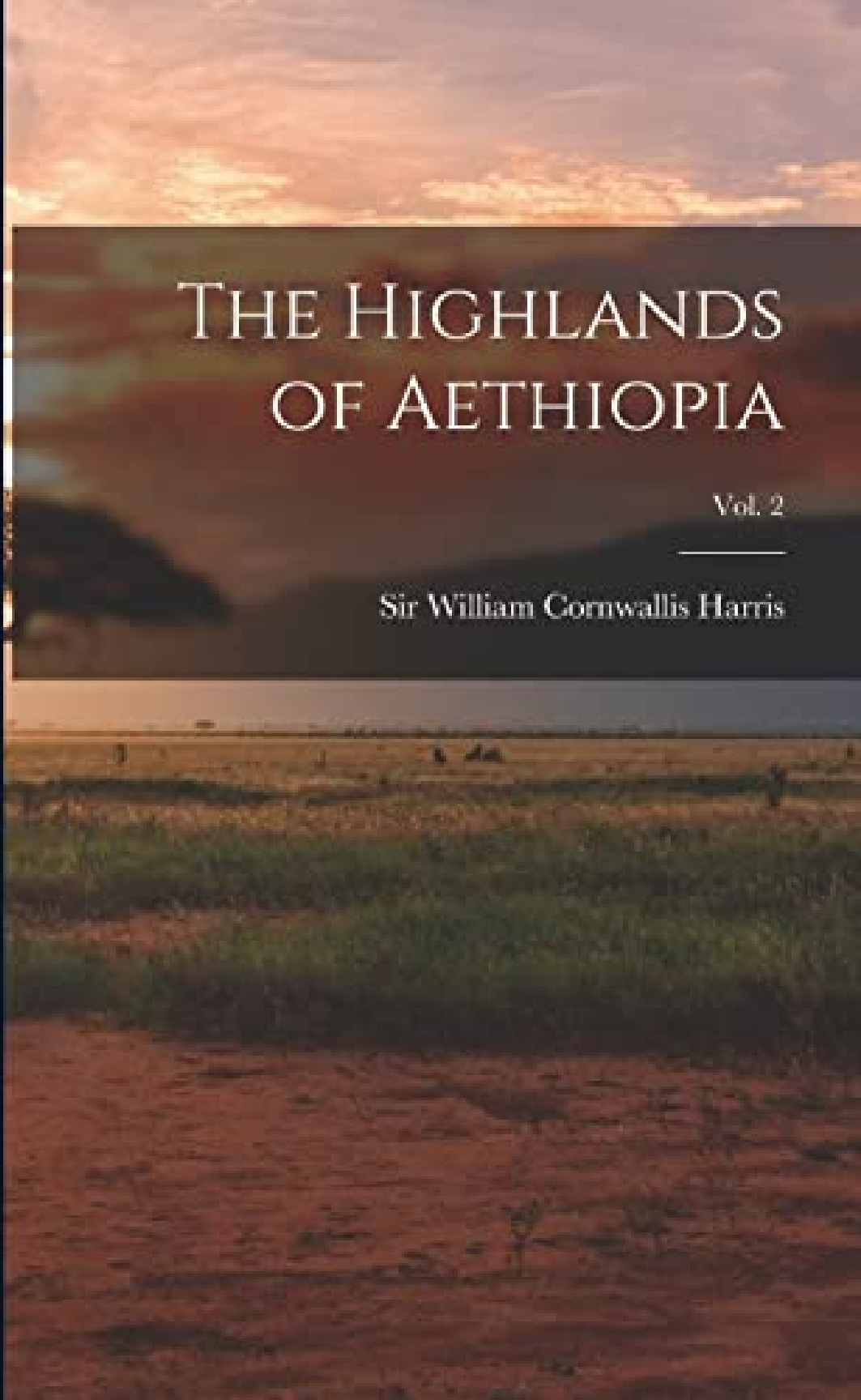

The Highlands of Aethiopia
Vol. 2
Sir William Cornwallis Harris

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Sir William Cornwallis Harris

"The Highlands of Ethiopia"

Introduction

In putting forward a second edition of my “Highlands of Ethiopia,” I have two very different duties to perform: first, to thank the press for the extremely liberal and generous manner in which it has received my work; secondly, to reply to certain objections which have been made by one or two periodicals, happily not of the first eminence, against both me and my travels. So numerous, however, are the publications that have evinced a favourable, I might almost say a friendly, disposition towards me, that I am unable to specify them. They will, therefore, I trust, accept in general terms my thanks to them one and all.

Their very flattering testimonies have induced me to revise carefully what I have written, in order, if possible, to render it worthy of their warm praise, and to justify their predilection in my behalf. On the other hand, *fas est et ab hoste doceri*. I have consequently turned to account even the animadversions of my enemies—for enemies unhappily I have, and those, too, of the most implacable and malignant character—mean persons to whom I have shown kindness, which they have apparently no means of repaying but by inveterate aversion. This circumstance I ought not

perhaps to regret, except on their account. The parts we play are suitable to our respective characters; and I should even now abstain from prejudicing them in the estimation of the public, if I did not apprehend that my forbearance might be misconstrued.

The points of attack selected by my adversaries are not many in number. Ultimately, indeed, they resolve themselves into three: first, my style of composition, which they say is gorgeous and inflated, and therefore obscure; second, the inaccuracy of several of my details; and third, the absence of much new information, which it seems the public had a right to expect from me. On the subject of the first accusation it will not perhaps be requisite that I should say much. To any one who cannot understand what I write I must necessarily appear obscure; but it may sometimes, I think, be a question with which of us the fault lies. That my composition is generally intelligible may not unfairly, I think, be inferred from the number of persons who have understood and praised it; since it can scarcely be imagined that the majority of reviewers would warmly recommend to the public that in which they could discern no meaning. Besides, on the subject of style there is a great diversity of opinion, some thinking that very extraordinary scenes and objects should be delineated in forcible language, while others advocate a tame and formal phraseology which they would see employed on all occasions whatsoever. I may observe, moreover, that “style,” as Gibbon remarks, “is the image of character,” and it is quite possible that my fancy may have a natural aptitude to take fire at the prospect of unusual scenes and strange manners. Still I am far from defending obstinately my own idiosyncracies, and yet farther

from setting them up as a rule to others. In describing what I saw, and endeavouring to explain what I felt, I may very possibly have used expressions too poetical and ornate; but the public will, I am convinced, do me the justice to believe that, in acting thus, my object was exactly to delineate, and not to delude. I called in to my aid the language which seemed to me best calculated to reflect upon the minds of others, those grand and stupendous objects of nature which had made so deep and lasting an impression on my own. At all events, I am not conscious of having had in this any sinister purpose to serve.

It is a far more serious charge, that I have presented the public with a false account of the Embassy to Shoa; that I have altered or suppressed facts; that I have been unjust to my predecessors and companions; and that I have at once misrepresented the country and its inhabitants. It has been already observed, that my accusers are few in number. Probably they do not exceed three individuals, two who affect to speak from their own knowledge, and one whom they have taken under their patronage as their cat's-paw. It may seem somewhat humiliating to answer such persons at all. I feel that it is so. But if dirt be cast at me, I must endeavour to shield myself from it, without enquiring whether the hands of the throwers be naturally filthy or not. That is their own affair. Mine is to avoid the pollution aimed at me. This must be my apology for entering into the explanations I am about to give.

When I undertook to lay before the public an account of my travels in Abyssinia, I had to choose between the inartificial and somewhat tedious form of a journal, and that of a more elaborate history, in which

the exact order of dates should not be observed. I preferred the latter; whether wisely or unwisely remains to be seen, though hitherto public opinion seems to declare itself in favour of my choice. Having come to this determination, it was necessary that I should act in all things consistently with it. As I had abandoned the journal, it was no way incumbent on me to observe the laws which govern that form of composition. My business, as it appeared to me, was to produce a work with some pretensions to a literary character; that is, one in which the order of time is not regarded as a primary element, the principal object being the grouping of events and circumstances so as to produce a complete picture. I perfectly understood that I was to add nothing and to invent nothing, but that I was at liberty to throw aside all trivial details, and dwell only on such points as seemed calculated to place in their proper light the labours of the mission, with the institutions, customs, and type of civilisation found among the people to whom we had been sent. In conformity with this theory I wrote. One of the first consequences, however, of the view I had taken of my subject, was the sacrifice of all minute personal adventures, which scarcely appeared in any way compatible with my plan. I abandoned likewise the use of the first personal pronoun, and always spoke of myself and my companions collectively, thereby perhaps doing some little injustice to my own exertions, but certainly not arrogating to myself any credit properly due to others. Among my friends there are those who object to this manner of writing, and I submit my judgment to theirs. In this Second Edition, therefore, I have reconstructed the narrative so far as was necessary in order to convert the third person into the first. To the charge that I have not observed the strict

chronology of a journal, I have already pleaded guilty. It seemed to me far better to arrange together under one head whatever belonged properly to one topic. For example, when recording the medical services rendered to the people of Shoa, high or low, I have not inserted in my work each individual instance as it occurred, but have placed the whole before the reader in a separate chapter. So likewise in other cases, that which appeared to elucidate the matter in hand, was introduced into what I thought its proper place, because there it might both receive and reflect light, whereas in any other part, perhaps, of the work, it might have been without significance, if not altogether absurd. Not being infallible, I may possibly have misinterpreted the laws of rhetoric which I adopted as my guide: of this let the public be judge. I have aimed, at all events, at drawing a correct outline of Shoa and the surrounding countries, as far as my materials would permit, and should I have sometimes fallen into error, I claim that indulgence which is always readily extended to authors similarly circumstanced. While in Abyssinia, my official position very greatly interfered with my predilections as a traveller. I could not move hither and thither freely. To enlarge the circle of science was not the principal object of my mission; but at the same time it must not be forgotten that I enjoyed some advantages which a traveller visiting the country under other auspices would scarcely have commanded. In drawing up my work, however, the character in which I travelled was of considerable disservice to me. Much of the information that I collected, it was not permitted me to impart, which I say, not by way of complaint against the regulations of the service in which I have the honour to be engaged,—on the contrary, I think it most just and

proper that such should be the case—but that the reader, when he feels a deficiency in political or commercial information, may know that it has not been withheld through any negligence or disrespect of the public on my part.

I now come to consider more in detail the objections which have been urged against my travels. Some of these, it will at once be perceived, are so loose and indefinite as to be wholly incapable of being answered. For example, it is said, I have made no addition to the information already existing respecting the southern provinces of Abyssinia. How can I reply to this? Must I reprint all the works which had been previously published, and point out the additions I have made? The process, it will be acknowledged, is an unusual one. Besides, the scientific world has not hitherto been averse to look at several views of the same country, to compare them for itself, and to derive from the very comparison both pleasure and information. Some additions, moreover, to geographical science I undoubtedly have made, and there are those who have not been ashamed to borrow them. I have ascertained, for example, that the Gochob does not flow into the Nile, as it is made to do in a map which I have seen, constructed by one of the reviewer's greatest authorities. The inquiries I instituted render it probable that the Gochob is the same river with the Juba. And, above all, the longitude of Ankóber was, under my directions, and by a laborious series of operations, correctly determined. The importance of this to travellers who may not possess the ability or the means of resolving it themselves, I need scarcely point out. Previously, every position in the maps of Southern Abyssinia was calculated from a false position, and therefore of

necessity wrong. But I shall not here enter upon an inventory of my humble services to science. I could wish they were more numerous, but such as they are I trust they will be found not wholly without their value.

In “ethnography,” or rather perhaps “ethnology,” the critic discovers my ideas to be all wrong; and he accounts for the circumstance by supposing in me some innate aversion to the “savage.” I certainly dislike that particular variety of our species whether at home or abroad, but it does not necessarily follow that I have been therefore guilty of misrepresentation. These things, nevertheless, I leave to be determined by public opinion, which, so far as I can perceive, is little, if at all, influenced by the bitter and self-interested censures of my enemies.

When I determined on making some reply to the “slashing” Aristarchus who has assailed my work—I would say publicly, but that the thing is so obscure that few persons have even heard of it—my design was to attempt something like order, that I might not by a multiplicity of disjointed remarks confound the memory of my readers. But the impossibility of following any rational plan soon became apparent. The reviewer with whom I have to deal is a man who scorns all order and regularity. His only rule is that of *hysteron proteron*, or putting the cart before the horse. Not possibly that he considers such a method of writing best in itself, but that by introducing perfect anarchy into his critique, and returning a dozen times to each objection urged, my faults might in appearance be so multiplied that they would suffice to fill a whole encyclopaedia. Now if in my reply I followed any other than his fragmentary system, I might perhaps seem to many not to answer all his

objections, whereas my intention is to demolish every one of them. I resolved therefore to begin *ab ovo*, and giving quarter to no impertinence or absurdity by the way, to clear the ground completely, and leave a perfect *rase campagne* behind me. That in so doing I shall not prove tedious, is more than I can hope. My adversary is insipidity personified. But if the controversy be unamusing, it shall, at least as far as I can render it so, be brief.

The critic whose vagaries I have undertaken to expose, though affecting not to be hypercritical, first dwells with a puerile pertinacity on the title of my book, which he pronounces to be a misnomer, because, forsooth, the territories of Shoa are not high lands, but a high land! Possibly he figures to himself the whole of Abyssinia as one single vast plateau, whose surface presents neither elevation nor depression, otherwise the reader will see no reason why it should be spoken of in the singular.

In describing the contents of the second volume, my reviewer speaks of “a slaving expedition among the Galla, *in which the Embassy*,” he affirms, “*took part*.” The assertion, however, is incorrect, not to apply to it a harsher epithet; for the spectator who looks on a play can with no propriety be said to take part in the acting of it. The mission was sent to Sáhela Selássie, not to the city of Ankóber. It was consequently my business to attend the king, to watch his movements, and study his character, just as the Embassy under Sir John McNeil attended the Shah of Persia to Herát, though instead of taking part in the siege, he laboured earnestly to put a stop to it.

The contents of the third volume are next wilfully misrepresented, the critic desiring to make it appear

that a very small portion indeed has reference to the country or people of Abyssinia, though at least two-thirds treat expressly of those subjects, whilst the remainder is strictly connected with them.

But it is not merely in the third volume that the critic is unable to discover any information respecting Shoa. He takes courage as he proceeds, advances from particulars to generals, and contends that the book contains no information at all in any part of it, that no account is given of the geography of the country, no sketch of its history, in short no account of it in any way whatsoever. Afterwards, indeed, an exception is made in favour of religion. Taking no interest in this, however, he treats it as a twice-told tale with which he was previously familiar. Considering the modes of thinking prevalent in the quarter, it may, without much uncharitableness, be permitted one to doubt this. Not to insist, however, on a point which may be disagreeable to the reviewer, I hasten to compliment him on his sagacity, which, through the table of contents, has made the discovery, that the political history of Abyssinia for the last thirty years is not given. I acknowledge the omission, and may perhaps have been to blame for suffering any consideration connected with the size of the volumes to weigh with me in such a matter. The historical sketch in question, however, was actually written, though the critic would probably not have derived from it any more satisfaction than from the rest of the book. He objected to its absence because it was not there. Had I introduced it, he would have said it was a twice-told tale, and absolutely good for nothing.

My adversary now and then qualifies, as he proceeds, his absolute affirmations. Having again and again maintained that there is no account,

"historical or otherwise," given of the country, he afterwards admits his error, but says the account is "confused and unintelligible." I think it was Mr Coleridge who made the remark, when persons complained that they could not understand his work, that it was their fault, since all he had to do was to bring the book, and that it was their duty to bring the understanding. I make the same reply to the critic. Other people understand my account of Abyssinia; and if he really does not, I am sorry for him, but can offer him no assistance. However, there is an old proverb, I believe, which says, "There are none so blind as those who won't see."

The argument by which I am proved to have read Mr Salt, though I make no allusion to him, is curious; but I either profited by my reading, or I did not. If I profited, the consequences must be visible in my work; if I derived nothing from Mr Salt, then my work can contain no proof that I did. But it does, according to the critic, contain such proof; *ergo*, I have profited by Mr Salt's labours. It would have been well, however, if the critic had pointed out where and how much; for until he does so, my word will probably be thought as good as his, especially as he is anonymous, and I am not. One proof of my careless reading of Mr Salt is, I own, very remarkable. It seems, had I been well versed in his production, I should have known that Oubié is "still alive and ruler of Tigré;" Mr Salt having, of course, been careful to relate that circumstance. It so happens, however, that at the period I was engaged in writing my work, Oubié was a prisoner, and another prince seated on his throne—a fact, I believe, not preserved in Salt.

Next comes on the tapis the orthography of Ethiopia; *apropos* of which, the critic takes occasion to call in

question my classical acquirements. I was not, however, aware that, by preferring one orthography to another, I was laying claim to profound erudition, or setting myself up for “an authority among scholars.” On the contrary, I followed those who appeared to me very sufficient guides. Gibbon and Dr Johnson,—authors who may perhaps, even by the reviewer himself, be permitted to claim a humble niche among our classics. But they wrote, it may be said, in the last century. I therefore refer to a perfectly new publication, on a classical subject, if not the work of a classic,—I mean Mr Saint John’s “History of the Manners and Customs of Ancient Greece,” in which the orthography I have adopted is likewise made use of. If then I have been affected, I have at all events indulged my affectation in very good company. But the reviewer does not stop here. He thinks the orthography involves a mystery, and he goes about the unveiling of it in a very mysterious way. It is a proof he thinks that I am indebted to Mr Krapf for what little proficiency I may have made in the art of spelling; nay more, that I have derived from that gentleman all my knowledge of Abyssinia of every kind!

Before I make any other remark on this part of the subject, I will take occasion to compliment myself on my simplicity; for if I had desired to conceal my obligations to Dr Krapf, and have been conscious of any which I have not frankly stated, I should have been careful to spell Ethiopia *classically*, that is, as the reviewer does, in order to conceal the source from which I had drawn. I should thus clearly have put him on a very wrong scent, since a single letter suffices to lead him by the nose. But the most curious view of this question remains yet to be taken. Dr

Krapf, he says, possesses the most complete knowledge of Abyssinia, its geography, language, and literature. He then goes on to maintain that Dr Krapf imparted his knowledge to me, and I that same knowledge to the public. But, no! the reviewer stops short here, and affirms that I envied the public the possession of Dr Krapf's knowledge, and withheld it all; since he everywhere asserts that there is no information whatever in my book. Verily, I have been taking a lesson from that ancient Briton who is represented as having plundered a naked Scotchman:

> "A painted vest Prince Vortigern had on,
> Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won!"

Because, if I tell nothing new, and owe all I do tell to Dr Krapf, who also imparted to me all he knew, his knowledge must clearly have been very limited. I have acknowledged, however, and I repeat the acknowledgment, that Dr Krapf was of essential service to me in various ways; that he freely imparted to me the valuable information he possessed, and gave me to understand that I was at liberty to make use of it. I did make use of it, having previously however been careful to publish my obligations to him. In fact, there is no man who would be more ready than Dr Krapf, were he now in England, to express his perfect satisfaction with what I have done. He has, indeed, expressed it publicly in his "Journal," where he acknowledges himself to be under obligations to me; and the Church Missionary Society, in its preface, makes the same admission.

I am next blamed for not giving a connected history of the mission; the proper answer to which is, that I never undertook to give it. I have not entitled my book

"the History of an Eighteen Months' Residence in Shoa," but have said that my observations were collected *during* an eighteen months' residence there. They are not all my observations, nor have I arranged them chronologically; therefore, though the reviewer feels disappointed, he has no right to quarrel with me. He expected one thing—I published another; simply because I did not write for him, or such as he, but for the public. As it is, however, I am not sorry that he is "tantalised," which he would not be if he possessed one-tenth of the knowledge to which he obliquely lays claim. On most points he is profoundly ignorant, and it suits my purpose to leave him so. Any information that I can impart, without prejudice to the public service, it is doubtless my duty to give; and accordingly, in this second edition, I have stated some facts not recorded in the first. In most cases, indeed, men publish a first edition as an *experiment*, to ascertain how far their views of what information the public needs are correct, that they may afterwards diligently, and to the best of their power, supply it.

The Mission, it is said, has been "a complete failure." But how is this proved? By a scrap extracted from some anonymous correspondent to a newspaper, who writes, not from Angollála or Ankóber, but from Caïro, which is nearly as though a person residing in Saint Petersburgh were to write authoritatively to China respecting what is going on in Lisbon. But it does not follow that the Mission has been a failure, because some Cairo gossip chooses to say so, or because all the fruits of it have not yet been reaped. A treaty has been concluded, friendly relations have been established, and upon this basis commerce will proceed, slowly perhaps, but surely, to erect its

structure. It will be for the next generation to determine whether or not the mission was “a complete failure.” A reviewer residing in the purlieus of High Holborn is not competent to do it.

On the subject of “German crowns,” the critic may, for aught I know, be a great authority; or, as he says on another matter, may know somebody that is. But the quarrel which he seeks to pick with me is so utterly puerile, that I will not engage in it. His positiveness, however, is as usual proportioned to his ignorance, for even on so infinitesimal a point as this he contrives to be wrong, since the marks are not *three*, as he supposes, but *seventeen*, on the coronet and shoulder-clasp. However, supposing I had here been wrong, would it therefore have been fair to infer that on every other point I must be wrong also? An usurer would be a better authority on the aspect of a gold coin than the Chancellor of the Exchequer, yet in finance the Jew might not be a match for the Chancellor. Let it not, however, be supposed that I desire to compare myself with Mr Goulburn, or the critic to a Jew; I merely mention these things by way of illustration. At any rate, my censor’s blunder must be obvious to every one who has seen a German dollar, and to adopt his own phrase, “*Ex pede Herculem*.”

On the practice observed by the Mohammadans in slaughtering animals, the reviewer displays a vast deal of erudition, and quotes the treatise of Mr Lane, on the “Manners of the Modern Egyptians.” It happens, however, that there are variations in the practices of the Moslems; and he might as well have argued, that because there are pyramids in Egypt, there must also be pyramids in Abyssinia, as that because the Egyptians do not make use of certain

words on particular occasions, therefore, the Danákil and the Somauli cannot possibly employ them. My narrative does not touch on the customs of Egypt, on which Mr Lane writes but on those of a different part of Africa, in which, so far as I can discover, that author has never been. What I relate, however, is matter of fact, and the critic only exhibits his profound ignorance of human nature by supposing that Mohammadanism is stereotyped in any part of the world, since there are as many differences in the customs of the Mohammadan nations, as in those of Christendom. For example,—the practice of "bundling," so common in Wales, does not, I believe, prevail in Egypt; but if our critic were to infer that it is, therefore, altogether anti-Islamite, he would be as completely wrong as he is in the present instance; for that which the Egyptian Mussulman detests, is the established custom in certain parts of Afghanistan. So, likewise, is the invocation of the name of God during the slaughter of animals. The Egyptians, it seems, invoke the sacred name without coupling with it "the Compassionate, the Merciful," which they think would sound like mockery; but what proof is the reviewer prepared to advance in his wisdom, that this rule is observed in India and every other part of the East?

The Mohammadans, again, he says, never drink blood; and why? because it is forbidden them by the Korán. But stealing is no less peremptorily prohibited. Will he, therefore, argue, that there is no such thing as a Mohammadan thief? The question is not as to what is forbidden or ordained, but as to a simple matter of fact. I state what I saw with my own eyes. The critic, who was never in the country, who cannot possibly know what I saw or did not see, contradicts

me. I leave it to the public to judge between us; asserting, however, that he is fully as ignorant of the people whose customs he so glibly writes about, as he is of the rules of common decency.

