a good track ; in fact, it would almost be possible to drive a motor-car from Jigjiga to Gaho were there petrol stations and other accessories. The aneroid showed a fall of 280 feet from Gaho, so that the elevation of Harakley is a little over 4,000 feet. I feel sure, however, that the readings of my aneroid were sometimes excessive, and the fall was therefore probably not quite so great as stated. It may be pointed out, once for all, that the ground falls practically all the way from Jigjiga to

Gabridehari—from Jiggiga to Sesebani, 131 miles, nearly 2,000 feet, and from Sesebani to Gabridehari, 97 miles, about 1,400 feet.

There are two large groups of shallow wells at Harakley similar to those at Gaho, but not so numerous. In some of them it was possible to reach the water by scrambling down the side, but in others it required four men to bring the water to the top. There was not more than a foot of water in any of the wells when we were there, and in most cases it was muddy, though the natives pronounced it to be "good," and also said that at no time were all of these wells dry.

On December 8th we were up again at 2.30 and started at 4.30 for Jailee, eighteen miles away, refilling our water tanks before leaving. Hitherto the way had been over sandy ground covered with very little else but thorn bushes and dried grass; now, however, it became dusty and earthy and the track much rougher, but the same everlasting thorns were on every side, opening out in several places, but in others forming impenetrable thickets. Many of the thorn bushes presented the bulbous enlargement or deformity of their thorns which is so common. In most places the enlargements are white, but about here I noticed, particularly in the variety called by the natives "waddy," that they were of a black or dark brown colour. This waddy tree commonly grows to a height of from twenty to thirty feet or more, and possesses in some cases thorns which are



OUR MIDGAN GUIDE.



AT THE WELLS—DAGABUR.

larger than those of any of the other trees thereabouts, being eight inches long or more, and it also exudes a large quantity of gum which the natives say causes flatulency.

The enlargements on the spines of the trees, characteristic of the myrmecephylous plants, are inhabited by ants which defend the plant from injurious insects and feed on the sticky secretion often found on the leaves. The ant eggs are probably laid in the young growing spine, which subsequently bulges with the development of the ants, which themselves, when fully formed, eat their way out. Thus, on the same stem one may often see well-developed spines which have been left untouched, six or eight inches long, with other dwarfed bulbous ones, not more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 inches in length. I obtained from our Somali escort the native names of most of the trees, the branches of which were cut indiscriminately in forming a zareba,¹ and a few details of

¹ We are indebted to Mr. W. S. Fenwick, B.Sc., for identifying the specimens sent home, as follows :—

Native Name	Botanical Name	Natural Order	Sub-order
Kiddy	<i>Euphorbia Cuneata</i> ?	Euphorbiaceæ	
Megag	<i>Ormocarpum Spinatum</i>	Leguminosæ	?
Adad	<i>Acacia Senegal</i>	„	Mimosææ
Bilal	„ <i>Mellifera</i>	„	„
Chairin	„ <i>Sergal</i>	„	„
Khoorah	„ <i>Fistulans</i>	„	„
Galol	„ ?	„	„
Marrah	„ <i>Arabica</i>	„	„
Guasu	„ <i>Pennata</i>	„	„
Waddy	„ (new species) ?	„	„
Sarman	„ („ „) ?	„	„

some of the chief varieties may be of interest. With the exception of megag and kiddy, they are all leguminous plants and acacias of the sub-order Mimoseæ. From a little way off the megag looks like a bush covered with a luxuriant growth of lichen, but on inspection it is found that the branches are closely packed round with tiny yellowish-green flowers and with little green leaves of an ovate form springing in clusters from the stem. The natives burn these branches and use the carbonised ends to blacken the inside of their "deeshas" or milk vessels. The kiddy cactus grows freely in that district, and is often mistaken at a distance for megag, since it grows in the same thick, close-set form and produces much the same outline. Galol, or jalol, is apparently the same as the Egyptian lebbekh, and in the adad I recognised an old friend, the Egyptian nebak, or "wait-a-bit" thorn, with its short curved spines set against one and one's garments. The short broad pods of the adad are very like those of another thorn, bilal. In some varieties, especially the chairin and the khoodah, the pods form large horseshoe-shaped crescents, or nearly complete rings, and in the chairin, particularly, they are remarkably thick, coarse and fibrous. The bark of a variety called "goomer" is used by the natives to make the kebid of hérios and it possesses a very unpleasant smell; and the thorns of this tree and another called "addy" provide the natives with tooth-brushes. Nearly all the trees are gum-bearing, and some, such as the waddy, in a

particularly liberal manner. The large, thick white thorns of sarman are for some reason left undisturbed by the ants, and exhibit no bulbous enlargements. The small red pods of this tree give it a very bright appearance when they are ripe. All the gum-bearing trees are used as firewood, and unless in a time of great drought they are all said to be evergreen.

During our morning marches, on the 7th and 8th, it had felt chillier than before, and this was probably due to the higher level of the sub-soil water, as evidenced by the presence of water in the shallow wells at Harakley. At Jailee (3,700 feet) we found a chain of some fifty wells, about twelve feet deep, in most of which there was from three to twelve inches of very muddy water, but which, nevertheless, was again pronounced by the natives to be "sweet and good." The wells are dug in the course of a channel in the ground, in which water lodges during the rains, and lie about half a mile east of the "road," and between five and six miles south-west of a characteristic dip in the Megag range of hills.

Doctoring natives and mules, and shooting for the pot, occupied the day at Jailee, and the next morning we pushed on twenty-two miles farther, and at 8 a.m. halted close to Tuli (3,500 feet), where there was no water. The track was a little harder and not so dusty as on the day before, but there was the same close thorn bush on either side. Our guide was a Midgan, armed with a bow and with a quiver of iron-pointed arrows, the barbs of which were poisoned

with the wahbi plant. On the march the Colonel and I rode and walked at alternate intervals of about fifty minutes to rest ourselves and the mules.

The silvery moon was generally vertically over us as we set out, and cast a clear light all round. The Southern Cross, like a tilted kite, was before us, the morning star on our left front (S.E.), the Plough behind and to the left (N.E.), and Orion above us to the west. We passed Gebel Gumber on the east, and Gebel Tuli on the west. Near the former, about 5 a.m., the Colonel saw five aoul, some distance off, and I had a shot at them at 240 yards from behind a bush with the sun in my face, but missed them. In the cold of the early morning one's fingers were half frozen and the sensation almost gone, so that I could neither properly hold the rifle nor feel the trigger. The aoul careered round, not knowing whence the shot was fired, and halted, about 170 yards off, where I could just see their shoulders above the long grass in which they stood. After rubbing my fingers well I took a standing shot and dropped the leading buck, and, on the Colonel's suggestion, took another shot at the second one, and dropped him too. We left a man with them to bring them on when the transport camels came up.

There was much spoor of game, and in one place a lion's track. Large herds of camels were seen grazing, and concerning them, the Colonel elicited the following illuminating information from our Abyssinian interpreter, Georgis, who, in response to

the Colonel's inquiry as to the proportion of transport to milk camels in the herds, said, "If there are a few, there are a few, and if there are many, there are many."

The next day (December 10th) we were up at 1.40, started off at 2.40, and reached Dagabur, twenty-two miles distant, at 8.45. The march was a longer one than had been expected, but the tendency ever is to under-estimate long distances and to over-estimate short ones. The road was much the same as before. At 7.20 we crossed the deep sandy Jerrer River bed, and subsequently marched more or less along it, crossing it again, and then recrossing it ten minutes from camp. Sergeant Shepherd, who brought up the rear with the camel transport, reached camp at 11 a.m., and reported that early in the morning, when not far from Tuli, he had seen a lion about 300 yards from the road, and that it had walked on the flank of the caravan for several hundred yards.

Bad news reached us at Dagabur that same afternoon, and the halt there became much longer than had been bargained for.

NOTE.—A water vessel . . . is a Han.
 The cover of a water vessel . . . is an Āgān.
 A milk vessel . . . is a Deesha.
 The cover of a milk vessel . . . is a Dilka.

CHAPTER V

CHAPTER V

Bad news from Farso—Colonel Rochfort—The proceedings of the Abyssinians—Dagabur—The wells—The country round—Ant-hills—Abdullah Tahr—Shooting oryx—Tracking a runaway mule—Arrival of Duff and Dunn—A lion tale—Good news from the Colonel—The march resumed—Sesebani—The wells—Arrival of Ogilvy—March to Dagaha Mado—Camp at Dagaha Mado—Ramsay-Fairfax

OUR news from Baird, who was with the Abyssinians at Farso, was short and evil. He told us that owing to the reported scarcity of water along the line of advance, the army would not be able to proceed farther south.

It is impossible to describe our disappointment at the prospect of such a stoppage. Our toil and sweat, it would appear, had been for nothing, and we were pulled up short, and found ourselves like a ship ashore, high and very dry. However, if things were really as bad as the present anticipations indicated, we could only submit with as good a grace as possible, for if the wells would not hold water, what argument would there be no earthly use in dropping buckets into empty wells. It is a bad enough thing sometimes to be on half rations, but, with no water

obtainable, the desert becomes an impassable barrier, and 5,000 men, 1,500 camels and 12,000 mules, require a lot to drink.

It is difficult to speak highly of our superior officers without giving occasion for offence, but perhaps it may be permissible to say that we counted ourselves fortunate in having a man like Colonel Rochfort at our head, for if anyone could get us out of the difficulty he was the man.

The history and disposition of the Abyssinian force up to that time, December 10th, had been as follows: during September the Emperor Menelik issued orders for the collection of a force of four thousand mounted men, to include a considerable number of his own personal troops, and towards the end of November, this army, under the command of Fituarari Gabri, had assembled at Babilli, about thirty-six miles to the south-west of Harrar. The arrangement was that the force should proceed *via* Wardair to Galadi, occupying these places, and, if necessary, make a demonstration towards Mudug. The Mullah was known to be in the Nogal Valley, and it was desirable that he should be encouraged to remain there until the Somaliland field-force was ready to act.

On the previous Abyssinian expedition it had been found sufficient for each man to carry one month's provisions on a mule, and beyond that to rely on supplies which could be drawn from the district in which the force was acting. On this occasion, how-

ever, in consequence of the distance to be covered, the scarcity of water, and the total absence of any grain on the line of march or in the expected field of operations, such an arrangement was out of the question. The Abyssinians have no organised system of supply and transport, and their mobility had on the previous occasion been much hampered by the lack of vessels for water transport. On this expedition therefore the British Government supplied 5,000 water bottles, 1,000 eight-gallon and 360 twelve-gallon water tanks, together with the pumps and waterproof sheets necessary for improvising drinking troughs; and arrangements were made for carrying two months' supplies and for these to be supplemented later on by three caravans despatched by Ras Makunнан.

What the improvisation of all this meant in an Eastern country where neither man nor beast is expected to turn up to time, and what were the thousand and one difficulties, diplomatic and otherwise, shifts and changes of plans and arrangements, delays, mishaps, and the rest, are matters that may, perhaps, be guessed at, but they are impossible to describe. Ras Makunнан himself was most energetic in the matter, and was determined that the expedition should be carried out if possible. Indeed, the story went round afterwards that he had made it to be known that any man who retreated while there was water in the wells would not be allowed to re-enter Harrar.

On December 1st news from Baird was received at Jigjiga that the Abyssinian army was assembled at Babilli, and that Ras Makunna, Gerolimato, Ogilvy and Fairfax, the latter with two Colt guns on tripods, were with the force. Each man carried two months' provisions, either on his own or on the Ras's mules or camels, and there were two hundred additional mules carrying sufficient ammunition to make up two hundred rounds per man, including the rounds in their bandoliers, while one month's rations on a thousand Ogaden camels were to follow to Wardair. At the same time Baird told us that there were then five hundred water-carrying camels with the force, but that a thousand more were required.

The Abyssinians subsequently marched as far south as Farso, and there, in consequence of the bad reports returned by the parties sent out to report on the water likely to be available on the march, they came to a stop. Their line of advance and ours converged at Sesebani, thirty-three miles south of Dagabur, which latter place we had reached on December 10th. On the receipt of Baird's intelligence, the Colonel immediately decided to go and see for himself how matters stood, and determined, if it were in any way possible, to get the advance carried out. With this purpose he left on December 11th, at 2.45 a.m., taking with him a small caravan of nine baggage camels, three camel sowars, and four mules. I was left at Dagabur, and Duff and Dunn, who had been working down south, returned here on

December 15th, since nothing further could be undertaken whilst the present *impasse* continued.

There were few men in camp, and the duties were nominal, so that such an opportunity for prospecting the country, and perhaps getting a little shooting, was not to be lost, and I tried to make the most of it. At this point, let me express my indebtedness to Duff for the loan of his Mannlicher rifle, which he handed over to me at Jigjiga with a sufficiency of cartridges. My own rifles and guns were still wandering about the country, nobody knew where. The calibre of the Mannlicher (.256) is, however, too small for big game, and on several occasions, to my great disappointment, despite prolonged search, I lost wounded animals in consequence.

Dagabur (*lit.* Rocky Hill) was formerly the site of a considerable village, but the constant raids to which the natives were exposed in the absence of an ordered Government, led eventually to its desertion, so that now, like many other places marked on the maps, it is nothing more than the name given to a collection of wells, and every vestige of human habitation has disappeared. The wells are known as the Hari Yusif wells, and a group of seven of them lies along the track of the Jerrer River, about a quarter of a mile south of where we had pitched our camp. Six of them are in the river bank and one in the dry bed, while a little farther south there are two others, which were said to hold less water. All the wells are sunk through the sandstone rock and appear to be about forty feet

deep, and it takes eight men to raise the water from the bottom of the well to the troughs at the top. The water is cool and fairly clear, and was said to be four feet deep in most of the wells, and not to fail through the dry season.

Dagabur is about 3,100 feet above sea level, and was distinctly warmer than any other place we had stayed in since leaving Harrar. The country for some miles round is almost destitute of grass, although the whole district is overrun with large herds of cattle, flocks of sheep and goats, and droves of camels. Here and there one finds patches of closely-cropped grass, particularly along the course of the river bed, and in places where, at first, one would not have expected it, namely, in the stony places and amongst the rocks. It occurred to me that the denudation of the country of grass was possibly due to the fact that the animals pull it up, root and all, out of the loose earth, whereas in the rocky ground the roots get a firm hold. Although there is a scarcity of grass, there is no lack of fodder for camels, as the thorn bushes provide them with a plentiful supply. All the trees, owing no doubt primarily to the scarcity of water, appear to wither off and die before reaching full maturity ; and nature, thereby, sooner than usual, returns to the earth what she has borrowed from it, sacrificing, it seems, with solicitous motherhood the bodies, even of the middle-aged, to the well-being of the rising generation.

There are large numbers of immense ant-hills



AN ANT HILL.



ORYX HEAD (left).

LESSER KOODOO (right).



SOMALI WOMEN WITH HANS (WATER VESSELS).



A MAT HUT—SOMALI.

scattered all over the country, and some of them are of great height, as is shown in the accompanying illustration of an ant-hill with a man six feet high standing beside it. Very commonly they are fifteen feet high, but in some cases are as much as twenty or thirty feet. They are said to arise by the ants collecting the débris formed after flood or fire in the bush, and heaping it up around dead tree-trunks or something of that kind.

Abdullah Tahr remained with us at Dagabur, and in many ways he was a pleasant companion. Sometimes he would talk of his own affairs, and very often he speculated upon ours. He preferred to stand still rather than to move with the times, and the benefits of education were not obvious to him. One day he was telling me about his son, a youngster who was at Harrar learning the Koran, and I inquired whether he was going to have him taught a little English, French, or Italian. "No," Abdullah replied; "only Arabic, and perhaps a little Abyssinian, but nothing else. If he learnt European languages he might come to love the world too much and his home too little, and forget the teaching of the Koran." Like many other Abyssinians, he was puzzled to know why Englishmen came out there, if it was not to spy out the land. Why should they make up caravans simply for the sake of going about and shooting? Why should they pay high wages to their servants and distribute presents to all sorts of people? "Have you no poor in your own country?" was the

inquiry that was made of me ; and, to tell the truth, I had a good deal of difficulty in making a satisfactory reply.

Sergeant Shepherd undertook the duties of cook after the Colonel's party left Dagabur, and in doing so he enhanced his already good reputation for thoroughness ; but he was handicapped by the fact that, beyond pigeons, there was very little small game that could be obtained for eating purposes. In attempting to stalk gerenuk or oryx, one sometimes had fortune in the sport, while at other times one was the sport of fortune. It was the invariable rule that the wind came with the sun, so that in working with the sun in your face, a shot was often difficult. On December 12th I started off at 4.15 a.m. with my syce and a Somali guide, hoping to get a shot at gerenuk. We marched till 5.30, and then halted until sunrise, a few minutes later. Very soon I caught a glimpse of game between the bushes, but not nearer than five or six hundred yards. About eight o'clock I got within 240 yards of a fine buck oryx, and tumbled him over at the first shot. Another buck, which was standing close by, began trotting off, and directly after I had had a shot at him, the buck, which I had thought dead, jumped up, and the two, together with three does, trotted away, leaving two tracks of blood. We followed them for over two hours, but finally lost their traces, as they disappeared into some dense thorny bush over a hard gravelly bed.

On the 13th I went off again, and within twenty

minutes of leaving camp had bagged a couple of aoul, each of them at about 120 yards. Unfortunately one of them was a doe, and she had been raked from stem to stern. In the bad light—as both sexes have horns—it is quite impossible to distinguish male from female. There did not seem to be much difficulty in getting aoul, and I made up my mind that, except for commissariat purposes, I would leave them alone for the present. Tramping on for a long time, we finally came upon the fresh spoor of an oryx, and although nothing came of it we had an instructive piece of tracking. As far as I could understand, it was about as follows : The spoor was fresh, for we soon came to a place where the animal—evidently a male—had urinated, and the ground was still wet. He had proceeded at a walk at first, but then, probably from scenting us, had stepped out. His course was very zigzag sometimes, and we could not avoid now and then getting to windward of him. His haste may, however, have been due to the necessity of getting to the place of assignation at the appointed hour, for, farther on, we came to the meeting of two trails, the one that we were following, and another—most likely a female's—which met it at a right angle. There had been a bit of a scuffle, and the sand was a good deal scattered about. Finally they stepped off together, the buck leading ; at first they went slowly and then hurriedly, most likely from seeing us, or perhaps they were ashamed of their disorderly proceedings. They moved at a canter

until out of possible view of us, when they halted behind a bush to observe our movements. After this they decided on elusive tactics and doubled back on their course, circling well round, and finally descended into a ravine, the bed of which was rocky, and could not receive their footprints. It was a trump card to play, and they won the point, for we lost all trace of them at that place and had to give up the hunt without having caught a glimpse of them. I could not say if the syce would give a similar version of their movements, for it was very difficult to understand anything he said. He spoke only Somali with a few words of what was, to me, a bewildering form of Arabic, and his stock of English consisted of the convenient expression "Awrright." On our return to the mules we found that some natives were already engaged in devouring the aoul meat, and I made them a present of a few matches in return for a Kodak snapshot. Matches and a water-bottle, by the way, are indispensable in the bush; whilst twisting and turning about in trying to circumvent a quarry, it is often very difficult to keep your bearings, and there is nothing easier than to get lost in the labyrinth of the bush veldt, and there are few things more difficult than finding your way out, but if one is assured of drink and of a fire, the matter assumes a less hopeless aspect. These remarks, however, do not apply to the Somali, for he seems to have the happy knack of knowing his way anywhere by a sort of intuition.

On the 14th there was no sport at all, in consequence of a runaway mule putting an untimely end to my small expedition. At 5.45 a.m., when about five miles from camp, the syce, who was carrying the camera and rifle, became very anxious that I should shoot a little dig-dig, with a particularly good pair of horns, that was standing close by. As the syce was reaching out to give me the rifle he overbalanced himself, and off went the mule like lightning, letting out with his heels as he went, and dragging the unfortunate fellow along with him, the syce's head and my Kodak bumping regularly on the ground together. The man's right boot, or kabba,¹ caught in the stirrup, but luckily for him and for my camera, the leather strap of the kabba broke before he had gone very far, and he sustained nothing worse than a shaking. The mule continued his career at full gallop in the direction of camp, and succeeded, by virtue of vigorous kicking, in ridding himself of the saddle and its accessories.

On the 15th, Duff and Dunn, with 128 men and a convoy of 155 camels, arrived from Sesebani. Dunn had bagged three oryx, two aoul and two gerenuk in the course of his shooting, but Duff had scarcely had time to move out of the track between camps, for he had been constantly occupied in collecting information and in investigating the water supplies along the projected line of route.

That same afternoon natives brought in word that

¹ A kind of sandal.

there were some lions on a mountain side about seven miles away to the north, so we arranged for a shoot the next morning. We took two gun-bearers each, and six men on ponies to locate the lions, with an extra man to hold our mules, and we reached the supposed haunt about seven o'clock. The men were sent out to look for fresh spoor, and we devoted the time to having a good hour's sleep and to making ourselves some tea in Duff's "billy." In about an hour and a half the men returned without having been able to find any trace of the lions, and the natives thereabouts told us that they had seen nothing of them. Altogether the report turned out to be one of the fairy tales to which the traveller in those regions is often subjected. A native, be it remembered, has a lively imagination, and that which was hearsay to someone else will become an absolute fact, with all its details complete, when he passes it on to another; and I am not sure that now and then you do not chance upon one who is glad of an opportunity to "pull your leg" if the circumstances are favourable and if he can do it discreetly and with immunity.

Splendid news arrived from the Colonel during December 16th. He had got over the difficulties in the way of the march as few others could have done, and the Abyssinians were to advance in small bodies, from 300 to 400 strong, and eventually to concentrate, if possible, at Gerlogubi. They were exceedingly loath to advance in anything but large numbers, and that

was manifestly impossible, and the Colonel's success in inducing them to proceed in relatively small parties along an extended line was a remarkable evidence of his tact and force of character. It afterwards happened sometimes that the advancing column was strung out for more than 300 miles. And it will be readily understood that the disposition and control of such a long line was a very difficult matter ; and it is satisfactory to relate that it was carried out without the loss of a man. The British officers, as the narrative will show, became scattered up and down the line of route, controlling and protecting the water supply at the various places, and pushing on the troops in front to make room for those coming on behind, so as to avoid overcrowding upon the wells. At the same time that he sent us this good news, the Colonel instructed us to leave Dagabur for Sesebani on the 18th, and Duff was ordered to establish a water dak at Coralis Birdaale, about half-way between Sesebani and Dagaha Mado, through which latter place the Abyssinians would have to pass on their way to Sesebani.

We started off at 6 a.m. on the 18th, and marched fourteen miles to Birdaale,¹ where we halted at ten o'clock. The country was of the same character as that around Dagabur, and calls for no special description. The last mile of our march was along the Jerrer River bed, in which there are nine wells at

¹ This is another Birdaale from that between Sesebani and Dagaha Mado.

Birdaale. Each of them is about thirty feet deep, and requires five men to lift the water up to the trough.

After lunch we loaded up again, and marched another nine miles to our night's bivouac. About four miles short of this bivouac I dismounted, and broke into the bush to the east of our line of advance. In attempting to stalk some gerenuk I suddenly came upon a pair of oryx, and got a good standing shot at one at about 140 yards, and dropped it. With the next shot I wounded the second, but it was able to get away at a good pace and it was not until after getting in three running shots that my syce spotted it under a bush about sixty yards away from where we were standing, and I was able to give it its quietus. On looking it over, we found that it was a female and had been hit four times, in all cases in the shoulder or chest—a good evidence that the calibre of the Mannlicher .256 is too small for such big game. However, as was said before, if it had not been for Duff's kindness in lending me the rifle at Jigjiga I should have had nothing at all to shoot with, so I counted myself very fortunate as it was. On reaching camp, my syce, with several Abyssinians, was sent back with candle-lanterns to the "kills"—the syce to secure the heads, and the Abyssinians to get the meat and skins. The full-grown animal usually weighs about 450 pounds, and therefore supplies a good amount of fresh meat. The horns of one of these measured $33\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, and of the other $29\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

On the 19th we marched at 6 a.m., and keeping more or less along the line of the Jerrer River bed, reached Sesebani, fifty-six miles from Dagabur, at about 10 a.m., where we occupied the same ground, to the east of the river bed, that Duff and Dunn had used on their former visit.