For verbal criticism I entertain no contempt, though I think that a strict application of its rules to a book of travels, is scarcely called for. However, let us see how the critic succeeds in his task. I relate that the Arabs call the cove *Mirsa good Ali*, the "source of the sea;" from which he immediately infers my utter ignorance of Arabic. The only thing, however, that is really clear from the remark he has made is, that he does not understand English when it happens to be in the slightest degree inverted. A Biblical critic. Dr Parr, if I remember rightly, objected to a passage in the English version of the Bible upon much the same grounds. "Thus," says the Scripture, "he giveth his beloved sleep." Now the doctor maintains "beloved" to be an epithet bestowed on sleep, although the real sense is, that sleep is given to the "beloved." Still, in my opinion, the meaning is so obvious, that it required some ingenuity to mistake it. In my own case, the meaning I think is equally obvious; at least, what I intended to say was, that the Adaïel bestow on Mirsa good Ali cove, the additional name of "the source of the sea."

Upon the remarks on "mafeesh," I scarcely know what to say; but if he were to ask me,—is there any point or sense in them? I should reply "*mafeesh*, there is none"—an idiom well understood in English. Let the critic try again at Richardson's dictionary, and if he really can make out the Arabic characters, I think he will be able to discover a meaning which would come in very properly where I have placed it. "It is of no consequence," exclaimed the young

assassin, “none,” which is precisely the answer sometimes given to the insatiate “beggars” that we are told “surround the traveller” in certain countries, “there is no money in my pocket—none.” Nevertheless, as I have passed public examinations, and obtained certificates of superior proficiency in no more than four oriental tongues, I cannot be deemed so competent to offer an opinion on this subject as the reviewer and his accomplices.

With regard to the critiques on the Amháric expressions found in my work, it may be sufficient to say, that by his own confession “the reviewer does not understand one syllable of the language,” but hazards his remarks on the strength of knowing somebody who does. This appears to me a very poor qualification. It is as though I should set up as a critic in Sanscrit because I have shaken hands with Professor Wilson. However, let us examine the notions of this man who is so learned by proxy. One of the greatest triumphs of his erudition is his explanation of the Amháric word “Shoolada,” which, strengthened by Salt, and others, he determines to signify exclusively a “rump-steak.” That it has this signification there can be no doubt, but if the critic be disposed to defer on this, as on other occasions, to Dr Krapf’s Amháric scholarship, he may yet, as he expresses it, “live and learn.” In a copy of manuscript notes in Dr Krapf’s handwriting, still in my possession, occurs the following passage, which I quote *verbatim et literatim*:—“In one point the Abyssinian practices agree remarkably with those of the Jews, we mean the practice mentioned in Genesis chapter xxxii, where we find that the Israelites did not eat the nerve, since Jacob had been lamed in consequence of his earnest supplication to

the Almighty, before he met his brother Esau. This nerve is called in Amháric ‘Shoolada.’ I cannot determine how far the abstinence from this kind of meat is kept in the other parts of Abyssinia, but it is a fact in Shoa, that many people, particularly those of royal blood (called Negassian), do not eat it, as they believe that by eating it they would lose their teeth, the Shoolada being prohibited and unlawful food. Therefore, if anybody has lost his teeth, he is abused with the reproach of having eaten prohibited meat, as that of vultures, dogs, mules, donkeys, horses, and particularly of man, the meat of whom is said to prove particularly destructive for the teeth.”

From the above passage, if the reviewer be disposed to accept Dr Krapf for his teacher, he may clearly learn one or two particulars not hitherto comprehended within the wide circle of his knowledge. For example, he will perceive that the idea of eating man’s flesh is not yet entirely exploded from that part of Africa. On the contrary, the forbidden luxury would appear sometimes to be indulged in even by those who are one step at least, advanced before the polite Danákil, whom, at the sacrifice of my reputation for charity, I have denominated “vagabonds and savages.”

The critic’s observations on the pronunciation of Amháric and Galla words are so elaborate a specie men of trifling, that it would be wholly lost labour to wade through them. Of the Galla language he knows nothing, and had the case been different, still I might be permitted to judge by my own ear in the case of a tongue absolutely unwritten. Those acquainted with the works of travellers in the East are aware that almost every one has adopted a peculiar system of orthography. All, therefore, but one, might, by a

disingenuous critic, be accused of ignorance. But the reviewer goes on to inform the public that “the *vulgar* mistakes of English pronunciation—which are not participated in by Germans—are the wrong insertion or omission of the aspirate.” This is designed as a death-blow to me for writing *Etagainya* without an initial A, which highly culpable omission he presently afterwards takes occasion to rectify. Under this charge of vulgarity it is some consolation to me to quote as my authority Isenberg’s Amháric Dictionary, more especially since that gentleman *is* a German; but had he even been otherwise, I think his views on this subject of the aspirate might perhaps be preferred to those of any cockney.

The elaborate disquisition on *larva* and *boudak* (For *boudak* read *boudah*. It ought to have been translated *sorcerer*, but all artisans, blacksmiths especially, are regarded as *boudahs*. Vide Isenberg’s Amháric Dictionary. For *larva* read *lava*.) proves the critic to be qualified for the reading of proof-sheets, which appears to be the highest praise he can justly lay claim to. He can detect a misprint in other men’s works, and when his passions are unexcited, may possibly be able to correct it. But in the matters of ear or style, I would just as soon defer to the judgment of the great “Arqueem Nobba,” whoever that may be, (Vide Anti-Slavery Reporter, November 29th, 1843, page 222. For the information of my readers, it may be proper to explain that “Arqueem nobba” is believed to be doing duty for “Hakim nabaroo,” “You were the doctor”) from whom he seems to have obtained so much of his Oriental learning. He well knows to whom I allude, if no one else does. I shall turn his weapons against himself, and take occasion to question the classical attainments of a reviewer

who translates "*suum cuique*"—"be it for good or ill;" and shall direct the public indignation to the fact of his having aroused curiosity "without gratifying it," by the statement that I "studiously laboured to keep out of sight *a very* special service performed by the members of the Embassy." What was it? He must surely be thinking of *his reporters*, not of *my assistants*. Be this as it may, he will not attempt to screen himself behind the printer's devil, it being clear that no typical errors can be admissible in his forty pages of letter-press, if two are to be held inexcusable in my twelve hundred!

It will by this time, I think, be apparent that an extremely peculiar system of criticism has been adopted in reviewing my book. Here the diction is attacked, there the want of information; now we have complaints that information is given, but that it was obtained through the instrumentality of Dr Krapf; then the reviewer wanders into political and other considerations, and attacks my conduct as leader of the Mission. Occasionally he appears to be overwhelmed by a painful sympathy, an intense philanthropy, extreme sorrow for the dead, which betrays him into persevering rancour towards the living. In discussing, for example, the melancholy catastrophe at Goongoonteh, which, if credit be given me for the smallest particle of human feeling, I must be supposed to have regretted as much as any man, especially since Sergeant Walpole and Corporal Wilson were under my command, and both highly useful to me as soldiers and artisans, the critic suffers his compassion so powerfully to disturb his intellect, that he literally knows not what he says. He may, therefore, if such be his object, be thought extremely amiable by some people, but, upon the

whole, I apprehend, he will appear to be infinitely more absurd: because, to obtain credit for a generous and expansive humanity, it is necessary, at least, to bear the semblance of an unwillingness to wound men's reputations, living or dead. A genuine sympathy is always most active in proportion to the capacity of feeling possessed by the object of it. Thus we sympathise with our contemporaries more than with generations passed away; with Christians more than with Turks and Pagans; with Englishmen more than with Chinese; with our relations and friends more than with persons whom we never saw. But my critic reverses this order of things. His benevolence clings to individuals whose names he never heard, and urges him to inflict injury at all events, and pain if he can, upon persons whose sensibilities, he supposes, lay them open to his attacks. In one publication it seems to be intimated that I killed the men myself, whilst in the other I am conjectured to have been standing sentry, and to have dropped asleep at my post. The former charge I shall leave the Government of my country to answer; for if I be guilty and still at large. Government has made itself my accomplice. Shall I on the second point enlighten the critic, or shall I not? The fact is, I was not asleep, though with the greatest propriety I might have been, but at the very moment of the perpetration of the murder, I was leaning in bed upon my elbow, conversing with Captain Graham. Nevertheless, from the form of the *wady*, I could not command a view of every part of the encampment, or discern in the dark the approach of the assassins, at the distant point which they selected for their noiseless attack.

As to the manner in which I have related the circumstance, that is another affair, and the critic is at

liberty to judge of it as he pleases. I claim, however, the same liberty for myself, and will venture to observe, that this part of his review is more lumbering, heavy, and absurd than ordinary; that in attempting to display feeling, he is only betrayed into lugubrious affectation; and that however I may be able to wield our mother tongue, he manages it so unskilfully that he wounds no one but himself.

The next charge is based, like the former, on the critic's sympathy. I relate that at the village of Fárri the gentleman entrusted with the command of the watch, "worn out by incessant vigils," fell asleep. The apology, it will be perceived, precedes the statement of the fact. But this new knight of La Mancha is not satisfied. Putting his redoubtable quill in rest, he tilts most chivalrously at my narrative; and, the operation over, chuckles with delight at my supposed discomfiture. He may, perhaps, have learned from some prying visitor to what particular officer I allude in the above passage. But most assuredly the public has not, and therefore no evil consequence can arise from what I say. All our critic's ideas, however, are peculiar. He considers it criminal to hint indistinctly in a published work at a "breach of discipline," but thinks I might with propriety have reported the circumstance officially to Government! My theory of propriety is different. I made no report to Government; but when there were so many broad shoulders to share the blame between them, I thought it quite safe to touch upon it in my volumes.

Having waded through the above tedious list of charges, we arrive, so the reader may be tempted to imagine, at something new. But that is not the critic's plan. On the contrary, we find Monsieur Tonson on the stage again. Well might Dr Krapf exclaim, "Deliver

me from my friends!" if the reviewer in question be really one among the number. Secretly, however, it is not the Missionary that is aggrieved, but another individual whose name I will not be provoked to print in my pages. This person, we are told, came down to Dinómali, in company with Mr Krapf, "to welcome the Embassy." What he came down to do is not, however, the question. Come he certainly did; and I should have made honourable mention of him had I, during my stay in Shoa, found no reason to be dissatisfied with his conduct. The reverse was the case; and as I did not choose to be at the trouble of writing in his dispraise, I thought it better to say nothing. Let the reviewer be satisfied with that, for, if I should say anything further, I am sure his satisfaction would not be augmented. He is perfectly right in supposing, that I have not imparted to the public all the knowledge I acquired in Shoa, and that I have not related all the piquant comic anecdotes which were often at my pen's point, struggling to see the light. But who knows? The time for telling them with effect is not yet passed, and it is quite possible that, under certain combinations of circumstances, I may yet return to this part of my subject, especially if the anonymous system be persevered in, and attempts be made to wound me from behind the friendly figure of the Missionary.

I may here, however, mention by the way, that, besides the learned Theban alluded to, the critic has two other authorities. Dr Krapf and M. Rochet D'Héricourt. Upon them he relies with equal and entire confidence. But I would beg to suggest, that there exist some slight discrepancies between the statements of those two writers, and that weight can be laid on the testimony of the one only in proportion

as you mistrust the other. Yet the critic appears to discover nothing of this, never perceives that their testimonies are inter-destructive, but is perfectly satisfied to play off each in his turn against me. These authorities, in fact, are the legs on which his whole accusation appears to stand, though there be in reality an anonymous authority, which, like the third leg in the riddle, helps to support the tottering figure. To Mr Krapf, it is said, the Embassy owed whatever influence it possessed in Shoa. The officers of the Mission were nothing; the presents were nothing; the expectation of assistance and support from the Indian Government, in which Sáhela Selássie indulged, were nothing:—the reverend missionary was the "life and soul of the Embassy." I know not whether, as Dr Krapf is a minister of the Gospel, this be meant as a compliment or as a sneer; but so it is. I am said to have had no influence with the king, save through him who was literally all-powerful at court. This being borne in mind, turn we now to the critic's other authority, M. Rochet D'Héricourt, who is said to have been equally influential. But here comes the difficulty, which the critic either perceived or did not perceive. In the latter case he is criminally ignorant of what he ought to have known before he ventured to attack me; and if he did perceive it, then he is still more criminal for having suppressed the truth, and made that suppression serve the purpose of its contrary. It will be seen that I abstain from harsh language, and rather extenuate than otherwise the unworthiness of my adversary. The circumstance, however, to which I allude, is this: the critic maintains that Dr Krapf was all-powerful with Sáhela Selássie; M. Rochet D'Héricourt, on the other hand, asserts that Dr Krapf possessed so little influence, that it was only through *his* special interference, and at *his* earnest entreaty,

that the king suffered him to proceed towards the Galla frontier with the army. Nay, not only had the missionary, according to this traveller, (Rochet D'Héricourt, Voyage dans le Pays D'Adel, et le Royaume de Choa, pages 224-233.) no influence, but the king displayed the strongest possible repugnance for him, and made him feel the effects of his dislike throughout the whole campaign. Consult the "Journal" (Journal of the Rev. Messrs Isenberg and Krapf, page 187) of the worthy missionary himself; and we find that both he and M. Rochet D'Héricourt were, without solicitation or entreaty, on his part at least, "ordered to accompany the king." I am not pretending to dictate to the public as to which of these authorities it shall prefer. I only state facts, and leave others to draw the proper inference. The authority of Dr Krapf, however, at the court of Shoa to me seems to be strangely and wilfully exaggerated. It was a reflected authority, if I may so speak, that he exercised during the residence of the Mission in the country; an authority based upon the influence of the British Government, represented there for the time by me. The amount of his personal influence was such that the slightest accident sufficed to overthrow it. Had it been greater, his application to return would have been listened to. It may no doubt be observed in reply, that neither could my influence, which was fully exerted in his behalf, have been very considerable. But the caprices of despotism are not always to be accounted for, and they will serve to explain both the missionary's want of success, and my own.

This subject has been artfully connected with the return of the Mission from Shoa. It is said, that had we not retired, we should have been forcibly

expelled. I can certainly offer no proof that we should not; but the probability is, that the king of Shoa would have been in no hurry to dry up a constant source of profit to himself. It may, in fact, be laid down as a general rule, that no Oriental despot ever expels the giver of presents. It is the receiver of presents that he regards as an eyesore, the man who is dependent on him for his daily bread. The critic, however, has been "assured," that had we not retired, we should "probably ere long" have been expelled. But to this I reply, that probably we should not; and I call on him to state his proofs of the "disrepute" into which he asserts we had fallen. I have been "assured," that "probably" he has none to give, and "probably" this assurance is correct; otherwise, I think he would have been too glad to offer them. Be this as it may, the fact is, that we were not expelled, but recalled by our own government, when it considered that the duties for which I had been deputed, were fully accomplished.

The next attack upon me is based on certain "strange stories," which the critic says he has heard. For myself, considering the strange people with whom he associates, I entertain not the slightest doubt in the world that he has been crammed with "strange stories," and that he firmly believes them. In fact, he reminds me strongly of an anecdote related by Vossius, who, as Charles the Second observed, would believe anything but the Gospel. So this critic, who has no appetite whatever for plain truth, will swallow "strange stories" by the bushel. For example, with an earnestness which does great credit to his simplicity, he believes that the British officers in Shoa, with the few rank and file under their command, assisted the king in making prisoners among the Gallas. He believes, too, of course, that

the field-piece, which had been presented to the king, and was therefore no longer under the control of the embassy, was employed to batter down villages, and, in one word, to effect the triumph of Sáhela Selássie over his refractory subjects and heathen neighbours. I feel for the distress his humanity must have suffered, and all through the “strange stories” to which he lends so greedy an ear! But let him be re-assured. The slaughter was not perpetrated by means of the galloper gun, which went not on the expedition at all, but was left by the king at his palace newly erected near Yeolo, the place of rendezvous. (N.B. This is not meant as a translation.) There were no “rounds of *artillery*” in the case, and the escort of British soldiers was taken with us, not to join in the foray, but to protect our own tents. Neither is this “memorable circumstance.” “omitted in my volumes,” as asserted by the veracious critic. It is distinctly stated for the information of those who are able to read, and the conduct of one of the privates stands specially recorded, who was urged by the Amhára to destroy a Galla.

(As a military man, and an Engineer officer to boot, I may perhaps be permitted to suggest, although with the utmost deference to the reviewer and his anonymous authorities, that the term “ammunition” might here have been employed with advantage. But perhaps he may consider “rounds of *artillery*” to be a more *classical* expression!)

The critic’s persevering patronage of Dr Krapf is so chivalrous, that I almost regret to show that it has been exerted in vain. Truth, however, requires that I should do so. Perhaps, indeed, the reviewer’s purpose may be less benevolent than it appears at first sight. His object may not be so much to exalt the

clergyman, as to depress me, by creating, as far as he is able, in the public mind, the belief of what he asserts so positively, namely, that the Embassy fell into utter “disrepute” after the departure of the missionary, that so far from being able to exercise any influence, it would have been forcibly expelled, had it not beaten a hasty retreat. My opponent is a man of dates, and parades them in a manner truly pathetic. But how on these points did he happen to remain so much in the dark? Had he not all the great Abyssinian authorities at his elbow? Was he not acquainted with those who knew everything about the country—Arabic and Amháric scholars, who, by the help of Isenberg’s Dictionary, could translate *boudah*, and with the aid of Richardson, plunge into the mysteries of *mafeesh*? Where was the erudite individual who weighed my classical attainments in the balance, and found them wanting? Where was his *fidus Achates*, the “Arqueem Nobba?” How happens it that his oracles grew suddenly dumb when he consulted them on the subject of dates? The reader will scarcely credit the reason of all this when it is stated; but the fact is, that the reviewer had no other object in view than to misrepresent and injure me, though of course aware that it was in my power fully to refute him. I shall do so now, and, as I think, so satisfactorily, that he will not return to the charge.

I state in my travels, that through the interference of the British Embassy, four thousand seven hundred persons, reduced by an arbitrary edict of the king to bondage, were liberated; upon which the critic, full of the “strange stories” which his strange associates had related to him, immediately concludes that Dr Krapf might have had some hand in that transaction. At all events he must contrive to make it appear so,

otherwise what would become of his primary thesis, that the Embassy “fell into such disrepute?” Montaigne, the reader will doubtless remember, observes somewhere in his essays, that in order to catch his critics napping, he often put forth the opinions of the greatest writers of antiquity, without making the least allusion to the author, in order that, if these should be turned into ridicule, as was not unlikely, he might show that it was not himself that they had attacked, but Seneca, or Cicero, or Plato. Without having any such intention, I have caught my critic in a similar trap. Believing he could attribute the honour to Dr Krapf, he does not call in question the issuing of the edict or the liberation of the slaves, but inquires knowingly, “had *he*, the missionary, nothing to do with their deliverance?” Next, with a skill which does him much credit, he connects the liberation of the princes with this other transaction, so that if the reader believes his unfounded assertion that it was Dr Krapf, not the Embassy, whose influence prevailed with the king in the one case, he may be led to suppose that it was so in the other. This, it must be acknowledged, is a very ingenious piece of workmanship, and has, I doubt not, earned its author much credit. Nevertheless, it will not bear the touch of examination. The simplest statement of facts in the world will suffice to destroy it, together with the critic’s main theory on the subject of my loss of influence at the court of Shoa. Dr Krapf quitted Angollála on the 12th of March, 1842, and during May of the same year, left Massowah for Aden. His active influence, it may fairly be inferred, terminated at this date. The forlorn Embassy was now abandoned to its own resources. There was no one to interest the king in its behalf; no one to perform great and benevolent actions, in order that I might obtain the credit of them.

While we were in this state of torpor, the proclamation in question was published by the herald. Before Dr Krapf quitted Massowah? Alas! no. For that event took place in May, whereas the royal edict was only promulgated on the 3rd of August. It was by me, therefore, and not by Dr Krapf, that the remonstrance was forwarded to Sáhela Selássie, which produced the liberation of the slaves. This fact is known to every member of the Mission, and it ought to have been within the recollection of some of those infallible authorities who at once supplied the critic with facts and with learning, who remembered for him, understood languages for him, and when need was, invented for him.

The statement that the parents of the four thousand seven hundred individuals liberated, were slaves, is not true. I have said that their fathers were bondsmen, and their mothers free women, and this position I maintain. To the question who delivered the petition, I reply, “my dragoman of course.” Upon his boasted maxim of “giving honour to whom honour is due,” the conscientious reviewer will doubtless award the sole credit of the success attending this remonstrance, not to myself, but to the party who presented it, and his doing so will be quite as reasonable as the decision that I collected no geographical information, because my assistant. Dr Kirk, was entrusted by me with the department of survey. In equity he ought surely to have taken the case of Dollond into consideration, since *he* made the satellite glass and the sextant used in determining the longitude of Ankóber, upon which every recent addition to the geography of southern Abyssinia is indebted for whatever value it does possess.

Next comes the deliverance of the princes, which

took place little more than three months before my return to India. These facts, known to every person in Abyssinia, the correctness of which will be vouched for by every member of the Mission, and the whole particulars of which were laid at the time before the Indian and British governments, may, perhaps, suffice to show in what spirit I have been criticised, and how totally unscrupulous my assailants have been. The gross misstatements disseminated anonymously through some of the public journals, and repeated by the candid reviewer, I have already publicly contradicted with my name. I here also contradict the assertion, that the king remained silent during my sojourn on the frontier. What object the sage reviewer would propose by my going back to take *a second* leave of His Majesty, when such is the etiquette of no country in the whole world, and my public duties imperatively required my presence at Fárri, the reader will be, as I am, at some loss to comprehend.

The treaty concluded with the king of Shoa having now been placed by Parliament before the country, I should have thought it unnecessary to notice the remarks which have been made on that subject, but for one or two considerations connected with it. First, it is said, that the ancient practice of detaining strangers had in usage been previously abolished, and it seems that, notwithstanding the treaty, it was afterwards, in one particular case, revived. Clearly the critic does not perceive the force of his own statements; for if, in spite of the most solemn engagements that a prince can enter into, Sáhela Selássie denied a British subject ingress to his country, does it not follow that distinct stipulations on this point were necessary? What does it signify, that

practically Sáhela Selássie had in many instances permitted Europeans to enter his country? Were they not all, whilst there, legally subject to his caprice, and was it not prudent to endeavour to emancipate them from that caprice? But Sáhela Selássie, it is said, shortly violated the treaty, and his act is made the subject of accusation against me. Had I broken it myself, the circumstance would have been somewhat more germane to the matter. At present, all that can be said is, that Sáhela Selássie is a novice in European diplomacy.

The case of hardship alluded to, is that of Dr Krapf, who, having quitted Shoa on urgent private business, was denied re-admission. On this subject I might enter into a long explanation, which, because of the peculiarity of my position, could never be complete. I therefore judge it more satisfactory to refer to the testimony of the Church Missionary Society, which, as well as Dr Krapf himself, has put on record its entire satisfaction with my proceedings. If, therefore, the parties most deeply concerned be content because they understand the whole state of the case, I may safely despise the reproaches of a critic who neither knows nor cares any thing about the matter, further than as it may enable him to prejudice me in public opinion.