There are fourteen wells along the river bank at Sesebani, and thirteen of them were in use whilst we were there, and they had an average depth of $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water. One well, which was particularly deep, had 17 feet of water in it. In addition to these, there was a group of three wells between the river bed and our camp, which yielded bitter water.

The aneroid at Sesebani showed a fall of 150 feet from Dagabur, so that its elevation is a little under 3,000 feet.¹ Grass is scarce there, though less so than at Dagabur, and the soil is similarly dry and dusty. There were some very fine trees along the river bank and elsewhere, and the bush generally is fairly thick.

On December 20th, the day after our arrival, Ogilvy came in from Dagaha Mado, being *en route* for En, to inspect and report on the water supply there. Basha Balina and a small Abyssinian escort were with him, and they reported that Fituarari Gabri, with an escort of 300 men, had arrived within two hours' march, that 5,000 Abyssinians were streaming in driblets in our direction, and that there was plenty of

¹ The *Précis of Information on Somaliland* gives the height of Sesebani as 3,240 feet, but I think this must be too high.

rain-water in the clayey bed of the Fafan River between here and Dagaha Mado.

Ogilvy further told us that the Colonel had written to Duff instructing him and me to proceed to Dagaha Mado, so that although the Colonel's letter had not yet come to hand, we decided to leave at once.

We struck our tents without delay, leaving the outer flies and all superfluous kit behind, and left Sesebani at 3 p.m. with our servants and syces, an escort of three Somalis, and an Abyssinian guide. Five camels, five mules, and a pony made up the caravan, and we carried ten days' rations for ourselves and the men, with two water tanks of $12\frac{1}{2}$ gallons capacity each. We halted about an hour after sunset, having marched a great part of the way through a particularly pretty, park-like country, and slept in the open after a dinner of chopped aoul, rice, ration biscuits, jam and figs.

The next morning (21st) we were off at six o'clock, the way lying over a grassy and shrubby veldt. After a time we reached Coralis Birdaale and came upon a camp of Abyssinians under Balambaras Chitee, upon whom we called and salaamed, exchanging notes and civilities. He could not tell us exactly how many men he had; he thought there were between three and four hundred, but some were coming in, some going on, some getting grass, some doing this and some that, so that one could not be surprised at his uncertainty. From the number of tents scattered about, bordering the channel in which the water

lodged, there did not appear to us to be so many as the Balambaras thought.

The Abyssinians had divided each of the pools at Coralis Birdaale into two parts by means of a few thorn branches struck across the middle, and the drinking water for the men was obtained on one side and that for the animals on the other. Some of the animals waded in for their watering and some were watered from drinking vessels on the bank, with the result that a lot of the water was wasted. Washing was done on the bank close to the drinking water, and most of the washings trickled back again into the pool, from which, of course, we had to replenish our water tanks.

We left the Balambaras's camp at 1 p.m. and marched in sweltering heat and amid much dust until shortly after dark, when we came across an Abyssinian camp under Fituarari Dusta. We halted about three-quarters of a mile away, at 6.45 p.m., and the Fituarari sent over to say that he would be glad to see us and hear the news, so that Duff and I, much against our inclinations, had to retrace our steps to his camp, with the guide leading. We gossiped for a while and then returned to our own camp and to dinner, escorted, perforce, by fourteen armed Abyssinians. We bivouacked again in the open, and slept, as usual, like doormats.

On the 22nd we marched from six o'clock until nine, and then halted to give the mules time to graze and ourselves time to have a biscuit and a tin of

potted meat with a cup of tea from Duff's "billy." We marched again at 2 p.m., and reached Dagaha Mado at four o'clock.

The distance from Sesebani to Dagaha Mado is from fifty-seven to sixty miles, and for the last day and a half of the journey the track had been over loose, soft ground, with the result that we were enveloped in clouds of dust nearly all the time.

There was an Abyssinian camp of about 150 men under Fituarari Kolassi at Dagaha Mado, and we found Fairfax's and Citerni's tents there, pitched on the south-west side of the Sullul¹ River bed, overlooking the wells from a height of about forty feet. We had our tents pitched beside theirs and were soon enjoying tea with milk and bread, a combination to which we had been strangers since leaving Sesebani. Dining in a standing camp after a march always seems like a killing of the fatted calf, and the stoical reader must not resent these references to meals. They are interesting things, especially when a good one happens to come along to vary a diet of ration biscuit and potted meat—notwithstanding that those articles are of a high nutritive quality. Our sleep was not disturbed by the howling of the hyænas—they howled, but we heeded them not. The mysteries of Amharic did not invite to the consumption of midnight oil, and one had not been sufficiently enamoured of the country's splendour, as revealed in the course

¹ The Sullul joins the Fafan in the district between Sesebani and Dagaha Mado.

of the march, to want to sit up to pen a description of its beauties, notwithstanding that it had been a march in the company of such a splendid fellow as Duff. The consolation of a good sound sleep was what we wanted, and what we sought for early and to good purpose.

Ramsay-Fairfax, who up till then had been in charge at Dagaha Mado, was formerly a lieutenant in the navy, but as there was not fighting enough going on to suit him he retired from the service and went through the South African war as Captain in the 30th battalion of the Imperial Yeomanry. Afterwards he joined Mr. Millar, the American explorer, on his voyage down the Blue Nile ; and, finally, hearing of this Expedition, he made his way to Abyssinia and brought two Colt guns with him. His services were accepted by Colonel Rochfort, and, if I may anticipate history a little, by a great scramble, on our return to the coast, he got into the Expedition sent to attack Illig and took a part at the capture of that place. What he will do next is in the womb of time, but of a surety he will do something.

•
•
•
•
•

CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VI

Dagaha Mado—The wells—Method of sounding—Passage of the Abyssinian army through Dagaha Mado—A swallowed leech—News from the Colonel—The Abyssinians and their animals—Departure from Dagaha Mado—Instructions for the advance—The Staff—Duff—Sergeant Tubb—Somali women—Somalis and Abyssinians—Shooting—My syce—Sesebani—March to Gabridehari—En, Aggal, Doohrie, Warandab, Gabridehari.

DAGAHA MADO (*lit.* Black Rock), like Sesebani and Dagabur, appears on the map as a village, but it is now only the name given to a collection of wells used by natives in their moving karias. There are no large shady trees as at Sesebani, no grass on the loose sandy ground, and the bush around is quite open. Apart from the wells the country is waterless over a wide area, and produces nothing beyond the thorn trees. It is three hundred feet higher than Sesebani, and the air is most salubrious. The mid-day temperature during our stay ranged from 90° to 99° F., and the early morning temperature from 46° to 55°. In the river bed there are fourteen wells sunk through the rock twenty feet or more, their shafts being about three feet in diameter. Most of them are funnel-shaped at the mouth and are slippery from the presence of the sand, so that it is difficult to see

down the shaft. In taking a sounding a native creeps down the mouth and plants his feet straddle-legged across the top of the shaft and lets down the sounding line, which consisted with us of a twisted string weighted at one end with a couple of cartridges, and marked with pieces of loose woven bandage at five-, eight-, ten-, twelve- and fifteen-feet distances from the lower end. The native judged when the bottom was reached by the sense of touch, and we by when the line ceased to be taut. The man counted the pieces of bandage showing above water, and the record of the depth was made accordingly. The wells were tested every day, so that the strain upon them could be properly regulated. On the day of our arrival, counting from above downwards along the river bed, they contained $12\frac{1}{2}$, $6\frac{1}{2}$, 3, 17, 7, 12, 10, 7, $6\frac{1}{2}$, 2, 2, 0, 7 and 12 feet of water respectively. In addition to No. 12 being dry the water in No. 14 contained sulphuretted hydrogen, and was not used. The water was fairly clear on being drawn, but a considerable sediment soon formed which clogged the Berkfeld filters.

Duff, Citerni and I remained at Dagaha Mado from December 22nd to January 3rd, and we saw the whole of the Abyssinian force pass through on its way south, with the exception of the small parties we had met on the way from Sesebani and of a few stragglers who came on behind. Our duties were to regulate and supervise the distribution of water and to push on the troops as rapidly as was expedient.

Fituarari Kolassi¹ left for Sesebani on December 24th, and Fairfax went on the same day to supervise and report on the water supply at Coralis Birdaale, which place, it will be remembered, lies between Dagaha Mado and Sesebani, somewhat nearer the latter place. The Colonel and Baird arrived from Farso the same day, at 9 a.m., and left again in the afternoon for Sesebani, but not before Baird had left us twenty-four tins of jam, four tins of milk and two bottles of whisky, the last articles in particular being for the delectation of the Abyssinian chiefs, who have a marked liking for the "fire water." To my joy Baird brought also my '303 Mauser-Metford sporting rifle.

With the Colonel came a patient who was suffering from what was, to me, a novel and interesting complaint. He was a camel-man and said that in drinking water some twenty days previously he had swallowed a leech, which he was sure was still fixed in his throat. The natives stated that it was quite a common thing for leeches to get into many of the drinking troughs, so that the accident was quite a possible one. The man swallowed with difficulty and said he felt something "choking him" far down on the left side. He kept on spitting blood at intervals and complained of feeling weak and ill, which he certainly appeared to be. On examining his throat I failed to see anything of the leech, but was quite prepared from his confident account to accept his statement that it was still

¹ For an explanation of the rank of Abyssinian officers, see p. 185.

128 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

lodged in his gullet. Various methods were resorted to in order to secure its eviction, and after some initial failures, it was dislodged and disgorged, proving to be full of blood and about two inches in length. The bleeding soon stopped, the man was jubilant at getting rid of the intruder, and proceeded to eat and drink freely to make up for lost time.

Whether it was due to fairy tales this man or his friends had told, or to a general faith in the powers of a European, cannot be said, but we were afterwards consulted on, and expected to cure, all manner of physical disabilities, such as flat feet, contracted hands, squints, knock-knees, bandy legs, old scars and such-like.

Late at night on December 24th Gerasmatch Asheety and a large party of Abyssinians, with many animals, arrived in camp, and the next day their place was taken by Kenezmatch Wadahjo and his body-guard, who arrived from Farso in advance of his main body.

Duff was off duty on the 25th with a shivering fit, accompanied by pains in the back, headache and a temperature of 104°. He fancied, no doubt correctly, that he had caught a chill in the night, for we had left the inner flaps of the tents at Sesebani and the wind blew somewhat strongly through his tent. Citerni generously insisted that he and Duff should change tents, and after twenty-four hours' quiet in a darkened cool tent, with light liquid diet and proper medical treatment, Duff was himself again, although

feeling somewhat pulled down. The same day Kenezmatch Wadahjo was down with an attack of fever, but in his case it was some weeks before he recovered.

On the 27th we received a letter from the Colonel at Sesebani, passing back the news that he had received from Ogilvy and Fituarari Gabri, who were with the advance parties and had then moved from En, twenty-two miles south of Sesebani, to Coral¹, a place thirty miles farther south, between Aggal and Warandab. The Colonel's letter said :—

“The advance depends on there being sufficient water at Gabridehari and Gorahai to concentrate the force, and until this is ascertained no troops should be allowed to pass Coral¹ Birdaale whilst the water there is sufficient. The advance, however, should be continued to that place, where the parties can safely collect under instructions already issued, as I estimate that the water there is sufficient for a large force of men and animals for the next week ; but it is rapidly drying up. Whilst it lasts Fairfax should see that it is utilised to the fullest extent, but should the supply fail before definite orders of future movements have been received, he can then pass on the troops to Sesebani. All officers have authority to stop the advance at any time, should it be found necessary, and it would be preferable to do this rather than to run the risk of having to make a retrograde movement which,

¹ This Coral¹ should not be confused with Coral¹ Birdaale between Sesebani and Dagaha Mado, or with Coral¹ between Dagabur and Sesebani.

130 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

probably could not be retrieved, and which would lead to congestion in the rear. I desire, if possible, to keep Sesebani free from troops, as in the event of retirement the supply there will be required for the troops now south of that place.

"I proceed south at once, and shall send definite orders, which must be passed on without delay. In the event of retirement, which should only be commenced after sufficient time has elapsed to get the orders through to the officers in the rear, the troops should as far as possible be passed back in succession in the reverse order to their advance, and no halts are to be permitted."

On the 28th Kenezmatch Wadahjo and his staff left. During his stay the force under his command kept arriving and departing in batches, so that it was very difficult accurately to estimate their numbers, and it was almost impossible to get a characteristic photograph of the parties as they went through. Kicking up the dust sky-high, they came and went, in dribbles and odds and ends of parties, like batches of refugees, fugitives, or emigrants, and it was about as difficult to bring them to a focus in a Kodak as it would have been to photograph a flight of locusts; and their movements were of a similarly nondescript character. Nevertheless, they were a businesslike, bellicose, grim-visaged host, and they appeared to have almost innumerable donkeys and mules—on an average, probably, they had three per man. In their train also were a good many camels and several women.



ABYSSINIANS STRAGGLING INTO DAGAHA MADO.



RIVERBED AND POOLS, EN.



WIVES AND THEIR MASTERS.



SMILING GALLAS.

Their management of the animals and attention to them were most admirable. On arrival in camp the Habshi¹ (Abyssinian) immediately off-saddles; the mules, donkeys, and camels have a roll in the dust, are taken to water, and afterwards turned loose to graze on what food there is to be had, whilst someone is detailed to look after them. The men then eat their "dargnosh" or powdered biscuit, and drink their water under what shade they can find, after which a number of them go off to cut grass for the mules—and they may have to go four or five miles to find it in sufficient quantity, as was the case at Dagaha Mado—returning to camp later on, carrying a huge truss on their heads or shoulders. At night-time there is a second meal of "dargnosh," and afterwards those who have tents, which they pitched as soon as possible after off-saddling on arrival, turn into them, while the rest sleep under a selected tree, with their animals tied up close by.

At Wardair I saw the men dressing the sores on the mules' backs. The method they adopted there was first carefully to clean the raw surface with water and the fingers, and then to rub in thick fat or tallow, which is obtained from the fat tails of the sheep and which is preserved for this purpose. The dressing served to keep off the flies and maggots, and the wounds commonly healed with fair rapidity beneath it.

The wells at Dagaha Mado stood the drain upon

¹ Habashe, mixed—in relation to their mixed racial origin.

them very well. If a large force of, say, from five to six hundred men, with their animals, came into camp and halted for the night, an aggregate fall of perhaps five feet of water would be registered the next day ; but if the arrivals were small and did not exceed a couple of hundred men and their animals, the water would rapidly regain its former depth.

On January 2nd the last large body of Abyssinians came in under Gerazmatch Gamadoo, and accordingly the next day we were able to strike camp and move south, for the Colonel had already contrived to ensure an advance to Gabridehari ; and it was therefore most important that we should push on as rapidly as possible if we were effectively to co-operate with the British forces. Alone and Wakeman were coming on with a caravan from Farso, and there were a few stragglers still to come up. There was also a caravan of forty-one camels and nineteen men, which had been sent back to bring on extra stores that had been despatched from Harrar by Messrs. Goolamally, Mohamedaly & Co. ; but, with these exceptions, all the forces were then south of Dagaha Mado.

The Colonel's memorandum in which he sketched our advance was as follows :—

“ Dated Sesebani, December 26th, 1903.

“Lieutenant Ogilvy reports sufficient water at Gabridehari to concentrate the force. The advance, therefore, should be continued to that place by the despatch of one Chief daily from each post. The following itinerary of the road south of Sesebani is

issued for guidance, and should be explained by Captain Dunn (now at Sesebani) to the Chiefs. No halts are permitted.

“SESEBANI to TUG FAFAN : Distance for mules, three hours ; water should be carried in tanks. But there is some water in holes about 200 yards up stream from where the road crosses the Tug, and there is good grazing.

“TUG FAFAN to EN : Distance $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours for mules ; water in holes on banks of Tug, and grazing. There is also water close by at HANALEH and BIYA KABOBA.

“EN to AGGAL : $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours for mules. There is some water in wells on banks of Tug, and good grazing.

“AGGAL to GALHADALI : Five hours for mules. There is good pool of water in Tug between Coral¹ (eight miles south of Aggal) and Galhadali, and men should proceed along the bed of the Tug to find it. Three days' water in tanks should be carried from Galhadali. There are also some water holes at Elleli, which is $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours for mules south of Galhadali. There is grazing at Galhadali.

“GALHADALI to WARANDAB : $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours for mules. There is some water in the wells at Warandab, also grazing there.

“WARANDAB to GABRIDEHARI : $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours for mules. No water is reported on the road. Should be done in a night march.”

¹ The pool of water which existed at Coral^{is} was dry shortly after this date.

134 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

The Colonel and Baird at that time were on their way from Warandab to Gabridehari, where Ogilvy already was ; Dunn was at Sesebani, and Fairfax at Coralis Birdaale.

The functions of our party may perhaps be familiarly set forth in tabular form :—

Colonel A. N. Rochfort	Sirdar.
Major Alone . . .	Transport officer and interpreter.
J. L. Baird . . .	Diplomatist.
Captain A. A. Duff .	Shikari ¹ and scout.
Captain H. N. Dunn .	Surgeon and zoologist.
Lieutenant Ogilvy .	Sapper.
Ramsay - Fairfax, ex-lieutenant, R.N. .	Warrior.
W. A. M. Wakeman .	Assistant surgeon.
Self	Unknown quantity.
Sergeants Tubb and Shepherd . . .	Handymen and indispensable.
Capitano C. Citerni .	Representing the Italian Agency with the Abyssinian army.

It would be invidious to make comparisons amongst such first-rate comrades, but now and then I may be permitted to offer an insufficient tribute to one or other. At this point I should like to state the simple fact that Duff, in my estimation, is the best man to make a "bunderbuss," and to work

¹ Tracker.

it out in detail, that I have ever met. He is also an animated "ready reckoner," and beside, whilst regulating and supervising the water supply to the Habshis and to the Somalis, he was the long-headed and singularly impartial Lord Chief Justice of Dagaha Mado. An out-and-out sportsman is Duff, with a wonderfully retentive memory, and stored with all sorts of interesting and stirring material. He is a fellow campaigner of the best sort, and the debt of gratitude that I personally owe him for handing me over his Mannlicher and keeping me supplied with cartridges for nearly three months, is one that cannot easily be repaid.

Here also let me say that Sergeant F. Tubb, of the 1st Hampshires, is "game to the backbone," and made of that special non-commissioned-officer stuff which is the most important ingredient in the pith and marrow of the British Army.

Holding the mirror up to nature in this generous manner leads to observations on very different individuals, and one is bound to say that the older Somali women have, unfortunately, every reason to avoid the use of such a toilet requisite. The children, like the young generally, are often pretty, but the women, with their rough, hard life, appear to undergo a warping and defacing process as they get older. They acquire corrugated skins and forbidding countenances, and present a sort of toad-like appearance, becoming indeed a hideous distortion of the female figure.

Both individually and as a race the Somalis appear to be cleaner than the Abyssinians. Being Mohammedans they are teetotalers, which the Abyssinians certainly are not. They will drink camel's milk in unlimited quantities, whilst the Abyssinians will rarely touch it, although it is really very good, notwithstanding that, being less rich in fats than cow's milk, it does not yield cream or butter. One might think that with one class that would not touch milk, and another that would leave your wines and spirits alone, you had the materials for a perfect mess *personnel*. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. In the Somali you have a receptacle for all the camel's milk he can hold, whilst to the Abyssinian wines, spirits, and sweetened lime-juice are always welcome cordials, and to both of them jams, sugar, rice, flour, butter, tea, coffee, and things of that kind never come amiss. Neither of them exhibits a fine discrimination between *meum* and *tuum*, and they are adepts at spiriting away commodities, from a bottle of whisky, a pot of jam, or a sack of sugar to a batch of sheep. So economical and considerate were our cooks, that a gerenuk shot by Citerni on the 25th, although an unsavoury tasting antelope at the best, was still being served up for us in some form or other—minced, curried, roast, boiled, fried, or devilled—as late as the 29th, whilst a party of Habshis coming in the same day fell upon eight of our sheep and killed, cooked, and gobbled them up—the animals being duly reported as “missing”!

Speaking of gerenuk reminds me of a baby member of the species that I obtained from a native at Sesebani, and for which I purchased a goat to act as foster-mother. With a little coaxing the suckling was performed well enough, but unless it was seen to by myself there was no certainty that it would be regularly carried out, for my Somali servant was a fair representative of his kind, and was not to be trusted. Given a good headman in camp, the Somalis will frequently make excellent servants, but leave one to himself and he will, as a rule, form a first-rate example of a thorough-going "waster." There are no doubt exceptions to this rule, and there is no desire to malign the race ; but, all in all, if you leave a Somali to his own interpretation of his duty, you may be quite sure that it will not be your interpretation.

I was very unsuccessful with the rifle at Dagaha Mado, and was specially unfortunate on one or two occasions in losing badly wounded game after spending days in hunting for them. On December 29th I started off with two boys at 5 a.m., and, when about five miles from camp, caught sight of gerenuk and an oryx in the bush some distance off. Directing one boy to take charge of the mule, and telling the other to lie down and not to move till beckoned, I wriggled through the grass for 300 or 400 yards, and got within 200 yards of my objective and then lay still, hoping that the oryx would expose himself by moving out from behind some bushes which partly

hid him. After about twenty minutes the muleboy, who had grown impatient, and was feeling uneasy at being left alone unarmed, came hurrying up with the mule. The game, needless to say, was off like a shot, and it is not desirable to print my remarks to the muleboy. Give a Somali a gun and he is perfectly happy in his sense of safety. Whether you have given him a cartridge or not is of no consequence.

On New Year's Day a good chance of a shot was similarly thrown away by my syce, and to make matters worse it was after I had lost two wounded animals. About six miles from camp I hit a gerenuk with my first shot, but he succeeded in hobbling away, and we could not get near him again. We followed his tracks a long way and eventually lost them, as was only too easily done, over some rough stony ground and in the thorny bush. Later on I badly wounded another fine male gerenuk with an end-on shot at 260 yards. He left two pools of blood, but we never caught sight of him again, although we followed his tracks for over two hours. Luck seemed to change at last, however, for three or four miles off I saw what at first I took to be a herd of aoul, but which, after making a long circuit, I found was a pack of Clarke's gazelles or diptag, which are rare animals and hard to get. After much creeping and wriggling I came within 250 yards of them, and was waiting my time for a good broadside shot when suddenly the whole pack made off like wildfire. On turning round I discovered my intelligent syce behind

me presenting a semi-decapitated appearance—that is to say, his head seemed to be hidden behind his mouth, which was wide open. He had grown tired of waiting and, raising his shoulders, had craned his neck forward to have a look, opening his mouth to its widest possible extent at the same time. It was one more result of having an untrained native as your shikari.

It is time, however, to leave these reminiscences and to resume the record of our movements. As already explained, we were able to leave Dagaha Mado on January 2nd, and the caravan, with Duff, Citerni, and myself, started off at 3.30 p.m. and marched by the light of the moon until 11.30, with the exception of a halt at seven o'clock. The next morning we were off again at 5.30, and reached Coralis Birdaale at ten o'clock, in time for breakfast with Fairfax and Rose. Later in the day Duff and I rode on to Sesebani, and the rest of the party, with the caravan, followed the next morning.

It should be explained that Lieutenant Ivor Rose, of the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles, who at this point joined our party, had been in the country for some time with Captain R. G. Munn, of the 3rd Sikhs, A.D.C. to General Egerton, endeavouring to raise a troop of tribal horse in the Ogaden country. The levies, however, proved to be unsatisfactory and the attempt was abandoned. Rose remained with us, and at Sesebani we found Munn, then on his way back, *viâ* Hargeisa, to rejoin the Somaliland Field Force.

140 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

At Sesebani, during January 4th, 5th and 6th, we rearranged the various stores so as to enable us to march as light as possible. All surplus stores were left there, together with two weeks' supplies for all Europeans, as well as 1,000 lb. of rice, 500 lb. of jowari, 300 lb. of dates, and 120 lb. of ghee. Two gun-bearers, 4 scouts, 2 camel-men and 2 grass-cutters, all armed with rifles, 7 mules, 9 transport and 4 milk camels were also left behind, the whole under the charge of Sergeant Shepherd.

On January 7th Rose, Fairfax, Citerni and I left at 6.30 a.m. for Gabridehari¹ with 108 men, 35 rifles, 2 Colt guns and a caravan consisting of 129 loaded camels,² 12 mules, 3 horses, 12 sheep and a goat. Duff and Dunn were to remain a few days longer at Sesebani.

A short distance south of Sesebani there is a sheikh's tomb to the east of the road, and there was a solitary patch of jowari cultivation to the west of the road in the same neighbourhood. We halted at noon in the Tug Fafan, and resumed the march at three o'clock, reaching En, twenty-two miles from Sesebani, at 6.45 p.m. Most of the road lay over

¹ If the map be consulted on which the line of our advance is shown, it will be found that the Tug Jerrer and the Tug Milmil converge in the neighbourhood of Sesebani, and thereafter our way as far as Gorahai lay, roughly, along the Tug Fafan.

² The loads carried by the camels were made up as follows : 26 small twelve-gallon water tanks ; 18 small eight-gallon water tanks ; 4 water boxes ; 46 bags of rice ; 22 bags of dates ; 7½ bags of flour ; 16 tins of ghee ; 2 treasury chests ; 2 Colt guns with tripods.



STRIKING CAMP—SESEBANI.



THE DREARY MARCH.

open, dry, and almost level plains, covered with parched grass, between mountain ranges on either side, and we saw large numbers of cattle and camels in different places. On the 8th we marched at 4.15 a.m. and arrived at Aggal, twelve miles distant, at 8.15, where we had to halt for the remainder of the day, as we were able to fill only eight of our smaller water tanks from the one shallow well that existed in the Tug there, and had to send back the rest of the water camels to refill the other tanks at En, where there was a fairly good supply. I have never seen the aoul so tame as they were at Aggal, and in one place approached to within twenty yards of a female and her two young when quite in the open.

We left Aggal at 4.15 the following morning, January 9th, and halted at eight o'clock at Doorhie, ten miles farther on, where we found some water in holes in the river bed and one small pool. Whilst there the good news came to us from the Colonel that the advance could be continued beyond Gabridehari, but that it was not expected that we should be able to proceed farther than Wardair. In the afternoon we continued the march for three hours, and halted for the night at six o'clock, bivouacking in the open. On the 10th we left our zareba at 3.15 a.m. and reached Warandab at nine o'clock, halting there till the afternoon. We found a little grazing for the mules and about fifty shallow wells or holes either in the bank or in the bed of the Tug, most of which were dry. A few, however, contained some inches of

muddy water of about the consistency of pea soup. There had been a great many Abyssinians passing through, so that doubtless the water was lower than usual at that time of the year ; but there appeared to be little likelihood of the supply being of much value, even in the absence of this special demand. Warandab is twenty-five miles from Doohrie and forty-seven miles from En ; the road lies through a very dry and barren tract of country, with little or no grass, but is for the most part even, inclining generally downhill. The waddy thorn tree, with its smooth silver-green bark and black bulbous thorns, grows particularly freely along the road after Aggal, and at Warandab it forms very dense thickets.

To the south of Warandab the grazing improves, and we passed some patches of jowari cultivation. The trees also grow to a larger size, and we came upon some kinds that we had not previously met with, particularly "higlu," "harreeri," and "kalangal," all of which are large-growing thorn trees.

We had an afternoon march of three hours on the 10th, and on the 11th we were off at 3.15 a.m., reaching Gabridehari at half-past ten.

CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VII

Gabridehari—The march resumed—Beribu—Shooting—Adeleh—The trees and water—Gerlogubi—The wells—Evidence of a higher civilisation—An Abyssinian opinion of the country—Orders from the Colonel—Operations of the Somaliland Field Force—Jidballi—March to Wardair—The mails—Expedition to Gumburru—The battle-field and Cobbe's zareba

GABRIDEHARI is ninety-seven miles from Sesebani and twenty-eight miles south of Warandab. A great part of the road from Warandab is very heavy for marching, as the ground is loose and sandy ; indeed, what with all our own party and the crowds of Abyssinians going in the same direction, we were enveloped most of the time in clouds of dust. The bush *en route* is well grown, and dense in some places, the trees being of the usual varieties, except that the waddy practically disappears after Warandab.

There is a fall of a thousand feet from Sesebani to Gabridehari, as has already been pointed out, and we felt the nights to be much closer and warmer than heretofore. The whole of the ground about the wells in the river bed is strewn with boulders and loose stones. Great herds of camels came to water at the wells, and there was at that time a good supply of

water of a brackish taste. Our tents were pitched under large shady higlu trees, and we found the place to abound in camel ticks of a huge size and vicious habit. During our halt there on January 12th, we bought two transport camels for Citerni—to replace two he had lost—three eating camels for the men, and six goats for ourselves, at a total cost of Rs.345. During a halt on the next day's march three milch camels (hasha) were purchased for Rs.50 each, including their young (nirikta).

As we were coming to Gabridehari we saw my terrier bitch, Bessie, for the last time. She had followed Rose into the bush, and going off on some scent or another had got astray. We did our best to find her, but could discover no trace of her, and it was quite likely that she fell a victim to the leopards.

Gabridehari was left at 4 a.m. on January 13th, and we marched about fourteen miles, halting at 8.30 at Beribu near the Tug Fafan, where we found water from recent rains in some pools in the river bed, in addition to that in the wells, in two of which latter it was very salt. The route was chiefly along a wide, well-trodden, dusty track, over an open plain, dotted with sparsely scattered small thorn bushes, and we passed several karias, or villages, and some herds of camels.

The Colonel in passing had established a small zarebaed post at Beribu, and we left there a Congo chest for Wakeman. One large and several small Abyssinian camps were there at that time, and the forces were

crowding in. On the way we had been overtaken by several hundreds of them, and many more came in during our halt. After we had been off-saddled a short time a soldier came in with some dollars tied up in a corner of his tobe, and said that he had been sent by some of the Abyssinian Chiefs to buy wine from us. We sent back a reliable servant with a bottle of champagne, telling him to offer it as a present if the man's tale turned out to be true—which it did. The Chiefs sent word that they were coming over to visit us, but we left on our afternoon's march before they arrived. The Fafan bed was crossed at the outset, and the way was over an open grassy plain,¹ on which we saw several packs of aoul and many large herds of camels, which latter the natives were hurriedly driving off at our approach. We halted for the night at 6 p.m. at the edge of the bush veldt, where there was good grazing, but no water. Our bag of aoul, as meat for the day, was four head to Rose, one to Fairfax, and three to myself.

On January 14th we left our halting-place by the failing light of the waning moon, and marched twelve miles through a bushy country to a well called Adeleh, some twenty miles from Beribu, when we made the morning's halt. On the way we passed some large-leafed adad bushes, and found that chairin, with its large pink-and-white fluffy balls and large coarsely fibrous pods, which had been

¹ It may be pointed out that the large standing camp subsequently formed at Gorahai was on a part of this plain.

hitherto a rare bush, became very abundant, and the place bristled with the thorns of sarman, which, however, were much shorter and less bulbous in that district than in many others.

We started from Adeleh at 3 p.m., and after a march of about five miles came upon a single well containing a little water, and a quarter of a mile farther on we found two more wells, one of them fifty yards beyond the other. Both of these wells are about thirty-five feet deep, and the farther one contained a plentiful supply of muddy water. There was no grazing there, and the bush was very thick, so we watered the horses and mules, filled our tanks, and pushed on till 6 p.m. The first brew of tea from the water of our refilled tanks had the flavour of a stagnant village duckpond, but it was acceptable.

On the 15th we began to load up at 5.15 a.m., started off at six o'clock, and marched till 10.15, when we halted in a place where there was fairly good grazing, and took our morning's siesta under a goorah tree. The way was over the usual red sandy earth, and it was easier going and less dusty than any part of the march since leaving Gabridehari. We passed patches of the long coarse "durr" grass, and where we halted in the evening, after a three hours' afternoon march, there was good "gurgurra" or short grass. The thorn bushes were the same as before, except that goomer largely replaced chairin. In one place I noticed a tree apparently without a leaf, which was covered with perfectly lovely flowers



BRITISH OFFICERS. GERLOGUBL.



A MID-DAY HALT.



FALLING INTO PLACE BEFORE MARCHING OFF.

of virgin whiteness, fringed with delicate lace-like sepals of a similar white. The natives said it was called "salilmah," and the flowers appeared to fade by noon-time.

Gerlogubi (6° 51' 45", Ogilvy) is about sixty-three miles from Gabridehari according to the line of our march, which was south-eastwards for the first fifteen miles to Beribu, and thereafter bore away from the Tug Fafan almost directly eastwards, and the aneroid showed a rise of 250 feet. The whole place is nothing but an extensive rocky and sandy plain, dotted with goorah trees and "jellayto" scrub, and riddled with wells sunk from sixty to seventy-five feet through the sandstone and conglomerate limestone rock, and in some cases apparently excavated at the bottom into cisterns or reservoir chambers. The wonder is how and by whom they were made. They clearly are the work of people in a far higher stage of civilisation than the present inhabitants of these regions. They yielded a cool and fairly clear water. The shafts vary from three to four feet in diameter, and many of them were the homes of large be vies of bats, which would fly out during the daytime if one cast a stone down the well, and at night-time the air was thick with them whirling about. They are a small variety, with large ears, pin-hole eyes, peculiarly depressed noses and beautifully soft fur. Guinea-fowl and dig-dig existed in considerable numbers about Gerlogubi, and several laughing and barking hyenas hung round the camp at night.

A guard of 100 Abyssinians had been left over the wells there whilst the parties moved through to Wardair, at which place a considerable force had now assembled. One of the Abyssinian guard at Gerlogubi gave me the benefit of his opinion of the country. He said he thought that it was intended for "infidels" and "Somalis," and that "if it had been intended for Christians it would have been a land rich in crops and full of rivers like Abyssinia ; altogether, it was about on a par with its inhabitants" ; and I am bound to say that I agreed with him to a great extent. One did not become more enamoured of this part of Somaliland as the line of our advance grew longer and longer, especially in view of the uncertainty which prevailed as to the amount of supplies that the Abyssinians actually had with them. The advanced body of the Abyssinians at Wardair, under the Colonel and Fituarari Gabri, was now some 365 miles from Harrar, and nearly 200 miles from Sesebani. There was a great scarcity of grazing for the animals, and the country provided nothing that we wanted.

Our arrival at Gerlogubi was duly reported to the Colonel, and on January 17th he sent me a letter, which is quoted from as explaining the situation up to that time :—

"I think you have all done well to get so far, and, from what we hear, this move of the Abyssinians has deterred the Mullah from coming to this place. I have heard from the G.O.C. that he was attacking

.

the Mullah, or a part of his force, at Jidballi on the 10th inst., and it was said that the enemy was holding that place in force, and intended to fight there. Jidballi is thirty-eight miles east of Badwein, which is near Eil Dab. On the morning of the 15th I sent from here two camel sowars and a mounted guide to Bohodtle, so think we ought to hear something definite about the 22nd or 23rd if they get through. In the meantime, as the grass is very bad here, I think the bulk of the caravan had better remain at Gerlogubi. You had better come on here with a few medical stores for temporary use, and Dunn, when he arrives, if the situation is not then defined, can take charge at Gerlogubi. Wakeman will arrive with Alone probably before long. The British detached force evacuated Galadi on the 4th inst., but unless I see something worth going for I shall not ask the Abyssinians to go beyond this place. It is impossible to gauge their supply, but they have not been able to get any loot. I hope, however, that Alone will bring 200 camel loads of supply with him, as it would be no use going to Galadi unless we are prepared to stay there and to operate beyond if necessary."

In connection with this letter from the Colonel it may be explained that it had been General Egerton's object all along to prevent the Mullah getting away south-westwards, for example, by Wardair, or Galadi, or by the district between these places, since he would then have been in a country which was to a great extent outside the field of operations of either forces.

With this purpose in view, a show of operations was made on the south of the Haud by the occupation of Galadi and by various other movements. It had been hoped that the Abyssinians would reach Galadi by the new year, and supplies had been got up to that place in anticipation of their arrival, but, as has been seen, the advanced bodies had barely reached Wardair by that time. Nevertheless, in consequence of the Abyssinian advance and of the operations of the Somaliland Field Force, it appeared that General Egerton's object had to a great extent been achieved, for on December 19th a considerable body of the Mullah's forces had been located by Lieutenant-Colonel Kenna at Jidballi, which was apparently covering a withdrawal northwards across the Haud. General Egerton immediately commenced a concentration of his forces, withdrew the Galadi garrison, and was joined by General Manning and his command. In the meantime the Mullah's force at Jidballi had gone on increasing and now evidently consisted of his best fighting forces, and numbered somewhere between 3,000 and 6,000 fighting men.

General Egerton attacked them on January 10th, and the Mullah's army was defeated with heavy loss,¹ leaving 688 dead on the field, and losing as many more in the pursuit by the mounted troops. We did

¹ The British losses in this action consisted of Captain J. R. Melland, R.A.M.C., Lieutenant C. H. Bowden-Smith, and seventeen natives killed and nine British officers and twenty-nine natives wounded.

not, of course, receive news of this event until a few days afterwards ; but it was not less necessary than before that our force should concentrate in the field of operations, so as to be ready to prevent the Mullah from doubling back on his tracks, or cut off any parties of stragglers that might make in the Wardair direction, as, indeed, several afterwards did. These considerations will sufficiently explain the Colonel's reason for concentrating the Abyssinian troops, that were still in rear, at Gerlogubi, and for eventually assembling the whole army at Gorahai in the Tug Fafan, some fifteen miles south of Gabridehari.

On the receipt of the Colonel's letter I prepared to leave Gerlogubi the next day, January 18th. My kit, a pair of panniers, a Congo chest, a surgical haversack, a water bottle, a stretcher and one small water tank were loaded up on to four camels, and I took also a milking camel with its young. The way lay over heavy red, sandy earth and through bush which was so thick that at most times it was not possible to see more than forty yards around, and often less. A halt for the night was made at Ubertale, thirteen miles from Gerlogubi and ten miles from Wardair. Ubertale is regularly honeycombed with wells ; all, however, were then dry except two, and in them the depth of the water was not ascertained.

A large Abyssinian camp had been formed at Wardair with ours beside it and enclosed in the same zareba. The Colonel, Baird, and Ogilvy were just beginning breakfast when I came in at 10.15 a.m.

on the 19th, so the time of arrival was opportune. Wardair is 200 feet below the level of Gerlogubi and possesses an enormous number of wells. The best of them are on the higher ground and appear to be between sixty and seventy feet deep and in twenty-two of them there was from ten to fifteen feet of water.

The mails had come in two days previously, and it may be interesting to trace their mode of conveyance from Aden. As far as Zeila they came by coasting steamer; from Zeila to Harrar, 185 miles, by camel; from Harrar to Farso, 88 miles, by mule; from Farso to Sesebani, 84 miles, by camel or mule; from Sesebani to Beribu, 111 miles, by mule; and from Beribu to Wardair, 71 miles, by camel.

A goodly number of patients with various minor ailments soon put in an appearance, and one of them, a Somali, was suffering from colic, and no wonder, for he had eaten the whole of his date ration at one sitting and swallowed the stones into the bargain.

Fairfax and Rose arrived on the 20th, and it was pleasant to have a whole day free from a march. A few sick required attendance, some small animals were bottled in whisky for Dunn, a baby leopard belonging to Baird was duly inspected and photographed, and a call on Fituarari Gabri in company with Ogilvy and Johannes Fiesah formed the occupations of an easy day.

The Colonel suggested that I should go with Ogilvy and 300 Abyssinians on the 21st to try to locate the site of Colonel Plunkett's disaster at

Gumburru, which we found to lie about forty-four miles from Wardair, a little to the south of east and about half-way to Galadi.

It is hardly necessary to say how welcome was the prospect of such an expedition. We left camp at 5.45 a.m. on the 21st, taking with us three days' provisions and water supply. Two Somali guides accompanied us, and one of them, a Mijjertan from Wardair, Hercy by name, had a wonderfully accurate knowledge of the country, for he indicated the direction and exact situation of the battle-field with the precision of a person supplied with a large-scale map properly oriented.

We marched till 9.45, covering thirteen miles, and then, after a rest till 12.15, pushed on fifteen miles further, halting at five o'clock, in time to make a zareba before dark. We travelled over a fairly well-marked track, known, I believe, as the Middle Galadi road. It was heavy going in places over the usual red sandy ground, but we got along at a good pace considering that the bush was very thick except in a few places. All the trees were leafless except some large goorah which, I noticed there, possessed two kinds of thorn on the same tree—one long and lance-like and the other clawed, or recurved, of the "wait-a-bit" shape. Grazing began about seven miles from Wardair and continued more or less all the way. There were very few birds to be seen, and none of them were small ones; hornbills, khoran, and two big bustards, were all we noticed. There were, however,

great numbers of dig-dig, and we saw one old rhinoceros track and a few spoor of diptag.

Three large graves were passed along the road, which were said by the guide to be the burial-places of the Mullah's men who had been killed at Gumburru or had died of their wounds afterwards. The graves, however, appeared to me to have been made at different times, and this was probably the case, as the natives constantly travel to and fro on this route. Both that day and the next also we saw several shelters which, we were told, had been used by the Mullah's wounded, on their way from the scene of action to Wardair.

On the 22nd we left the zareba at 5.45 a.m. with two-thirds of the force, carrying full water bottles and a day's rations, the other third of the party remaining in occupation of the zareba. After a march of sixteen miles through thick bushy country, we reached the scene of action at 9.15.

The battle-field lies about a mile and a half to the south-east of the hill of Gumburru—a landmark that had been pointed out to us whilst we were still some miles away—and comprises an area several hundred yards in diameter, which is covered with low open bush, jillap scrub, and tufted machen grass. It has a few trees, chiefly low-growing chairin, which present a somewhat flat-topped form, like an inverted saucer, with the branches spreading out all round and often coming within two feet or so of the ground.

There were ample evidences of the fierce fight which had taken place and of the gallant stand that had been made when the small detachment, under its British officers, had been overpowered by superior numbers and annihilated. A small bullet-scored lebbay tree was clearly indicated as the last rallying point.

Nearly four miles due east of Gumburru we came to the zareba which Colonel Cobbe had made for the protection of the remainder of his force, and it speaks well for those who died with Colonel Plunkett that the Somalis did not afterwards dare to attack this force, but allowed it to return unmolested to General Manning's relieving party.

Between the battle-ground and the zareba the ground dips a little, sloping to the south-east and becoming rocky. In this hollow the bush is thicker and better grown than on the higher ground, the chairin trees were in leaf, and the grass greener than in the immediate neighbourhood.

From the rocky dip the ground rises to the zareba, about which the bush had been cleared for a considerable distance, so as to give an open field of fire. Inside it is strongly entrenched with redoubts at the salient angles, and is dug out at the south-east corner, where apparently the water was stored under a large, spreading goorah tree. The interior measures about eighty yards by fifty, and when we were there it was crowded with "wahb," or grass-and-branch shelters, erected by the Mullah's men since Cobbe's occupation. The scene of action was probably concealed

158 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

from those in the zareba by the trees and bush which grew about the battle-field.

We reached the zareba at 11.30 a.m., and left it at 12.15, for there was a twenty miles' march before us and we had no time to spare if we were to be back in our camp of the previous night before darkness fell. We pushed on at a good pace, and rejoined the party there at 4.35 p.m., and arrived back at Wardair the next day at one o'clock without incident.

No memorial marks the scene of the action of Gumburru in honour of the brave soldiers who fell there, yet they, like many more who die for Britain, have a tomb in the hearts of their comrades and a monument in the memory of their deeds that is more enduring than stone.

CHAPTER VIII

.

1
1
1

CHAPTER VIII

Wardair—Despatch from General Egerton—Commotion in camp—Inspection of Walwal—Consultations—Decision to concentrate at Gerlogubi—Temporary reoccupation of Wardair—Failure of the water at Gerlogubi—Shortage of the Abyssinian supplies—Concentration at Gorahai—Drastic treatment—The plain of Gorahai—The bush, a nightmare—The district around camp—Arrival of Alone and Wakeman—The whole party together—The Abyssinian camp : plan of ; stench of—Doctoring camels—The native's thick head—Baird—Dunn—Capitano Citeri and his dog.

ON January 23rd the Colonel received the following telegram from Lieut.-General Egerton : "I much appreciate the occupation of Wardair and the exertions of yourself and staff by which it has been achieved. Please convey to the Abyssinian officer in chief command my congratulations and my appreciation of the arduous march which has been made by his force. Their presence at Wardair at the present time closes to the Mullah an important line of retreat, and I trust sufficient force may be maintained there to hold it and, if possible, to threaten Galadi during the next month. My force is at present extended along South Nogal towards Adodero to cut off the retreat of the Haroun to the south, as a preliminary to regaining touch with the Dervish force which moved

east from Halin after the action at Jidballi on the 10th." The telegram went on to give a report of the battle of Jidballi and of the future disposition of the different portions of the Somaliland Field Force, and various eventualities were discussed.

A tremendous commotion suddenly arose that evening in the Somali quarter of our camp. The Colonel and Baird went out for an afternoon stroll about 4.45 and were returning to camp when, as they emerged from the thick bush, an Abyssinian fired a shot at what he thought was a hyæna, the bullet whizzing close by them. The Abyssinian was greatly distressed, and at once expressed profound regret, but before any of the rest of us knew that anything had happened, the Somalis spread a wild report that the Colonel and Baird had been either shot or were having their throats cut by some Abyssinians, and all turned out pell-mell with any firearms they could lay their hands on. I was speaking to Rose in my tent when suddenly my syce bolted in, seized my rifle, upsetting nearly everything in his blind and blazing excitement, and yelled out that the Colonel and Baird were done for. We did not, of course, believe a word of his jabber, but thinking one of them might have been accidentally hurt, we went to look for them. In a few seconds they appeared, followed by a crowd of chattering Somalis, whom the Colonel soon dismissed by telling them that it was all a mistake. My syce got into some trouble in the business for having cut one of the Abyssinian

machangas (hide thongs or reins), half of which he stole. His case was disposed of by Baird inflicting a fine of Rs.10, and after that peace reigned once more.

On the 25th a party consisting of the Colonel, Baird, Ogilvy, Fituarari Gabri, Fituarari Kolassi, Gerasmatch Kitemma, Balambaras Ahsheety, Balambaras Assegud, Ato Karakorat and myself, with 160 Abyssinians, rode over to Walwal, about eight miles to the north, to inspect the water supply there. There are a great number of wells at that place, which, at a rough guess, I should say are sixty feet or so in depth ; and very many of them contained water. Ogilvy and I walked all the way through the thick bush, hoping to get a shot at diptag, but neither of us caught sight of any although there was a lot of spoor about. We also noticed old rhinoceros tracks in some places.