In every page of the criticism the sophisms and fallacies of which I have undertaken to expose, there is some fresh proof that the reviewer does not see his own way, and that he is perpetually at contradiction with himself. For example, he insists on nothing more incessantly than the all-powerful influence of Dr Krapf over the king of Shoa, to which, he says, the Embassy owed whatever success it met with. No sooner, however, does the missionary quit the

precincts of the court, than he is arrested and plundered, evidently, the reviewer insinuates, with the knowledge and connivance of his fast friend Sáhela Selássie. What then becomes of his prodigious influence, since it did not suffice for his own protection? But if Dr Krapf was powerless, so likewise, argues the critic, was the Embassy; “for we read of no remonstrances, no applications made to the king on behalf of the missionary, and surely there are no political considerations to restrain communicativeness upon a subject like this.” He is perfectly mistaken. For although it may, without compromising any one, be stated that remonstrances were made, there are reasons, and those public ones too, which forbid me to explain why those remonstrances were ineffectual. Had the critic, or his Amháric philosopher, possessed one atom of sagacity, they would have divined those reasons; but as the case is otherwise, I leave them in the darkness which encompasses the whole coterie.

As to my having no right to use information expressly collected for me by the Political Agent at Aden, and by Lieutenant Christopher, in reference to the Eastern Coast, that is really a point upon which the reviewer can hardly be reckoned a competent judge. Lieutenant Barker, like Dr Kirk and the rest of my assistants, was under my orders, and sent with me for the express purpose of taking share, as I might see fit, in the duties allotted to me. The authorities quoted by the reviewer, as having been first in the field with every particular respecting slavery and the slave-trade in Shoa, do not bear out his assertion. Not to go any farther, where does he find the fact, which is rather an important one, that the king claims one out of every ten slaves that pass through his

dominions? Like most other points which bear materially upon the subject, this is omitted in the "reports" which are so confidently advanced, in order to throw dust in the eyes of those who will take the Reviewer's word for whatever he has the effrontery to assert.

Next comes the question of the royal arms of Shoa, which I have stated to be the Holy Trinity. Here the critic, as he thinks, has me clearly at disadvantage. He denounces me, accordingly, to be in the wrong, by showing, not what the arms of Shoa are, but what are the arms of the Ethiopic empire; which is exactly the same as if a traveller in Flanders, having described the royal arms of that country, were to be taken to task because the arms of the Austrian Emperor were different. I make a statement on one subject, and he refutes me by making a different statement on a different subject, which is somewhat comic, to say the least of it. But the arms of Abyssinia are, it seems, the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah," to which the Catholic missionaries have added a cross. M. le Grand, in speaking of Abyssinian coronations, says: "The escutcheon is a lion holding a cross, with this motto: *Vicit leo de tribu Judah*." But all this has nothing to do with the king of Shoa, who employs a device of his own, and that device is exactly what I have represented.

The ignorance of the reviewer and his anonymous authorities is again conspicuous in the remarks offered relative to the signet. Why has he not followed the rule he has laid down for my guidance, and "said openly," who these mysterious informants are, in order that, by their calibre, the public might have been enabled to judge whether on any, and on what subject, their opinion or their assertion is likely

to be better than my own? As it is, the reader might really be tempted to believe that there existed a penny post in the kingdom of Shoa, and that every subject was in the daily habit of corresponding through it with all his acquaintance. But with exception of a few letters indited by His Majesty, or by the Queen, there are, perhaps, not half a dozen penned during the year, and those are upon scraps of parchment the size of a visiting card, and have neither signature nor superscription, much less device to adorn them. More than ignorance is displayed in the sneers cast upon my ability to use the pencil and the rifle. These qualifications, however incompatible their exercise may be with the dignity to which the critic has been pleased to elevate me, are far from being lightly estimated in Abyssinia; and that foreigner who can neither draw portraits, nor ride, nor slay wild beasts, is not likely to hold a very high place in the estimation of Sáhela Selássie, whatever may be thought of him by a learned reviewer.

The speculations indulged in as to the success or failure of my Embassy, are artfully spread over the whole article, a little here and a little there; so that the reader, should a reader be found, must always of necessity have doubts unanswered in his mind. There is some skill in this, and I give the writer credit for it; but though he manages his matter well, the matter itself is good for nothing. He puts himself in the place of the public, and demands certain explanations which I am not permitted to give. Parliament alone has it in its power to satisfy my critic, and to Parliament I refer him. Everybody else will feel that an imperfect explanation would be worse than none at all; a complete one I cannot furnish, though it may hereafter be permitted me to clear up

the whole matter, which I am fully able to do.

It appears to me that I have now answered every objection worthy of notice that has been made against my work on Shoa. Not improbably, I shall be thought by some to have been too minute and circumstantial in my reply—to have exposed too seriously misrepresentations originating in ignorance or wanton malice—to have expended argument on that which deserved only contempt. But, respecting the public as I do, I judged it to be incumbent on me completely to disprove the assertion that I had imposed upon it. I trust I have established my own veracity, which I have been far more solicitous to do than to defend the plan adopted in the composition of my narrative. Much more might have been said, to show that the truth is neither in the reviewer, nor his "private informants," but it is not worth my while to trouble myself further with such people. The public, I am convinced, will agree with me in thinking that I have left no just cause for cavil, and if, therefore, the system of abuse should be persevered in, it can only be because I happen to have enemies who will make a point of pursuing me as long as I am above ground, and perhaps much longer. I wish they could discover some better and more profitable employment, and with that wish I leave them.

W.C. Harris.

London, March 31, 1844.

Extract of Instructions Addressed by the Secretary to the Government of Bombay to Captain W.C. Harris.

Bombay Castle, 24th April, 1841.

Sir,

I am directed to inform you, that the Honourable the Governor in Council having formed a very high estimate of your talents and acquirements, and of the spirit of enterprise and decision, united with prudence and discretion, exhibited in your recently published Travels “through the territories of the chief Moselekatse to the tropic of Capricorn,” has been pleased to select you to conduct a Mission which the British Government has resolved to send to Sáhela Selássie, the King of Shoa in Southern Abyssinia, whose capital, Ankóber, is computed to be about four hundred miles inland from the port of Tajúra on the African coast.

The Mission will be conveyed to Aden in the Honourable Company’s steam frigate Auckland, now under orders to leave Bombay on the 27th instant; and it has been arranged that one of the Honourable Company’s vessels of war, at present in the Red Sea, shall be in readiness to convey the Mission thence to Tajúra, at which latter place it should immediately disembark, and commence its journey to Ankóber.

(Signed) J.P. Willoughby, Secretary to Government.

To Captain W.C. Harris, Corps of Engineers.

The Embassy was thus Composed:

Captain W.C. Harris, Bombay Engineers.

Captain Douglas Graham, Bombay Army. Principal Assistant.

Assistant-Surgeon Rupert Kirk, Bombay Medical

Service.

Dr J.R. Roth, Natural Historian.

Lieutenant Sydney Horton, H.M. 49th Foot,—as a Volunteer.

Lieutenant W.C. Barker, Indian Navy.

Assistant-Surgeon Impey, Bombay Medical Service.

Mr Martin Bernatz, Artist.

Mr Robert Scott, Surveyor and Draftsman.

Mr J. Hatchatoor, British Agent at Tajúra.

Escort and Establishment:—

Two sergeants and fifteen rank and file; volunteers from H.M. 6th Foot, and from the Bombay Artillery.

An Assistant Apothecary.

Carpenter.

Smith.

Two Tent Lascars.

Introduction.

Written in the heart of Abyssinia, amidst manifold interruptions and disadvantages, the following pages will, in many respects, be found imperfect. Their chief recommendation must be sought in the fact of their embodying a detail of efforts zealously directed, under the auspices of a liberal Government, towards

the establishment of a more intimate connexion with a Christian people, who know even less of the world than the world knows of them,—towards the extension of the bounds of geographical and scientific knowledge, the advancement of the best interests of commerce, and the amelioration of the lot of some of the least favoured portions of the human race.

An obvious necessity for the introduction of the foregoing extract from his instructions will exonerate the Author from an intention to appropriate as his due the very gratifying encomium passed upon his previous exertions in Southern Africa. As a public servant, the freedom of his pen has now in some measure been curtailed; but his official position and resources, added to the able assistance placed at his command, have, on the other hand, extended more than commensurate advantages.

To Captain Douglas Graham, his accomplished and early friend, and principal assistant, he acknowledges himself most especially indebted, for the aid of a head and of a pen, such as are not often to be found united.

The exertions of Assistant-Surgeon Kirk alleviated incalculable human suffering; and his perseverance, although long opposed by an unfavourable climate, carried through a series of magnetic and astronomical observations of the highest importance to Abyssinian geography.

An indefatigable devotion to the cause of science, added to the experience gained during previous wanderings in Palestine, eminently adapted the learned Dr Roth to discharge the arduous functions of

natural historian to the Mission; and the splendid collection realised, together with the researches embodied in the various appendices to these volumes, will afford the fullest evidence of his industry and success.

To all who were associated with himself, in view to the better attainment of the objects contemplated, the Author here offers his warm acknowledgments for the cheerfulness displayed under trials and privations. Of the able assistance of some he was unavoidably deprived during an early period of the service. The disappointment thus involved in his own person has been fully equal to that experienced by themselves; but they must be sensible that their hardships have not been undergone in vain, and that they too have accomplished their share in the undertaking, so far as fortune permitted.

To the Reverend Dr Krapf the thanks of Government have already been conveyed, for the valuable co-operation derived from his extended acquaintance with the languages of Abyssinia. But the Author gladly avails himself of this opportunity publicly to record his personal sense of obligation to the active and pious Missionary of the Church of England, whose kindness from the first arrival of the Embassy on the frontiers of Shoa, to the date of his own departure for Cairo, was unremitting.

By no tribute of his own could the writer of these volumes extend the well-deserved reputation of McQueen's Geographical Survey. It will nevertheless be satisfactory to one who takes rank among the foremost benefactors of the oppressed "children of the sun," to receive the additional testimony which is due to the undeviating accuracy of theories and

conclusions founded upon years of patient and honest investigation; and this the Author unhesitatingly records, in so far as the north-eastern portions of Africa have come within the observation of the Embassy which he has the honour to conduct.

Ankóber, 1st January, 1843.

Postscriptum.

The length of time that has unavoidably elapsed between the preparation and the appearance of these volumes, needs no apology, neither is it proposed to offer any for their termination in the country of which they treat, and wherein they were written. But the work must not now be suffered to go forth without the expression of the Author's gratitude for the assistance derived during its progress through the press, from the talents and literary taste of his friend Major Franklin Lushington, C.B.

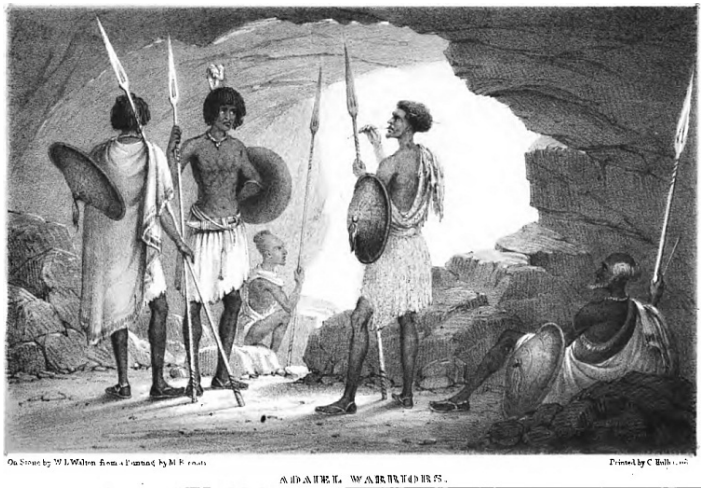
Volume One—Chapter One.

Departure of the British Embassy from the Shores of india.

It was late on the afternoon of a sultry day in April, which had been passed amid active preparations, when a dark column of smoke, streaming over the tall shipping in the crowded harbour of Bombay, proclaimed the necessity of a hurried adieu to a concourse of friends who still thronged the deck; and scarcely was the last wish for success expressed to the parties that had embarked, before the paddles

performed their first revolution, and the Honourable East India Company's steam frigate "Auckland," bound upon her maiden voyage, shot through the still blue water.

A turbaned multitude of manifold religions had lined the pier and the ramparts of the saluting battery, to pay a parting tribute of respect to their late governor. Sir James Rivett Carnac, who, with his lady and family, was now returning to his native land. On board also were the officers and gentlemen composing an Embassy organised under instructions by the government of India. More than a fortnight had been diligently passed in the equipment of this mission; but its objects, no less than the destination of its innumerable bales and boxes, still served as puzzles to public curiosity; and many a sapient conjecture on the subject was doubtless launched after the bounding frigate as she disappeared amid the haze of the closing day.



Immortal Watt! sordid is the man who places his foot

behind the Titanic engines which owe their birth to thee, and who would withhold, as an offering to the altar of thy memory, a mite, according to his worldly means, wherewith to erect a fabric colossal as the power enthralled by thy transcendent genius! Strange are the revolutions undergone in affairs nautical since the introduction of the marine steam-engine upon the Indian seas. The creaking of yards has given place to the coughing and sobbing of machinery, as it heaves in convulsive throes. Tacking and wearing have become terms obsolete, and through the clang of the fire-doors, and the ceaseless stroke of paddle-wheels, the voice of the pilot is rarely heard, save in conjunction with “Stop her,” or “Turn a-head.”

Marked by a broad ploughed wake, the undeviating course pursued through the trackless main was demonstrated midway of the voyage by a tall pillar of smoke from the funnel of the “Cleopatra,” rising against the clear hot horizon, like a genie liberated from his sealed bottle, to proclaim the advent of the English mails. The deep blue sea was glassy smooth. Each passing zephyr set from Araby’s shores; but, heedless alike of wind and opposing current, the good ship steadily pursued her arrow-like flight,—passed the bold outline of Socotra, redolent of spicy odours,—and before sunset of the ninth day was within sight of her destined haven, one thousand six hundred and eighty miles from the port she had left.

Cape Aden was the bold promontory in view, and it had borrowed an aspect even more sombre and dismal from a canopy of heavy clouds which stole across the naked and shattered peaks, to invest the castle-capped mountain with a funereal shroud. Crossed by horizontal ledges, and seamed with gaps and fissures, Jebel Shemshán rears its turreted crags

nearly eighteen hundred feet above the ocean, into which dip numerous bare and rugged buttresses, of width only sufficient to afford footing to a cony, and each terminating in a bluff inaccessible scarp. Sand and shingle strew the cheerless valleys by which these spurs are divided, and save where a stunted balsam, or a sallow clump of senna, has struggled through the gaping fissure, hollow as well as hill is destitute of even the semblance of vegetation.

> "How hideously
> Its shapes are heap'd around, rude, bare, and high.
> Ghastly, and scarr'd, and riven! Is this the scene
> Where the old earthquake's demon taught her young
> Ruin? Were these their toys? -
> or did a sea
> Of fire envelope once this dismal cape?"

Rounding the stern peninsula, within stone's cast of the frowning headlands, the magnificent western bay developed its broad expanse as the evening closed. Here, with colliers and merchantmen, were riding the vessels of war composing the Red Sea squadron. Among the isolated denizens of British Arabia, the unexpected arrival of a steam frigate created no small sensation. Exiles on a barren and dreary soil, which is precluded from all intercourse with the fruitful, but barbarous interior, there is nothing to alleviate a positive imprisonment, save the periodical flying visits of the packets that pass and repass betwixt Suez and Bombay. In the dead of night the sudden glare of a blue light in the offing is answered by the illumination of the blockship, heretofore veiled behind a curtain of darkness. The double thunder of artillery next peals from her decks; and as the labouring of paddle-wheels, at first faint and distant, and heard only at broken intervals, comes booming

more heavily over the still waters, the spectral lantern at the mast-head is followed by a red glow under the stem, as the witch, buffeting a cascade of snowy spray, vibrates to every stroke of the engine, and leaving a phosphoric train to mark her even course, glides, hissing and boiling, towards her anchorage. Warped alongside the blockship, the dingy hulls lean over like affectionate sisters that have been long parted; and, flinging their arms together, remain fast locked in each other's embrace.

And who are these swart children of the sun, that, like a May-day band of chimney-sweeps, are springing with wild whoops and yells over the bulwarks of the new arrival? 'tis a gang of brawny Seedies, enfranchised negroes from the coast of Zanzibar, whose pleasure consists in the transhipment of yonder mountain of coal, lying heaped in tons upon the groaning deck. To the dissonant tones of a rude tambourine, thumped with the thighbone of a calf, their labour has already commenced. Increasing the vehemence of their savage dance, they heave the ponderous sacks like giants busied at pitch and toss, and begrimed from head to foot, roll at intervals upon the blackened planks, to stanch the streaming perspiration. Thus stamping and howling with increased fury, while the harsh notes of the drum peal louder and louder to the deafening vehemence of the frantic musician, they pursue their task, night as well as day, amid clamour and fiendish vociferations, such as might suggest the idea of furies engaged in unearthly orgies. In the first burst of their revelry, the spectator is happy to escape from the suffocating atmosphere of impalpable coal-dust; and rarely does it happen that for every hundred tons of fuel received, fewer than one life is forfeited by the

actors in the wild scene described—some doomed victim, swollen with copious draughts, and exhausted by the frenzy of excitement, invariably casting himself down when his Herculean task is done, to rally and rise up no more.

Volume One—Chapter Two.

Disembarkation at Cape Aden.

Quitting the boisterous deck of the steamer, and pulling towards the shores of Arabia, a cluster of barren rocks, which might fitly be likened to heaps of fused coal out of a glass furnace, present an appearance very far from inviting or prepossessing. They are little relieved by a few straggling cadjan buildings, temporarily occupied by those whose avocations enable them, during the summer months, to fly the intolerable heat of the oven-like town. But under the roof of Captain Stafford Haines, who fills the honourable and responsible post of Political Agent, there awaited the embassy, on its landing, a hospitality of no ordinary stamp. It literally knew no bounds, and could not fail to obliterate at once any unfavourable first impression arising out of the desolate aspect bestowed by Dame Nature upon “Steamer Point.”

A volunteer escort of European artillerymen was yet to be obtained from the garrison of Aden; horses, too, were to be purchased, and sundry other indispensable preparations made for the coming journey into the interior of Africa. During a full week there seemed no termination to the influx of bags

containing dates, rice, and juwarree, and scarcely a shorter period was occupied in the selection from the government treasury of many thousand star-dollars of the reign of Maria Theresa, displaying, each in its turn, all the multifarious marks and tokens most esteemed by the capricious savage. Neither was the bustle one whit diminished by the remote position of the town, which, unless through the kindness of friends, is only to be attained on the back of one of the many diminutive donkeys stationed along the beach for the convenience of the stranger. Encumbered with a straw-stuffed pack-saddle far exceeding its own dimensions, the wretched quadruped is zealously bastinadoed into a painful amble by the heavy club of some juvenile Israelite with flowing auburn ringlets, whose chubby freckled cheeks, influenced by the sultry sun no less than by the incessant manual labour employed, are wont to assume a strangely excited appearance ere the journey be at an end.

Along the entire coast of Southern Arabia, there is not a more remarkable feature than the lofty promontory of Aden, which has been flung up from the bed of the ocean, and in its formation is altogether volcanic. The Arab historian (Masudi) of the tenth century, after speaking of the volcanoes of Sicily and in the kingdom of the Maha Raj, alludes to it as existing in the desert of Barhut, adjacent to the province of Nasafan and Hadramaut, in the country of Shaher. “Its sound, like the rumbling of thunder, might then be heard many miles, and from its entrails were vomited forth red-hot stones with a flood of liquid fire.” The skeleton of the long-exhausted crater, once, in all probability, a nearly perfect circle, now exhibits a horse-shoe-shaped crescent, hemmed in

by splintered crags, which, viewed from the turreted summit of Jebel Shemshán especially, whence the eye ranges over the entire peninsula, presents the wildest chaos of rock, ruin, and desolation.

From the landing-place at Ras Marbut, a tortuous track of five miles conducts past the coal-depôt and Seedie location, along various curvatures of the arid coast, to the cantonment and town of Aden. “Sublime in barrenness,” the rugged and lofty cliffs pile themselves upward in masses of the most fantastic shape, now bare and bald, shooting into perpendicular spires, and now leaning over the caravan of heavily-laden camels that toil along the path. The sunshine of perpetual summer reigns throughout the scene. Glittering sand-hills slumber in breezy dimness around the land-locked harbour, and over the faint peaks of Yemen’s distant mountains the unclouded sky floats bright and blue. The sparkling waters leap against the dark base of the naked islets; but the wide glassy surface beyond, reposing like a broad lake, is only ruffled by the circling eddy which follows the sportive plash of the bottle-nosed porpoise, or the pluming of a fleet of silver-winged terns, riding quietly at anchor on its tranquil bosom. As the road retires from the beach, the honey-combed cliff’s assume the similitude of massive wads and battlements, every where pierced with loopholes and embrasures. A gradual ascent leads through a craggy portal, bristling with cannon, and guarded by the pacing sentinel. One narrow rift in the solid rock, to the foot of which the sun rarely penetrates, forms an abrupt division in the chain, and beyond it the eye suddenly embraces the basin-like valley wherein stands the decayed capital of Arabia Felix.

“Aden,” saith old Ibn Batuta of Tangiers, “is situate upon the sea-shore—a large city, without either seed, water, or tree.” Five hundred years have elapsed since this graphic account was penned, and the vegetation has in nowise improved. An amphitheatre of dimensions sufficient for the Devil’s punch-bowl is formed by two volcanic ranges, once in connection, but obviously rent asunder, heaved outwards, and canted in opposite directions by some violent eruption that has forced an opening to the ocean. A sterility which is not to be surpassed invests the scene with an aspect most repulsive and forbidding. No tree varies the dreary prospect, no shrub relieves the eye, not even a flower lends its aid to enliven the wild and gloomy hollow, the fittest refuge that the imagination could picture for the lawless and the desperate. Fortifications are to be traced on every point either liable to assault or eligible for defence: ruined castles and watch-towers perched on the highest elevations of the precipitous hills stand the now inaccessible guardians of other days; and even the limited view to seaward, where the passing white sail of a small coasting craft, or the catamaran of the amphibious fisherman may occasionally be seen, is partially screened by a triangular rock, which frowns like a great spectre over the inner harbour. Seerah, “the fortified black islet,” is said to have been the residence of Cain, “the first born of a woman,” after the murder of his brother Abel; and, verily, it would be difficult to devise a more appropriate exile for the banished fratricide. Hurled into the sea by a convulsive shock, it is surrounded by pumice and by currents of obsidian, the products of volcanic emission, strewed among vast undulating waves of cavernous lava, or mingled with black masses of porous rock, which bear evidence of fusion, and yield

to the touch a metallic sound.

Sterility has indeed claimed this dreary region as her own; and even in the more productive portions of the peninsula, little verdure is derived from the almost leafless Beshám, the *Balsamodendron Opobalsamum*, a dwarf shrub, which, according to the Arab tradition, formed a part of the present carried to King Solomon by the Queen of Sheba from the aromatic regions of myrrh and frankincense. Where incisions are made in its stem, the far-famed Balm of Mecca flows copiously, but the volatile oil quickly evaporating, leaves a tasteless insipid gum. Nursed by no periodical shower and by no hidden spring, the precious plant, scorched by a withering blast, derives its only moisture from the mists which envelope the mountain-top, when all is sunshine below.

Among the most singular features of the Cape is the supply of water, which is found only in the valley of Aden, close under the cliffs, and at the openings of the fissures from the steppes above. Here, piercing to a great depth through the solid rock, are upwards of one hundred wells; many dilapidated and choked up, but others yielding an abundant and unfailing supply. Whence or in what manner they are fed it is extremely difficult to conjecture. All near the beach are bad, and more or less brackish; some are sensibly affected by the tides, and very saline; whilst of those which afford sweet water, one only is visibly acted upon by some lower spring. It is excavated at the entrance of a dark gorge rent by some violent convulsion in the rugged bosom of Shemshán, and the surface, which is in a state of constant commotion, remains at the same level, although daily drawn upon from morning till night for the supply of

thousands.

The almost total absence of the vegetable kingdom considered, it is not surprising that there should exist also a palpable deficiency in the animal creation. In perhaps no other quarter of the universe are the sparrow and the crow such perfect strangers. The pigeon, the fox, and the rat, divide the sovereignty of the rocky cleft; and the serrated heights are held without a rival by a garrison of monkeys. With these long-tailed occupants of the tower-capped pinnacles are connected wondrous superstitions, and an Aden tradition, extant throughout Southern Arabia, would exalt them into the remnant of the once-powerful tribe of Ad, “a people great, and strong, and tall,” who are believed to have been metamorphosed into apes, in token of the displeasure of Heaven, when Sheddád, “the king of the world,” illustrious in the annals of the East, impiously sought, in defiance of the prophet Hûd, to create unto himself a garden which should rival the Celestial Paradise. The Bostán el Irem, with its gorgeous palaces and shining domes, the similitude whereof had never been constructed on the regions of the earth, is said to be yet standing in the solitary deserts of Aden, although miraculously concealed from mortal ken. Within the silent walls of its lofty towers did Abdállah ibn Aboo Kelâba pass his night of wonder during the reign of Moâwiyeh, Prince of the Faithful; and it is believed by every good Moslem that this marvellous fabric of human skill and impiety, which finds a record in the sacred Korán, will endure until the Last Day, an imperishable, but rarely revealed monument of Divine retribution.

Note 1. Lieutenant J.C. Cruttenden, assistant to the Political Agent at Aden, heard the same version

repeated at Saana, the capital of Yemen, which far-famed city he has been the first European to visit, since the days of Niebuhr.

Volume One—Chapter Three.

A Stroll through the Infant Metropolis of British Arabia.

A uniform system of architecture pervades the houses of Aden, nearly all of which would appear to have arisen out of the ruins of former more extensive edifices, now buried far below the surface of the accumulated soil. Tiers of loose undressed stone are interlaid, instead of mortar, with horizontal bands of timber; the walls thus traversed being perforated with pigeon-holes to serve as windows, and surmounted by a low parapet concealing the terraced roof. Many, occupied by the more wealthy, have attained to a third story; but nearly all are destitute of ornament. This is now restricted to the decayed palace of the sultáns of Yemen, where

> “In proud state
> Each robber chief upheld his armed halls,
> Doing his evil will.”

In the thick coating of cement with which the shattered edifice is still partially encrusted, are the remains of various raised devices; and a profusion of open fretwork in wood is still observable, interspersed with latticed cornices, comprising choice sentences from the Korán.

The shops of Parsee and Mohammadan merchants already extend an assortment of European commodities to the notice of the visitor; and in a bazaar, infested like other fish-markets by a legion of cats, are exposed sharks and a variety of the finny tribe. Water from the sweetest well is hawked about in dirty skins, instead of the lemonade and sherbet of large oriental towns; and piles of fruit, drugs, dates, molasses, and other abominations, present the same amount of flies, and no abatement of the compound of villainous smells, by which the booth of the shrewd and avaricious Gentoo is so invariably distinguished.

In the suburbs, the frail cadjan wigwam of the Arab and Somauli population impart the undeviating aspect of the portable encampment of the nomade hordes. The tattered goat-hair awning of the bare-footed pilgrim to the shrine at El Medina is here; and low crazy cabins of matting or yellow reeds are so slenderly covered in with the leaves of the palm as to form but a scanty shelter against the intolerable heat and dust occasioned by periodical blasts of the fiery Shimál.

During his diurnal reign, the sun has shone fiercely over the extinct crater of Aden, and the relentless shower of dust and pebbles has kept the inhabitants within their rude dwellings. But as the declining rays cast a lengthened shadow across the narrow alleys, and the hot puffs, abating in violence, are succeeded by a suffocating calm, the hitherto torpid population is to be seen abroad. That bronzed and sun-burnt visage, surrounded by long matted locks of raven hair —that slender, but wiry and active frame—and that energetic gait and manner, proclaim the untameable descendant of Ishmaël. He nimbly mounts the crupper of his now unladen dromedary, and at a trot

moves down the bazaar on his way back to the town of Lahedge. A checked kerchief around his brows, and a kilt of dark blue calico about his loins, comprise his slender costume. His arms have been deposited outside the Turkish wall, which stretches its barrier across the isthmus from sea to sea, where flying parties of the Foudthli still infest the plain; and as he looks back, his meagre ferocious aspect, flanked by that tangled web of hair, stamps him the roving tenant of the desert.

The Arab has changed neither his character nor his habits since the days of the patriarchs, and he affords a standing evidence of the truth of the scriptural prophecy. He regards with disdain and with proud indifference every other portion of mankind, for who can produce so ancient monuments of liberty as he who, with little intermission, has preserved it from the very Deluge? Is the land of his ancestors invaded? A branch torn by the priest from the venerated *Nebek* (A tree bearing a fruit like the Siberian crab), having been thrust into the fire, is quenched in hot blood welling from the divided throat of a ram which has only the moment before been slaughtered in the name of God the one omnipotent. Dripping with the crimson tide, the emblem is solemnly delivered to the nearest warrior, who hies him forth with this his summons for the gathering of the wild dans. Down from their rocky fastnesses pour the old and the young, the untried stripling, and the stern veteran with a thousand scars. On, on speeds the messenger with the alarum of coming strife. Transferred from hand to hand, it rests not in the grasp of any; and in a few brief hours, thousands of wild spirits, calling upon Allah for victory, and thirsting for the blood of the foe, have mustered around the unfurled standard of their

prophet.

Thus it was that the numerous hill-forts and strongholds studding the rich province of Assyr, which borders on the Holy Land of the Moslem, last poured forth their hordes to meet the invader of her fair plains, and the despoiler of her countless flocks. Sixteen thousand warriors, composing one of the most ancient as well as bravest of the Arab tribes, cast aside spear and falchion, and, armed only with the deadly creese, stole during the night upon the camp of the insatiate Egyptian, and slaughtering the greater number, drove Ibrahim Pacha, with the wreck of his army, to seek safety in precipitate flight to Hodeïda.

In yonder fat and sensual money-changer from the city of Surat is presented the very antipodes to the posterity of Hagar. In drowsy indolence, see him emerge from his treasures of ghee and groceries, among which, scales in hand, he has been patiently squatted since earliest dawn at the terrace of his booth, registering his gains in the daily ledger. Not one spark of animation is there. A dark slouching turban, and ample folds of snowy drapery, envelope the sleek person of the crafty Hindoo, and his lethargic motions render it difficult to comprehend how he should have contrived to exile himself from his native soil, and in such a forbidding spot, even in pursuit of his idol, Mammon.

Ajan and Berbera, famous for their early connection with the Greek kings of Egypt, have both contributed largely to the population that now throngs the street. The regular and finely-turned features of those Somauli emigrants from the opposite coast are at once selected from the group, although some have

disguised their hair under a thick plaster of quick-lime, and others are rendered hideous by a wig of fiery red curls; whilst the dyed ringlets of a third have faded to the complexion of a housemaid's mop, and a fourth, forsooth, is shaven because his locks have been pulled in anger. (It is the practice of the Somauli to shave the head when thus insulted, and to make a vow that the hair shall not grow again until they have had their revenge.) All present a curious contrast to the jet black skin and woolly pate of the Suhaïli, who, in his turn, is destitute of the thick pouting lip which adorns that stalwart Nubian, swaggering like a great bully by his side. At the door of those cadjan cabins, which resemble higglers crates, not less in size than in form and appearance, groups of withered Somauli crones are diligently weaving mats, baskets, and fans, of the pliant date-leaf; and their laughing daughters, yon tall, slim, and erect damsels with the earthen pitchers above their plaited tresses, present, on their way up from the well, some of the comeliest specimens of the ebon race.

"Honesty," saith the Arab proverb, "is found only amongst poor fools." The Bedouin has for ages been celebrated for his ingenuity and daring, and the African offset is nothing behind the parent stock. A Somauli thief is perhaps "the cunningest knave in the universe." He has been known to cut away a pile of tobacco so as to leave to the merchant who reposed thereon, naught but the effigy of his own figure: and after entering through the roof of a house, the burglar has taken his exit through the door with chests of treasure, from the top of which the sleeping proprietor has been first hoisted, with his bed, by a tackle lowered through the aperture, and so left hanging until the morning!

Muffled in a Spanish mantilla, see the spouse of the bigoted Islám taking the air upon the crupper of a donkey, her fat face so scrupulously concealed, that nothing of it is visible save two sloe black eyes which glitter through perforations in the white veil, and impart a similitude to the horned owl. On the rude steps of the clustering habitations that she has passed, surrounded by rosy-cheeked urchins, are seated numerous dark-eyed and well-dressed Jewesses. Rachel, although discreet, and preserving the strictest decorum, is unveiled. Were it possible to prevail upon her to have recourse to daily ablution, in lieu of the hebdomadal immersion which celebrates her sabbath eve, her complexion would not be less fair than that of the native of Southern Europe; and in the well-chiselled features and aquiline profile of the brunette, are preserved all those marked peculiarities which in every part of the world distinguish the scattered daughters of Israël.

The children of the tribe of Judah are most completely identified with the soil of Aden, and may be regarded as the artisans and manufacturing population. Victims heretofore of the tyranny and intolerant persecution which the infidel has ever to expect at the hand of the true believer, they toiled and accumulated, but feared lest a display of the fruits of their labour should excite the cupidity of a rapacious master. Now their prospect has brightened, and the remnant of a mighty though fallen and dispersed people, no longer exists here in poverty and oppression, insulted and despised as they have always been in every part of the Eastern world; but in uninterrupted security ply their industrious occupation, and under British protection fearlessly practise those rites which have been religiously

preserved from the time that their priests bore aloft the ark of the covenant. Stone slabs with Hebrew inscriptions mark the resting-place of the departed; schools witness the education of the rising generation; and men and women, arrayed in their holiday apparel, sit apart in the synagogue, to listen at each return of their sabbath to the law which had been read since “by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea” their fathers “went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.”

Volume One—Chapter Four.

The Gibraltar of the East.

Aden, in its history and reverses, presents the type of many a mighty nation,—it flourished and has fallen. As it once stood, it was the maritime bulwark of Arabia Felix. So early as the reign of Constantine the Great, it was celebrated for its impregnable fortifications, its extended traffic, and its attractive ports. Here the camels of the Koreishites were laden with a precious cargo of aromatics. Here commerce first dawned; and little more than two centuries and a half have rolled away since the decayed city ranked among the most opulent emporia of the East. Its decline is only dated from the close of the illustrious reign of Suleïman the Magnificent; but the spider has since “weaved her web in the imperial palace, and the owl has stood sentinel upon the watch-tower.”

In the eyes of the true believer, the Cape is hallowed by the tradition that it was honoured with the preaching in person of that arch impostor, “the last of

all the prophets," who, with the sword in one hand and the Korán in the other, became the lawgiver of the Arabians, and the founder of an empire which in less than a century had spread itself from the Pyrenees to the Indus. Three hundred and sixty mosques once reared their proud heads, and eighty thousand inhabitants poured into the field, an army which accomplished the subjugation of El Yemen. This latter, famous from all antiquity for the happiness of its climate, its fertility and surpassing riches, became an independent kingdom at the period that Constantinople fell into the hands of Mahomet the Second. Aden frequently cast off its allegiance; and when the Turks, by means of their fleet built at Suez, rendered themselves masters of the northern coast of the Red Sea, they found the peninsula independent, under the Sultan of Foudthli. Turkey and Portugal, struggling for supremacy in the East, hotly contested its possession; but, being unable longer to maintain their rivalry, it finally reverted into the grasp of its ancient masters.

Great natural strength, improved by the substantial fortifications which had been carried by Sultán Selim completely round the zone of hills that engirds the town, now rendered it the fittest of all retreats for the piratical hordes of the desert; and the lawless sons of Ishmaël, scouring the adjacent waters, loaded their stronghold with booty. But after the loss of government, Aden could not be expected to retain its opulence. Its trade passed into the rival port of Mocha, and grinding oppression caused the removal of the wealthy. At the period of the British occupation, ninety dilapidated houses, giving shelter to six hundred impoverished souls, were all that remained to attest its ancient glories. The town lay spread out

in ruin and desolation, and heaps of stone, mingled with bricks and rubbish, sternly pointed to the grave of the mosque and tall minaret.

Few fragments now survive the general decay, to record the high estate of the once populous metropolis, or reveal the magnificence it could formerly boast in works of public utility. The chief buildings are believed to have been situated ten miles inland, and to have been swallowed up by the ever rising, never ebbing, tide of the desert. The red brick conduit of Abd el Waháb can still be traced from the Durab el Horaïbi, whence it stretches to Bir Omheit, upwards of eight miles, across a now dilapidated bridge. Here are numerous wells, which supplied the reservoirs; but, “like the baseless fabric of a vision,” every vestige of an edifice has vanished.

Among the most perfect and conspicuous relics of the past are the laborious and costly means adopted to insure in so arid and burning a climate, a plentiful supply of water. In addition to the wells, three hundred in number, the remains of basins of great magnitude are found in various directions; and in the Valley of Tanks are a succession of hanging cisterns, formed by excavations in the limestone rock. These are lined with flights of steps, and supported by lofty buttresses of imperishable masonry, forming deep reservoirs of semi-elliptical form, which still blockade every channel in the mountain side, and once served to collect the precious drops from heaven, when showers doubtless fell more abundantly than at the present day.

In the extensive repositories for the dead, too, may be found assurances of the former population of Aden. Many of the countless tombs in the Turkish

cemetery were of white marble, and bore on jasper tablets elaborately-sculptured inscriptions surmounted by the cap and turban; but the greater number of these pillared monuments have either disappeared or been overthrown. Of the evidences of Mohammadanism that once graced the city, nearly all lie buried from sight beneath heaps of accumulated rubbish and débris, the removal of portions of which has disclosed many curious coins of remote date. The minaret of Menáleh, and a tottering octagon of red brick, attached to the Jama el Musjid, lone survivors of the wreck, still point to the sky; and of the few mosques that have been spared by the destroying hand of time, the principal is that of the tutelar saint of the city, beneath the cupola of which, invested with a pall of crimson silk, and enshrined in the odour of sanctity, repose the venerated remains of Sheïkh Hydroos.

An excellent zig-zagged road, imperfectly paved, and raised in parts to the height of twenty feet, extends from the base to the summit of Jebel Shemshán, and, with some few of the disjointed watch-towers, has defied the ravages of centuries. Three enormous pieces of brass ordnance, pierced for a sixty-eight pound shot, and covered with Turkish inscriptions, were the chief symbols of the former strength of this eastern Gibraltar. These were transmitted to England, when their capture, shortly after the present accession, avenged an insult offered to her flag, and wreathed the first laurels around the brow of her youthful Queen.

In general aspect the Cape is not dissimilar from the volcanic islands in the Grecian Archipelago, and viewed from a distance it appears separated altogether from the mainland. The long dead flat of

sand by which it is connected with the Arabian continent, rising on either beach scarcely two feet above high water mark, induces the belief that the promontory must on its first production in early ages have been insulated. According to the evidence of the present generation the sea is still receding, and the sand steadily accumulating, but the noble western bay will not be affected for many centuries. Though the glory of Aden may have fled, and her commerce become totally annihilated, her ports will long remain as nature formed them, excellent, capacious, and secure.

Important commercial advantages cannot fail to accrue from the occupation of so secure an entrepôt, which at any season of the year may be entered and quitted with equal facility. The readiest access is afforded to the rich provinces of Hadramaut and Yemen, famous for their coffee, their frankincense, and the variety of their gums, and abounding in honey and wax, of a quality which may vie with the produce of the hives of the Mediterranean. A lucrative market to the manufactures of India and Great Britain is also extended by the facilities attending communication with the African coast, south of Báb el Mandéb, where the high mountain ranges bordering upon the shore are clothed with trees producing myrrh, frankincense, and precious gums, whilst the valleys in the interior pour forth for export, sheep, ghee, drugs, dry hides, gold dust, civet, ivory, rhinoceros horns, peltries, and ostrich feathers, besides coffee of the choicest growth. A wide field is open for mercantile speculation, and it is not a little pleasant to contemplate the approaching improvement of Christian Abyssinia, and the civilisation of portions of Africa even more benighted

and remote, through the medium of intercourse with British Arabia.

Under the flag of old England, Aden has enjoyed a degree of happiness and security never previously experienced, even in the days of her greatest glory, when she ranked among the foremost of commercial marts in the East, and when vessels from all the known quarters of the globe thronged her boasted roadstead. Emigrants from the interior as well as from the exterior of Hadramaut and Yemen, and from both shores of the Red Sea, are daily crowding within the walls to seek refuge from grinding oppression, and to free themselves from the galling burthen beneath which they have long groaned at the hand of insatiate native despots. The amazing increase of population and the crowded state of the bazaars form subject for high admiration. In the short space of three years the census has been augmented to twenty thousand souls; substantial dwellings are springing up in every direction, and at all the adjacent ports, hundreds of native merchants do but await the erection of permanent fortifications in earnest of intention to remain, to flock under the guns with their families and wealth. Emerging thus rapidly from ruin and degradation, the tide of lucrative commerce, both from Africa and Arabia, may be confidently expected to revert to its former channel. Blessed by a mild but firm government, the decayed mart, rescued from Arab tyranny and misrule, will doubtless shortly attain a pinnacle far eclipsing even its ancient opulence and renown; and Aden, as a free port, whilst she pours wealth into a now impoverished land, must ere long become the queen of the adjacent seas, and take rank among the most useful dependencies of the British crown.

Volume One—Chapter Five.

Voyage across the Gulf of Arabia.

Eight bells were “making it twelve o’clock” on the 15th of May, when the boatswain piped all hands on deck to weigh the anchor, and within a few minutes the Honourable Company’s Brig-of-war “Euphrates,” having the Embassy on board, and commanded by one of its members (Lieutenant Barker, Indian Navy), set her white sails, and, followed by three large native crafts freighted with horses and baggage, stood across the Arabian Gulf. A favourable breeze pressed her steadily through the yielding bosom of the ocean. The salt spray flew under her gallant bows; and as the hospitable cadjan roofs on Steamer Point, first in order, and then the jagged pinnacles forming the spider skeleton of Aden, sank gradually astern, each individual of the party destined to traverse the unknown wilds of Ethiopia, took the pilgrim’s vow that the razor should pass no more over his beard, until his foot had again rested on civilised shores—an event not unreasonably conjectured to be far distant for all, and for some destined never to be realised.

The breeze increasing, the low sandy promontory of Ras Bír on the African coast became visible during the forenoon of the following day; and before evening, notwithstanding a delay of some hours, caused by an accident to the mainyard of one of the tenders, which obliged her to be taken in tow, the brig was passing a group of eight coral islands, elevated about thirty feet above the level of the sea. The remainder of the fleet having parted company during

the night, were now perceived standing directly for Mushahh, the nearest of these islets, situated at the mouth of the Gulf of Tajúra, and divided from the Danákil coast by a fathomless channel of seven miles. An iron messenger despatched to bring the convoy to, ricochetted over the blue water, kicking up a column of white spray at every bound, and before the smoke of the gun had cleared the bulwarks, a bald pate protruded between the rigging, was followed by the swarthy person of Aboo Bekr, of the Somauli tribe Aboo Salaam, and commonly styled Durábili, or "the Liar." Nákhuda of a small trading craft which had been employed as a pilot boat during the recent trigonometrical survey of the coast, he was well-known to the officers of the "Euphrates," and was ascertained to be at this moment charged with despatches for Aden, which, whether important or otherwise, had been during three days lying safely at anchor off the island, to admit of enhanced profits by the collection of a cargo of wood.

"Salaam aleikum!" exclaimed the old Palinurus as soon as his foot had touched the deck; "Hamdu-lillah! Praise be unto God! it is you, after all. When I saw those two crazy tubs in your van, I believed that it could not be my old ship, although it loomed so vastly like her; but the moment you took in your studding-sails to let Aboo Bekr come alongside, I knew it must be the Capitan Báshi. Kayf hálut, how fares it with your health?"

The welcome visitor was forthwith accommodated with a chair on the poop; into which having squeezed himself with difficulty, he drew up his knees to his scanty beard, inserted a cigar into his mouth as a quid, and, sipping tea like a finished washerwoman, instituted a train of inquiries relative to the position of

affairs in the British possessions across the water.

“Tayyib, tayyib,” he ejaculated, when thoroughly satisfied that Cape Aden was not again in the hands of the Arabs. “Marhábba, it is well. All, too, is as it should be at Tajúra. Misunderstandings are adjusted, and the avaricious chieftains have at last, the Lord be praised! got all the dirt out of their bellies. Their palms have been judiciously tickled, and it only now remains to be seen whether the old sultán, who is fully as fond of money as his neighbours—or his ancient rival, Mohammad Ali, is to have the honour of forwarding the English to King Sáloo. My boy has just returned from Hábesh, and shall escort you. Abroo has been twice in Bombay, as you know, Capitan. You have only to tell me if he should misbehave, and I’ll trounce the young scamp soundly.”

Meanwhile the bold mountain outline of the land of promise, forming a worthy barrier to the unexplored treasures of the vast continent of Africa, had been rapidly emerging from obscurity, and the brown forbidding bluff, styled Ras Dukhán, “the smoking promontory,” in height about five or six hundred feet, was now on the starboard quarter; its abrupt summit, as usual, surmounted by a coronet of fleecy clouds, from which, if not from the thermal well at its base, this Cape has probably derived its appellation. The brig was already standing up the bay of Tajúra; but darkness overtaking her, it was resolved to lay to until daybreak; and a gun fired in intimation of approach was presently answered by a display of rockets and blue lights from the Honourable Company’s schooner “Constance,” riding at anchor in the harbour.

The Arabs lay claim to the invention of the compass; and Aboo Bekr, who believed himself in truth a

second Anson, was provided with one, which must certainly have been the first ever constructed. Age having impaired the dilapidated needle, it was forced off its pivot by a quantity of pepper-corns, which are here considered highly efficacious in the restoration of decayed magnetic powers. From the native navigators in the Indian Ocean he had borrowed a primitive nautical instrument for determining the latitude; nor was he a little vain of his practical skill as an observer. Through a perforation in the centre of a plane of wood in size and shape like a playing card, was passed a knotted whipcord, and the distance from each knot was so regulated that the subtended angle should equal the altitude of the polar star at some frequented point on the coast. The knot having been placed between the teeth, and the lower margin of the plane brought in optical contact with the horizon, the position of Polaris must be observed with reference to the upper edge; when, if it be above, the desired haven is known to be to the southward—if below, to the northward, and the course is shaped accordingly.

“I’ll take you in this very night, Capitan Báshi, if you so please,” resumed the pilot, whose packet had by this time escaped his recollection altogether. “Only give me the order, and, praise be unto Allah! there is nothing that Aboo Bekr cannot do. My head, as you see, is bald, and I may perhaps be a little old-looking now, but wait until we get on shore, and my new wig is bent; Inshállah! I shall look like a child of five years among the youngest of them.”