After various consultations the Colonel and Fituarari Gabri decided to effect a preliminary concentration of all the forces at Gerlogubi, and the Fituarari promised the Colonel that he would do his best to get to the bottom of the Abyssinian supplies, which were still a very uncertain quantity. The Abyssinians stood in great awe of their commander, and he, fortunately, had a most profound respect for the Colonel's judgment and decision. It was hoped that it would be possible to despatch a considerable section of the troops that were now at Gerlogubi, or would shortly arrive there, to reoccupy Wardair ; but all depended on supplies. The possibility was discussed that at the end of the operations the Abyssinians would have to

return by the Webbe Shabéleh, on the road to which, and beyond, there were both water and food, whilst there was very little of the former and none of the latter if they returned by the road on which they had come. In case of the alternative route being selected, Dunn and I would be required to accompany them, and we regarded the possibility with unmixed pleasure, as it offered the prospect of good shooting and very likely a scrape with the second or "mushroom" Mullah, who had sprung up in those parts. Our whole force at Wardair, therefore, struck camp on January 26th, and marched for Gerlogubi, which was reached the next day at 7 a.m.

The water supply at Gerlogubi had now unfortunately become very insufficient. During our absence a large force of Abyssinians had assembled there, so that there had been a great drain on the wells for some time before the arrival of our contingent; and with such an addition to the numbers, the state of affairs at once became critical. Most of the Colonel's time was occupied in settling disputes between the Somalis and the Habshis, and in receiving deputations from the Chiefs on questions chiefly relating to water supplies. Some of the wells failed on the day of our arrival and some Abyssinians sat up all night waiting for them to fill up a little. The next day the water allowance per man was reduced by half, and all bathing was, of course, forbidden. Three batches of Abyssinians petitioned the Colonel for food, and the numbers appeared to rise in geometrical progression.

The issue of a rice ration to each man made them grateful; but something evidently must be done at once. After repeated consultations, it was decided that Duff and Dunn (who had arrived at Gerlogubi before our return from Wardair), with Ogilvy and Fairfax, their mules and twenty-five camels, and 1,500 Abyssinians, with their animals, should proceed the next day, January 29th, to reoccupy Wardair. This served the double purpose of maintaining control over the wells there, and of rendering our movements more perplexing to the Mullah, who probably was fully aware of our proceedings through the various half-harmless and half-suspicious-looking Somalis that were hanging round the place.

On January 30th it was resolved to take the force remaining at Gerlogubi, consisting roughly of 3,000 men and nine or ten thousand animals, to Gorahai, on the Tug Fafan, where there was good grazing on an open plain and also a fair supply of water.

Reference to the map will show that this place lies forty-eight miles south-west of Gerlogubi, eighteen miles from Adeleh, and about seven miles south of Beribu, through which we had passed on January 13th.

I remember on that last afternoon at Gerlogubi prescribing a very drastic treatment for a patient. The camel jemadar, speaking in Arabic, told me that there was a sick "gemal" (soft g) that he thought would be unable to march to-morrow. I asked if it was one with a bad back, and he said "Yes," so I inquired whether I had seen him in the morning, and he said

I had. I then asked whether he thought he was likely to recover, and he replied that he hardly thought things were so bad as that, but that he could not bear anything on his back. "Well, then," I said, "if that's the case, he had better have his throat cut and the Somalis can eat him"—for they will eat almost any kind of camel, provided that it has been "hallaed" or had its throat cut before death by a Somali and the words "Bismillahi Allah Akbar"—"In the name of God Almighty"—pronounced at the same time. The jemadar seemed to look askance at my suggestion; but thinking he did not quite see the force of the reasoning—for I had expected him to jump at the proposal—I repeated that he might have the camel's throat cut, and added that the Somalis could eat him or not as they liked. The man's face became blanched with horror, and such a change came over him when I further added that I would go and see it done, that I began to suspect something must be wrong. He had meant a "gemál," a camel-man, and not a "gemal," or camel, as I had understood, for the words are pronounced very much alike. His face beamed with delight as the matter was cleared up, and I went along with him and arranged that the man should ride a mule. As the jemadar had said, I had seen him and prescribed for him in the morning after the camel doctoring.

We filled up our water tanks at Gerlogubi on the evening of January 31st, and commenced the march to Gorahai at 7.15, continuing till midnight, and

covering fifteen miles. The next morning we pushed on to Adeleh, where we rested for the day ; and on February 2nd, after a six hours' march in a westward direction, we crossed the Fafan River bed and halted at Gorahai.

As we emerged from the thickets at Adeleh and entered upon an open plain, our feeling was one of intense relief at being in the fresh air again, and able to breathe freely, for the thick dark bush round about, every day and all day, oppresses one like a nightmare. Imagine yourself, in some horrible dream, dropped into a maze, and left there : the maze is of thick thorn bushes, and every tree becomes transformed into a half-starved and parched octopus, every branch into a tentacle, and every thorn into a sucker, and you, gripped tight, are in the midst of it. By some big effort you shake yourself free and are at liberty to move and breathe. It was so with us when we left the bush and entered the plain of Gorahai.

The country is truly a dismal, hopeless wilderness, and no wonder the Abyssinian thought it was fit only for infidels and hyænas. How long it has been such a waterless desolation I do not know, and it passes one's comprehension to understand how it can ever be anything else. It is one of the waste places of the earth, and, short of some titanic convulsion, will probably remain so. Yet here were we, we islanders, moiling and toiling in the heart of it ! It was the greatest possible relief at Gorahai to see around us an open, level plain more or less covered with sun-dried

grass, dotted with scrub and trees, and alive with aoul, sand-grouse and pigeons—although there were plenty of jackals and hyænas lurking in their company ; and this notwithstanding the fact that the air was charged for half the day on an average with the comings and goings of dust-storms.

Our camp was pitched on the south-west side of the Fafan between Gorahai (6° 33' 45" N., Ogilvy) and Moradili ; Gebel Debengiddi lay about three miles away to the south-west, and another hill, Gebel Faikh, about five miles to the east. There was some running water in the Fafan bed, some distance above camp, but it was foul and dark, and dead camels were lying in several of the larger pools. Our water was drawn from a series of shallow wells, or rather holes, about a mile south-east of camp, and although the water was a little muddy it was good enough, and, as there was plenty of it, the Colonel gave orders that the mules should be watered twice a day, which, after the hard times they had been having, soon began to bring about an improvement in their condition.

The mirage was often very well marked at Gorahai, and riding back to camp from a distance, the hills around looked like islands ; our tents seemed to be floating in a lake, and the camels and mules appeared to be wading knee-deep in the water.

About eight miles to the south-east the grass and trees were quite green, and the aoul grazing in crowds all about were so tame that it would have been quite easy to go up and shoot one with a shot-gun. They



A DUST DEVIL APPROACHING. ABOUT TO STRIKE.



A DUST DEVIL DEPARTING, AND HAVING STRUCK.



SAND GROUSE FOR THE POT.



ABYSSINIAN CAMP—GORAHAI.

were most useful in providing us with fresh meat. Our supply of shot-cartridges had become small, so we had to adopt murderous, non-sporting tactics with the blue rocks and sand-grouse that abounded everywhere, and shoot into a heap of them as they stood on the ground, so as to bag half a dozen or a dozen at a shot. The record shots in this way were eighty-eight sand-grouse in four shots and twenty-six in one shot. The birds were very delicious eating, and if it had not been for them and other game which it was the daily duty of one or other of us to provide, we should have found our rations running short too soon, beside being very dry and uninteresting. Our own boxes of extra supplies from home were now weeks overdue, and we had given up expecting to see them, except perhaps at Harrar, if we happened to return that way.

There are few more graceful little birds than the sand-grouse. Although alert enough in full daylight, they appear to be almost blind in the dim light of dawn, for at that time, walking upright in the open, you may often approach so close to them that you could if you wanted almost knock them over with a stick, and even when so close as that, they appeared to be disturbed more by what they heard than by what they saw, whilst there may have been light enough for you yourself to see them twenty yards or more away.

We held on to our camps at Gorahai from February 2nd till March 29th, keeping parties in observation

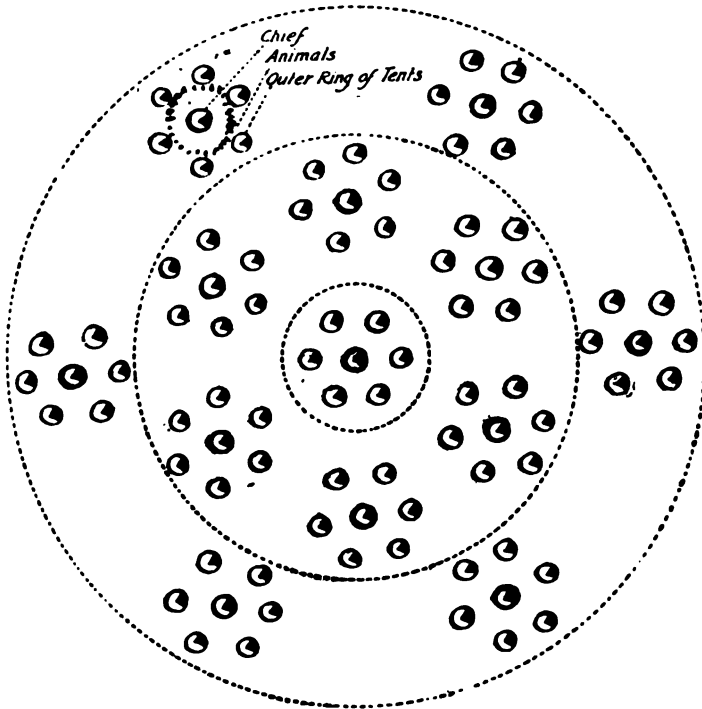
of Gerlogubi, Wardair and other districts. The contingent at Wardair under Duff was withdrawn; and he, with Dunn, Fairfax, Ogilvy, Basha Balina and the caravan, arrived in camp at Gorahai on February 5th. "George," the second Abyssinian interpreter, who was attached to the rear portion of the force, was reported to be missing. Duff did not think the world of "George"—neither did anyone else for the matter of that—and high hopes were entertained that he was lost for ever; but later on he turned up as self-confident as usual, and with a beaming countenance, whilst Duff's fell unmistakably at the sight of him.

On February 6th Alone and Wakeman arrived with a welcome convoy from Harrar; and now for the first time the whole of the Colonel's staff was in camp together. The force in the small British camp consisted of 10 officers, Sergeant Tubb and 226 Somalis, with 235 transport camels, 68 mules, 5 ponies and 7 riding camels. With the supplies that Alone had brought we had 69 sacks of rice, 33 tins of ghee and 29 bags of dates,¹ or sufficient approximately to provide rice and ghee rations for 230 men for 45 days, and dates for 35 days.

The Abyssinian camp was pitched some four miles to the north of ours, and as there were about 5,000 men and upwards of 15,000 animals in camp, it will be understood that it covered a large extent of ground. It was pitched, as they always are, in the

¹ The round rolls of dates were found to be the best.

open, and the tents, of all shapes and sizes, were arranged in circles round the tent of a Chief, with the animals tethered close to the tents inside the circle. At the centre of the whole camp was the tent of Fituarari Gabri, and arranged round it in a circle



were the tents of his immediate following. Outside this, as shown above, was a series of circular groups of tents, each around a Chief, who might be of any rank, from a Fituarari to a Basha. The diagram shows the camp, not as it was, but as it would have been had the tents been regularly arranged and dressed.

The stench around the tents, when the men were making "biltong" out of aoul meat or mutton, was terrible. The ground, too, in the vicinity of the camp became abominably foul, stinking and polluted, especially in some places; and before the camp had been in existence a week there were two dead and rotting donkeys and a dead camel in an advanced state of decomposition lying in the river bed close to the water holes—one of them within fifteen yards, and the others not more than forty yards away. Crowds of men were down there all day and every day, drawing water or watering their animals, and everyone was either holding his nose or had his nostrils plugged with rags. They all did this rather than adopt the simple expedient of removing or burning the carcasses. Every man thought it was somebody else's business to do the work. If a shower of rain had fallen, the wells would have soon become charged with filthy putrefying matter.

By the aid of an interpreter and Assistant-Surgeon Wakeman, the obvious remedy was pointed out to them, but they very plainly regarded it as a "lame and impotent conclusion." The Habshi thought the cure would be more nauseating than the disease; to remove the offence would turn the stomach, whilst it could just be borne if left alone.

In view of these insanitary conditions, it may occasion surprise that there were only two deaths from disease during the whole expedition. One was that of



CORNER OF ABYSSINIAN CAMP, GORAHAL, BILTONG AND WATER TANKS.



GERASMATCH DUSTA ENTERING THE ZARIBA.



ABYSSINIAN CHIEF AND FOLLOWERS IN "REVIEW ORDER."

a man who died of a malignant type of remittent fever at Gorahai, and the other that of a Balambaras who died of the same disease on his way back to Harrar. There were, however, several sick, chiefly with minor ailments, to be seen daily. Those who were able came over to see us, but Dunn, Wakeman and myself took it in turns to ride over to the Abyssinian camp at 6.30 in the morning, and our duties usually employed us there till 11 or 11.30. Two hours each morning, usually from 6.30 to 8.30, was spent in doctoring transport camels, and there were on an average fifty-three to be attended to daily. They were formed up in single rank, well to the rear of camp, in kneeling position, with a rope tied round the neck and fore legs, and with their heads to leewards, because in that way one stood clear of their breath, which is overpoweringly offensive. The treatment consisted in cleaning the sores with raw cotton from which the seeds had been picked out, steeped in a .1 per cent. solution of corrosive sublimate; in syringing with the same solution, and otherwise treating the sores as was necessary, and finally in applying a dressing of the cotton steeped in the same solution. Five assistants were necessary for the work: No. 1 carried the solution, No. 2 the cotton wool, No. 3 helped to clean the sores, No. 4 held the camel by the lips to prevent his biting, and No. 5 went on one camel in advance, removing the old dressings. Each camel, whilst being dressed, keeps up a growling and gurgling noise like a mountain in

labour, and very often one would roll suddenly over on to his side and let out with his hind legs; and, seeing that he has a reach of about five feet with them, it was necessary to keep a sharp look-out.

Speaking of medical matters reminds me that we had under treatment at that time a Somali, who must have been endowed by nature with a remarkably thick head. The day before we left Gerlogubi he was working at the bottom of a seventy-foot well, cleaning out the mud. As usual in such cases, he had been let down by a rope tied round his waist, and was employed in filling a bucket which was raised by another rope when full, and lowered again when emptied. On this occasion, one of the cross beams at the mouth of the well, a rough-hewn branch several inches in diameter, got detached and dropped down the shaft on to the man's head, which it ought to have knocked into smithereens, but did nothing of the kind. Its fall must have been broken in some way, for it could not have hit him very directly; at all events, the yells which followed were conclusive evidence that he had by no means received his quietus. He was quickly hauled up, being nearly strangled in the process, and all the damage he could show was a slight scalp wound.

One of the worst features of being stationed for seven weeks in such an outlandish, dust-storm-home of a place as Gorahai was that, apart from one's duties, there was little to do. That hated diary was, of course, always waiting for one like a goblin,

but to keep it entered up could not by any stretch of imagination be called an amusement. The Colonel allowed us to get away in pairs on short shooting expeditions, and if it had not been for them and for one's excellent companions, our stay would have been about as dreary a business as could be imagined.

The mails from home came on camels at irregular intervals, and the news of the situation between Russia and Japan in the Far East was just then, I think, more interesting than the movements of the elusive Mullah.

Concerning one's fellow campaigners, however, let me add to what I have said of the Colonel and Duff by trying to hit off some of the characteristics of Baird and Dunn. Like the divinity student, however, who was up for his examination in Holy Orders, and was asked to write a description of the Kings of Israel and to contrast their characters, I feel inclined to say that "it is invidious on my part to distinguish between these great and holy men." Everything about Baird is systematic and always in apple-pie order, from his clothes to his tent-ropes. Vivacity, tact, and scholarly gifts reveal the diplomatist, for, from the ease with which he speaks French, German, Italian, or Arabic, any one of them might be his mother tongue. His spirit, knowledge, sincerity and good judgment make him a man whose advice is worth asking and taking; and add to all these virtues his ready generosity and the fact that he is invariably late for his meals, and a suitable back-

ground of human frailty is provided for a good fellow.

Dunn has been a friend and comrade for many years, and if one man could say more of another than that, Dunn would deserve it. Always true, always where there was work to be done, and always ready to do it, he is an all-round sportsman and also the most industrious naturalist imaginable. The specimens he obtained during this expedition, like those he collected in the Soudan, have been added to the collection in the South Kensington Museum, and the accompanying particulars are obtained from Professor Oldfield Thomas's description of them.¹ A considerable number of new forms is contained in the collection, and some of them, particularly a certain mongoose, a ground squirrel and a rat (*Ammodillus imbellis*) show in a marked degree the adaptation of colour in the animals so as to make them correspond with the red sandy ground on which they live. A reduction in size, no doubt arising from the difficult conditions of their existence, is shown in several forms, as, for example, in the two skulls and the skin of pigmy leopards (*Felis pardus manopardus*), which are the first specimens of the kind that have been brought to this country; in the small Somali wild dog (*Lycaon pictus Somalicus*) and in a new variety of rat which

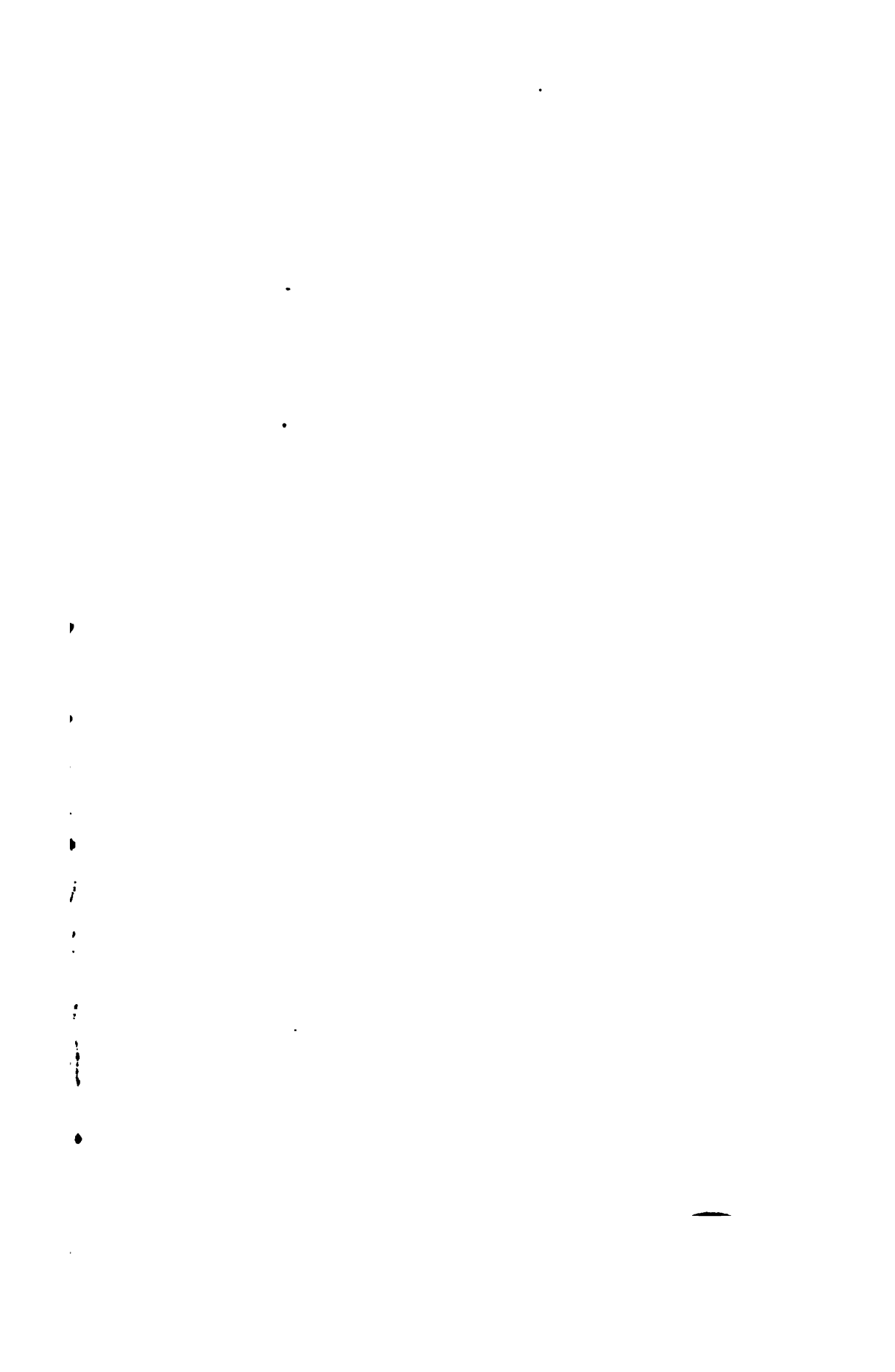
¹ "On a Collection of Mammals Obtained in Somaliland by Major H. N. Dunn, R.A.M.C., with descriptions of allied specimens from other localities, by Oldfield Thomas, F.R.S."—*Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, Sect. 7, vol. xiv. August, 1904.

Professor Thomas has named *Gerbillus Dunni* after the donor of the specimen.¹

Before closing this chapter a word should be said of Capitano Carlo Citeri, whose interesting reminiscences were so pleasant to all of us. He has had a long experience of the country and travelled to Lake Rudolph on one of his journeys. A faithful follower of his took the shape (!) of a pariah dog which slept all day except when it was eating, and bayed and barked throughout the livelong night. It was a lubberly, hulking hound, with a coat like the kebid of a h rio, and was diabolically fat and lazy. One day it was lying on the ground about ten yards from where I was sitting, so to give it a little exercise I called it to me. Instead of jumping up and bounding across, as any decent dog would have done, it straightened out its hind legs, folded in its fore legs, and rolled over and over sideways until it came to anchor at my feet. It waved, not wagged, its tail, blinked, yawned and fell into a dead sleep, snoring like a pig.

¹ Without giving a detailed account, it may be said that Dunn's specimens described by Professor Oldfield Thomas include one or many of the following types : weasel, cat, leopard, mongoose, hunting dog, badger, ground squirrel, bat, rat, mouse, porcupine, hare, coney, dig-dig and deer.

CHAPTER IX



CHAPTER IX

ABYSSINIAN CUSTOMS—Method of obtaining information—Wakeman
—Mobilisation and equipment—Soldiers—Ranks—Transport—
Dress—Decorations—Fighting qualities and methods—Tribute
system—Coinage—Calendar—Seasons—Posts—Education—
Justice and crime—The Thief Catcher

CAREFUL efforts were made to arrive at a right understanding of some of the established Abyssinian conventions and practices, and inquiries were pursued on every convenient occasion during the whole time of our stay in the country. Many things became clear in the course of questioning our Amharic and Arabic interpreters, a certain Balambaras, and several soldiers and patients whose confidence one was able to gain; but my course was beset with many difficulties until the arrival of Assistant-Surgeon W. A. M. Wakeman. He speaks Amharic like a native, and thoroughly understands the idioms and turns of expression. He is eminently careful and sound, and during his six years' residence in the country and on various expeditions he has been brought into intimate contact with a great many persons of both low and high stations. The

182 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

officers with whom he had served or whom he had attended on the expedition for the Survey¹ of the southern frontier of Abyssinia, were continually singing his praises to me and could not speak highly enough of his achievements and of his devotion to his work. To him I am indebted for the solution of many perplexing problems, for a literal interpretation of enigmatical expressions, and for continual help.

The accompanying notes summarise my investigations, and I think that on the whole they may be relied upon as correct.

There is no need for compulsory *military service* in Abyssinia, for the national instinct is so martial that in case of emergency every man would probably turn out to fight. There are no "King's Regulations" for the enlistment, pay and services of the soldier, and the conditions vary somewhat amongst the different Chiefs. Those conditions, however, which relate to the enrolment of Menelik's own soldiers, and of those of the big Abyssinian Chiefs, are somewhat as follows.

On registering his name as a soldier, a man usually receives \$3, a rifle, a few cartridges and a large roll of grey American sheeting (*boluko*) about thirty yards in length. The rifles given out are of all patterns, the "Gras" predominating. The *boluko* costs from

¹ See the Report, vol. i. p. 28.

\$3 to \$4, washes well and lasts a long time, and the men either make it into a tent or cut it into three suitings. The man also receives twelve kunnas¹ of grain per month for himself and his wife, a pay of \$5 a year, and, occasionally, an extra honorarium of \$6 a year. The pay is said to increase with the length of service, and an old and trusted soldier may receive as much as \$15 a year, or get an increase in his ration allowance, or receive presents and other tokens of appreciation from his Chief. After a year's service the soldier usually receives a sword of a sharp-curved make—a scimitar, in fact—which is used for hacking and not for thrusting purposes, and is worn, when campaigning, sheathed and on the right side. After three years' service he may be given a revolver and cartridges, and, if he has proved himself a good soldier, a riding mule and saddle, a horse, and perhaps a pack donkey. These latter he has to keep at his own expense, and they become his property, though he is liable to forfeiture of them on misbehaviour.

When an army is mobilised for active service, the Ras, to whose lot it falls, issues a proclamation to his Chiefs; they pass it on to their sub-chiefs, and they to the private soldiers, who are thereby instructed to assemble at the head-quarters of their respective Chiefs and to receive arms, ammunition, supplies and equip-

¹ A kunna is between one and two pounds' weight.

ment from the official arsenal and store. Each man receives an ammunition belt with forty rounds of ammunition, a cooking pot and a baking pan, and, if he does not already possess them, a horse, a mule, a boluko and a rifle. Revolvers, knives and swords are always the property of the man who carries them. The daily ration consists of a kunna of teff flour, and from one to two months' supplies on this basis are issued to each man. Beyond this he receives nothing but his regular allowance of twelve kunnas of grain per month, and he has to depend on what he can beg, borrow, or raid on the expedition. If a man leaves his wife behind him, she is entitled to draw a moiety of his monthly allowance. Two-thirds of all looted animals belong to the Chief, and the remaining third is divided amongst his soldiers. None but a singularly benevolent Chief will replace a man's lost mule or other animal unless its tail is produced as evidence of its death. The personal belongings of a dead enemy belong to the man who has killed him. A man may receive ornaments for hanging on his horse's or his mule's neck as a reward for service, and he may even obtain promotion to the rank of Balambaras—though rarely higher. Should a man save a comrade's life on the battle-field he receives a bracelet or some other distinctive ornament as a decoration. The higher ranks do not draw any regular army pay, but receive grants of land which bring them in tribute.

The following are the army ranks :—

1. Wätädär = A soldier ("Tommy Atkins.")
2. Amsä Ālakä = Chief of 50 men.
3. Metto Ālakä = „ „ 100 „
4. Basha, generally = „ „ 300 „
5. Balambaras = Commander of a fortress or post.
6. Yesambul = Commander of 1,000 men.
7. Gerazmatch = „ „ left wing.
8. Kanzamatch = „ „ right wing.
9. Fituarari = „ „ advance guard.
10. Dejasmatch = A general.
11. Ras = Governor.
12. King = King.
13. Emperor = King of Kings.

The Emperor Menelik is known as Negoosa Negist or Negûs Nagasti (hard g's), the King of Kings, Jan Hoy (the Exalted One or Emperor, or His Majesty), and he is officially addressed as "The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menelik II, The Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia."

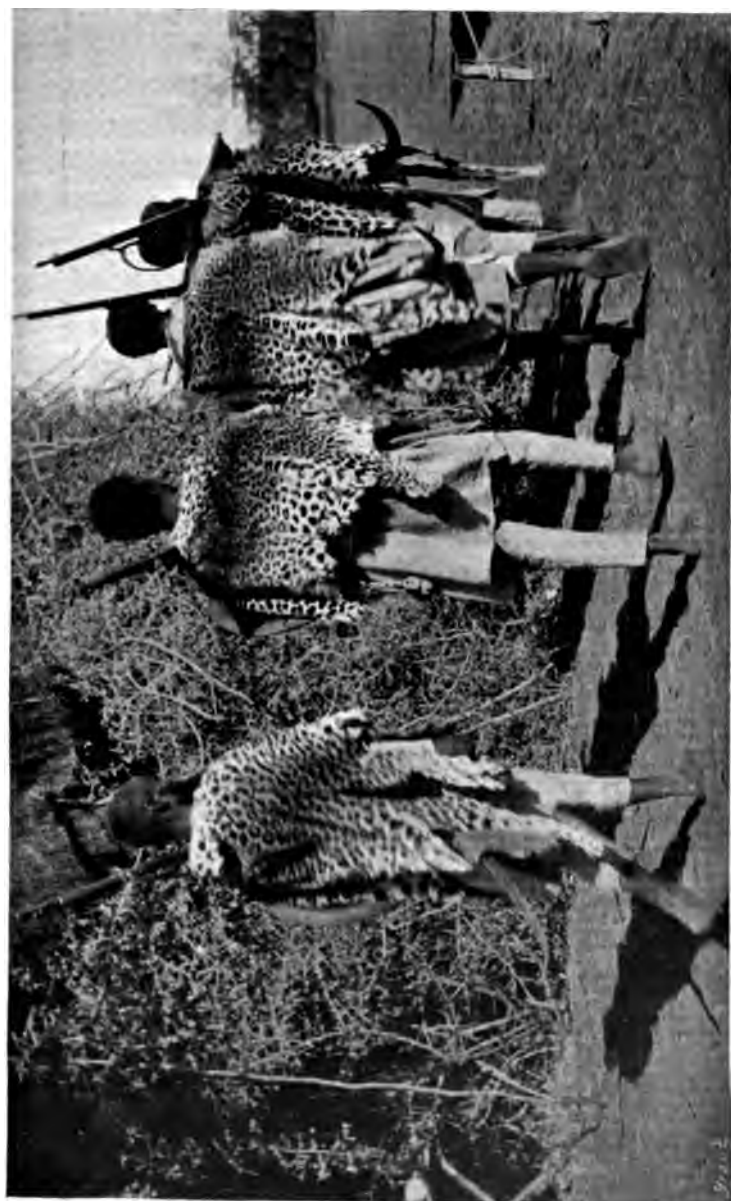
The exact derivation of the expression "Jan Hoy" is not clear, but from what I could gather, it has nothing to do with "the man in the red tent" as has been suggested, although the Emperor is the only person permitted to occupy a red tent, or, for the matter of that, any tent with a double fly.

The term "Lij" is applied to the general nobility, as apart from army rank, and may be taken as equivalent to esquire.

Accompanying the King's army and with some of the big Chiefs' armies, are treasury, transport, granary and engineer officers. If a Chief can afford it, he takes a woman and a private soldier—a tent-boy—to cook for him. Four or five men will commonly club together, one man's boluko serving for their tent, and the others making it up to him in suitings. Similarly they will often employ a menial to work for them, and the result is that in any Abyssinian camp there are a great many hirelings and hangers-on, who, when it comes to hand-to-hand fighting, are accustomed to join in with knives, swords, or any weapon they can lay their hands on in order to get a share of the spoil. Judging from their appearance, they are eminently cut out for this sort of work.

The Abyssinians are accustomed to carry their water in large canvas water bottles or in skins, but, as already explained, this method of transport had been found insufficient during the expedition in the spring of 1903, and on this occasion the British Government had supplemented it by the issue of 1,000 eight-gallon and 360 twelve-gallon water tanks and 5,000 water bottles. At the start of the expedition the water bottles were filled with tej or with araki, as they were looked upon as too small for carrying water.

It was very difficult to estimate with accuracy the number of Abyssinians in the field with us, but there were probably from 4,000 to 5,000 fighting men, and from 12,000 to 15,000 animals. The Emperor



ABYSSINIAN SOLDIERS IN FULL DRESS.



FITUARARI GABRI (left), BALAMBARAS ASSEJUD (right), AND BODY GUARD.

Menelik had provided 1,500 riding and transport animals, mules, donkeys, or horses, and 200 camels. The remainder—not possessed by the men themselves in the ordinary way—had been supplied by Ras Makunnan.

The *soldiers' dress* consists of a pair of baggy trousers, tight below the knee, made of American grey sheeting, and a shirt of the same material. Over them is a shamma or loose woven tobe, and the loins are girded with a twisted roll—the makannat—of about thirty yards of fine muslin. A black silk cord—the matab—is hung round the neck, and to it are attached several amulets for protection against the evil eye and certain diseases. Very commonly also a cross hangs from the cord, but it is the cord and not the cross which typifies Christianity.

The men have a passion for hats, and favour a soft felt wideawake, which is usually black or grey ; but all kinds of hats are grabbed with the utmost avidity. The sword is often richly ornamented, and, in addition to it and the rifle, they carry a circular shield made of oryx or some other hide, which is often decorated with brass, tin, silver, or gold bands. A revolver and one or two knives may be stuck in the makannat, and in full dress they array themselves in leopard-skins or in black and white sheep-skins. Their mule trappings are also often decorated, so that altogether when in their full “war-paint” they present a very picturesque appearance. In the low or thorny country most men wear canvas gaiters and leather sandals or

"chamma," but never in the hills. When riding, they grip the stirrup between the great and second toes, and they always mount on the off side.


The dress of the officers is substantially the same as that of the men, only the materials are of a finer quality, and they wear in addition a long black silk cape—generally of Egyptian manufacture—which is called a "kabba." On gala days their display of wearing apparel is very fine indeed, and all sorts of fantastic waistcoats and shirts are donned, and the head is often crowned with a lion's mane.

Besides the decorations that indicate military rank or service, many are worn which show the extent of the wearer's achievements in either sport or adventure. Thus a plain or ornamented stud or earring worn in the lobe of the left ear denotes that the wearer has killed from one to five elephants. If he has killed six elephants, a man wears a ring in each ear, both rings of the same size. If he has killed a rhinoceros and an elephant, he wears a large ring in the left ear to denote the elephant, and a smaller one in the right ear for the rhinoceros. Great honours attach to the killing of a lion, and the slayer is entitled to a silver gilt neck chain—a dirri. A rough scale of values is generally understood as follows :—

One elephant is considered equivalent to ten men (formerly it counted as forty men).

One rhinoceros is considered equivalent to five men (formerly it counted as twenty men).

One lion is considered equivalent to five men.



FIGHTING QUALITIES AND METHODS 189

One leopard is considered equivalent to one man (formerly it counted as five men).

The slaying of a wild dog is also looked upon as a considerable achievement, owing to the rarity of these animals and to superstitious fears of their ferocity. No mark of distinction attaches to the killing of a man.

The *Abyssinian soldier* is undoubtedly hardy and a good campaigner, and when you get to know him and are careful not to see too much, he commands your admiration. He has a very profound sense of nationality, and I am convinced that rival Chiefs—even if the bitterest enemies—would sink their differences and unite in opposing any invading force. The troops would certainly give a good account of themselves in bush fighting or in a hand-to-hand conflict, but how they would stand modern artillery fire, if unable to return it, one cannot say. Their endurance is beyond question, and doubtless their courage also. They are reluctant to attack when in a minority, but once in a fight, whether in a minority or not, there is apparently, so far as one could learn, no such thing as stopping or controlling them. Once these “dogs of war” are let slip, “no quarter” and wild frenzied excitement appear to be the order of the day, and they become mad with a sort of blood intoxication; their one fierce desire being to get in with their swords and deal out slaughter. When fighting a charging enemy, they are said to ride within a few hundred yards of the foe, dismount and leave their

mules (which are accustomed to stand quietly), blaze off five or six rounds of ammunition, sling their rifles rapidly over their shoulders, draw their swords with their right hand, hold up their hide shields with the left, and with fierce yells and shouts throw themselves in a headlong rush upon the enemy.

They march with Somali and Abyssinian scouts thrown well out in advance and on both flanks ; the scouts fire at sight and then fall back on the advance guard. Somalis in particular are used for this work because of their excellent topographical knowledge. The advance guard is well in front of the main body, which itself marches with right and left wings thrown out. After the main body come the baggage supplies and the reserve ammunition column, and, last of all, a large rear-guard.

When campaigning against an enemy armed with modern weapons, their preference is for forced marches, covering forty or fifty miles in a day. For choice they start at sunset, march the whole night, and come upon the enemy at daybreak. Before they start on this night march they form a strong zarebaed camp in which all the sick men, baggage, and reserve supplies are left, the men on the march providing themselves with four or five days' rations, either wrapped up in their girdles or carried on their saddles. Their constant aim in fight is to make a wide enveloping movement, but they have no means of communication either by heliograph or semaphore. We were told that they make every available use of cover,

of stones, bushes, rocks, or of unevenness of the ground, and that they creep, kneel, or lie down, or make short rushes, as the case may be, firing as they go, and that they do not charge in with their favourite sword until signs of demoralisation in the enemy have shown themselves. Their impulsiveness and thirst for blood, however, are so great, that, for my part, I should receive this account of their patient use of cover with a good deal of scepticism.

If attacked on the march, they abandon their mules to "the care of God" and try to get to close quarters at once. They may apparently pursue a defeated enemy for a short distance, but what is attempted is more in the nature of mounted infantry work than of cavalry action.

They soon quiet down when all is over, and become well-behaved and courteous. They are fond of loud talking, but are not really braggarts. They can do a good deal of hard swearing, and they are not exactly novices at lying; in fact, they are very artistic liars, and lying is their besetting sin, although they themselves do not regard it as a vice. In this respect, however, even they cannot be compared with the Somali, who is, so far as my experience goes, both by nature, tradition, and habit a master of the art. The Abyssinian thoroughly hates the Somali, and especially one in the service of a white man. In mental powers the Abyssinians admit themselves inferior to the white man, but in every other respect,

especially in fighting qualities, they place themselves far above him.

Before referring to the domestic life and habits of the Abyssinians, a few details of their public administration, and of such general matters as I was able to obtain a reliable account of, may be mentioned.

The peasants, as distinguished from the landed proprietors, appear to make their contribution to the State by a *tribute*, either in labour or in kind. Altogether it appears to be a rather complicated business, but in the case of the more immediate subjects of the Emperor Menelik it is as follows: every man who holds about an acre (kalad) of land from the Emperor has to work for him two days out of every eight, or to provide a substitute. He also pays a tithe of the land's produce, is expected to grind five kunnas of grain—which is supplied for the purpose—generally, once a month, to furnish \$3 worth of honey per annum, and to equip an armed soldier if an expedition is undertaken. If he fails in any respect he is liable to a fine of two "salts" or half a dollar. The "salt" is a block measuring, I believe, 10 in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., and a salt, a half-salt and a quarter-salt are currency. When the salts get broken into smaller pieces they are given to horses and mules, or are used for household purposes.

Coinage.—The Maria Theresa dollar, as already said, is current throughout Abyssinia, and the traveller should buy them at Aden. The rate of exchange fluctuates from Rs.130 to Rs.180 per \$100. The

Menelik dollar is current about Adis Ababa, but his smaller coins do not circulate freely. Rupees are accepted at Harrar and as far as Gildessa and Jigjiga, but usually at a discount of two annas per rupee, and, as far as Kunni, two anna pieces are freely accepted. The merchants at Harrar will usually accept drafts, but it is better to take money to Adis Ababa unless it has been made quite certain beforehand that drafts will be accepted, and if the drafts are for large amounts, a month's notice is generally required. In remote districts cloth, wine, beads, etc., should be carried. Blocks of salt (amuli) are current everywhere, and four salts generally go to a dollar. Gras cartridges, also, at the rate of twelve for a dollar, will generally be taken.

Calendar.—The year begins on the 1st of Máskar-ram, which corresponds to about our 10th of September, and the Abyssinian reckoning is some seven years and eight months behind ours. Thus, February 2nd, 1904, is, I believe, the 26th day of Tarr, in the "year of Grace 1896." The year is divided into twelve months of thirty days each, and the five extra days, known as "pagmen" or "quaggimi," are put on at the end of the year, and are treated as holidays. In leap year a sixth day (Kodis Yohannis) is added. Although the year is thus divided, most people appear to remember dates by important events, and the time of day is calculated by the altitude of the sun. There are neither watches nor clocks in the country except amongst a few officers and odd indi-

viduals, and very few of them even seem to know how to read the watches. In fact "the enemy," time, does not enter seriously into their calculations.

Seasons.—The year in Abyssinia is divided into two seasons—"Baga," the dry season, from October to May, and "Karamt," the wet season, from June to September. Such things as eclipses, falling stars, comets, and the rest are calmly looked upon as the inscrutable will of God and as things that must needs be. They do not give them a thought: they mind their own business, they say, and attach no importance to things that do not concern them. By many of the ignorant, however, a comet is looked upon as a sign that the nation will go to war with somebody.

Posts.—There are no official post officers in Abyssinia, the King and the Chiefs employing special mounted messengers as required. There are a telegraph and a telephone between Harrar and Abis Ababa, of Swiss construction, and the profits go partly to the King, and partly to the Swiss engineer who, I believe, constructed the line at his own expense except that Menelik provided the labour.

Education.—There is no system of public education, and what is done in that way consists in the priests' giving instructions to the sons of noblemen and of ruling persons in reading and writing Amharic, while perhaps, in some cases, instruction is given in the official Semitic language, Geez, which appears to possess a certain literature, chiefly in the form of translations; but this language is not used by the

people for speech. I found that most of the men could count if they began at one, but they were always very suspicious of being taken in.

Justice and crime.—Only the King can order a man to be hanged, and sometimes the relatives of the condemned man will obtain permission to shoot him whilst he is hanging in order to lessen his pain. The different Ras's can inflict punishments short of hanging, such as imprisonment, flogging round the market place, and fines. Grave cases are always brought before the tribal Chief, but the general civil law is administered by special judges, "Afa Negoos," whilst petty squabbles are settled by juries of from five to twenty members.

An inveterate thief may have his left hand removed ; for a very grave offence he may lose his right hand, and occasionally his left foot as well. Before being subjected to these mutilations, however, the offender must be tried and found guilty before three judges, and the sentence must be confirmed by the King. The execution of this sentence, like that of hanging, must be done publicly.

Some of the punishments inflicted for personal assaults are graded in a peculiar way. One day in camp, for example, an Abyssinian soldier hit another man on the head and inflicted a considerable scalp wound with a fracture of the skull ; for this he was kept in chains for some days and then released on payment of a fine of \$2. If, however, he had simply cursed the other man, without hitting him at all, the

fine would have been \$14 (how undesirable a place Abyssinia would be for the drivers of some of the vehicles of the metropolis!). If he had hit the other man and broken an arm or a leg bone, the usual fine would have been \$160. For killing another man in self-defence the fine is \$150, and hanging is the punishment for murder. Although in this way there appears to be a certain amount of discrimination in the awards of punishment, in practice there is very little, for the vast majority of Abyssinians are no more able to pay a fine of three dollars than they are one of three hundred, and if a man cannot pay his fine he is thrown into prison and kept there in fetters until he can, which may be never.

As we shall see, the marriage and divorce laws are very lax and easy to manipulate. Religious fanaticism is almost non-existent, and, although there is a good deal of hard drinking, there is a very noteworthy absence of drunkenness. It is probably within the mark to say that these three things together, or one or other of them, are responsible for five-sixths of the world's troubles, and it is therefore easy to understand why there is so remarkable an absence of crime in Abyssinia as it is understood there; for that such is really the case seems beyond doubt.

Lébashai (Thief Catcher).—For the detection of theft, professional thief catchers, or *lébashai*, are extensively employed, even by the Emperor Menelik and by the great Chiefs.

If anything is stolen a *lébashai* is sent for, and at

the same time is paid \$3 as a consultation fee. He decides on visiting the house on a certain day and preparations for his entertainment are begun, since he has to be feasted after the discovery of the thief. If, say, he intends proceeding to-morrow, he sends his medium, usually a boy of about ten years of age, to the house to-night, and the boy receives strict injunctions that, after his sunset meal, he is not to touch food or drink of any kind. The *lébashai* comes in the morning, and the inmates of the house and the neighbours assemble for the ceremony. The boy medium is brought forth and the *lébashai* gives him some powder in milk to drink, and then makes him smoke a big pipe with a long stem and the bowl filled with some form of narcotic leaf—perhaps Indian hemp. The boy inhales every whiff of the smoke until he becomes semi-unconscious or intoxicated. A hitch muslin band is then made round his waist and he gets up and proceeds in his mesmeric (?) trance in a certain direction. After wandering about for a varying period, if he has failed to see the thief amongst the crowd, he enters a house and lies down. The house in which he lies down is supposed to harbour the thief, or the thief has recently visited it, and the owner of the house has to produce the delinquent or find someone to go bail for him. If the boy sees the thief anywhere he goes up to him and slaps him. The person slapped, whether the thief or not, has to pay over a sum equal to the value of the article stolen, to pay damages, the expenses of the entertainment which

198 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

follows and the lébashai's fees. If the owner of the house wherein the boy may lie down fails to produce the thief, he has to pay these sums or is imprisoned until he does so or can find bail for himself. After the boy has performed his duties he is given an emetic, and the lébashai strikes him with a wand three times, saying each time, "Come to; come to; come to." The boy then recovers, and thereby gives the signal for the feasting to begin.

It thus happens that if a man is able to afford the lébashai's consultation fee and to provide the necessary feast, he is fairly sure to receive his expenses again, the value of the thing lost as well as appropriate damages, whilst the real thief may escape and an innocent man may be punished.

CHAPTER X



CHAPTER X

ABYSSINIAN CUSTOMS (*continued*): Dress, male and female—Sleep—Food—Drink—Industries—Musicians—Marriage: 1, by jury; 2, by sacrament; 3, by concubinage—Divorce—Marriages amongst the Gallas—Abyssinian baptism, circumcision, names, vaccination, religion—The priests—Fasts—Feasts—Medicine—Hystero-epilepsy—Booda

Dress

THE dress of the Abyssinian soldier has already been described, and in its essentials it represents that of the men generally, nearly all of whom go about armed with a rifle and with a knife or some other weapon stuck in their girdle.

The women's dress is simplicity itself. They wear a long skirt or chemise of loose proportions, gathered in at the waist by a few yards of a thin muslin girdle, giving the wearer the appearance of having on a blouse and skirt; the sleeves are loose at the arm and tight at the forearm, and are often highly ornamented at the cuffs. Black felt hats are often worn, and the women of quality almost invariably have an embroidered silk cape such as the men wear. The poor women go about bareheaded or bind a yard or so of muslin round their heads. Abyssinian women, like women generally, covet adornments, and they bedeck themselves, when they can afford it, with bangles,

rings, anklets and other ornaments. Like the men, they wear a silk cord round the neck, to which crosses, toothpicks, earpicks and rings are attached. They dye their nails with henna, tattoo their gums blue, put black pigment (kohl) on their eyebrows, eyelashes and eyelids, and they plaster any amount of ghee on their hair, so much so that it dribbles down on to their shoulders and keeps the skin soft, smooth, and glossy, and serves incidentally to still or stifle the lice. Since, however, aromatic oils from India and elsewhere were introduced the women of the better classes use lemon or almond oil for this last purpose. Their hair is black and curly, and does not appear to grow more than a few inches in length; sometimes it is cut short, but very often it is plaited into ridges and furrows, running from front to back; but girls are accustomed to have a circular shaved patch on the crown of the head. A woman's hair toilet may occupy several hours every two weeks or so. They go barefooted and ride straddle-legged like the men. Women of the upper classes carry parasols, usually home-made or country-made, but sometimes silk ones of French manufacture.