“Now if we had but Long Ali of Zeyla on board,” continued the old man, whose merry tongue knew no rest; “if we had only Two-fathom Ali here, you would not make all these difficulties. When they want to lay

out an anchor, they have nothing else to do but to hand it over to Ali, and he walks away with it into six or eight feet without any ado. I went once upon a time in the dark to grope for a berth on board of his buggalow, and stumbling over some one's toes, inquired to whose legs they belonged; 'All's,' was the reply. 'And whose knees are these?' said I, after walking half across the deck; 'Ali's.' 'And this head in the scuppers, pray whose is it?' 'Ali's to be sure,' growled a sleepy voice; 'what do you want with it?' 'Subhán Allah, Ali again!' I exclaimed; 'then I must even look for stowage elsewhere.'"

Dawn of the 17th revealed the town of Tajúra, not a mile distant, on the verge of a broad expanse of blue water, over which a gossamer-like fleet of fishing catamarans already plied their busy craft. The tales of the dreary Teháma, of the suffocating Shimál, and of the desolate plains of the bloodthirsty Adaïel, were in that moment forgotten. Pleasure sparkled in every eye, and each heart bounded with exultation at the near prospect of fulfilling the benevolent schemes in design, and of adding one mite to the amelioration of Afric's swart sons.

Those who are conversant with Burchell's admirable illustration of an encampment of Cape farmers, with their gigantic waggons scattered about in picturesque confusion, will best understand the appearance of the group of primitive habitations that now presented itself on the sea-beach. Exceeding two hundred in number, and rudely constructed of frames of unhewn timber, arranged in a parabolic arch, and covered in with date matting, they resembled the white tilts of the Dutch boors, and collectively sheltered some twelve hundred inhabitants. The bold grey mountains, like a drop scene, limited the landscape, and, rising

tier above tier, through coral limestone and basaltic trap, to the majestic Jebel Goodah, towering five thousand feet above the ocean, were enveloped in dirty red clouds, which imparted the aspect of a morning in the depth of winter. Verdant clumps of date and palm trees embosomed the only well of fresh water, around which numerous Bedouin females were drawing their daily supply of the precious fluid. These relieved the humble terraced mosque of whitewashed madrepore, whence the voice of the muezzin summoned the true believer to matin prayer; and a belt of green *makanni*, a dwarf species of mimosa with uniform umbrella tops, fringing the sandy shore, completed a pleasant contrast to the frowning blocks of barren black lava which fortify the Gibraltar whereupon the eye had last rested.

As the ship sailed into the harbour, the appearance of a large shark in her wake caused the tongue of the pilot again to “break adrift.” “A certain friend of mine,” said he, “Nákhuda of a craft almost as fast a sailer as my own, which is acknowledged to be the best in these seas, was once upon a time bound from this port to Mocha, with camels on board. When off Jebel Ján, the high table-land betwixt the Bay of Tajúra and the Red Sea, one of the beasts dying, was hove overboard. Up came a shark, ten times the size of that fellow, and swallowed the carcass, leaving one of the hinder legs protruding from his jaws; and before he had time to think where he was to find stowage for it, up came a second tremendous monster, and bolted his messmate, camel, leg, and all.”

In return for this anecdote, the old man was treated to the history of the two Kilkenny cats in the sawpit,

which fought until nothing remained of either but the tail and a bit of the flue. “How could that be?” he retorted seriously, after turning the business over in his mind. “Now, Capitan Báshi, you are spinning yarns, but, by Allah, the story I have told you is as true as the holy Korán, and if you don’t choose to believe *me*, there are a dozen persons of unblemished veracity now in Tajúra, who are ready to vouch for its correctness.”

Volume One—Chapter Six.

Cast Anchor at Tajúra on the African Coast.

A scraggy, misshapen lad, claimed by Aboo Bekr as his own most dutiful nephew, now paddled alongside in a frail skiff, the devil dancing in his wicked eye; and having caught the end of a rope thrown by the doting uncle, he was on board in another instant.

During a former cruise of the “Euphrates,” this imp had contrived to pass on the purser a basket of half-hatched eggs, which he warranted “new laid,” but with which he was subsequently pelted over the gangway. On being greeted as “Sahib el bayzah,” “the master of the eggs,” and asked if he had not brought a fresh supply for sale, grinning archly, he dragged forward by the topknot a dull, stupid, little wretch—his messmate—whose heavy features formed the exact reverse of his own impudent animation. “Here,” he exclaimed, “is the identical young rascal of whom I told you I bought them; he actually stole the whole from under his mother’s hen, and then assured me that they were fresh.” “Why

don't you grow taller as well as sharper?" enquired the party upon whom the precocious child of the sea had imposed; "'tis now twelve months since you cheated me, and you are as diminutive a dwarf as ever."

"How can any one thrive who is starved," was the prompt reply; "were I to eat as immoderately as you do, I doubt not I should soon grow as corpulent."

But the arrival of Ali Shermárki shortly changed this desultory conversation to weightier matters. This worthy old man, sheïkh of the Somauli tribe Aber Gerhájis, possessing great influence and consideration among the entire Danákil population of the coast, had been invited from Zeyla, his usual place of residence, to assist in the extensive preparations making for the journey of the Embassy; and he now represented the requisite number of camels to be on their way down from the mountains, if the assurances of the owners, upon whose word small reliance could be pieced, were to be implicitly believed.

Long faithfully attached to the British government, the sheikh's first introduction arose out of a catastrophe which occurred many years ago—the loss of the merchant brig "Mary Anne" at Berbera, a sea-port on the Somauli coast, lying immediately opposite to the peninsula of Aden. Deserted from October till March, it becomes, throughout the residue of the year, one uninterrupted fair, frequented by ships from the Arabian shores, by rapacious Banians from India, and by caravans of wandering savages from all parts of the interior—a vast temporary city or encampment, populated by not fewer than fifty thousand souls, springing into existence as if by the magic aid of

Aladdin's lamp, and disappearing so suddenly, that within a single week, not one inhabitant is to be seen. Yet another six months, and the purse-proud merchant of Hurrur is again there, with his drove of comely slaves newly exported from the highlands of Abyssinia. There, too, is the wild pagan, displaying coffee, peltries, and precious gums from beyond Gurágue; and, punctual as ever, see the káfilah from the distant gurriahs of Amín and Ogáden, a nomade band, laden with ivory and ostrich plumes, and stained from head to foot, both in person and in garment, by the impalpable red dust traversed during the long march from the southward.

Religious prejudices on the part of the wily Hindoo precluding all traffic in live stock, the Somauli shepherd retains in his own hand the sale of his black-headed flocks; embarked with which in his frail bark of fifty tons, he stands boldly across the gulf, at seasons when the Arab fears even to creep along the coast of the Hejáz. All other trade, however, is engrossed by the subtle Banian, who divides the *adductor pollicis* of the right thumb, in order to increase the span by which his wares are to be measured; and he, during many years, has enjoyed, silently and unobserved, the enormous profits accruing from the riches annually poured out from the hidden regions of Africa. No form of government regulates the commerce; and, in the absence of imposts, barter is conducted solely through the medium of a native broker styled Abán, who, receiving a regulated percentage upon purchases and sales, is bound, at the risk of his own life, to protect his constituent from injury or outrage.

A vessel standing towards the coast proves a signal to all who gain their livelihood by this system, to swim

off, and contest first arrival on board; the winner of the aquatic race, in accordance with ancient usage, being invariably received as her Abán. Thus it was that Ali Shermárki became agent to the “Mary Anne,” a small English merchantman from Mauritius, whose captain, imprudently landing with the greater portion of his crew, afforded to a party of knavish Somauli an opportunity to cut the cable, when she drifted on shore and was lost. Hoping by his influence to prevail upon the plunderers to desist, the Abán, then a younger man, exerted himself to gain the wreck, but he was repulsed by a shower of spears, and his boat was swamped. A savage rabble next beleaguered his dwelling, and imperiously demanded the persons of the officers and crew, in order to put them to death; but, true to his charge, Ali Shermárki stoutly resisted, and being severely wounded, succeeded with his blood in securing honourable terms, and preserving the lives for which he had made himself responsible. His zealous integrity was duly rewarded by the British Government, and a sword was presented in token of his gallantry, the display of the brilliant setting of which led to the narration of the foregoing history.

The passage from Aden had been made in forty-two hours. As the cable of the “Euphrates” ran through the hawse-holes, and the rest of the squadron feu into their places betwixt herself and the shore, she fired a salute of five guns; and, after considerable delay, a negro was perceived timidly advancing with a lighted brand from among a knot of grey-bearded elders, seated in deep consultation beneath the scanty foliage of an ancient date tree. A superannuated 4 Pr., honey-combed throughout its calibre, and mounted upon a rickety ship carriage, tottered on the beach—the sole piece of ordnance

possessed by Sultán Mohammad ibn Mohammad, reputed ruler of all the Danákil tribes. It was, after much coaxing, persuaded to explode in reply to the compliment paid, and for some minutes afterwards, wreaths of white smoke continued to ascend from the chimney-like vent, as though the venerable engine had taken fire, and was being consumed internally.

The commander of the “Euphrates,” whose naval functions were now temporarily suspended, having long enjoyed the honour of a personal acquaintance with the potentate bearing the above pompous and high-sounding title, repaired forthwith to the palace, which consists of the stern moiety of the ill-starred “Mary Anne,” tastily erected, keel uppermost, in the middle of the town, to serve as an attic story. Letters of introduction from the political authorities at Aden, with many complimentary speeches, duly delivered, permission to land was solicited; and although the formidable array of shipping, whose guns, not two hundred yards distant, sullenly overlooked the royal lodge, had given birth to certain misgivings, the Sultán finally overcame his fears, and acquiesced in the arrangement. A spot of waste land, forming a common near the mosque, was pointed out as the site upon which to encamp, but the favour was granted with this express understanding, that the British Embassy should tarry in so enviable a situation, not one moment longer than the exigencies of the service imperatively demanded; a saving clause in the stipulation to which all parties heartily subscribed.

The bay in which the “Euphrates” now rode, styled, from its wonted smoothness, “Bahr el Bánateen,” “the sea of the two nymphs,” is a deep narrow estuary, bounded by a bold coast, and extending, in a south-

westerly direction, about forty-five miles, when the Eesah and Danákil shores suddenly converge so as to form a straitened channel, which imparts the figure of an hour-glass. Barely three quarters of a mile across, this passage is divided by a barren rocky islet styled “Báb,” “the door,” as occupying the gateway to the inner bay of Góobut el Kharáb, “the basin of foulness.” The vortices formed by the strong tide setting through these confined apertures, assume a most dangerous aspect; and although the water in the bowl, whereof the longer axis measures twelve, and the shorter five miles, is so intensely salt as to create a smarting of the skin during immersion, mud adhering to the lead at one hundred fathoms, is perfectly sweet and fresh. Of four islets, two are rocks; Bood Ali, on the contrary, three hundred feet in height, and perfectly inaccessible, being thickly encrusted with earth and vegetable matter, whilst the sides of its nearest neighbour. Hood Ali, are bare, and present unequivocal traces of more recent volcanic action than are to be found in the surrounding débris.

Immediately outside the bay, on the Danákil coast, there issues from the rock below high water line, a spring which, at the flood tide, is completely effaced; but during the ebb is so intensely hot, that a crab is instantly destroyed and turned red by immersion. At the western extremity of Goobut el Kharáb, a cove three hundred yards in diameter, with sixteen fathoms water, is enclosed by precipitous volcanic cliffs, and the entrance barred by a narrow coral reef, which, at low tide, lies high and dry. In the waters of this recess is presented one of those strange phenomena which are not to be satisfactorily explained. Always ebbing, there is an underflow

during even the flood tide; and usually glassy smooth, they become occasionally agitated by sudden ebullition, boiling up in whirlpools, which pour impetuously over the bar; whence the natives, persuaded that there exists a subterranean passage connected with the great Salt Lake, of which the sparkling expanse is visible from an intervening high belt of decomposing lava, term the cove “Mirsa good Ali,” “the source of the sea.”

Volume One—Chapter Seven.

Reception of the Embassy by the Sultán of the Sea-Port, and Return Visit to his Highness.

The first British camp with which the sea-port of Tajúra had been honoured since its foundation, raised its head on the afternoon of the 18th of May; when the Embassy, accompanied by the officers of both ships of war in the harbour, landed under a salute of seventeen guns from the “Euphrates,” (commanded by Lieutenant J. Young, I.N.,) and in a spacious crimson pavilion, erected as a hall of audience, received a visit of ceremony from the Sultán and his principal chiefs. A more unprincely object can scarcely be conceived than was presented in the imbecile, attenuated, and ghastly form of this most meagre potentate, who, as he tottered into the marquee, supported by a long witch-like wand, tendered his hideous bony claws to each of the party in succession, with all the repulsive coldness that characterises a Dankáli shake of the hand. An encourager of the staple manufactures of his own country, his decrepit frame was enveloped in a

coarse cotton mantle, which, with a blue-checked wrapper about his loins, and an ample turban perched on the very apex of his shaven crown, was admirably in keeping with the harmony of dirt that pervaded the attire of his privy council and attendants. Projecting triangles of leather graced the toes of his rude sandals; a huge quarto Korán, slung over his bent shoulder, rested beneath the left arm, on the hilt of a brass-mounted creese, which was girded to the right side; and his illustrious person was further defended against evil influence by a zone and bandolier thickly studded with mystic amulets and most potent charms, extracted from the sacred book. Enfeebled by years, his deeply-furrowed countenance, bearing an ebony polish, was fringed by a straggling white beard, and it needed not the science of Lavater to detect, in the indifference of his dull leaden eye, and the puckered corners of his toothless mouth, the lines of cruelty, cunning, and sordid avarice.

His Highness's haggard form was supported by the chief ministers of Church and State—Abdool Rahmán Sowáhil, the judge, civil, criminal, and ecclesiastic, and Hámed Bunaïto, the pursy Wazir, whose bodily circumference was in strict unison with the pomposity of his carriage. One Sáleh Shehém, too, occupied a prominent seat in the upper ranks—a wealthy slave-merchant, whose frightful deformities have ennobled him with the title of "Ashrem," which being interpreted signifies, "he of the hare-lip." This trio alone, of all the unwashed retinue, showed turbaned heads, every lesser satellite wearing either a natural or artificial full-bottomed peruke, graced with a yellow wooden skewer, something after the model of a salad fork, stuck erect in hair well stiffened with a goodly

accumulation of sheep's-tail fat, the rancid odour whereof was far from enhancing the *agrémens* of the interview. Izhák and Hajji Kásim, two elders of the blood-royal, with whom a much closer acquaintance was in store, were perfectly bald,—their patriarchal bearing and goodly presence affording no bad imitation of the scriptural illustrations by the old masters of the apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul. True to his word, the wag Aboo Bekr, as full of pleasantries as ever, had donned a preposterous tawny wig, quaintly manufactured of the fleece of a sheep; and in his smirking, facetious physiognomy was found the principal relief to the scowling satanic glances of the ill-favoured rabble, dripping with tallow, and redolent of abominable smells, who crowded the tent to the choking of every doorway.

It having heretofore been the invariable maxim of the Sultán to exact a visit from the stranger before condescending to pay one himself, the departure from established rule in favour of the liege subjects of Her Britannic Majesty could not fail to prove eminently gratifying. Compliments of the most fulsome nature were bandied about with compound interest, as the coffee-cup passed round to the more distinguished of the Danákil guests. Promises of assistance the most specious were lavished by the authorities, in grateful acknowledgment whereof, Cachemire shawls, and Delhi embroidered scarfs of exquisite workmanship, were liberally distributed, and as greedily tucked under the dirty cloth of the avaricious recipients; and although, in accordance with the unpolished custom of the country, no sort of salutation was offered when the conference broke up, the filthy guests departed with a semblance of good humour, that had been observable in none at their

first entrance.

Widely different was the mood of the son of Ali Abi, chief of the Rookhba, as he rushed into the pavilion on the exit of his rival, the hereditary Sultán of the Danákil. Lucifer, when gazing forth upon the newly created Paradise, and plotting the downfall of the sinless inmates of the garden of Eden, looked not half so fiend-like as Mohammad Ali, whilst, trembling with jealousy and rage, he demanded the reason of having been so insultingly omitted in the distribution of valuables? “Am I then a dog,” he continued, in the highest indignation, “and not worth the trouble of propitiating? whereas that old dotard yonder is to have his empty skull bound with rich shawls from India, and his powerless relatives decorated from head to foot. Inshállah, we shall see anon whether the Sultán of the sea-beach, or the son of Ali Abi, keeps the key of the road to Hábesh.”

Unlike the succession of every other government in the universe, the nominal sovereignty of the united tribes composing the Adaïel of Danákil nation, whereof Tajúra is the seat, is alternately vested in the Adáli and the Abli, a Sultán drawn from the one, being succeeded by his Wazir, who is invariably a member of the other, whilst the individual to fill the post vacated by the latter, is elected by suffrage from the family of the Sultán deceased. The town is besides the rendezvous of the petty chiefs of all the surrounding clans, who, to the number of eight or ten, claim an equal voice in the senate, and with about an hundred litigious followers each, make it their head-quarters during the greater portion of the year. Mohammad Ali is the principal of these, and his powerful tribe occupying a central position on the road to Abyssinia, he asserts the right to escort all

parties proceeding thither—a right which the Sultán denies. The necessity of propitiating at one time, and in the same place, two rival savages, possessing equally the means of annoyance, whilst neither is sufficiently strong to afford protection against the interference of the other, rendered the negotiation one of considerable difficulty and delicacy; nor was it without a vast expenditure of honied words, that the ruffled temper of the malcontent was finally soothed, and he was persuaded to waive the assertion of his recognised claim, until a more suitable opportunity.

All the tents having been erected, the steeds landed and picketed in the rear, and the heterogeneous mass of property which strewed the sea-beach reduced to a something less chaotic state, a return visit to His Highness was paid in full uniform; and the *cortège* being swelled by the naval officers, an exceedingly gay procession of cocked hats, plumes, and gold lace, passed along the strand to the palace, under a befitting salute from the Brig of war. The lounging population were altogether lost in amazement at the sight of such magnificence—old and young, of both sexes, thronging the wayside, with features indicative of unequivocal admiration at the brilliancy of so unwonted a display.

The thunder of artillery, to which the nervous old Sultán does not conceal his insuperable aversion, still shook the unpretending couch whereon he quailed, as the procession entered the fragile tenement of stakes and matting which constituted the Divan; and which, without possessing any pretensions to exclude either sun or rain, proved just sufficiently large to include the entire party. A renewal of hand-shaking in its coldest form, and a repetition of yesterday's compliments, and of yesterday's promises mode only

to be broken, was followed by a general sipping of coffee, prepared, not in the royal kitchen, but in the *cuisine* of the Embassy; and after being scrutinised during ten minutes of suffocating heat by numerous female eyes glistening through an infinity of chinks and perforations in the envious matting, the party returned, bearing as a costly token of His Highness's regard, a cloth similar to that composing the royal mantle.

It did indeed, in this instance, form matter of heartfelt congratulation, that the regal custom was dispensed with, of investing the honoured guest with a garment from the imperial wardrobe! As the cavalcade, duly impressed with this sentiment, remounted at the gate of the thorn inclosure which fortifies the palace, the Sultana vouchsafed a glimpse of her bedizened person from the stern cabin window of the "Mary Anne"—the withered frame of the ancient beldame, embedded in spells, beads, amulets, and grease, forcibly reminding the spectator of the witch of Endor, and rendering her in very truth, a right seemly partner for her wrinkled lord.

Volume One—Chapter Eight.

Tajúra, "The City of the Slave-Merchant."

In the heart of the peninsula of Arabia, environed on every side by rocky mountains, there stood, in the middle of the sixth century, a celebrated pagan shrine, that had been held in the most exalted veneration during fourteen hundred years. The edifice was believed to cover the hallowed remains of

Ishmaël, the father of the wandering Bedouin, and it contained a certain sacred black stone, whereon the Patriarch Jacob saw the vision of angels ascending into heaven. On its site, according to the Arab tradition, Adam pitched his tent when expelled from the garden of Eden, and there died Eve, the partner of his fall, whose grave of green sods is shown to the present day, upon the barren shores of the Red Sea.

This shrine, of course, was none other than the famous temple of the Sun at Mecca, since so consecrated by the lawgiver of the Mohammadans, as to form the focus of attraction to every true believer. The extraordinary veneration it received in those early days, concentrating the tide of commerce, rendered it the absorbing mart of Eastern trade. Abyssinia at that period held in occupation the adjacent provinces of Arabia Felix, and Abrahah, the vicegerent of Yemen, conceiving the idea of diverting the channel to his own advantage, erected in the country of the Homerites a splendid Christian church, which, under the title of Keleïsa, he endowed with the same privileges, immunities, and emoluments, that had pertained, from all antiquity, to the shrine of Sabaean idolatry.

“If,” says Gibbon, “a Christian power had been maintained in Arabia, Mahomet must have been crushed in his cradle, and Abyssinia would have prevented a revolt which has changed the civil and religious aspect of the world.” But alarmed at the prospect of the desertion of their temple both by votaries and merchants, the Beni Koreish, who held the keys of the black stone in hereditary right, polluted the rival fane at Saana, which had no equal, saving the palace of the Hamyar kings, and was calculated to ensure the veneration of every pilgrim.

Out of this sacrilege and affront arose the event celebrated in the Korán as “the war of the Elephant.” Mounted on a huge white elephant, Abrahah, surnamed El Ashrem, placing himself at the head of a vast army, proceeded to take revenge on the idolaters; but, misled by intelligence artfully given by Aboo Táleb, grandfather to the Apostle of God, he destroyed, instead of the Kaaba, a temple of Osiris at Taïef, and the first recorded appearance of the small-pox, shortly afterwards annihilated the Christian forces.

The wars that distracted all Arabia, between the Greeks and Persians in the first instance, and subsequently between Mahomet and the population in support of his divine mission, had greatly impaired the traffic carried on by general consent at the temple of Mecca. A caravan scarcely ever ventured forth by any road, that it was not plundered by the opposing partisans, and merchants as well as trade gradually departed south of the Arabian Gulf, to sea-ports which in earlier times had been the emporia of commerce with the East. Raheïta, Zeyla, Tajúra, and a number of other towns in the Indian Ocean, thus recovered their importance and their lost prosperity. The conquest of the Abyssinian territories in Arabia, drove every Ethiopian to the African shores. Little districts now grew into great consideration. Mara, Hadea, Aussa, and Adel, amongst other petty states, assumed unto themselves the title of kingdoms, and shortly acquired power and wealth eclipsing many of the more ancient monarchies.

The miserable town of Tajúra, “the city of the slave-merchant,” as it exists at the present day, demands no further description. It was for two years in the hands of the Turks, who occupied it after the taking of

Massowah, and converted into a fort a venerable mosque, now in ruins, on the sea-beach near the palace. But no consistent chronicle, either of the capture or evacuation, is to be expected where every man is notorious equally as a boaster and a liar, and making himself the individual hero in every passage of arms, never foils to extol his own clan as immeasurably superior in valour to every other. The melancholy aspect of the place is but too well calculated to convey to the traveller a foretaste of the sufferings inseparable from a pilgrimage through any portion of the country denominated Adel; and each barbarian of the entire population of Tajúra will be found, on sad experience, a type of the Dankáli nation!