The faces of the people bear striking testimony to their mixed Hamitic and Semitic origin, and here and there the element of negroid infusion is shown.¹

Sleep.—Both men and women divest themselves of

¹ The Arabic word *habashe* ("mixed") has been applied to the Abyssinians for this reason.



TWO SHORN LAMBS—FIESAH AND GEORGIS.



POOL, IN RIVER BED—GORAHAI.



ABYSSINIAN RAIDING PARTY.

their day clothes at night and wind themselves in their night sheet, or jamma, a man and wife usually wrapping themselves in a single jamma. People of "quality" sleep on angareeb, or the native four-poster beds, with fibre ropes laced criss-cross and lengthways; but "common" people sleep on carpets or skins, on the floor.

Food.—At home it is usual for them to eat their food off a bamboo-and-wickerwork table (gabali), while they squat round it on the carpet. Standing beside the gabali, as a sort of side table, is an inkab, or covered wickerwork tray. They all eat together, smacking their lips and making as much noise as possible, so as to evince their relish for what is provided for them. They talk incessantly during the meal, and drink all they can get. The cost of living for the average Abyssinian is about two dollars, or four shillings, a month.

Injera is, *par excellence*, their staple article of diet. It is a kind of light, thin, aerated chupattie, baked in large thin cakes of about sixteen by twenty inches, and is made of teff flour. Every Abyssinian, when he can get it, eats about a couple of square yards of this daily, and mainly subsists on it, just as the natives of India do on rice and ghee. I ate some at Ras Makunnan's and thought it excellent. Large quantities of salt are eaten, and chilli paste, made from powdered chillies and warmed ghee, is a favourite relish with meat and vegetables.

When they can procure it, they eat heartily of

meat ; in fact, they gorge themselves with it, as, for instance, at feasts and banquets. They prefer the meat boiled, and they like it to be followed by a rich dessert of raw beef. Raw mutton is not used in this way but is dried into "biltong."

They will eat you out of house and home in ghee (or the native clarified butter made from cow's or goat's milk) ; and "dabo kolo," hard marble-like balls of teff flour fried in ghee and flavoured with chilli paste, and corresponding to our biscuits, is very much esteemed when campaigning. Fruit is practically unknown, but they are fond of peas, lentils and wild cauliflower.

They care nothing for sweets or confectioneries, or for any such creature comforts, and nothing will induce them to drink camel's milk. In both respects, so far as I know, they are the antithesis of the Somali.

Drink.—*Birz* (made of honey-water) and unsweetened coffee are the favourite drinks of the teetotalers, and they will take any quantity of these. A few persons like tea and sweetened coffee, but only a few.

There are three favourite alcoholic drinks, namely :—

Tej, a mixture of honey and water, fermented and flavoured by the addition of the leaves of the gesho plant ;

Talla, a beer made from malted grain, either barley, jowari (dhoura shami), or mealies (dhoura Hindi, or Indian corn), which is said to produce in the consumer a bulldog courage ; and

Araki, or distilled tej, to which oil of aniseed is added, and which they drink with great gusto.

The apparatus of the Abyssinian distiller consists of two earthenware vessels—a retort and a condenser respectively—which are connected by a tin tube. Cow-dung is used to close the apertures of the vessels, and sometimes a wet rag is tied round the intervening tube to assist condensation. In recent years the Greeks and Armenians have secured the greater part of “the trade” by making better and cheaper tej and araki than the Abyssinian manufacturer, whose implements remind one of the primeval and illicit stills that are sometimes met with even now in the west of Ireland.

Very few Abyssinians take snuff or smoke tobacco, except in towns, where they come in contact with Europeans; and I have seen more men chewing tobacco than smoking it.

Industries.—Wood, charcoal, and cow-dung are used as fuel. Coal is being looked for by some foreign prospectors, but it does not appear as yet to have been found in remunerative quantities. General agriculture, coffee-growing, the collection of honey for the manufacture of tej and araki, weaving and embroidering, goldsmith’s and blacksmith’s work are the chief industries; but the men are generally very handy, and the making of clothes and tents, particularly, appears to come naturally to them.

There are some professional painters of a crude sort, whose chief work is the depicting of Biblical

scenes and saints in vivid frescoes on the walls of churches, and the illustration of parchment Scripture manuscripts. Musicians will play a few monotonous tunes for hours at a stretch. The one we had in camp seemed to be always twanging his "bagana" (harp), and he appeared to depend mainly on his wit in composing extempore topical songs, which were received with great applause and clapping of hands.

So far as one was able to ascertain, there appear to be no caste distinctions. The only thing is that the Christians everywhere look down on the Mohammedans, by whom the sentiment is heartily reciprocated. It was difficult to see that there was much reason in conduct for the assumption of superiority on either side.

Marriage.—The status of women in Abyssinia seems to be a very humble one. They appear to be considered only from the point of view of marriage and for the bearing of children; and, with the peasant classes, as much work as possible is got out of them.

There are three processes of marriage—namely, marriage by jury, marriage by sacrament, and concubinage.

By Jury.—*Marriage by jury, or before witnesses*, is the commonest method, and averages from 80 to 90 per cent. of all unions. Witnesses to the number of five are beaten up, two at least of whom are elders or elderly men. The note of preparation is sounded, and the prospective Benedict and his partner are in

turn sworn "by the death of ——" (naming their Chief), the man saying, "I marry this woman," and the woman replying, "I marry this man." The thing is then done, the witnesses approving.

The preliminaries of this form of wedding are often somewhat as follows—the elaboration of the proceedings depending upon the status of the parties. The man meditating matrimony employs the services of an old man to act as deputy in approaching the father of the girl on whom he has set his desire, and with whom he seeks an alliance—the girl's feelings in the matter being a negligible quantity.

The bridegroom's deputy and the prospective father-in-law go through the preliminaries of the arrangements of the settlements and so forth, the marriage day is discussed and agreed upon, and preparations for the feast are straightway begun by both sides. On the evening of the day before the wedding, the bridegroom, accompanied usually by four selected men as deputies, repairs to the house of the bride's father, to whom the deputies, standing, convey the bridegroom's compliments. They are then asked what they want, and they reply, "We want your daughter, and we wish to effect an alliance with you." After the same question and answer have been repeated three or four times, the father of the bride, speaking by deputy, asks them what they have brought, or, literally, "What are you holding?" whereupon, in proportion to the bridegroom's circumstances, the deputies produce clothes, honey, money, ornaments,

etc., as peace-offerings and as introductory presents. The father's deputy then inquires into the number of sheep and cattle, the amount of land and other belongings of the bridegroom, whose deputies in reply give an account of the same, holding back a part, in case the prospective father-in-law should not be satisfied with the first account. The bridegroom's possessions are then accepted as a sufficient competence, and the ceremony proceeds. The bridegroom swears "by the death of Menelik" or of "Ras Makunnán" or of some other great Chief, that he takes the girl as his wife, and she, swearing the same oath, takes him for her husband. All are then invited to the feast which has been prepared. The bride's father, his deputy, the bridegroom and his supporters, all sit at the same table in one hut, whilst the invited guests and servants have their repast in another hut. The bride is kept out of the way in the women's apartment, and although the bridegroom has seen her before that day no one is supposed to know that they are intimately acquainted. The bridegroom sleeps for the night in the bride's house and the next morning, after breakfast, either by song or conversation, proceeds to show his impatience to take away his bride. He has brought with him a richly caparisoned mule for her, and usually two others for her female attendants or instructors. A trusted servant carries the bride from her quarters and seats her astride the mule, and her attendants are similarly transferred to the animals in waiting for them. The bridegroom then

appears and kisses—not the bride, but her father's feet, and afterwards rides away to his own home. On his arrival there, another feast takes place, the bride being kept out of the way as before.

Afterwards the parties may be married by sacrament, but very rarely. If the bride objects to the marriage, her objections are invariably overruled.

Girls are usually married when from eleven to thirteen years of age, but the bridegroom may be anything from a lad of sixteen to a grown man.

Sacrament.—*Marriage by sacrament* is the rarest and most stringent form of tying the nuptial knot, and only the big Chiefs, the nobles, all the priests, and a few others adopt it. For this purpose they attend church and take the sacrament, and swear before the priest or the high priest that they take each other to be husband and wife. Union in this form can only be dissolved by the Abuna, or Coptic Patriarch, who is head of the Abyssinian Church.

Concubinage.—In concubinage a man, through the medium of a friend, approaches and makes proposals to, say, a certain agreeable-looking woman, with a view to bringing about an alliance or partnership with her, and if her consent is gained the business is concluded.

Divorce.—A man is allowed to have only one legal wife, but the number of concubines is not limited. The divorce proceedings are of the simplest possible character. If the parties have been married by jury, this same jury or any other can dissolve the marriage by the applicants appearing together before them and

concurring in the divorce, or the man alone can appear before the jury and swear "By the death of Menelik I divorce this woman," and the thing is done. Nothing could be simpler or more one-sided than that, yet I was told that in 99 per cent. of the cases it is the woman who is the plaintiff. The divorce jury is made up of a judge, two representatives of the man's part and two of the woman's part. If the woman wants the divorce, she comes forward and says, "Release me from the marriage tie with this man," and if the man agrees, it is finished; but if, as sometimes happens, he objects, he replies, "I decline to divorce her." The case is then gone into by the representatives on both sides pleading and bringing forward witnesses, and the decision rests with the judge, who, if he is satisfied that there is reasonable ground for divorce, declares the marriage annulled. Half the property goes to the woman, and she has the custody of the children up to four years of age, the father being responsible for the support of both mother and children until that time. Afterwards the children come under the father's charge and his responsibility for the support of his divorced wife ends. Should a man discover his wife in adultery, he can obtain satisfaction by shooting the adulterer, and the law exonerates him.

A moment's digression may be allowed to describe the usual marriage procedure amongst the Gallas. With them, if a man, either by personal knowledge or by report, takes a fancy to a girl, he seeks an inter-

view with her father, settles the preliminaries and comes to an understanding with him, arranging to see as much of the girl as possible. After a time he decides whether he will marry her or not. If he decides on marriage, elderly men are sent to the girl's father with green grass, typifying plenty or prosperity, and Sunday is always selected as the day of the visit. The elders fix upon a day for a second visit, and on that occasion they bring a ring, either of silver or copper, according to the affluence of the parties, and the girl's father places it on her right little finger. The preparations then begin for the marriage feast. On the appointed day a number of horsemen, representatives of both the bride and the bridegroom, assemble at the bride's house, each man holding a spear-shaft. The bride is then brought out, set on a horse or a mule and proceeds with a small personal following, and with the parties of horsemen, to the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom rides on ahead, carrying a branch in his upraised hand—whether typical of the "green bay tree" that flourishes, or of the "tree of knowledge," I do not know—and the parties of horsemen engage in a sham fight on the journey. Arrived opposite the bridegroom's house, the cavalcade halts, and a sheep is brought and killed by the prospective husband at the door of his home. He dips a finger in the blood and marks the bride with it on the forehead, on both cheeks, and just above the breast-bone. The marriage party then enters the house, and the feast begins. In one respect, at least,

the Galla marriages are superior to the Abyssinian, namely, that the girls are generally somewhat older.

The baptism of an Abyssinian male child takes place almost invariably on the fortieth day after birth, and of a female child when she is about two months old. It is a canon of the Abyssinian religion that no uncircumcised child shall be baptised, and the circumcision of infants of both sexes is usually performed from ten to fifteen days after birth.

The following appeared to be the most common christian names, the men's names being taken from those which seemed most popular amongst our grass-cutters :—

MEN'S NAMES

Johannes	.	.	signifies	John
Gabriel	.	.	„	Gabriel.
Raftel	.	.	„	Raphael.
Weldë Yes	.	.	„	Son of Jesus.
Weldë Maskal	.	.	„	„ „ the cross.
Gabri Selasi	.	.	„	Slave of the Trinity.
„ Yes	.	.	„	„ „ Jesus.
„ Weldë	.	.	„	Son of a slave.
Aferoo	.	.	„	Let him multiply.
Desta	.	.	„	Joy.
Heilemariam	.	.	„	The strength or power of the Virgin Mary.
Tasamma	.	.	„	He heard me, or he listened to me.
Weldemariam	.	.	„	Son of the Virgin Mary.
Makunnan	.	.	„	Judge.

WOMEN'S NAMES

Werrkenesh	.	signifies	You are old.
Turroonesh	.	„ „ „	pure.
Woobenesh	.	„ „ „	beautiful.
Abenetah	.	„	She has budded.
Wëlëtëmaskal	.	„	The handmaiden, or the daughter of the cross.
Wëlëtëgiorgis	.	„	The handmaiden, or daughter of St. George.
Habtîshîmër	.	„	?
Elfenish	.	„	You are one in a thousand.

The Abyssinians know nothing of the merits of vaccination, but they have a lively fear of smallpox, and they practise inoculation from a smallpox patient to a healthy subject, injecting the variolous material either in the forearm or in the wrist. I feel sure that they would take kindly to vaccination if it were judiciously introduced to them. One of our interpreters, however, who spoke French fairly fluently, objected to it, on the ground that it only conveyed immunity for a period of seven years or so. He believed that inoculation from a smallpox patient, once done, was done for all, or to use his own expression, "once and once only." Upon this he took his stand, and nothing I could say could convince him of the disadvantages of his method.

Religion.—There are three forms of religion in Abyssinia. The three ruling Abyssinian races, the Godjames or Amharas, the Tigreans and the Shoans,

are Christians. The Wollo Gallas, like the Somalis, are Mohammedans. The Gallas are in some cases idolaters, worshipping trees as deities, or setting up a sorcerer or "kalecha," but for the most part they are heathen.

The Abyssinian Church is under the Patriarch of Alexandria, and, with the exception of a break roughly lasting during the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth centuries when it was more or less directed by Rome, from the time of the appointment of the first Bishop of Ethiopia by Athanasius of Alexandria in the fourth century to the present time, its head or Metropolitan has been appointed from Egypt.

The cathedral at Axum is basilican, and I believe there are many rock-cut churches in the country. The native churches in Tigré are said to be square or oblong in outline, but those we saw were all large circular buildings—tripartite, with inner, middle, and outer divisions, separated from one another by two walls, the outer one of the two being concentric with the enclosing wall of the building. The walls are studded with open windows, and a doorway leads from one circle to the next. The innermost or central division of the church is the sanctuary, or holy of holies, and is reserved for the Abuna, or High Priest. It contains the altar and the holy books—the latter, at Harrar, being kept in wooden boxes draped with gaudy print muslins. The sanctuary in the church at Harrar appeared to be circular in shape, though they are said to be always quadrangular.

The middle court is for the priests, who conduct the service in Geez, or the ancient Ethiopic language, which none of the people understand. The outer court is for the congregation, who stand during the service. The church is nothing more than an elaborated labyrinthine native hut. The roof is generally thatched, but may be covered with old kerosene tins, as at Harrar ; it slopes up to a point, and is there surmounted by an earthenware cap and a brass cross. The walls are usually made of mud and sticks and may be plastered, and the whole building is often highly, but crudely, ornamented, the people spending much of their time, money, and labour in the work.

Attendance at church is very regular ; but most persons appear to go either as a matter of course or because it is the fashion. There can hardly be said, however, to be much worship. The service is accompanied by a good deal of the jingling of bells and castanets and the waving of crucibles of incense. The congregation is crowded in the outer court and can see the priests in the middle court only through the windows of the separating wall, and, during the service, they are accustomed to gossip and discuss the latest scandal, cast aspersions on their neighbours, or even indulge in heated, though perhaps subdued, arguments. They may even take advantage of the occasion to get hold of a victim—a debtor, for example—and make him disgorge.

The priests, however, possess a great power, owing probably to the existence of the confessional and to

the granting of absolutions, and the people are very subservient to them. Nevertheless, one is bound to say that practical or applied Christianity, as a European would understand it, does not seem to form a part of the Abyssinian religious practice; at any rate, there was no evidence of it that I could see. Their theoretical notions of right and wrong are perhaps orthodox enough, but their general morality is a very convenient and slippery quantity, and truth is right, or not, according to the purpose to be served; in fact, the whole system is that of an easy, look-after-yourself, go-as-you-please, characteristically Oriental sort of order, which might, so far as an outside observer is concerned, from its influence on character and conduct, be any system of religion or none at all.

The priests derive their salaries partly from the Church lands, and they partly live by their wits. They receive the marriage, birth, and death fees, and they realise not inconsiderable pickings from writing charms on amulets, by copying out a verse of Scripture at a fee which amounts, perhaps, to a couple of dollars. The charm is usually written on a piece of pink paper, and given to the applicant with the direction to take it to a leather dealer and have it encased in leather. The priests also, as remarked before, act as scribes and tutors, for they know Amharic as well as Geez. To tell the truth, for all that one could see and hear, a goodly number of them seemed about the most incorrigible rogues in creation, always with an eye to the main chance,

and united in keeping the people ignorant ; for otherwise many advantageous parts of their occupation would soon be gone.

Fasts.—The fast days are very numerous and, as a rule, are strictly observed. The fast of “Fasika Tom” corresponds to our Lent, and lasts forty days. During the fast people are not allowed to eat until the afternoon, and then only bread, vegetables and vegetable oil ; no meat or ghee is permitted, and the diet generally consists of bread and dry pepper. A patient of ours at Gorahai during this time, who was extremely anæmic and debilitated after a severe attack of fever, resolutely refused to break the rules of his fast in any way at all. The “Ganna” fast lasts ten days near Christmas. Every Wednesday throughout the year is a fast, and there are also many minor fasts—in fact, every saint and celebrated person seems to have his memorial in this form. So strict are many of the Abyssinian nobles that they fast, I believe, as many as 200 days out of the 365.

Feasts.—The principal feasts are the Feast of the Cross (Mascal) about the middle of September, the Christmas Feast (Ganna) early in January ; the Feast of Baptism (Trinkat) in February ; the Feast of Easter (Fasika) and the Feasts of St. Michael, St. George, St. Mary, St. Gabriel, and, now, the anniversary of the victory of Adowa.

Medicine.—Many very interesting points in connection with native medicine and with the prevalence of various diseases came under our notice, but for the

most part they were of a technical character and need not be discussed here. The prevalence of leprosy has been already referred to, and certain specific diseases are also exceedingly common ; but, most of all, an enormous number of persons suffer from a cestode parasite, which inhabits the intestinal tract and which is no doubt chiefly introduced in the half-cooked or raw beef that is so much eaten ; for the parasite in one stage of its existence very commonly inhabits the ox. Assistant-Surgeon Wakeman told me that he himself annually dispenses some 5,000 capsules of the extract of the Male Fern for the treatment of this disease, many of the patients coming long distances to obtain the drug from him, because they prefer it, both for its efficacy and from the form of its administration, to the infusion of the leaves of kusso which is the native remedy. The kusso plant grows wild in the Abyssinian highlands and the Amharic name of the parasite is "kousso," in recognition of the virtues of the plant. Rheumatism, minor intestinal disorders, inflammation of the eyes and of the outer ear passages, and hysteria in women, are common disorders. Dysentery is extremely rare, and malaria is scarcely known in the highlands, though it prevails in the low countries.

It is quite possible that some of the intestinal disorders met with are due to the enormous quantities of chillies and other hot condiments which many of the people consume, whilst dirt and neglect are responsible for a large number of the eye and ear inflammations.

There are no general medical practitioners in Abyssinia, and I was told that there is no professional quackery. Each physician is a specialist; one on rheumatism, another on eye diseases, another on stomach-ache, and so on; but the list of their remedies is a small one. The superiority of European medicine is freely admitted and whenever it can be had it is readily sought. As a rule the people take what their own physician prescribes for them and "trust in God" to complete the cure; they are, in fact, in that respect, a primitive sort of Christian Scientists. One method of curing colic is to make the patient stare into a cup of water, while the doctor repeats some Scriptural texts. The water is then drunk and the patient "very soon quite recovers."

The surgery is of a rude kind, but is sometimes ingenious. Their treatment of an open wound consists in first cleaning it with their fingers and water, and then smearing it either with ghee, or with tallow from a sheep's tail, after which, in man, the wound is covered with a broad leaf, or bandaged with a piece of muslin. Fractures are set up by means of twigs and reeds woven together, and a most useful support is often made. I was told—though I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement—that certain professional bone-setters will sometimes graft a piece of sheep's bone in a case where a bone has been extensively injured and a gap let in it. In some cases red-hot irons will be plunged into wounds in order to scarify and purify them.

There are only two hospitals in the country, the one at Harrar, built and maintained by Ras Makunnan, and another at Adis Ababa provided by the Emperor Menelik, and administered by a Russian medical staff.

Hystero-Epilepsy, or Booda.—Devils by the legion are supposed to inhabit various streams, forests, mountains, and other places, and to be responsible for divers ills. Amongst them a fiend capable of producing a form of hystero-epilepsy known as Booda is particularly active in his operations. Women are by far the most commonly affected, but men are subject to it sometimes, as was the case with one man in the Colonel's force on the expedition in the spring of 1903. The "evil eye" is a prime factor in its causation, and a person with an evil eye may set it up in another by simply looking at him. They say the patient is possessed with a devil, and that no medicines are of any avail unless the administration of them is preceded by some form of exorcism. One of the characteristic features of the disease is that the victim cries out "like a hyæna." The Booda specialist, on being applied to, sends a powder for the patient, first to smell, and then to swallow in water, and gives instructions that he should be brought to him for exorcism. At the interview the doctor seizes the patient's left hand, and then addresses himself to the evil spirit, which replies through the sufferer. Asked by the doctor who he is, the devil replies, "I am my father's son," making the reply three times over and

bellowing the while like a hyæna. "How did you get into him?" the doctor next asks, and the conversation proceeds to trace the genealogy of the devil to the seventh generation. Then, after demanding in very forcible terms, "Why did you come here?" the doctor asks, "Will you come again?" "No," replies the devil; "I only came in to-day; I'm terribly nervous, and will be off at once and won't come again," or in words to that effect. "Swear that you will not come again!" cries the doctor. "I swear it by the slave of the Lord of Hosts, and may He destroy me by fire if I come again," replies the devil. On this the specialist releases the patient's hand, asking the devil to tell him his father's name once more, or to show him his father. The patient then usually gets hold of a large stone, poises it on his shoulders, and walks on all fours in mock similitude of a hyæna, sometimes, maybe, to cause mirth amongst the on-lookers. Asked, then, what he will eat, he selects ashes, mud, charcoal, the dregs of coffee or tej, or some unpalatable stuff of that sort. The doctor advises him to take it, and after consuming the mess the patient lies down for a time, and then rises and asks those about him, in the most unconcerned way, where he is. They say that he has been ill and is now well; and so presumably he is.



CHAPTER XI

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



MORNING PRAYER. ABDULAHI CONDUCTING.



HABR AWAL SOMALIS.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOMALI : The shikari—General impression—Jabber—Work—Dress—Men and women—Status of women—Food and drink—Liars—Enmity between the Abyssinians and the Somalis : examples of—Hockey match and a free fight—NARRATIVE RESUMED : Ceremonial calls—Midgans—Extracts from the diary—My syce again : the last of him—Further accounts of the operations—Extended shooting expeditions—A three days' shoot—Oryx—Gerenuk—The Colonel's achievement

A GOOD Somali shikari, when you find one, is said to be a splendid fellow, faithful, intelligent, and reliable, and in his special work, tracking, he has probably no superiors and few equals. The wilderness and the solitary place are an open book to him, and he finds his way through the tangle of the bush with an ease and accuracy that are truly wonderful. Many headmen also are valuable servants, and will get good work out of their subordinates, and keep things going smoothly. Most Somalis are good Mohammedans, and are therefore sober ; in many respects also they are cleanly. Major Swayne speaks well of them in general, and he has had an extensive experience of many parts of the country.

The Midgan is an outcast tribe, and, except as casual guides, one had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. Perhaps the Habr Awal and

the various Ogaden tribes, particularly the Rer Ali and Rer Ugaz, of which we saw the most, are not up to the average. I can only say, and I think my comrades took the same view, that they are pre-eminently fair-weather followers. When all goes well, and when they are getting, as we had to give, more than their market value for their services, the work may be done satisfactorily, but if difficulties arose, 90 per cent. of them, I should say, would leave you to your own devices, and if you found yourself in a tight corner with only them to depend upon your executors at home would have to settle your accounts. A few Somalis are good, the majority are from poor to medium, and a great number are the most absolute wastrels I ever came across.

They have an overweening conceit of themselves, and think that nobody on earth is to be considered beside them. They and their camels are at the head of creation. They eat camel's meat and love it ; they talk, think, sing and dream of camels, and swill their milk. The aim and object of their life is to possess, count, breed and buy camels, and they work to make money in order to get more of them.

Jabber is their great forte. They talk for all they are worth—a good deal more sometimes. They never leave off talking. They tell you that there is no race on earth that can talk like them. They talk during inspiration and during expiration ; they talk till they are out of breath, and then they talk, and they pride themselves upon their ability to do it. Above all

things they dislike being told to hold their tongues. They will apparently obey you and observe silence, but all the while they are talking to themselves. When not engaged in active and violent conversation they indulge in a repeated long-drawn-out droning, a sort of musical whine, something like a bee in a bottle.

They work well if it is at a job they like, such as drawing water from a well or cleaning one out, and the accompaniment of noise is such that you can hardly hear yourself speak. They love rice, dates, ghee, sleeping and dancing about equally well, the latter provided they have girls to dance with. Amongst personal possessions they prize a spear, or "waran," a hide-shield, or "gashan," a long stick, or "hungol," and a shorter clubbed stick, or "gudnor." The hungol has a crook at one end and a fork at the other, and is used for dragging and pushing thorn branches into position in a zareba, whilst the gudnor is used to break off the branches. When a man is not possessed of an axe, he values a large knife ("bilowa") and a small one ("mindee") in cutting thorns.

They wear a "mawista," or loin cloth, and a tobe, or "marrada," of American sheeting about six yards long, which they wind round themselves. They either go barefooted or wear leather sandals called "kabba." A "tisba," or string of beads, is generally hung round the neck, and sometimes pieces of amber or verses from the Koran, encased in leather, are suspended from

it. The women that I saw were dressed much the same as the men, with their tobe tied over the left shoulder. A maiden wears a cord round her waist, removes it on marriage, and, at the same time, her hair, which had previously been free, is now enclosed in a blue net. Plastering the hair with mud is commonly resorted to, partly because it is considered ornamental, and partly because it improves the condition of the hair, and acts as an insecticide.

When a male child is born to a Somali, the father rushes up screaming with delight and presents his wife with a coloured tobe ; if, however, the infant be a girl, all is silent.

This proceeding is significant of the general position of women amongst the Somalis. Child-bearing and drudgery are their lot, and, as remarked before, when a woman has left youth behind her she soon acquires a wretched appearance, miserable and weary-looking ; and it is no wonder.

The children's names are the same as those common in other Mohammedan countries, and, like the Abyssinians, both sexes undergo circumcision.

Should a father have occasion to chastise his son, he does so right heartily, heaping curses and imprecations the while upon the lad's progenitors—his father coming in for the chief share of abuse. There seems no incongruity in this to the man, and the fact that he is cursing himself does not apparently cross his mind at all.

When a Somali has bad pain in any part he will

brand himself there with a red-hot iron, and in this way one could often tell a man's medical history from the site and number of his scars.

Camel's milk and water are the Somalis' two beverages, and mutton, camel's flesh, rice and ghee, are their chief foods. Among certain tribes, if a man has a cow that is reluctant to yield her milk, he takes a mouthful of milk from the vessel and blows it from his own mouth into the cow's. On one occasion, near Dadal, I saw this done, and it certainly appeared to have the effect of making the cow immediately submit to be milked.

The Mohammedan creed, of course, does not permit of the use of alcohol as a beverage, and the Somalis rarely drink coffee. When they get familiar with tea, they like it, and take it very sweet. In fact, they like sweet things of any kind, and will conjure away a bag of sugar in a very dexterous fashion.

They will not eat birds at all—fish, many of them have never heard of, much less eaten, and they will not eat any animal unless it has been properly hallaled.¹ Their food is cooked over the usual stick fire, but I have often seen them ravenously tearing to pieces aoul or other flesh only half-cooked or nearly raw.

Anything that a Somali can steal from a white man, without being found out, is regarded as justly his by right of possession; and when a caravan breaks up there is always an amusing scramble

¹ See page 166.

amongst the boys for knives, forks, spoons, and such-like, each man trying to secure as many as possible of other people's in addition to his own.

As liars the Somalis are unsurpassed. Whether the lie serves any purpose or not is of no consequence. They love lying for its own sake, and, by constant practice, they do it exceedingly cleverly.

A Somali who is not in the service of a white man despises another who is, although he himself doubtless would be glad enough to take the work at a price. One day on a shooting expedition we fell in with a karia of the Rer Ugaz—many of which were round about Gorahai—and a quarrel arose between our followers and the herdsmen. It began over their refusing to supply us with camel's milk, of which they had an unlimited supply, on the pretext that they did not know whether we were Europeans or Abyssinians, and the next thing was that they began cursing our Somalis for being in the service of the white man. The wordy warfare became fast and furious, and some choice expressions were exchanged; the fathers and grandfathers, long since dead, of the respective parties, coming in for the chief abuse. At last our men made a move, and in a fraction of a second the karia was cleared of all its males, who fled precipitately into the bush and disappeared in the dark. We got the milk, and, after drinking our fill, finished our dinner and departed.

On February 14th the Colonel sent sixty-six tobies to Gabridehari for the purchase of camels and

goats, but the party had to return empty-handed, as the Somalis refused to deal. Time and again they declined to sell, even on most generous terms ; nothing but wickedly extortionate prices would satisfy them. On this particular occasion the supplies were obtained through the Abyssinians, who deal with them after their own fashion. They set what they consider just terms, and in this case the prices were 10 tobes per camel, and Rs.90 for twenty sheep. The Abyssinians, on the whole, are remarkably tolerant in their dealings with the Somalis, and it is no wonder if, with an army in the field that must be fed, they find that, after lying and cheating as much as possible, the Somalis refuse point-blank to deal, they take by force what they cannot buy. No doubt the intense hatred of the Somalis for the Abyssinians is responsible for much of the difficulty, and it is very likely that under British administration such conditions would not arise ; but I am bound to say that I hope the day is far distant when my countrymen will spend valuable lives and treasure in extending their influence over this country and its inhabitants.

There were continual squabbles between the Somalis and the Abyssinians, both in camp and on the march, but perhaps the finest shindy of all arose out of an unfortunate proposal of mine over a game of hockey.

Hockey was a great game in the afternoon outside camp, and both Somalis and Habshis used to play a great deal, often joining amicably together. On Feb-

ruary 18th the Somalis were boasting so much of their play that I proposed an international hockey match, and offered a prize of ten shillings for the winning team. The idea was enthusiastically taken up, and the two sides, the ground, boundaries and the rest were properly arranged; and the game was to take place the next day. Before the first quarter of the game had been played, it came to an untimely end in a fierce fight. Every man for the time being became a raving lunatic. All the fire of racial hatred was on the instant fanned into flame, and Somali and Habshi fell on each other with their hockey sticks, every blow being intended for a knock-out one. We had all gone to look on, but none of us could say how the thing started. In the twinkling of an eye all the players were engaged in a furious battle. Our voices were drowned in the din. For every combatant we laid hold of, two took his place, and within a few minutes the whole camp was involved, supporters rushing into the fray from all sides. The Abyssinians, finding themselves outnumbered by ten to one, rushed to their tents for their rifles and swords. Our excellent and usually level-headed Abyssinian interpreter, Johannes Fiesah, lost his self-control altogether; he lashed himself into an uncontrollable fury, and, for the time being, was beside himself, behaving like a maniac. With frenzied shouts and expostulations he incited his fellow-countrymen to fresh onslaughts upon the Somalis. The yelling and struggling and crashing of sticks and

heads went on unabated for five or ten minutes, and when rifles and swords began to come out we fully expected that the affair would end in slaughter. How the uproar was quieted was a wonder to all of us. We rushed in between the contestants, seizing sticks, swords, and rifles, pulling and pushing or holding the men apart as best we could, and it was an intense relief to be able to restrain the Abyssinians from using their rifles and swords. Duff seized Fiesah, and his capture had a lot to do with our success. By dint of frantic efforts on our part, things began to quiet down, and the two sides were separated and their hockey sticks confiscated. The list of casualties, not counting the slightly wounded, ran into double figures, but there was no injury of a very serious character. Anything but a native's head would have been cracked like an egg-shell under some of the blows, for many of the sticks were as thick as one's wrist, and everyone laid about him as hard as he could, and there was no attempt at parrying. Both sides were paraded independently before the Colonel in the evening, and were dealt with. To outward appearance, however, they had all settled down, and were the best of friends again the next day.

The accident to the native in the well at Gerlogubi has been mentioned as an instance of what a native's cranium will stand, and the hockey match supplied many another, but we had under treatment at that time an Abyssinian who exemplified in a striking way

the apparently trivial effect of even a considerable injury. He had been felled with a heavy clubbed stick shod with iron, and had sustained extensive injuries on one side of his head. There were two large wounds exposing the bone, and in one of them it was fractured and distinctly dented in ; yet the man did not seem even stunned by the blow. He had walked to Wakeman to have it dressed, and never exhibited any bad effect beyond a little tenderness about the wounds. A Balambaras told us that his was a case in which red-hot irons would have been used in the wound if it had been under the care of an Abyssinian surgeon, so no doubt the man counted himself fortunate for once in being in European hands.

* * * *

After this long digression from the orderly narration of our doings on Abyssinian and Somali habits and characteristics, the story may be resumed with a short account of our stay at Gorahai.

On February 3rd, the day following our arrival, the Colonel, with his suite, walked over to the Abyssinian camp to pay a ceremonial call on Fituarari Gabri. After the usual salutations, we were regaled with coffee and dabo kolo, and a discussion of the situation took place through the interpreter. Before we left, Fituarari Kolassi and his following arrived, all present rising on their entrance and exchanging the usual graceful bows. The next day the Fituarari returned the Colonel's call, and the result of the deliberations

was a decision to hold on where we were until the receipt of orders from General Egerton.

A certain amount of miscellaneous shooting had been going on about that time between Abyssinians and Somalis. On February 4th a murderer was surrendered for justice, and on the 5th from another affair we were provided with a couple of patients. The murderer was not the only culprit in this case, for months before some Abyssinians had killed three Somalis, and the Somalis now retaliated by killing two of the Fituarari's postmen on the road between Gabridehari and Warandab.

An Abyssinian came in on the 5th who had been wounded by arrows in two places in a fight with some Midgans. He and two companions had been searching for stray animals in the bush towards Wardair, and had come across a party of eight Midgans, who, they said, had opened fire on them with their bows and arrows. The Abyssinians replied with their rifles, and stated that they had put an end to the whole party of Midgans. At any rate, they brought in six bows, quivers and arrows as trophies. Some of the arrow-points were poisoned, but those which inflicted the wounds were fairly clean and were very sharp, and the wounds healed readily on simple treatment. Three days afterwards the man brought the six bows and quivers to me as a thank-offering. I gave him a present of two dollars (four shillings), and he thanked me so profusely and bowed so naturally and gracefully that gratified vanity sorely

236 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

tempted one to make him a present of a dollar for each bow ; such courteous homage was well-nigh irresistible.

During the early part of February, and, indeed, with short intermissions during the whole time of our stay at Gorahai, dust-storms raged about us, sometimes all day. Often they were very violent, and on such occasions all you could do was to keep things well bedded down and sit tight, trusting to your tent-pegs. The photographs opposite page 168 give a better idea of what these "dust devils," or *afreets*, are like than any verbal description.

A brief epitome of a few days' doings at Gorahai may perhaps be of interest as giving an idea of the kind of life in camp :—

February 9th.—Fairfax and Ogilvy left for Gabridehari to take observations with the theodolite. Wakeman and I visited the Abyssinian sick camp ; fifteen new cases. The day's bag, contributed by all combined, consisted of thirty-seven sand-grouse, two partridges, eighteen pigeons, one wild tom-cat and two kittens. The tom-cat and one kitten were shot by Duff as specimens for Dunn, and he gave me the other kitten, which I tied to my tent-pole and found the little beast to be as wild and ferocious as a tiger. At 9.40 p.m. Dunn was hard at work skinning the tom-cat. The day was spent by me in reducing to a connected order a pile of notes on Abyssinian customs.

February 10th.—Rode over with Dunn on camel-back to the sick camp—twelve new cases¹ to-day, and there were over fifty camels for us to dress. A party of scouts was sent

¹ The number of fresh cases each day did not often exceed fourteen ; frequently there were not more than half a dozen, and a great many of the cases were trivial.



DUFF AND BAIRD DISPENSING JUSTICE—GORAHAL.



HIS MAJESTY UGAZ HASHI, KING OF THE RER UGAZ.



A FAVOURITE SOMALI ATTITUDE OF REST.

out to watch the road between Wardair and Gerlogubi. The card-party after dinner adjourned to the mess-tent to-night for the first time, as it felt chilly. Baird has been reading up bridge assiduously, and is applying his knowledge with fine success.

February 11th.—The latest fairy tale is that the Mullah has given himself up to Ali Yusuf and Osman Mahmoud. I entered up the treasury accounts since taking over charge on the 6th January, checked the balance with Dunn, and sent on the details to Sergeant Shepherd at Sesebani for entry in the ledger. Rose and his Midgan follower constructed a noose trap for hyænas. A jackal sprung it after dinner, but got away.

February 13th.—Citerni bagged thirty blue rocks with four cartridges. Duff added fourteen sand-grouse, and Dunn an aoul to the contents of the larder. It was horribly dusty in the early hours of the day. Fairfax and Ogilvy returned from Gabridehari. Ogilvy and Rose made a trap for hyænas and jackals out of boughs and thorn bushes, with a simple but ingenious drop-shutter. All kinds of accusations and counter accusations have been made amongst the mess-boys and they ended to-day in Dunn's servant being saddled with draining half a bottle of whisky and a bottle of milk.

February 14th.—A small mail came in. Two supposed Baggari (Mullah's own tribe) were seen spying out our camp to-day. Alone and myself each added an aoul to the pot. The Colonel sent a party with tobies to Gabridehari to try to purchase camels and goats. More notes on Abyssinian affairs.

February 16th.—Abdullah Tahr and an Abyssinian supply column arrived to-day. Thank Jan Hoy for that! This is not a land full of corn and myrrh. Dunn bagged seventeen sand-grouse in five shots, and also brought in four aoul. Ogilvy and I followed a wounded aoul in the bush, and when we had found it, had lost our syces, so had to tramp five miles back to camp, carrying half the carcass between us.

On inquiry we became convinced that my syce had deliberately left us to our own devices, and had probably ridden off

238 WITH THE ABYSSINIANS IN SOMALILAND

to camp on my mule. He has been an habitual defaulter, and is continually getting into some scrape or another; shifts and excuses to get off duty are his favourite pursuits, and his capacity for lying, skrimshanking, and scaring game are truly extraordinary. I gave him the chance to revert to camel-man (for every Somali can do this work), but he said he didn't understand camels, didn't know the duties, and so forth, and would rather be sent back home than that. The headman reported very badly of him, so I paid him his wages and sacked him as incorrigible and worthless.

February 17th.—The diary and medical work filled up the day. It has felt considerably warmer the last three days and nights. To-day at 3.15 p.m., about which time it is generally hottest, the temperature in a double fly tent was 96°. During the last three nights the temperature has not fallen below 60°. Fituarari Gabri visited the Colonel to-day.

February 18th.—To-day's bag was made up as follows:—Duff, an aoul and a gerenuk; Rose, three young wart-hogs and a lesser koodoo; Ogilvy, three aoul; and Citerni, thirty-five sand-grouse. All the medical officers were kept busy till noon, attending either to animals or men. Abdullah Tahr left for Jiggiga. He is looking after the young gerenuk for me, and tells me that it is now quite tame. The kitten tied to the tent-pole here is as wild, and as great a spitfire as ever. Scouts' reports from Gerlogubi are very conflicting—some state that the Mullah is making in our direction; but such luck is not expected.

A tremendous uproar arose in the native part of the camp about the middle of the night. Sergeant Tubb turned out to see what it was about, and to quiet it. Suddenly he found himself felled by a blow from a heavy stick. He jumped up again and went for his assailant, knocking him over on the spot, and damaging his own fist in the process. The native was no sooner down than he was up again, and fled wildly through the camp, making night hideous with his yells of "Murder!" or its Somali equivalent. His identity was now evident—he was my former useless syce Mohammed, who, instead of going away, had been living in the Somali quarters. There was a

mighty hue and cry, but Tubb eventually brought him to the ground and hauled him up before an extemporised court-martial, consisting of the Colonel, Baird, and Duff. Twenty lashes was the sentence, and they were administered on the spot. Baird's sleep and diplomatic reserve deserted him altogether—or should we say were lost in a sense of duty?—as he stood over the chastiser with a whip and threatened him with the direst vengeance if he failed to use his koorbash vigorously. The ex-syce was turned out of the camp directly afterwards; but the thrashing must somehow have shaken up his latent abilities, for later on I saw him at Hargeisa acting as a camel-man, although “he didn't understand camels at all, and couldn't do the work.”

February 20th.—I was up at three o'clock, and spent the morning looking for koodoo or oryx, but saw only five female koodoo and three female gerenuk. Three aoul were shot for food. Yesterday Ogilvy stalked ten natives, whom he took for Baggaris. To-day I came across four mounted men, who bolted when challenged by the syce.

February 21st.—First news, *via* Hargeisa, of the declaration of war between Russia and Japan. Our instructions still are to “mark time.” The Mullah, unluckily for us, has proceeded east, and not south-west. Duff, Rose, Fairfax, and Baird, with a small party of Somalis, went out to scout the hills, to discover who these so-called Baggaris really were. They found a number of deserted karias, and ascertained that some Ogaden friendlies were the horsemen in question.

On February 25th, the Colonel received a despatch from General Egerton through the Intelligence Officer at Bohodtle, which said: “The occupation of Wardair by the Abyssinians has served its purpose during my operations in Nogal, and I appreciate the exertions on your part which have effected this. I am now concerned in operations in the Warsangeli country, north of the Sorl, where the Mullah is reported to have

arrived after a somewhat disastrous march. In the meantime, Manning is holding the North Nogal, and the continued presence of the Abyssinians at Wardair, Gerlogubi, or on the Webbe Shabéleh, would be advantageous as a further deterrent to the Mullah from attempting a flight southwards."

A second despatch was received later, in which it was definitely stated that the Mullah was in the Sorl, and that his apparent objective was Gebi in the Warsangeli country to the north. His stock had been raided by the First Brigade in the Southern Nogal, and by the Illalos and the Tribal Horse from Bohodtle, on his march from Halin. After the action at Jidballi, also, the Sultan Islam and Ali Yusuf had despatched raiding parties against him, and great quantities of stock had been taken. The forces of the first and second brigades had joined hands behind him to the west and south, and General Egerton was then disposing his force to continue further operations against him in the Warsangeli district.

In consequence of our continued presence in the field being desirable, twenty days' extra rations of dates, ghee, and rice were sent for from Harrar, and it was estimated that they would reach us in from twenty-six to thirty days; ten days' additional meat rations for our men were obtained through Fituarari Gabri and a party of 1,000 Abyssinians, under five Chiefs, was sent to the Webbe Shabéleh to collect grain.

The Colonel was now able to permit us to go farther afield on our shooting expeditions, and we

were able to get away in pairs together, in search of good ground. Most of us had obtained what specimens we wanted of aoul, oryx, gerenuk, and koodoo, and we were on the look-out for rhinoceros and lion haunts—of which we heard many rumours, but received little trustworthy intelligence.

On the 26th Dunn went off in a south-westerly direction with a small escort, and slept out for the night, returning the next day with an oryx-head. Rose and Fairfax proceeded in the Gabridehari direction, where lions were reported, but returned after two days without finding anything.

On February 29th Ogilvy and I started on a three days' shoot in a south-westerly direction, hoping to get oryx, and if possible a rhinoceros, of which we had heard reports in the district. Basha Balina, with his four Abyssinian grass-cutters and attendants, came with us, and we took ten water tanks on five camels, two camels for the tents and for our own and the men's rations, four mules and eight men. We started in the afternoon, and after a four hours' march halted near a well, with a little water in it, close to a karia of the Rer Ugaz, Ogaden tribe, at a place called Harriden. We obtained some milk and a sheep from the Somalis, and glowing accounts of rhinoceros sport were dished up for us. We dined, put on a guard, and bivouacked under a glorious moon. "The night is a dead, monotonous period under a roof, but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes

on the face of nature" ; so Stevenson says truly, but to sleepers like ourselves, these beauties were only very fitfully revealed. We were off before five o'clock the next morning, after a cup of cocoa and a biscuit, and we scoured the country round for rhinoceros tracks. The bush, however, revealed no new secrets ; though there were a great many old tracks to be found, and the euphorbia cacti were lying prostrate in great numbers in some places, having been knocked over and browsed upon by the rhinoceros. These cacti are from fifteen to twenty feet in height, and their trunks are about as thick as, or thicker than a man's thigh. The animal leans up against the tree and breaks it down by his weight, thereby enabling himself to feed on the young green tops. We got back to camp about noon after a morning of pleasant although luckless toil, rested till 9 p.m., and then moved on to another camping ground, which we reached at midnight.

Before daybreak the next morning we went off in different directions. I got a buck oryx before very long, and about eight o'clock unfortunately only wounded another. We followed his tracks, which presented trickles of blood from two wounds, for four hours, and then had to stop for the time being, owing to thirst and hunger and heat. After lunch the camels started off for a new camping ground, and the local shikari and myself resumed the tracking of the wounded animal. We followed his course for about three miles farther than before, but as it was getting

late in the afternoon we had to stop again, as there were five miles of thick bush between us and camp. The shikari was confident that he could find the oryx, and promised that he would return and do so; but I never heard that he was successful. As we were returning to camp we put up a herd of oryx in the thick bush, but could not catch sight of them until they broke into the open plain. As no cover intervened between us and them, I put up the 500 yards sight, and fired at what I thought was the best buck, knocking it over. It jumped up again, however, and I fired a second shot. In a few moments we heard a fall, but, through rapidly gathering darkness, could not certainly tell whether it was the oryx or not. First thing in the morning, however, the shikari went back and found that it was the oryx. It was a fine animal, but a female, and the horns measured $33\frac{1}{2}$ inches, while those of the one shot earlier in the day measured $26\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It was seven o'clock when we reached camp, and Ogilvy and the Basha had not returned. The camping ground which had been chosen was some miles nearer Gorahai than we had indicated, so I lighted a huge fire, which shed a good light and gave them a clue to the spot.