Bigoted Mohammadans, punctual to the call of the Muezzin, praying three times in excess of the exactions of the Prophet, often passing the entire night in the mosque, or sitting in council at its threshold; sedulously attentive to the outward forms of their creed, though few have sufficient energy to undertake a pilgrimage to the Kaaba, and content, like other hypocrites, with a rigid observance of externals—the Danákil rise from their devotions well primed with Moslem intolerance, and are perfectly ready to lie and cheat as occasion may offer. Unoccupied, and at a loss for honest employment, idlers without number sauntered about the pavilion at all times and seasons, entering at pleasure, and monopolising chairs and tables with the insolent independence which forms one of their most prominent features. Supported by a long staff, the ruffians gazed for hours together at the novel splendour of the equipage; and invariably disfigured by a large quid of tobacco adulterated with ashes,

squirted the redundant saliva over the carpet, although squatted on the outside of the door, with ample space at command. But although thieves by profession on a grand scale, they fortunately contrived to keep their hands from picking and stealing; and notwithstanding that the tents were thus thronged from morning till night, and the sea-beach for many weary days was strewed with boxes and bales of truly tempting exterior, nothing whatever was abstracted.

The classic costume of the people of this sea-port consists of a white cotton robe, thrown carelessly over the shoulder, in the manner of the old Roman toga; a blue-checked kilt reaching to the knees, simply buckled about the waist by a leathern belt, which supports a most formidable creese, and a pair of rude undressed sandals to protect the feet of such as can afford the luxury. The plain round buckler and the broad-headed spear, without which few ever cross their threshold, renders the naturally graceful and manly figure of almost every individual a subject for the artist's pencil; but the population are to a man filthy in the extreme, and the accumulated dirt upon their persons and apparel leaves a taint behind, that might readily be traced without the intervention of a bloodhound. Rancid mutton fat, an inch thick, frosts a bushy wig of cauliflower growth, which harbours myriads of vermin. Under the melting rays of a tropical sun, the grease pours copiously over the skin; and the use of water, except as a beverage, being a thing absolutely unheard-of, a Dankáli pollutes the atmosphere with an effluvium, such as is only to be encountered elsewhere in the purlieus of a tallow-chandler's shop.

All are vain of scars, and desirous of displaying them;

but little favour is shown for other outward ornament; and the miserly disposition which pervades the breast both of young and old, inducing an effort towards the concealment of property possessed, a paltry silver ring in the ear, a band of copper wire round the junction of the spear-blade with the shaft, or pewter mountings to the creese, form the sum total of decoration on the arms and persons even of the most extravagant. Fops in numbers are to be seen at Tajúra, who have called in the aid of moist quick-lime towards the conversion of the naturally jet black peruke to a most atrocious foxy red—when judicious frizzing, and the insertion of the wooden skewer, used for scratching, completes the resemblance to a carriage mop. But this novel process of dyeing, so contrary to that employed by civilised beaux, is only in fashion among the Somauli, who, in common with the Danákil dandies, employ, in lieu of a down pillow, a small wooden bolster, shaped like a crutch, which receives the neck, and during the hours of presumed uncomfortable repose, preserves the periwig from derangement.

Massy amulets in leathern envelopes, or entire Koráns in quarto or octavo, are borne on the unpurified person of almost every individual; and the ancient Arab remedy of swallowing the water in which passages from the holy book have been washed from the board or paper whereon they were inscribed, is in universal repute, as a sovereign medicine for every ailment to which frail flesh is heir—the firm of Sultán, Wazir and Kázi, who alone possess the privilege of wearing turbans, holding the monopoly, and driving a most profitable trade by the preparation of this simple, but potent specific. Large doses of melted sheep's-tail fat are moreover swallowed on certain

occasions; and a native Esculapius gave proof of the perfection to which the dentist's art has attained at Tajúra, by dexterously detaching a carious tooth from the stubborn jaws of a submissive old woman, with the patent machinery of a rusty nail as a punch, struck with a heavy stone picked up on the sea-beach, where the operation was performed for the edification of the encampment. Applications were nevertheless frequent for European aid—a venerable priest numbering threescore years and ten, peremptorily demanding, in addition to a philter, the instantaneous removal of two obstinate cataracts, which had long dimmed his sight, and upon which he had vainly expended the teeth of half the mules in Tajúra, roasted, and reduced to an impalpable powder.

Education, to the extent of spelling the Korán, is general, and all speak Arabic as well as Dankáli; the lore of the most learned being however restricted to a smattering of the holy book, with a very confused idea of numerals, and ability to endite a scraggy Arabic letter, which, when completed with infinite labour, the writer is often puzzled to decipher. To the immortal honour of the Sultán be it here recorded, that although the oldest male inhabitant of Tajúra, he is a solitary instance of non-acquaintance with the alphabet. The swarthy cheek of every urchin who distinguishes himself by diligence or quickness, receives in token thereof, a dash of white chalk, a black streak in like manner disgracing the idle and stupid; but the pedagogue would appear to omit the residue of this oriental custom—the stuffing the mouths of the well-behaved with sugar-candy, which would doubtless prove a source of much greater enjoyment.

In the evening the ingenuous youth of the town, each armed with a creese in case of quarrel, convene in numbers on the common, to play a game which combines hockey and football; the residue of their time being spent in angling, when the juvenile Walton stands up to the chin in the salt sea, and employing his head as a substitute for the reel, spins out a dozen yards of line in a truly fisherman-like manner. Numbers spent the period of their relaxation from study in gaping with the adults at the door of the pavilion, whilst the magic effect of the magnet was exhibited, or fire produced from the human mouth by means of a promethean, here emphatically denominated “the devil.”

The softer sex of Tajúra, whilst young, possess a tolerable share of comeliness, and a pleasing expression withal; but they are speedily past the meridian of beauty. A close blue chemise, a plain leathern petticoat, or a cloth reaching to the ankles, and a liberal coat of lard over extravagantly braided ringlets, which are knotted with white beads, form the toilet of maid, wife, and widow. An occasional necklace of coloured beads falling over the sable bosom, a pendant of brass or silver wire of no ordinary dimensions in the ear, and large ivory bracelets or anklets, proclaim the besetting foible of the sex: but ornaments are by no means general. Mohammadan jealousy tends to the seclusion of the better order of females to a certain extent; but a marriage in high life, when the procession passed close to the encampment, afforded an opportunity not always enjoyed, of beholding the beauty and fashion of the place. The matrimonial shackles are here easily loosed; and the greater portion of the population being deeply engaged in the slave trade

with the interior, have their rude houses filled with temporary wives, who are from time to time unceremoniously shipped for the Arabian market, in order that the funds accruing from the sale of their persons may be invested in new purchases.

Agriculture there is none. Every man is a merchant, and waxes sufficiently rich on his extensive slave exportations, to import from other climes the produce he requires. An extensive traffic is carried on with Aussa and Abyssinia, in which nearly all are engaged at some period of the year. Indian and Arabian manufactures, pewter, zinc, copper and brass wire, beads, and salt in large quantities, are at these inland marts exchanged for slaves, grain, ivory, and other produce of the interior,—salt and human beings forming, however, the chief articles of barter. Virgin Mary German crowns of Maria Theresa, 1780, as integrals, and strips of raw hide for sandal soles, as fractionals, form the currency of the sea-port; beads, buttons, mirrors, trinkets, empty bottles, snuff, and tobacco, for which latter there is an universal craving, being also received in exchange for the necessaries of life.

Avarice is the ruling passion—the salient point in the character of the Dankáli. His whole soul is engrossed in amassing wealth, whilst he is by nature indolent and lazy, and would fain acquire riches without treading the laborious uphill path towards their attainment. Miserly in disposition, there is not an individual of the whole community, from the Sultán downwards, who would not infinitely prefer the present receipt of two pieces of silver, to a promissory note for twenty at the expiration of a week, upon the very best security. “Trees attain not to their growth in a single day,” remarked Ali

Shermárki, after remonstrating with the grasping ruler on his inordinate love of lucre—“take the tree as your text, and learn that property is only to be accumulated by slow degrees.”

“True,” retorted the old miser—“but, Sheikh, you must have lost sight of the fact, that my leaves are already withered, and that if I would be rich I have not a moment to lose.”

Volume One—Chapter Nine.

Foretaste of Danákil Knavery.

A share of thirty thousand German crowns, the annual profits accruing from the sale of three thousand human beings kidnapped in the interior, renders every native of Tajúra a man of competent independence. It is not, therefore, surprising that the usual rates of transport hire, added to a knowledge of the exigencies of the Embassy, should have produced in this avaricious, but indolence-loving race, no particular desire to bestir themselves. All are camel-owners to a greater or less extent; but the presence of so many interested parties tended not a little to increase the difficulties inseparable from dealings with so listless and dilatory a set of savages —it being of course requisite to consult the advantage of all, to which, as might be conjectured, all are most feelingly alive. The ashes of ancient feuds were still smoking on the arrival of the British; and notwithstanding that it was matter of notoriety that the amount disbursed at the time of departure for Shoa, would be diminished in the exact ratio of the delay experienced—and although, to judge from the surface, affairs looked prosperous enough towards the speedy completion of carriage, there was ever an adverse under-current setting; and the apathy of the savage feeding upon listless delays, the party were doomed for a weary fortnight to endure the merciless heat of the Tajúra sun, whose tardy departure was followed by a close muggy atmosphere, only occasionally alleviated by the bursting of a thunder-storm over the peak of Jebel Goodah, and to be

perpetually deceived by the falsest promises, without being able to discover where to lay the blame. Bribes were lavished, increased hire acceded to, and camels repeatedly brought into the town; but day after day found the dupes to Danákil knavery still seated like shipwrecked mariners upon the shore, gazing in helpless melancholy at endless bales which strewed the strand, as if washed up by the waves of the fickle ocean.

During this tedious detention, which, as the sun shone fiercer and the close nights grew hotter with the rapidly advancing season, waxed daily more irksome and insupportable, and even threatened to arrest the journey altogether, the most conflicting accounts were received from various interested parties, of the actual extent of the Sultán's jurisdiction, averred by himself to have no limits nearer than the frontier of Efát. His revenues were ascertained to be restricted to two hundred head of oxen, camels, sheep, and goats, paid annually by the adjacent Danákil tribes, and it was certain that he enjoyed circumscribed prerogatives, based upon ancient usage; but although nothing is done or undertaken, without his concurrence duly obtained, he possesses no discretion to punish disobedience of his will, and is precluded from acting in the most trivial matter without the consent in full conclave, of the majority of the chiefs. Possessing little or no power over his nominal subjects, he is merely a puppet, looked up to by the wild tribes as the head of the principal family—infirmity and utter imbecility of character rendering His Highness at the same time, little better than a laughing-stock.

Faithless and rapacious, his insatiable avarice induced him to take every extortionate advantage of

the helpless party at his mercy, whilst his tottering sway debarred him the power of reserving to himself the exclusive right of pillage. Private as well as public *kaláms* were daily held for hours at the sacred threshold of the mosque, during which new schemes of villainy and plunder were devised; and date leaves were indolently plaited by a host of apathetic legislators, as the propriety of permitting the departure inland of the Christian Kafirs was fully discussed and deliberated over with all the vicious bigotry of the Moslem zealot.

In order to ascertain how far fraud and impertinence might be carried with impunity, a deputation of the artful elders beleaguered the pavilion during the dead of night, to complain, in no measured terms, that certain of the followers, regardless of orders, had been seen endeavouring, with beads and trinkets, to betray the virtue of females who drew water at the well—a tale which proved, on due inquiry instituted, to be, like other Danákil asseverations, devoid of the slightest truth or foundation. Not even a paltry water skin was to be purchased from a schoolboy under the disbursement of a silver *fuloos*, value four sterling shillings; and a courier, who had, at three times the established charge, been furnished on the security of the high and mighty Sultán, to convey to Ankóber a letter advising the King of Shoa of the advent of the Embassy, was, after being three entire days and nights in possession of his ill-gotten wealth, discovered to be still snug within his mat-house, in the bosom of his family.

The letter in question had fixed the day of departure, and had been written in the most public manner before the assembled chiefs, in order, if possible, to counteract in some measure the tissue of underplots

hourly developing, and to demonstrate to the Danákil capacity, that, whether camels were forthcoming or not, the journey would positively be undertaken; and the nefarious detention of the document, after the receipt of such exorbitant hire, being perfectly in keeping with the outrageously unprincipled and underhand treatment experienced from the first moment of arrival, the Sultán was at last plainly informed that further shuffling and falsehood would avail him nothing; since, if carriage were not immediately furnished in accordance with the plausible agreement concluded, the heavy baggage would be reshipped for Cape Aden, and the party would advance in defiance of opposition, with ten camels that had been brought by sea from Zeyla, by the nephews of Sheïkh Shermárki. Mohammad Ali, too, was now heart and hand in the cause, and his jealous rival, on receipt of this unpleasant intimation, began plainly enough to perceive that his guests were in right earnest, and that the golden opportunity of filling his coffers was passing rapidly away.

The royal salute, fired alternately from the decks of the brig and the schooner, each tricked out in all her colours, with gay signal flags in honour of the natal day of her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, enveloped the town during forty minutes in a dense white smoke, accompanied by a most unpleasant smell of gunpowder; and during the entire day the beach in front of the British encampment wore the semblance of a disturbed ant-hill. European and native—master and servant—the latter from every nation under the sun, Arab, Persian, Nubian, Armenian, Egyptian, Syrian, Greek, and Portuguese, —all in a state of most active bustle, were selecting light baggage for the approaching departure; whilst

crowds of oily savages, squatted on their hams, looked on in smiling apathy at the heaps of valuable commodities that were tossing about the sands. Twenty-one British officers subsequently sate down to dinner in the crimson pavilion, and the health of Queen Victoria having been given with nine times nine, another salute bursting from the sides of the vessels of war, shook the frail town to its foundations, and re-echoed long and loud among the mountain-glens—flights of rockets ascending at short intervals to illumine the dark sky.

The deafening din of the 32 pound stern chaser of the “Constance,” which pointed directly towards the royal abode, proved too much for the nerves of the timid Sultán; and no sooner had the lights been extinguished, than his spectral figure, which ever shunned the day, glided into the tent unannounced, and ghostlike, muttered the agreeable intelligence that His Highness, after consulting the horoscope, and ascertaining beyond all doubt that the journey would prove propitious—a fact not previously determined—had come to the resolution, wise though late, of supplying the desired carriage without further delay, and deputing his own son as a safeguard through the tribes—services for which the apparition felt confident of receiving a suitable reward. The voice of the chieftains had become unanimous. At the last of a long succession of meetings convened for the purpose of taking the affair into full consideration, Abdool Rahmán, the Kázi, in his capacity of lawgiver, had risen from his seat in the assembly, and ably demonstrated to his mat-weaving audience, why all animosities and heart-burnings must be sunk in the general object of making money, and getting rid as expeditiously as possible of a party of Kafirs, whose

guns, unshotted, threatened the destruction of the mosque of the true believer, and the total demolition of Tajúra. The Fátheh, being the first chapter of the holy Korán, was duly read, and the Danákil conclave with one voice vociferated a loud Ameen, even so let it be!

Volume One—Chapter Ten.

Long Adieu to the Unprincipled Sultán.

From this eventful epoch each sultry day did indeed bring a numerical accession to the beasts of burthen collected in the town; but they were owned of many and self-willed proprietors; were, generally speaking, of the most feeble description, melancholy contrasts to the gigantic and herculean dromedary of Egypt and Arabia; and no trifling delay was still in store through their arrival from distant pastures bare-backed, which involved the necessity of making up new furniture for the march. The Dankáli saddle is fortunately a simple contrivance; a mat composed of plaited date leaves thrown over the hump, supporting four sticks lashed together in couples, and kept clear of the spinal process by means of two rollers as pads, having been proved by centuries of experience to be not more light than efficient. Accoutrements completed, and camels ready for the march, other provoking excuses for delay were not wanting, to fill, even to overflowing, the measure of annoyance. The demise of a nephew of the Sultán—the protracted funeral obsequies of the deceased—and the almost nightly abstraction of one or more hired camels by the lurking Bedouin, all contributed their mite. At

length however no further pretext could be devised, and nine loads being actually in motion towards Ambábo, the first halting ground on the road to the kingdom of Shoa, the schooner “Constance,” getting under weigh, stood up the bay of Tajúra, and cast anchor off the incipient camp, of which the position was denoted by a tall cluster of palms.

Endless objections being now provokingly raised to the shape, size, and weight of the boxes to be transported, it next became requisite to reduce the dimensions of the greater number, in the progress of which operation it was discovered that the hurry of transhipment at Aden had resulted in the substitution of several dozens of choice marasquino, for a similar number of cases, of equal size, freighted with round shot for the galloper-guns. The work in hand was one of no ordinary labour and difficulty; and, after all, its completion proved insufficient to satisfy the parties. One blockhead complained that his load was heavier than his neighbour’s, who had wisely risen earlier in the morning to make his selection; another, that his case, although confessedly light, was not of convenient size; one was too long, another not long enough, a third too deep, and a fourth too loosely packed. From earliest dawn, until final close of day, on a sandy beach, under a broiling sun, was this torment continued without intermission, until the 30th of May, when, by dint of coaxing, menacing, and bribing, every article had been removed saving an unwieldy hand-organ, at which every camel-owner had shaken his wig in turn, and a few stand of arms which had been removed from wooden cases, and repacked in mats and tarpaulins. A great hulking savage finally proposed to carry these latter, upon condition of their being transversely divided with a

saw to suit the backs of his wretched hip-galled camels. “You are a tall man,” quoth Aboo Bekr drolly, “suppose we shorten you by the legs?”

“No, no,” cried the barbarian, “I’m flesh and blood, and shall be spoiled.”

“So will the contents of these cases, you offspring of an ass,” retorted the old pilot, “if you divide them.”

The almost insurmountable difficulties thus experienced in obtaining carriage, but now happily overcome, had so far delayed the advance of the Embassy, as to oblige it to cross the Teháma during the height of the fiery and unwholesome blast which, during the months of June and July, sweeps over that waterless tract from the south-west; and had moreover rendered it impossible to reach Abyssinia before the setting-in of the annual heavy rains, when the river Hawásh becomes impassable for weeks together. Independently of the natural apathy of the camel-owning population, the fact of the season of all intercourse with the interior, by Káfilah, having already passed away, rendered every one averse, under any consideration of gain, to so hazardous a journey. Grain was to be carried for the consumption of horses and mules during the passage of arid regions, where, during the hot season, neither vegetation nor water exists; and the wells and pools having notoriously failed in every part of the road, during three consecutive seasons of unusual drought, it was necessary to entertain a large proportion of transport for a supply of water sufficient to last both man and beast for two and three days at a time; whilst, neither grass nor green food remaining near the sea-shore, the hundred and seventy camels now forming the caravan, had been individually

assembled from various grazing grounds, many miles distant in the interior.

A sufficient number of water-skins had fortunately been purchased at exorbitant prices to complete the equipment, together with mules for the conveyance of the European escort and artillery; and the greedy Sultán, besides receiving the lion's share of the profits on all, had sold his own riding beast for three times its worth in solid silver. But the forage brought over from Aden being long since consumed, the whole were fed upon dates, and to the latest moment the greatest difficulty continued to exist in regard to followers. The services of neither Dankáli, Bedouin, nor Somauli, were obtainable at whatever wages; and the whole of the long train of live stock was consequently to be attended by a few worthless horse-keepers, enlisted at Aden, aided by a very limited number of volunteers from the shipping, whose indifferent characters gave ample promise of their subsequent misdeeds.

On the departure of the last load, a general begging commenced on a grand scale, on the part of all who flattered themselves that they had in the most remote manner been so fortunate as to render assistance during the protracted sojourn of the Kafirs. Many, whose claims were far from being apparent, after confessing themselves satisfied *in propriis personis*, modestly urged demands on behalf of their still more worthless neighbours; and in order to have any chance of passing in safety to the mountains with so long a line of camels, it was only prudent to propitiate each and all of this predatory hosts of locusts, before entering upon their lawless country.

With a feeling of pleasure akin to that experienced by

Gil Blas, when he escaped from the robbers' cave, the party at length bade adieu to Tajúra. Of all the various classes and denominations of men who inhabit the terrestrial globe, the half-civilised savages peopling this sea-port, are perhaps the most thoroughly odious and detestable. They have ingeniously contrived to lose every virtue wherewith the rude tribes to which they pertain, may once have been adorned; and having acquired nothing in exchange, save the vices of their more refined neighbours, the scale of abject degradation to which they are now reduced, can hardly descend lower. Under this sweeping and very just condemnation, the impotent Sultán, Mohammad ibn Mohammad, stands pre-eminently in relief; and the old miser's rapacity continuing unsated up to the very latest moment, he clutched his long staff betwixt his skinny fingers, and hobbled forth from his den, resolved to squeeze yet another hundred dollars as a parting memento from his British victims. The European escort were in the act of mounting the mules already harnessed to the galloper-gun, which he had vainly persuaded himself could never be transported from the coast, since no camel-owner consented to take it, and repeated attempts that he had witnessed to yoke a pair of oxen to the limbers had proved unsuccessful, even after their stubborn noses were pierced. But mule harness had been ably manufactured to meet the exigency, and when his lustreless eyes beheld the party in horse artillery order, firmly seated in their saddles, and moving along the strand towards Ambábo—forgetting the vile errand upon which he had come, he involuntarily exclaimed, "In the name of Allah and the holy Prophet, whither are those fellows going?" "*Raheen el Hábesh*," "to Abyssinia," was the laconic reply that fell upon his astounded ears as the whips

cracked merrily in succession; and His Highness was long after seen, still leaning on his slender crutch, and staring in idiotic vacancy after the departing cavalcade, as it disappeared under a cloud of dust from before his leaden gaze.

Volume One—Chapter Eleven.

Iniquitous Proceedings at Ambábo, and Understanding with the Ras El Káfilah.

The tall masts of the schooner of war, raking above the belt of dwarf jungle that skirts the tortuous coast, served as a beacon to the new camp, the distance of which from the town of Tajúra was less than four miles. A narrow footpath wound along the burning sands, across numerous water-courses from the impending mountain range of trachyte and porphyry, whose wooded base, thickly clothed with mimosa and *euphorbia antiquorum*, harboured swine, pigmy antelope, and guinea-fowl in abundance. Many large trees, uprooted by the wintry torrent, had been swept far out to sea, where in derision of the waves that buffet their dilapidated, stag-horn looking arms, they will long ride safely at anchor. The pelican of the wilderness soiled through the tossing surf, and files of Bedouin damsels, in greasy leathern petticoats, bending beneath a load of fuel from the adjacent hamlets, traversed the sultry strand; whilst a long train of wretched children, with streaming elf-like locks, who had been kidnapped in the unexplored interior, wended their weary way with a slave caravan, towards the sea-port, whence they were to be sold into foreign bondage.

An avenue through the trees presently revealed the white tent, occupying a sequestered nook on the course of a mountain stream near its junction with the shore. Here horses and mules were doing their utmost, by diligently cropping the scanty tufts of sun-burnt grass, to repair their recent long abstinence from forage, whilst the abbreviated tails of those which had been improved by mutilation, formed the jest of a group of grinning savages. Clumps of lofty fan palms, and date trees loaded with ripe orange-coloured fruit, still screened from view the village of Ambábo, the straggling Gothic roofed wigwams composing which have the same waggon-like appearance as the huts of Tajúra,—a similar style of architecture extending even to the unostentatious mosque, alone distinguishable from the surrounding edifices, by uncarved minarets of wood.

Greasy ragamuffins still intruding, here continued their teasing persecutions, and Mohammad Mohammad, the son, though not the heir to the throne of the Sultán, having been specially appointed by his disreputable sire to the important post of reporter and spy, unceremoniously occupied one of the chairs, to the exclusion of the lawful proprietor during the entire day. He however proved useful in so far that he was versed in the chronicle of Ambábo. The Nákhuda of one of his uncle's buggalows having contrived a quarrel with a member of the tribe Hassóba, one of the manifold subdivisions of the Danákil, the man threw the gauntlet of defiance by cutting off the prow of the boat. Meeting shortly afterwards in deadly conflict, the insulted mariner slew his antagonist on the spot, and took refuge in the hills, until, tired of long concealment, and believing the affair to be consigned to oblivion, he

ventured to settle with his family at Ambábo, and thus founded the present village; but after some years of repose, he was discovered by the relatives of the slain, and, as usual in all blood feuds, ultimately assassinated. Occupying a site proverbially unhealthy, and scourged during the rains by insupportable clouds of musquitoes, the miserable hamlet is but thinly peopled, and the Sheikh being on far from amicable terms with the authorities of Tajúra, it is likely soon to be abandoned in favour of some more eligible location.

A red savage, falsely representing himself to be one of the household of his Christian Majesty of Shoa, arrived during the afternoon from Ankóber, with letters for Aden, and having safely deposited his packet on board the “Constance,” was readily induced to return whence he came, with the Embassy. Déeni ibn Hámed, a liar of the first magnitude, but the only Dankáli who had voluntarily attached himself to the fortunes of the party, conceiving the arrival of this courier to afford an opening for the exercise of his talents which ought on no account to be neglected, immediately proceeded to tax his lively ingenuity in disclosing the contents of a document which he pretended had been received from Sáhela Selássie by the old ruffian from whose clutches his audience had just thankfully escaped; and the mass of gratuitous falsehoods that he contrived to string together with an unblushing front, must be admitted to reflect ample credit upon his fertile invention.

Lying appeared in fact to be the chosen occupation of this youthful warrior, who, however, unlike the mass of his compatriots, did possess some redeeming qualities, though they were by no means so

conspicuous as his scars. The insuperable aversion to veracity which he evinced on every occasion, renders it difficult to determine what degree of credit may be attached to the tragic tale that he was pleased to connect with a deep gash over the temple, which distorted his vision; and if not received in a less honourable *rencontre* than he pretended, affords another to the ten thousand instances on record of the savage rancour with which blood feuds are prosecuted. “My maternal uncle, and a native of Zeyla,” said Déeni, “becoming embroiled, mutually unsheathed their creeses in mortal strife, fought desperately, and died. The brother of the latter sought my life in revenge, as being the nearest of kin; but after receiving this slash upon my forehead, and another on my arm, which I shall also carry to the grave, I closed, stabbed the Somauli villain to the heart with this good creese, and, glory be to God I divided his windpipe with his own sword.”

Profiting by the amiable example of the illustrious ruler of Tajúra, the Sheïkh of Ambábo, a most notable extortioner, resolved to put his chum to a sum of ready money beyond a shadow of doubt, placed a strong Bedouin guard over the only well; and although he had every reason to be satisfied with the success of his nefarious schemes, he did not possess sufficient gratitude to prevent the commission of a robbery during the night, which might have proved more serious than it did. Solace under all misfortunes and annoyances was, however, found in the arrival of Mohammad Ali on the 31st, with a welcome accession of camels for the carriage of water, which rendered certain the prospect of departure on the morrow, it having been distinctly promised by the Sultán, in return for a handsome

pecuniary consideration, that his brother Izhák, who had been unanimously appointed Ras el Káfilah, his son, his nephew, and seven other persons of undoubted influence on the road, should be in readiness without fail, to escort the Embassy on the 1st of June, and that the reward of their services should be paid, *ad valorem*, upon safe arrival within the kingdom of Shoa.

Three hours after midnight, the galloper-gun, fired within the limits of the British camp as a summons to the drowsy camel-drivers to be up and doing, was echoed, according to previous agreement, by the long stern chaser of the “Constance,”—a signal to the “Euphrates,” still anchored off Tajúra, to thunder a farewell salute as the day dawned. The work of loading was merrily commenced—the tent went down —and camel after camel moved off towards Dullool; when, on the departure of the last string, it was observed with dismay that the ground was still strewed with baggage, for which carriage had unquestionably been paid and entertained, but for which none was forthcoming. The greasy proprietors were, after some search, discovered below the bushes, engaged in the operation of jerking mutton, —a process sufficiently nauseous in itself to repel any close advance; but persuasion and threats proved alike unavailing. Some had already sent their camels to graze at a distance; others insolently expressed their intention of doing so after the completion of their interesting work, and by far the greater number would vouchsafe no explanation whatever. At length the provoking riddle was solved by the arrival of a peremptory message from the Sultán, naming the price of the attendance of his brother with the promised escort, and modestly

requesting that the amount might forthwith be disbursed, or the bargain must be considered null and void!

In this awkward dilemma, one of the party was immediately despatched to create a diversion among the Philistines, and to remonstrate against so gross a breach of good faith; whilst the residue, awaiting his tardy return, passed the sultry day beneath the mock shelter afforded by a low date bush, shifting position with the deceitful shadow, which, before any further tidings were received of the delinquent old Sultán and his ungovernable myrmidons, was cast full on the eastern side. At length the anxiously straining eye was relieved by the appearance of the messenger on his way back. After a world of trouble, he had succeeded in hunting out some of the elders, who, however, would only consent to accompany him on the payment of every stuiver of the demand made in the morning, and, quietly possessed of the dollars, they had thought proper to detain the escort.

Izhák, backed by Ibrahim Shehém, the most renowned warrior in the next ten tribes, sat as orator on the occasion. The demeanour of the Ras bordered closely on the insolent. A heavy load of impudence could be detected under his broad pudding face; and his desire to be impertinent was favoured in no small degree by the presence of heaps of valuable baggage lying at his mercy upon the ground. The deputation was received quite as coldly as their dishonest and most provoking behaviour demanded; a silence of several minutes affording to each, leisure to pick out his curly locks, and cool himself a little, the whole having walked out in the broiling sun, and become considerably excited withal. Distant inquiries were at length instituted relative to the august health

of the Sultán and the royal family, which were stiffly responded to after the current Dankáli fashion, “Hamdu-lillah,” “thanks be unto God!”

The conference then opened with a bluster concerning the movement of the Káfilah from Ambábo without the presence, order, or consent of the Ras, who, after sneering at the attempt as a most unprecedented proceeding, and indulging in a very gratuitous *tirade* against Mohammad Ali, whom he styled in derision “the supplier of water,” and was anxious to make appear the only culprit on the occasion, added, in conclusion, that his own being “a house of mourning,” he had given up his intention of proceeding to Abyssinia, and had finally resolved to wash his hands of the business.

He was gravely answered that the caravan had started upon express orders given in consequence of a distinct understanding and pledge, purchased the preceding day of the Sultán and himself. He was reminded that every hire and remuneration for camels, guides, and escort, exorbitant though they were, had been paid in full at Tajúra; and was distinctly informed that if the terms of the agreement were not fully complied with, ere the night fell, the property of the British Government would be left on the ground, where it then lay, whilst the Embassy proceeded to Dullool, off which place the “Constance” had already anchored, reshipped all the baggage that had been sent to the advance camp, and set sail for Aden.

It was further added, that as the consequences of this step would rest upon the head of those who had entered into an express engagement, upon receipt of whatever terms they had demanded as the price of

their services, it should be borne in mind that further offensive and unprincipled demonstrations might terminate in unpleasant results.

As the interpreter proceeded to unfold this high-toned remonstrance, Izhák was seen to fidget uneasily upon his hams, whilst he sought to conceal his agitation by tracing figures on the sand; and, as the last intimation fell upon his ear, seizing his sandal, he relieved his excited feelings by shovelling a pointed stick through the very centre of the leather. But the swaggering air which he had assumed had now entirely disappeared, and, after a hurried whispering consultation with his confederates, he declared that he had been toiling day and night in the service of the English; that he was perfectly ready to perform every thing required of him, and that, notwithstanding the recent calamity with which his family had been visited, and the dangerous illness of his mother, he would escort the Embassy in person, with trustworthy colleagues; that he would be responsible for all the property left at Ambábo, and only petition for two days' grace to put his house in order before repairing to Dullool. This point being tardily accorded, he rose with Ali Shermárki, who had ridden in as mediator during the heat of the conference, and each offering his hand, in earnest of the matter being finally and amicably concluded in full accordance with the original stipulations of the covenant, set out on his return to Tajúra.

Volume One—Chapter Twelve.

Dullool—The Ras Unpleasantly Reminded of his

Pledge—Sagállo and Warelissán.

Izhák's absent camels, which had been kept close at hand pending the issue of this stormy debate, being now brought in, the ground was speedily cleared of the remaining baggage; and satisfied with the specious assurance of the Ras el Káfilah, that he would on no account tarry beyond nightfall of the following day, the party, relieved from their anxiety, mounted after five o'clock, and galloped seven miles along the sea-beach to the camp at Dullool,—the loose sand being so perforated and undermined in every part by the hermit crab, as to render the sieve-like road truly treacherous and unpleasant.

The grassy nook occupied by the tent was situated at the abutment of a spur from the wooded Jebel Goodah, evidently of volcanic origin, which gradually diminishes in height, until it terminates, one hundred yards from the shore, in a thick jungle of tamarisk and acacia, the former covered with salt crystals. Hornblende, in blocks, was scattered along the beach, and, wherever decomposed, it yielded fine glittering black sand, so heated under the noontide sun as to burn the naked foot. The movable camp of a horde of roving Bedouin shepherds, who, with very slender habitations, possess no fixed abode, was erected near the wells; and a quarrel with the followers, respecting the precious element, having already led to the drawing of creeses, silver was again in requisition to allay the impending storm.

The heat on the 2nd of June was almost insupportable; but the sultry day proved one of greater quiet than had fallen to the lot of the Embassy since its first landing. Late in the evening, when a

cool sea-breeze had set in, Ali Shermárki rode into camp, and delivered a letter which had been slipped into his hand by the Sultán, appealing against the hardship of being left without remuneration for his diligent services, praying that his old heart might be made glad, and hoping that all might meet again ere death should call them—a wish responded to by no single individual of the British party.

Neither Izhák nor any of his followers made their appearance, notwithstanding that the redemption of the solemn promise passed was anxiously watched until midnight. At gun-fire the next morning, however, the arrival of the whole being reported, orders were issued to strike the tent, a measure which was doggedly opposed by the Ras el Káfilah, whose brow again darkened as he declared his resolution not to stir from Dullool until three of his camels, which were said to have strayed, should be recovered; and deaf alike to remonstrance or entreaty, he finally withdrew to a distance, taking his seat in sullen mood beneath a tree.

The schooner had meanwhile fished her anchor, and was now getting under weigh for the purpose of standing up within range of the next halting ground. The mules were harnessed to the gun, and the tent and baggage packed. Ali Shermárki was deputed to acquaint Izhák with these facts, and to intimate firmly, that unless the order to load were given without another moment's delay, minute guns would be fired as a signal to bring up the brig from Tajúra, when the promise made yesterday by the English would be found more binding than those of the Danákil had hitherto proved. This menace had the desired effect, and after three hours of needless detention, the party commenced its third hot march along the sea-beach,

whence the hills gradually recede. Bedouin goat-herds occupied many wells of fresh water, which were denoted by clumps of date trees entwined by flowering convolvuli, whose matted tendrils fix the movable sands of the shore; and late in the forenoon the camp was formed at the pool of Sagállo, only three miles from the former ground, but affording the last supply of water to be obtained for thirty more.

An extensive and beautiful prospect of the western portion of the Bay of Tajúra had now opened, bound in on all sides by a zone of precipitous mountains, in which the gate leading into Goobut el Kharáb was distinctly marked by a low black point, extending from the northern shore. The schooner's services were volunteered to admit of a nearer inspection of the "basin of foulness;" but no sooner had she stood out to sea than signal guns fired from the camp announced the arrival of another packet from Shoa. The courier had been forty-four days on the journey, and the tidings he brought respecting the road, although highly satisfactory, added yet another instance to the many, of the small reliance that can be placed on information derived from the Danákil, who, even when disinterested, can rarely indeed be induced to utter a word of truth.

The strong party feeling entertained towards Mohammad Ali by the magnates of Tajúra, now vented itself in divers evil-minded and malicious hints, insinuating the defection of the absentee, who had been unavoidably detained by business, some hours after the last of the sea-port heroes had joined. "Where now is your friend Ali Mohammad?" "Where is the man who was to supply water on the road?" were the taunting interrogatories from the mouths of many; but come the son of Ali Abi did, to the

confusion of his slanderers, long ere the sun had set, bringing secret intelligence that he had sent to engage an escort from his own tribe; and the whole party being now at last assembled, it was resolved in full conclave, that as not a drop of water could be procured for three stages in advance, the entire of the next day should be devoted to filling up the skins, which done, the caravan should resume its march by night—a manoeuvre that savoured strongly of a design to favour the clandestine return to Tajúra of certain of the escort, who had still domestic affairs to settle.

Thus far the conduct of the son of the Rookhba chief had formed a notable contrast to the proceedings of his backbiters. Whilst Izhák and his stubborn partisans had positively declined to move according to their agreement, unless a further most extravagant and unconscionable sum were paid in advance for their anticipated services, and had altogether assumed a bullying tone, coupled with a most impertinent and overbearing demeanour, this scion of a savage house that holds in its hands the avenues betwixt Shoa and Tajúra, and could at pleasure cut off communication with the coast, had never applied for aught save a trifling sum for the present maintenance of his family, and since the first *éclaircissement*, had, to the best of his ability, striven to render himself useful and agreeable to the party about to pass through his country.

A most unprofitable discussion, which was prolonged until eleven the following night, had for its object to persuade the transmission of baggage in advance to the Salt Lake, in consequence of the carried supply of water being, after all, considered insufficient for three days' consumption. But the proposal was

negatived upon prudent grounds, the honesty of the intentions by which it had been dictated, seeming at best, extremely questionable, and no one feeling disposed to trust the faithless guides further than they could be seen, with property of value.

Scarcely were the weary eyes of the party closed in sleep, than the long 32-pounder of the “Constance,” proclaiming the midnight hour, sounded to boot and saddle. The Babel-like clamour of loading was at length succeeded by a lull of voices, and the rumbling of the galloper wheels over the loose shingle, was alone heard in the still calm of the night, above the almost noiseless tread of the cushion-footed camels, which formed an interminable line. The road, lit by the full moon, shining brightly overhead, lay for the first two or three miles along the beach, and then, crossing numerous water-courses, struck over the southern shoulder of Jebel Goodah, the distance from whose lofty peak each march had reduced.

Blocks and boulders varying in size from an 18 pound shot, to that of Ossa piled upon Pelion, aided by deep chasms, gullies, and waterways, rendering the ascent one of equal toil and peril, cost the life of a camel, which fell over a precipice and dislocated the spine; whereupon the conscientious proprietor, disdaining to take further heed of the load, abandoned it unscrupulously by the wayside. Gáleylaféo, a singular and fearful chasm which was navigated in the first twilight, did not exceed sixty feet in width; its gloomy, perpendicular walls of columnar lava, towering one hundred and fifty feet overhead, and casting a deep deceitful shadow over the broken channel, half a mile in extent. Déeni, in his customary strain of amplification, had represented this frightful pass to be entered through a trap-door, in order to

clear which it was necessary for a loaded camel to forget its staid demeanour, and bound from rock to rock like a mountain kid. The devil and all his angels were represented to hold midnight orgies in one of the most dismal of the many dark recesses; and the belief was fully confirmed by the whooping of a colony of baboons, disturbed by the wheels of the first piece of ordnance that had ever attempted the bumping passage.

Dawn disclosed the artillery mules in such wretched plight from their fatiguing night's labour, that it was found necessary to unlimber the gun, and place it with its carriage on the back of an Eesah camel of Herculean strength, provided for the contingency by the foresight of Mohammad Ali; and although little pleased during the imposition of its novel burthen, the animal, rising without difficulty, moved freely along at a stately gait. The same uninteresting volcanic appearance characterised the entire country to the table-land of Warelissán, a distance of twelve miles. Dreary and desolate, without a trace of vegetation saving a few leafless acacias, there was no object to relieve the gaze over the whole forbidding expanse. In this barren unsightly spot the radiation was early felt from the masses of black cindery rock, which could not be touched with impunity. The sand soil of the desert reflecting the powerful beams of the sun, lent a fearful intensity to the heat, whilst on every side the dust rose in clouds that at one moment veiled the caravan from sight, and at the next left heads of camels tossing in the inflamed atmosphere among the bright spear-blades of the escort. But on gaining the highest point, a redeeming prospect was afforded in an unexpected and most extensive bird's eye view of the estuary of Tajúra, now visible in all its shining

glory, from this, its western boundary. Stretching away for miles in placid beauty, its figure was that of a gigantic hour-glass; and far below on its glassy bosom were displayed the white sails of the friendly little schooner, as, after safely navigating the dangerous and much-dreaded portals of Scylla and Charybdis, never previously braved by any craft larger than a jolly boat—bellying to the breeze, she beat gallantly up to the head of Goobut el Kharáb.

Volume One—Chapter Thirteen.

Gloomy Passage of Rah Eesah, the Descensus ad Inferos.

Although Warelissán proved nearly seventeen hundred feet above the level of the blue water, a suffocating south-westerly wind, which blew throughout the tedious day, rendered the heat more awfully oppressive than at any preceding station. The camp, unsheltered, occupied a naked tract of table-land, some six miles in circumference, on the shoulder of Jebel Goodah—its barren surface strewed with shining lava, and bleached animal bones; sickly acacias of most puny growth, sparingly invested with sun-burnt leaves, here and there struggling through the fissures, as if to prove the utter sterility of the soil; whilst total absence of water, and towering whirlwinds of dust, sand, and pebbles, raised by the furnace-like puffs that came stealing over the desert landscape, completed the discomfiture both of man and beast.

During the dead of night, when restless unrefreshing

slumbers on the heated ground had hushed the camp in all its quarters, the elders, in great consternation, brought a report that the Bedouin war-hawks, who nestle in the lap of the adjacent wild mountains, were collecting in the neighbourhood with the design of making a sudden swoop upon the káfilah, for which reason the European escort must be prepared for battle, and muskets be discharged forthwith, to intimidate the lurking foe. They were informed, in reply, that all slept upon their arms, and were in readiness; but Mohammad Ali came shortly afterwards to announce that matters had been amicably adjusted with the aid of a few ells of blue cloth; and under the care of a double sentry, the party slept on without further disturbance until two in the morning, prior to which hour, the moon, now on her wane, had not attained sufficient altitude to render advance practicable.

The aid of her pale beams was indispensable, in consequence of the existence of the yawning pass of Rah Eesah, not one hundred yards distant from the encampment just abandoned, but till now unperceived. It derives its appellation, as “the road of the Eesahs,” from the fact of this being the path usually chosen by that hostile portion of the Somauli nation, on the occasions of their frequent forays into the country of the Danákil, with whom, singularly enough, an outward understanding subsists. Its depths have proved the arena of many a sanguinary contest, and are said, after each downpouring of the heavens, to become totally impassable, until again cleared of the huge blocks of stone, the detritus from the scarped cliffs, which so choke the bed of the chasm, as to impede all progress. The labour of removing these, secures certain immunities to the

wild pioneers, who levy a toll upon every passing caravan, and who in this instance were propitiated, on application, by the division of a bale of blue cotton calico, a manufacture here esteemed beyond all price.

A deep zig-zagged rent in the plateaux, produced originally by some grand convulsion of nature, and for ages the channel of escape to the sea of the gathered waters from Jebel Goodah, winds like a mythological dragon through the bowels of the earth, upwards of three miles to the southward. Masses of basalt of a dark burnt brown colour, are piled perpendicularly on either side, like the solid walls of the impregnable fortresses reared by the Cyclops of old; and rising from a very narrow channel, strewed with blocks of stone, and huge fallen fragments of rock, tower overhead to the height of five or six hundred feet. One perilous path affords barely sufficient width for a camel's tread, and with a descensus of one foot and a half in every three, leads twisting away into the gloomy depths below, dedicated to the son of Chaos and Darkness, and now plunged in total obscurity.

It was a bright and cloudless night, and the scenery, as viewed by the uncertain moonlight, cast at intervals in the windings of the road upon the glittering spear-blades of the warriors, was wild and terrific. The frowning basaltic cliffs, not three hundred yards from summit to summit, flung an impenetrable gloom over the greater portion of the frightful chasm, until, as the moon rose higher in the clear vault of heaven, she shone full upon huge shadowy masses, and gradually revealed the now dry bed, which in the rainy season must often-times become a brief but impetuous torrent.

No sound was heard save the voice of the camel-driver, coaxing his stumbling beasts to proceed by the most endearing expressions. In parts where the passage seemed completely choked, the stepping from stone to stone, accomplished with infinite difficulty, was followed by a drop leap, which must have shaken every bone. The gun was twice shifted to the back of a spare camel, provided for the purpose; and how the heavily-laden, the fall of one of which would have obstructed the way to those that followed, kept their feet, is indeed subject of profound astonishment. All did come safely through, however, notwithstanding the appearance of sundry wild Bedouins, whose weapons and matted locks gleamed in the moonbeam, as their stealthy figures flitted in thin tracery from crag to crag. A dozen resolute spirits might have successfully opposed the united party; but these hornets of the mountains, offering no molestation, contented themselves with reconnoitring the van and rear-guards from heights inaccessible through their natural asperity, until the twilight warned them to retire to their dens and hiding places; and ere the sun shone against the summits of the broken cliffs, the straggling caravan had emerged in safety from this dark descent to Eblis.

Goobut el Kharáb, with the singular sugar-loaf islet of Good Ali, shortly opened to view for the last time, across black sheets of lava, hardened in their course to the sea, and already rotten near the water's edge. Many years have not elapsed since the Eesah made their latest foray to the north of the pass, which has since borne their name; and sweeping off immense booty in cattle, halted on their return at Eyroladába, above the head of the bay. Under cover of the pitchy darkness, five hundred Danákil warriors, passing

silently through the gloomy defile, fell suddenly in the dead of night upon the marauders, when, in addition to the multitude slain by the spear and creese, numbers in the panic created by the surprise, leapt in their flight over the steep lava cliffs, and perished in the deep waters of the briny basin.

The schooner, although riding safely at anchor near the western extremity, was altogether concealed by precipitous walls that towered above her raking masts, and kept the party in uncertainty of her arrival. Crossing the lone valley of Marmoríso, a remnant of volcanic action, rent and seamed with gaping fissures, the road turned over a large basaltic cone, which had brought fearful devastation upon the whole surrounding country, and here one solitary gazelle browsed on stubble-like vegetation scorched to a uniform brown. Skirting the base of a barren range, covered with heaps of lava blocks, and its foot ornamented with many artificial piles, marking deeds of blood, the lofty conical peak of Jebel Seeáro rose presently to sight, and not long afterwards the far-famed Lake Assál, surrounded by dancing mirage, was seen sparkling at its base.