The next day we had a long tramp of eight hours without finding any game, and returned to Gorahai, after having made a rough circuit of a piece of country about twelve miles in diameter, lying ten miles south-west of Gorahai at its nearest point.

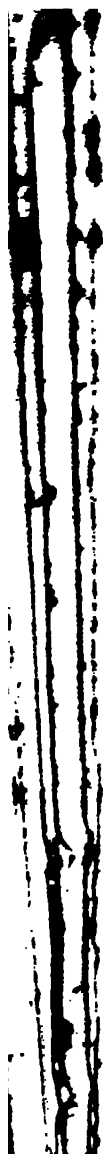
Alone and Dunn left on March 5th to shoot in the

Warandab district, and returned on the 11th without obtaining anything beyond the usual game, except that Dunn had shot a young leopard. Fairfax and Rose were away in a westerly direction from the 5th to the 14th, and found a place, Las Bullaleh, where there were good chances both for lions and rhinoceros, and Rose had shot a young rhinoceros. All naturally regretted that this ground had not been discovered sooner, and Ogilvy and myself obtained eight days' leave on March 14th, and set off in that direction.

Before, however, describing this expedition, reference should be made to a despatch from General Egerton, which had been received on March 2nd.

The despatch, dated February 16th, stated that the Mullah had reached Gebi in the Warsangeli country, after sustaining heavy losses of stock on the Sorl. The First Brigade, under General Manning, was occupying the North Nogal, and was being provisioned till April 15th. A concentration was being arranged for at the beginning of March, to undertake operations against the new head-quarters of the Mullah. Details of the disposition of the forces were given, and General Egerton added, "I attach considerable importance to Rochfort's remaining in the neighbourhood of Gerlogubi, or on the Fafan, with a sufficient Abyssinian force until the result of the fresh operations in the north is known ; the object being to prevent the Mullah using Galadi or Wardair, should he, as a fugitive, succeed in eluding the forces in the Nogal."

The Colonel, therefore, arranged with Fituarari Gabri to continue in occupation of Gorahai, and one cannot refrain from again expressing admiration of his achievement. Our force in the field was made up of men who hated the country they were in, who loved fighting, but who loathed standing still hundreds of miles from the scene of action, as we were doing. They remained for weary weeks where they could have no fighting and no fun, with nobody to look on, with nothing to brag about, all largely on somebody else's account, and with others getting what little credit there was to be gained. To bring such a force to a wilderness like Gorahai, and to keep it there, was a task so full of pitfalls and difficulties, and so requiring high qualities of tact, moderation, perseverance and firmness, that, although it had no sequel in the clash of arms, it was a performance so characteristically Anglo-Saxon, and so very meritorious, that even this humble chronicle should contribute its meed of praise.



CHAPTER XII





OGILVY AND LION.



SKINNING A VICTIM.



THE HEAD OF THE BULL RHINOCEROS.

CHAPTER XII

Shooting expedition to Las Bullaleh—Incidents by the way—The lion zarebas—Ogilvy's success—Rhinoceros tracks—Shooting a bull rhinoceros—Quarrel in camp—The Basha Balina—Return to Gorahai—Movements of other members of the party—Councils of war—Decision to retire—Camp struck and the route of the different parties—Gorahai to Sesebani—Sesebani to Hargeisa—Tribesmen's quarrels by the way—A lion story—Hargeisa—Hargeisa to Berbera—The party complete again—Fairfax goes to Illig—Assembly at Aden—Return home

WE started for Las Bullaleh at 4 p.m. on March 14th, accompanied by Basha Balina and his two attendants. There were eight camels in the caravan for the conveyance of six water tins (four of them full), a tent, the provisions and the ammunition. Baird lent us his Paradox and .375 rifles. Ogilvy had a .400 bore and we also carried our .303 rifles.

We bivouacked at eight o'clock on the night of the 14th, and were off again at six the following morning, passing Dadain wells,¹ six hours' camel journey from Gorahai, and halting at Dadal, or Tatal, wells at twenty minutes past ten. These places do not represent permanent settlements, but are occupied by

¹ See page 251.

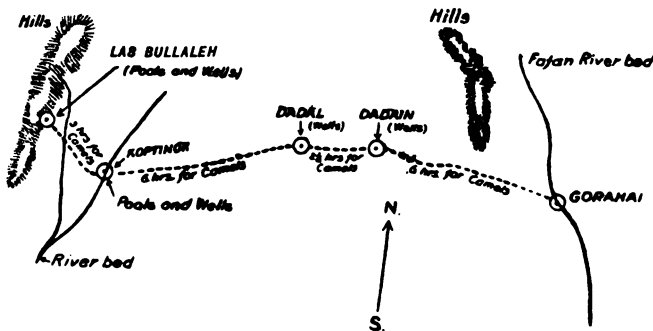
moving karias, chiefly of the Rer Ugaz. At Dadal our guide, a Somali of the Habr Awal tribe, had a great quarrel with one of the Basha's Abyssinians, and it would have ended in a general commotion if Ogilvy and I had not hurried up and separated them before the others could join in, as they were preparing to do. We left Dadal at 2 p.m., and at about eight o'clock arrived at Koptinok, six hours' camel journey from Dadal, where we intended to bivouac. After waiting nearly an hour without any sign of the coming of the camel party, which should have been not far in rear, the Basha hurried back along the road to look for them, and found that they had coolly zarebaed for the night about seven or eight miles behind. He roused them up in quick time and made them load up; but it was twenty minutes after midnight before they arrived at Koptinok, and it was 1 a.m. on the 16th before we got our dinner of the 15th!

There was a good supply of water in the wells and pools in the river bed at Koptinok. We saw fresh rhinoceros and leopard tracks about, and three-quarters of an hour before getting into camp we put up a pack of from forty to fifty wild dogs in the bush.

The march was resumed at 5.30 a.m. on the 16th, and the site of Rose and Fairfax's camp at Las Bullaleh was reached at 8.50, and our tents were pitched on an adjoining piece of ground.

The route to Las Bullaleh from Gorahai is shown

on the accompanying rough map. The total distance is probably forty miles. As far as Koptinok the track is a good one, but beyond that it is very broken, stony, and up and down hill. From a short distance before Dadain the way lies through thick bush of the usual character, except that a tree called "gerras," which I had previously noticed in some places between Warandab and Gorahai, is very abundant. It



ROUTE FROM GORAHAI TO LAS BULLALEH

produces an oval, edible fruit, which was then ripe. The fruit is about the size of a pigeon's egg and possesses a thin white shell or husk outside a layer of scarlet jelly of an insinuating flavour; and it contains, centrally, a bitter kernel of about the size of a pea.

Fairfax and Rose had constructed two zarebas at Las Bullaleh, about five hundred yards apart, some two miles to the north of camp. We tossed for

choice, and the upper one fell to me and the lower to Ogilvy. After a light meal at 4.30 p.m. we rode off and occupied our respective quarters for the night. These zarebas are made of thorn bushes close to or under a tree, and are made to look as much like a bush as possible. They are large enough to hold three men, and have a small window to shoot from and an opening for entrance and exit, which is closed by the occupant pulling in a large thorn branch.

About 8.30 Ogilvy fired two shots, and bagged a lion measuring 9 feet 4 inches in length. We each had a sick camel tied up just outside the zareba window, and Ogilvy hit his lion in the shoulder with the Paradox, killing him outright as he sprang on to the neck of the camel. Nothing came near my bait the whole night. On the 17th we changed zarebas, and Ogilvy again had the luck, shooting a lioness as she sprang on to the bait, which that night was a goat. There were several lions roaring in the bush, but again none approached my bait, and the same thing happened on the next night, although the morning showed that many had been sniffing round. I was tired by then of sitting behind thorns, so followed one lion's track in the bush for two hours, but lost it over stony ground. On the way back to camp, however, I came upon fresh rhinoceros tracks, and sent the boy to follow them, with instructions to let me know in camp if he was able to locate the animal. Ogilvy had not occupied a zareba that night, and on his way to meet me saw other fresh rhinoceros tracks and

followed them up ; and before I had started breakfast, word came in from him that he had bagged a cow and a calf. He shot both animals within about twenty minutes from camp.

Shortly afterwards my boy reported that he had tracked the rhinoceros he had been sent after, so I took some .375 cartridges and the rifle and rode off with the boy in pursuit. After going about three miles I dismounted, and then followed the tracks on foot for another three miles, over ground that was very rocky and broken in places, and was all the way through dense bush, up and down steep hillsides, and across ravines. At last I caught sight of a part of the rhinoceros as he was moving through thick bush ; but he disappeared almost as soon as seen. I thought that he had got wind of us, for the wind amongst these broken hills seemed to blow from every direction, and it was often difficult to make sure that one was going against it. At last, however, we found that he had pulled up against a tree only about thirty yards away from where we had first seen him. Creeping in, I got at last to a place where about a square foot of his body could be seen through the thicket, and he appeared to be some forty yards away. He moved forward a little, thereby showing in which direction he was facing and that the part of him in view was on the left side, just behind the shoulder—the very place that was wanted. Quickly raising the rifle, I fired ; and the hit told. There was a headlong rush to the right and a thundering crash through bush

and over boulders, downhill, and then a thud and dead silence. In a fraction of a second after firing he was invisible, and for a moment it was impossible to tell in what direction he was making, so I kept the second shot in hand, in case he was coming our way. Creeping carefully along in the direction he had taken—for there was, of course, the chance that he had come on soft ground, and that his movements were inaudible—I found him lying dead on the slope of the hill, about sixty yards away from where he had received the bullet. In his fall he had broken off a piece of rock, which was heavier than I could lift, but it had left no mark on his skin. He was a fine old bull, the larger horn measuring eighteen inches in length and nineteen inches in circumference at the base, and the smaller one eight inches in length.

Towards evening that day a further Abyssinian-Somali fracas occurred, and it would certainly have terminated fatally had not Ogilvy and myself been there to separate the combatants. The Basha's female companion, a cook, was drawing water from one of the tanks, when Ogilvy's Somali shikari addressed her in an offensive manner, coupling the Basha's name with hers in insulting terms. The Basha, overhearing the expression, pounced on him like a hawk, and pinned him to the ground in an Abyssinian paroxysm of fire and fury, and could he have got at a knife at that moment he would certainly have plunged it into the man's heart. At first we thought

it was only some Somalis indulging in horseplay, but when the situation was realised we doubled up to the Basha's tent and pulled him off his victim. He was almost out of his senses with rage, and struggled hard to make an end of the Somali; for nothing, it seems, can reconcile the two races. As we were inquiring into the cause of the quarrel, the Basha rushed out of his tent with his rifle, and, taking a cartridge from his belt, had it into the barrel in no time. The Somali darted behind my back, and, seizing my breeches behind, clung close to me with both hands. The rest of the Somalis bolted in all directions, lest the Basha should turn on them; but he was too intent on the man behind me. He refused to drop the rifle as he was ordered, so, with the Somali clinging close on behind, and keeping carefully out of sight of his enemy, I had to go up to the Basha, and Ogilvy and I then took the rifle from him. The Somali was ordered out of camp instantaneously, and later on, of course, we returned the rifle to the Basha.

Another night was spent in the zarebas, but nothing came to either bait, as in all probability the dead rhinoceros provided food for the beasts. During the evening our mules stampeded, and were nowhere to be found, so the whole camp, except a sufficient guard, was turned out to look for them. At midnight they were located at Koptinok, and were brought back at daybreak.

The next day, March 20th,⁷ we left Las Bullaleh, and reached Gorahai on the 22nd.

It would be well-nigh impossible to find a better companion on an expedition than Ogilvy, or a man more keen and level-headed. He joined Chatham in January 1900, served in South Africa from February 1900 to September 1902, and was selected for this duty in Somaliland in October 1903; which is not a bad record of experience in the first four years of a man's service.

Alone and Dunn, on eight days' leave, left for Las Bullaleh the same day that we returned to camp, and Fairfax and Rose went off towards Sesebani. A few days previously Alone had shot a lion from a tree about three hours' ride from Gorahai.

On March 25th Assistant-Surgeon Wakeman left Gorahai, *en route* for Harrar, in medical charge of a Balambaras, who was very much exhausted by severe remittent fever. We overtook the party later on at Sesebani, and I regret to say that the Balambaras died before reaching Harrar.

On March 28th Fituarari Gabri and his staff visited the Colonel, and a prolonged discussion of the situation took place. In the end it was agreed that we were serving no useful purpose by remaining in the field any longer, and that the time for retirement had arrived. The Mullah's forces had definitely been located in the Warsangeli country, hundreds of miles from where we were; he had been pursued northwards through the Sorl, and after the losses he had sustained there was no chance of his breaking back through the British forces, which were now between him



OCILVY AND WART HOG.



SOMALI AND LEOPARD (DUNN'S).



WILD PIG.

and us, and reaching Wardair or Galadi before the rainy season. The rains, moreover, were close upon us, and with them the operations would have to cease. The Abyssinian supplies were now running short ; nothing had been received from the Webbe Shabéleh, and the party sent there had apparently taken their own line and were on the way back to Harrar. We had prevented the use of the district by the Mullah during the operations of the Somaliland Field Force, and had made it impossible for the Ogaden tribes of the district to help him as they had done before, and, beyond that, unfortunately, there was nothing for us to do.

It was decided that the Abyssinians should return by the way they came, and that we should take the same road as far as Sesebani, and then march *viâ* Milmil and Hargeisa to Berbera. The Colonel, however, accompanied by Baird, intended to return *via* Harrar, in order to present his report to Ras Makunnan, and Capitano Citerri was to proceed to Harrar to resume his duties.

The distance from Gorahai to Berbera is about 336 miles, or about 40 miles more than to Harrar. It is made up as follows : From Gorahai to Sesebani 114 miles ; from Sesebani to Hargeisa 125 miles ; and from Hargeisa to Berbera 97 miles.

During the operations we had lost one riding and sixty-six transport camels out of the 226 which originally formed our caravan ; but it was hoped that

by pressing forward we should reach Berbera by the middle of April.

No time was lost after the decision to retire had been arrived at, and we left camp at 2 p.m. the same afternoon, March 28th, *en route* for Gabridehari. The Abyssinians started later the same day, and came up with us at Gabridehari. As we were to march separately, all the Chiefs came in to call on the Colonel and to exchange salutations and farewells.

Alone and Dunn, from Las Bullaleh, joined us at Warandab on March 30th. Dunn had shot a lioness, a lion cub and a leopard, and Alone a lioness. The reserve supplies, coming from Harrar, met us at that place, and we received some very acceptable parcels from home. Fairfax and Rose joined us at Sesebani on April 2nd. Fairfax had shot a young lioness in the open, being the only one of us to get one in that way.

There were rumours of lions on the Hargeisa road between Sesebani and Milmil, so Rose and I, with a small caravan, left Sesebani at 9.30 p.m. on April 2nd, in advance of the rest of the party, which was to follow in two days. The Milmil River bed was ascended for five miles that night, and the journey was resumed at 4.30 the next morning, April 3rd. About seven o'clock we came across thousands of camels, which, the Habr Awal men of our caravan told us, had been looted from their karias by the Rer Haroun, through whose country we were now passing; and continual squabbles took place between our men and

the natives, the latter of whom came up to us whining that they had been beaten and had had their spears and shields taken away from them by our men. There was still no news of lions and the Lower Milmil wells, twenty-seven miles from Sesebani, were reached at six o'clock the same evening. Countless camels thronged the place, and there were large flocks of sheep and goats, and crowds of natives of the Rer Haroun and Rer Ali tribes. There was plenty of green thorn bush for the camels, but no grazing for the mules, so we had to give them a feed of dhoura. It is not often that one comes across a place where there is equally good feeding for both camels and mules.

The reports of lions and leopards were finally unconfirmed, so we decided to push on, and started again at 4.30 the next morning, April 4th. After three hours we halted at some wells, seven miles higher up the river bed than Lower Milmil, and we again found multitudes of camels, goats, and sheep, and the squabbling and fighting between our Somalis and the natives went on as before. At three o'clock in the afternoon we started again, and continued on uphill till about 5.30, when we finally left the river bed and struck out into the open bush, entering, I believe, upon the Haud at that part. The way from Sesebani up the Milmil is for the most part over good, firm, sandy ground, and above Lower Milmil, particularly, the river banks are well wooded with goorah, gup, and other trees.

There are no wells in the ninety odd miles across the bush between Upper Milmil and Hargeisa, but a water-tank post was established at Arranarrhe, thirty-five miles from Hargeisa, and was replenished from that place. The soil thereabouts is red and sandy, the bush open, and the trees bare of green, but for some distance beyond Arranarrhe there is good grazing. We saw gerenuk, aoul, dubo kola (foxes), and a solitary oryx on the way, but there was no incident, except that we were caught in two showers of rain late on the 4th. We arrived at Arranarrhe at 7.15 a.m. on April 7th, and a characteristic lion story was there served up for our edification. Four or five lions were reported to have been seen, and to have killed two camels two days previously. Then it was said that *one* lion had killed a camel ten days before. Finally, the headman of a neighbouring karia explained that, when they had come to the place a month and a half ago, the Somalis who were there before them had said that they had had a camel killed by a lion one night, but the headman thought that the place where it happened was from two to four days' march away. The last version of this story, as compared with the first, furnishes an excellent example of the kind of exaggeration the Somali loves to indulge in, and of the sort of thing that the traveller may waste time and energy upon unless he is careful to sift statements very thoroughly before acting upon them.

From Arranarrhe until near Hargeisa, descending

from the high land of the interior, the track is across an open sloping plain, which is covered in places with daremo grass, in others with tall durr grass, and in some places is bare. The bush is sparse, but I noticed sugsug in different parts, and, near Hargeisa, irgin, darr and gup occur in addition to the commoner thorn trees.

There are many excellent wells at Hargeisa and those used by the garrison are well zarebaed. The fort lies on the right bank of the river bed and contains barrack rooms, a hospital, supply and transport stores and the usual offices. It was then garrisoned by half a company of the 101st Bombay Grenadiers, and we received a cordial welcome from Captains Fellows and Hadow, who were stationed there. The sight of hens amongst the ostriches and other live stock gave the place quite a home-like aspect. It is very hilly all about, and there is plenty of game in the neighbourhood, but at that time it was the close season. Lord Delamere's shooting lodge is near Hargeisa on the Berbera side.

Rose and I arrived at 10 a.m. on April 8th; Alone, Duff, Dunn, Ogilvy, and Fairfax, came in during the afternoon of the following day, and Sergeants Tubb and Shepherd, with the remainder of the caravan, arrived on the 10th.

The camels and mules were very done up with the arduous march from Gorahai, and two camels had died daily in the larger caravan on the way from Sesebani, so that it was necessary to rest for a day or two.

Rose, however, had not been well on the journey from Sesebani, so it was decided that a small party should go on with him in advance. Fairfax, Rose and myself, therefore, with twenty-eight men, four mules and two ponies, and twenty-five camels, carrying four large and two small water tanks, two pans, grass and grain rations for the mules and ponies, tents, valises, light kit and provisions, left for Berbera at 3.40 p.m. on April 10th.

The road from Hargeisa to Berbera is a well-known caravan route and need not delay us in description. Our midday meal on the 11th consisted of soup and biscuits, and the soup perhaps deserves mention. We thought the dregs were meat and vegetable fibres until Rose got his portion, which exhibited a fine fat tadpole floating on the top. On investigation the water was found to be alive with tadpoles and thick with frog-spawn. Therefrom arose its peculiar consistency and flavour.

Gamat wells were passed at 8 a.m. on the 12th, and we halted for the night at Orryodiyeh, rather more than half way from Hargeisa to Berbera.

The country thereabouts is very hilly, broken and desolate, and our pace was necessarily slow. A peculiar tree, warrabkarron, grows amongst the rocks on the mountain sides in that part of the country. It looks like a pillar of rock, with a tuft of tapering leaves and a bunch of pink-red flowers on the top. We noticed it especially in a narrow, locked-in valley, which is entered by a defile some miles beyond Orryodiyeh.

. .

We halted at the Malgu wells at evening on the 13th, and on April 14th arrived at Berbera at 6 p.m., having marched 336 miles from Gorahai in sixteen days, and having cheated the rains, which was the object of our forced march.

It was a change to get to Berbera, bad and hot as the place was, and a luxury, amongst other things, to get clear, cool soda-water instead of warm opaque sparklets, salt without baking-powder and alum, pepper without Keating's powder, sugar without sand, oatmeal and flour without weevils, tea and coffee without pepper, and soup without tadpoles and frog-spawn.

Duff's caravan came in on the 16th, while the Colonel and Baird arrived from Harrar *via* Djibouti on the 21st, and so, once more, the British party was complete.¹ Rose, for a time, was a patient in No. 2 General Hospital and Sergeant Tubb rejoined his battalion, the 1st Hampshire Regiment.

On the 19th and 20th Duff paid off the men, and by the 21st all the stores had been repacked, checked, and invoiced, and the accounts settled. In preparing for the journey home we forgot the dreary night

¹ Gerolimato resumed his duties at Harrar after the Expedition was started on its way. He was a hearty, loyal, and invaluable friend to all of us; his great business capacity and powers of language were always at our disposal, and what Gerolimato does not know about cotton and coffee must hardly be worth knowing. It has been a gratification to all of us that His Majesty the King has marked his appreciation of the value of his services by conferring upon him the honour of the C.M.G.

marches, the waterless wastes, and the disappointment of not having had a fight; but we realised that physical conditions can impose a task which, though lacking the excitement of actual conflict, calls for qualities none the less resolute; and only those who have accompanied a force committed to an advance, with a doubtful water supply in front and with wells drying up behind, can appreciate the responsibility that is involved.

Berbera had greatly developed as a military base since our former visit, and the views of No. 2 General Hospital (opposite page 9), under the command of Major F. W. Gee, I.M.S., may well serve as a model of the splendid arrangements which prevailed, which, so far as my experience goes, have not been excelled. We were most hospitably entertained by the various officers, and I may be permitted to express thanks to Colonel J. F. Williamson, C.B., C.M.G., R.A.M.C., Principal Medical Officer in Somaliland, for the detailed information he gave me of the military operations and of the medical arrangements, as well as of the drainage, geological formation, meteorology and botany of Somaliland.

On April 17th, in company with Lieutenant J. W. Little, I.M.S., I had the opportunity of visiting the source of the water supply of Berbera, which is in many respects interesting. It is situated at Dubar, eight and a half miles inland, at the foot of the maritime mountain range. The water flows out of the rock at a temperature of 110° F. at a steady flow.

It is led through a cutting in the rock to a rocky reservoir which is covered in and ventilated, and thence it flows in six-inch iron piping to the town, filling the local reservoirs and the house tanks. It is as clear as crystal, very hard, and saltish to the taste, containing large quantities of chlorides, carbonates and sulphates. After twenty years' service it led to a deposit of lime salts in the pipes which reduced their calibre from six inches to four and necessitated their renewal.

Fairfax left Berbera on April 17th, and took a part in the capture of the Mullah's maritime stronghold of Illig. He jumped overboard from the *Mohawk* and saved a lunatic from drowning, thereby gaining the Royal Humane Society's medal, and on April 27th he arrived at Aden, where the rest of us had then assembled. Some of us had spent a few days there, which, thanks to the kindness and generous hospitality of Mr. Cowasjie, were very pleasant ones.

There was room for us on the s.s. *Mongolia* when she came in, so we sailed in her on April 28th, and arrived in London on May 8th.



PLYMOUTH
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD.
PRINTERS



HOOVER INSTITUTION


To avoid fine, this book should be returned on
or before the date last stamped below

12N-0-71-30001

NOV 28 1983

DEC 21 1983

JAN 16 1984



DT401

J54