The first glimpse of the strange phenomenon, although curious, was far from pleasing. An elliptical basin, seven miles in its transverse axis, half filled with smooth water of the deepest caerulean blue, and half with a solid sheet of glittering snow-white salt, the offspring of evaporation—girded on three sides by huge hot-looking mountains, which dip their bases into the very bowl, and on the fourth by crude half-formed rocks of lava, broken and divided by the most unintelligible chasms,—it presented the appearance of a spoiled, or at least of a very unfinished piece of work. Bereft alike of vegetation and of animal life, the

appearance of the wilderness of land and stagnant water, over which a gloomy silence prevailed, and which seemed a temple for ages consecrated to drought, desolation, and sterility, is calculated to depress the spirit of every beholder. No sound broke on the ear; not a ripple played upon the water; the molten surface of the lake, like burnished steel, lay unruffled by a breeze; the fierce sky was without a cloud, and the angry sun, like a ball of metal at a white heat, rode triumphant in a full blaze of noontide refulgence, which in sickening glare was darted back on the straining vision of the fainting wayfarer, by the hot sulphury mountains that encircled the still, hollow, basin. A white foam on the shelving shore of the dense water, did contrive for a brief moment to deceive the eye with an appearance of motion and fluidity; but the spot, on more attentive observation, ever remained unchanged—a crystallised efflorescence.

As the tedious road wound on over basalt, basaltic lava, and amygdaloid, the sun, waxing momentarily more intensely powerful, was reflected with destructive and stifling fervour from slates of snow-white sea-limestone borne on their tops. Still elevated far above the level of the ocean, a number of fossil shells, of species now extinct, were discovered; a deep cleft by the wayside, presenting the unequivocal appearance of the lower crater of a volcano, situated on the high basaltic range above, whence the lava stream had been disgorged through apertures burst in the rocks, but which had re-closed after the violence of the eruption had subsided.

Dafári, a wild broken chasm at some distance from the road, usually contains abundance of rain-water in its rocky pool, but having already been long drained

to the dregs, it offered no temptation to halt. Another most severe and trying declivity had therefore to be overcome, ere the long and sultry march was at an end. It descended by craggy precipices many hundred feet below the level of the sea, to the small close sandy plain of Mooya, on the borders of the Lake—a positive *Jehannam*, where the gallant captain of the "Constance" (Lieutenant Wilmot Christopher, I N) had already been some hours ensconced under the leafless branches of one poor scrubby thorn, which afforded the only screen against the stifling blast of the sirocco, and the merciless rays of the refulgent orb overhead.

Adyli, a deep mysterious cavern at the further extremity of the plain, is believed by the credulous to be the shaft leading to a subterranean gallery which extends to the head of Goobut el Kharáb. Déeni, most expert and systematic of liars, even went so far as to assert that he had seen through it the waters of the bay, although he admitted it to be the abode of "gins and efreets," whose voices are heard throughout the night, and who carry off the unwary traveller to devour him without remorse. The latest instance on record was of one Shehém, who was compelled by the weariness of his camel to fall behind the caravan, and, when sought by his comrades, was nowhere to be found, notwithstanding that his spear and shield had remained untouched. No tidings of the missing man having been obtained to the present hour, he is believed by his disconsolate friends to have furnished a meal to the gins in Adyli; but it seems not improbable that some better clue to his fate might be afforded by the Adrúsi, an outcast clan of the Débeni, acknowledging no chief, though recognising in some respects the

authority of the Sultán of Tajúra, and who wander over the country for evil, from Sagállo to the Great Salt Lake.

Foul-mouthed vampires and ghouls were alone wanting to complete the horrors of this accursed spot, which, from its desolate position, might have been believed the last stage in the habitable world. A close mephitic stench, impeding respiration, arose from the saline exhalations of the stagnant lake. A frightful glare from the white salt and limestone hillocks threatened destruction to the vision; and a sickening heaviness in the loaded atmosphere, was enhanced rather than alleviated by the fiery breath of the parching north-westerly wind, which blew without any intermission during the entire day. The air was inflamed, the sky sparkled, and columns of burning sand, which at quick intervals towered high into the dazzling atmosphere, became so illumined as to appear like tall pillars of fire. Crowds of horses, mules, and fetid camels, tormented to madness by the dire persecutions of the poisonous gad-fly, flocked recklessly with an instinctive dread of the climate, to share the only bush; and obstinately disputing with their heels the slender shelter it afforded, compelled several of the party to seek refuge in noisome caves formed along the foot of the range by fallen masses of volcanic rock, which had become heated to a temperature seven times in excess of a potter's kiln, and fairly baked up the marrow in the bones. Verily! it was "an evil place," that lake of salt: it was "no place of seed, nor of figs, nor yet of vines; no, nor even of pomegranates; neither was there any water to drink."

Volume One—Chapter Fourteen.

Fearful Sufferings in the Pandemonium of Bahr Assál.

In this unventilated and diabolical hollow, dreadful indeed were the sufferings in store both for man and beast. Not a drop of fresh water existed within many miles; and, notwithstanding that every human precaution had been taken to secure a supply, by means of skins carried upon camels, the very great extent of most impracticable country to be traversed, which had unavoidably led to the detention of nearly all, added to the difficulty of restraining a multitude maddened by the tortures of burning thirst, rendered the provision quite insufficient; and during the whole of this appalling day, with the mercury in the thermometer standing at 126 degrees under the shade of cloaks and umbrellas—in a suffocating Pandemonium, depressed five hundred and seventy feet below the ocean, where no zephyr fanned the fevered skin, and where the glare arising from the sea of white salt was most painful to the eyes; where the furnace-like vapour exhaled, almost choking respiration, created an indomitable thirst, and not the smallest shade or shelter existed, save such as was afforded, in cruel mockery, by the stunted boughs of the solitary leafless acacia, or, worse still, by black blocks of heated lava, it was only practicable, during twelve tedious hours, to supply to each of the party two quarts of the most mephitic brick-dust-coloured fluid, which the direst necessity could alone have forced down the parched throat, and which, after all, far from alleviating thirst, served materially to augment its insupportable horrors.

It is true that since leaving the shores of India, the party had gradually been in training towards a disregard of dirty water—a circumstance of rather fortunate occurrence. On board a ship of any description the fluid is seldom very clean, or very plentiful. At Cape Aden there was little perceptible difference betwixt the sea-water and the land water. At Tajúra the beverage obtainable was far from being improved in quality by the taint of the new skins in which it was transferred from the only well; and now, in the very heart of the scorching Teháma, when a copious draught of *aqua pura* seemed absolutely indispensable every five minutes, to secure further existence upon earth, the detestable mixture that was at long intervals most parsimoniously produced, was the very acmé of abomination. Fresh hides stripped from the rank he-goat, besmeared inside as well as out with old tallow and strong bark tan, filled from an impure well at Sagállo, tossed, tumbled, and shaken during two entire nights on a camel's back, and brewed during the same number of intervening days under a strong distilling heat—poured out an amalgamation of pottage of which the individual ingredients of goat's hair, rancid mutton fat, astringent bark, and putrid water, were not to be distinguished. It might be smelt at the distance of twenty yards, yet all, native and European, were struggling and quarrelling for a taste of the recipe. The crest-fallen mules, who had not moistened their cracked lips during two entire days, crowding around the bush, thrust their hot noses into the faces of their masters, in reproachful intimation of their desire to participate in the filthy but tantalising decoction; and deterred with difficulty from draining the last dregs, they ran frantically with open mouths to seek mitigation of their sufferings at the deceptive waters

of the briny lake, which, like those of Goobut el Kharáb, were so intensely salt, as to create smarting of the lips if tasted.

Slowly flapped the leaden wings of Time on that dismal day. Each weary hour brought a grievous accession, but no alleviation, to the fearful torments endured. The stagnation of the atmosphere continued undiminished; the pangs of thirst increased, but no water arrived; and the sun's despotic dominion on the meridian, appeared to know no termination. At four o'clock, when the heat was nothing abated, distressing intelligence was received that one of the seamen, who during the preceding night had accompanied the captain of the schooner-of-war from Goobut el Kharáb, and had unfortunately lost his way, could nowhere be found—the gunner, with six men, having long painfully searched the country side for their lost messmate, but to no purpose; Abroo, the son of whom old Aboo Bekr was justly proud, and who was indeed the flower of his tribe, immediately volunteered to go in quest of the missing sailor, and he subsequently returned with the cheering intelligence that his efforts had been crowned with success. Overwhelmed by heat and thirst, the poor fellow, unable to drag his exhausted limbs further, had crept for shelter into a fissure of the heated lava, where he had soon sunk into a state of insensibility. Water, and the use of a lancet, with which the young midshipman who heroically accompanied the exploring party had been provided, restored suspended animation sufficiently to admit of his patient being conveyed on board the "Constance" alive; but, alas! he never reached Tajúra; neither did one of the brave tars who sought their lost comrade under the fierce rays of the sun, nor indeed did any of

the adventurous expedition, escape without feeling, in after severe illness, the unwholesome influence upon the human constitution of that waste and howling wilderness.

But the longest day must close at last, and the great luminary had at length run his fiery and tyrannical course. String after string of loaded camels, wearied with the passage of the rugged defile of Rah Eesah, were with infinite difficulty urged down the last steep declivity, and at long intervals, as the shadows lengthened, made their tardy appearance upon the desert plain; those carrying water, tents, and the greater portion of the provisions most required, being nevertheless still in the rear when the implacable orb went down, shorn of his last fierce ray. The drooping spirits of all now rose with the prospect of speedy departure from so fearful a spot. The commander of the friendly schooner, which had proved of such inestimable service, but whose protecting guns were at length to be withdrawn, shortly set out on his return to the vessel with the last despatches from the Embassy, after bidding its members a final farewell; and in order to obtain water, any further deprivation of which must have involved the dissolution of the whole party, no less than to escape from the pestilential exhalations of the desolate lake, which, as well during the night as during the day, yielded up a blast like that curling from a smith's forge—withering to the human frame—it was resolved as an unavoidable alternative, to leave the baggage to its fate, and to the tender mercies of guides and camel-drivers, pushing forward as expeditiously as possible to Goongoonteh, a cleft in the mountains that bound the opposite shore, wherein water was known to be abundant. Pursuant to this determination, the

European escort, with the servants, followers, horses, and mules, were held in readiness to march so soon as the moon should rise above the gloomy lava hills, sufficiently to admit of the path being traced which leads beyond the accursed precincts of a spot, fitly likened by the Danákil to the infernal regions.

Dismal, deadly, and forbidding, but deeply interesting in a geological point of view, its overwhelming and paralysing heat precluded all possibility of minute examination, and thus researches were of necessity confined to the general character of the place. Latitude, longitude, and level were however accurately determined (These will be found in the Appendix, Number One), and many were the theories ventured, to account for so unusual a phenomenon. Obviously the result of earthquake and volcanic eruption—a chaos vomited into existence by

“Th’ infuriate hill that shoots the pillar’d flame,”

Dame Nature must indeed have been in a most afflicting throe to have given birth to a progeny so monstrous; and there being no locality to which the most vivid fancy could assign aught that ever bore the name of wealth or human population, little doubt can exist that the sea must have been repelled far from its former boundaries. The oviform figure of the bowl, hemmed in on three sides by volcanic mountains, and on the fourth by sheets of lava, would at the first glance indicate the site of an extensive crater, whose cone having fallen into a subterranean abyss, had given rise to the singular appearance witnessed. But it is a far more probable hypothesis that the Bahr Assál, now a dead sea, formed at some very remote period a continuation of the Gulf of Tajúra, and was separated from Goobut el Kharáb by

a stream of lava six miles in breadth, subsequently upheaved by subterranean action, and now forming a barrier, which, from its point of greatest elevation, where the traces of many craters still exist, gradually slopes eastward towards the deep waters of the bay, and westward into the basin of the Salt Lake. Whilst no soundings are found in the estuary of Tajúra, Goobut el Kharáb gives one hundred and fifteen fathoms, or six hundred and ninety feet; and premising the depression of the lake to have been formerly correspondent therewith, one hundred and twenty feet may be assumed as its present depth. To this it has been reduced by the great annual evaporation that must take place—an evaporation decreasing every year as the salt solution becomes more intensely concentrated, and evinced by the saline incrustation on the surface no less than by a horizontal efflorescence, in strata, at a considerable height on the face of the circumjacent rocks.

In the lapse of years, should the present order of things continue undisturbed from below, the water win probably disappear altogether, leaving a field of rock salt, which, when covered in by the débris washed down from the adjacent mountains, will form an extensive depôt for the supply of Danákil generations yet unborn; and the shocks of earthquakes being still occasionally felt in the neighbourhood, it seems not improbable—to carry the speculation still further—that Goobut el Kharáb, divided only by a narrow channel from the Bay of Tajúra, will, under subterranean influence, be, in due process of time, converted into a salt lake, in no material respect dissimilar from the Bahr Assál—another worthy type of the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Volume One—Chapter Fifteen.

Dismal Night-March along the Inhospitable Shores of the Great Salt Lake.

Scarcely had the moon dipped her first flickering beam into the unruffled surface of the oval lake, and lighted the bluff cliffs for some hours previously shrouded in gloomy obscurity, than a loud war-cry from the adjacent heights echoed the assembly to arms, and the shrill blast of the Adaïel conch summoned all to the rescue. Abandoning his occupation, each stalwart warrior seized spear and buckler, which had been laid aside whilst he aided in the task of reloading the camels for the approaching night-march, and with respondent yells rushed towards the spot whence the alarm proceeded. The Europeans, springing from their broken slumbers on the parched sands, stood to their arms. A long interval of silence and suspense succeeded, which was at last relieved by the return of Mohammad Ali, one of whose beasts had unfortunately slidden with its burden over a steep precipice, when the water-skins bursting incontinently, had scattered the filthy but precious contents over the thirsty soil—an irreparable catastrophe which had occasioned the call for assistance, believed by all to indicate a hostile gathering of the wild Bedouin clans.

Of two roads which lead to Goongoonteh from the shores of the dreary Bahr Assál, one skirts the margin of the lake by a route utterly destitute of fresh water; whilst the other, although somewhat more circuitous, conducts over high lava banks stretching some distance inland to Haliksitan, and past the

small well of Hanlefánta, where the drained pitcher of the fainting wayfarer may be refilled. On finally quitting the bivouac under the scraggy boughs of the dwarf acacia, where the tedious and most trying day had been endured—which each of the half-stifled party did with an inward prayer that it might never fall to his lot to seek their treacherous shelter more—a fierce dispute arose amongst the leaders of the caravan as to which path should be adopted. “What matters it,” urged the intolerant Mohammadan from Shoa, who had accidentally been found starving at Ambábo, and been since duly fed by the embassy —“what matters it if all these Christian dogs should happen to expire of thirst? Lead the Kafirs by the lower road, or, *Allahu akbar*, God is most powerful, if the waters of the well prove low, what is to become of the mules of the Faithful?”

But the breast of the son of Ali Abi fortunately warmed to a more humane and charitable feeling than the stony heart of the “red man.” With his hand upon the hilt of his creese, he swore aloud upon the sacred Korán to take the upper path, and stoutly led the way, in defiance of all, after Izhák and the ruthless bigots in his train had actually entered upon a route, which the event proved must have involved the destruction of all less inured than the savage to the hardships of the waste wilderness.

’Twas midnight when the thirsty party commenced the steep ascent of the ridge of volcanic hills which frown above the south-eastern boundary of the fiery lake. The searching north-east wind had scarcely diminished in its parching fierceness, and in hot suffocating gusts swept fitfully over the broad glittering expanse of water and salt whereon the moon shone brightly—each deadly puff succeeded

by the stillness that foretells a tropical hurricane—an absolute absence even of the smallest ruffling of the close atmosphere. Around, the prospect was wild, gloomy, and unearthly, beetling basaltic cones and jagged slabs of shattered larva—the children of some mighty trouble—forming scenery the most shadowy and extravagant. A chaos of ruined churches and cathedrals, *eedgahs*, towers, monuments, and minarets, like the ruins of a demolished world, appeared to have been confusedly tossed together by the same volcanic throes, that when the earth was in labour, had produced the phenomenon below; and they shot their dilapidated spires into the molten vault of heaven, in a fantastic medley, which, under so uncertain a light, bewildered and perplexed the heated brain. The path, winding along the crest of the ridge, over sheets of broken lava, was rarely of more than sufficient width to admit of progress in single file; and the livelong hours, each seeming in itself a century, were spent in scrambling up the face of steep rugged precipices, where the moon gleamed upon the bleaching skeleton of some camel that had proved unequal to the task—thence again to descend at the imminent peril of life and limb, into yawning chasms and dark abysses, the forbidding vestiges of bygone volcanic agency.

The horrors of that dismal night set the efforts of description at defiance. An unlimited supply of water in prospect, at the distance of only sixteen miles, had for the brief moment buoyed up the drooping spirit which tenanted each way-worn frame; and when an exhausted mule was unable to totter further, his rider contrived manfully to breast the steep hill on foot. But owing to the long fasting and privation endured by all, the limbs of the weaker soon refused the task, and

after the first two miles, they dropped fast in the rear.

Fanned by the fiery blast of the midnight sirocco, the cry for water, uttered feebly and with difficulty by numbers of parched throats, now became incessant; and the supply of that precious element brought for the whole party falling short of one gallon and a half, it was not long to be answered. A tiny sip of diluted vinegar for a moment assuaging the burning thirst which raged in the vitals, and consumed some of the more down-hearted, again raised their drooping souls; but its effects were transient, and after struggling a few steps, overwhelmed, they sunk again, with husky voice declaring their days to be numbered, and their resolution to rise up no more. Dogs incontinently expired upon the road; horses and mules that once lay down, being unable from exhaustion to rally, were reluctantly abandoned to their fate; whilst the lion-hearted soldier, who had braved death at the cannon's mouth, subdued and unmanned by thirst, finally abandoning his resolution, lay gasping by the wayside, and heedless of the exhortation of his officers, hailed approaching dissolution with delight, as bringing the termination of tortures which were not to be endured.

Whilst many of the escort and followers were thus unavoidably left stretched with open mouths along the road, in a state of utter insensibility, and apparently yielding up the ghost, others, pressing on to arrive at water, became bewildered in the intricate mazes of the wide wilderness, and recovered it with the utmost difficulty. As another day dawned, and the round red sun again rose in wrath over the Lake of Salt, towards the hateful shores of which the tortuous path was fast tending, the courage of all who had hitherto home up against fatigue and anxiety began

to flag. A dimness came before the drowsy eyes, giddiness seized the brain, and the prospect ever held out by the guides, of quenching thirst immediately in advance, seeming like the tantalising delusions of a dream, had well nigh lost its magical effect; when, as the spirits of the most sanguine fainted within them, a wild Bedouin was perceived, like a delivering angel from above, hurrying forward with a large skin filled with muddy water. This most well-timed supply, obtained by Mohammad Ali from the small pool at Hanlefánta, of which, with the promised guard of his own tribe, by whom he had been met, he had taken forcible possession in defiance of the impotent threats of the ruthless “red man,” was sent to the rear. It admitted of a sufficient quantity being poured over the face and down the parched throat, to revive every prostrate and perishing sufferer; and at a late hour, ghastly, haggard, and exhausted, like men who had escaped from the jaws of death, the whole had contrived to straggle into a camp, which, but for the foresight and firmness of the son of Ali Abi, few individuals indeed of the whole party would have reached alive.

A low range of limestone hillocks, interspersed with strange masses of coral, and marked by a pillar like that of Lot, encloses the well of Hanlefánta, where each mule obtained a shield full of water. From the glittering shores of the broad lake, the road crosses the saline incrustation, which extends about two miles to the opposite brink. Soiled and mossy near the margin, the dull crystallised salt appears to rest upon an earthy bottom; but it soon becomes lustrous and of a purer colour, and floating on the surface of the dense water, like a rough coarse sheet of ice, irregularly cracked, is crusted with a white yielding

efflorescence, resembling snow which has been thawed and refrozen, but which still, as here, with a crisp sound, receives the impress of the foot. A well trodden path extends through the prismatic colours of the rainbow, by the longitudinal axis of the ellipse, to the northeastern extremity of the gigantic bowl, whence the purest salt is obtainable in the vicinity of several cold springs, said to cast up large pebbles on their jet, through the ethereal blue water.

At some distance from the beach was a caravan of Bedouin salt-diggers, busily loading their camels for the markets of Aussa and Abyssinia, where it forms on article of extensive traffic and barter. Two other basins of a similar stamp, but inferior extent, which exist at no great distance to the northward, are styled “Ullool” and “Dus.” The first of these producing salt of most exquisite lustre, is preferred by the Mudaïto tribes, from whose capital Aussa, it is not more remote than Doba, as they term the Bahr Assál, the right to frequent which is asserted as an exclusive privilege by the Danákil, who for centuries have actually held the monopoly undisputed. Transferred in bulk in long narrow mat bags, wrought of the date-leaf, it is exchanged for slaves and grain, and not only forms, as in other climes, one of the chief necessaries of life, but possesses a specific value for the rock salt of the north, which, cut into rectangular blocks, passes as a circulating medium.

A second low belt of hills, gypsum and anhydrite, succeeded by limestone overstrewed with basaltic boulders, forms the western bank of the molten sea, and opens into a mountain ravine. Taking its source at Allooli, the highest point of the Gollo range, this torrent strives to disembogue into the extremity of the lake, although its waters seldom arrive so far, save

during the rainy season. The high basaltic cliffs that hem in the pebbly channel, approximating in the upper course as they increase rapidly in altitude, form a narrow waist, where the first running stream that had greeted the eye of the pilgrims since leaving the shores of Asia, trickled onwards, leaving bright limpid pools, surrounded by brilliant sward.

Bowers, for ever green, enlivened by the melodious warbling of the feathered creation, and the serene and temperate air of the verdant meadows of Elysium, were absent from this blessed spot, but it was entered with feelings allied for the moment to escape from the horrors of purgatory to the gates of Paradise; and under the shade cast by the overhanging cliffs, which still warded off the ardent rays of the ascending sun, it was with thankful hearts that the exhausted party, after the terrors of such a night, turned their backs upon the deadly waters of the stagnant lake, to quaff at the delicious rivulet of Goongoonteh an unlimited quantity of cool though brackish fluid.

Here terminated the dreary passage of the dire Teháma—an iron-bound waste, which, at this inauspicious season of the year, opposes difficulties almost overwhelming in the path of the traveller. Setting aside the total absence of water and forage throughout a burning tract of fifty miles—its manifold intricate mountain passes, barely wide enough to admit the transit of a loaded camel, the bitter animosity of the wild bloodthirsty tribes by which they are infested, and the uniform badness of the road, if road it may be termed, everywhere beset with the huge jagged blocks of lava, and intersected by perilous acclivities and descents—it is no exaggeration to state, that the stifling sirocco which

sweeps across the unwholesome salt flat during the hotter months of the year, could not fail, within eight and forty hours, to destroy the hardiest European adventurer. Some idea of the temperature of this terrible region may be derived from the fact of fifty pounds of well packed spermaceti candles, having, during the short journey from Tajúra, been so completely melted out of the box as to be reduced to a mere bundle of wicks. Even the Danákil, who from early boyhood have been accustomed to traverse the burning lava of the Teháma, never speak of it but in conjunction with the devouring element, of whose properties it partakes so liberally, and when alluding to the Lake of Salt, invariably designate it “Fire.”

Volume One—Chapter Sixteen.

Afflicting Catastrophe at Goongoonteh.

Goongoonteh, a deep gloomy zig-zagged fissure, of very straitened dimensions, is hemmed in by craggy lava and basaltic walls, intersected by dykes of porphyry, augitic greenstone and pistacite, with decomposed sulphate of iron, all combining to impart a strangely variegated appearance. Scattered and inclined in various directions, although towering almost perpendicularly, they terminate abruptly in a rude pile of rocks and lulls, through a narrow aperture in which the path to the next halting ground at Allooli, where the torrent takes its source, strikes off at an angle of 90 degrees.

Huge prostrate blocks of porphyry and basalt, which have been launched from the impending scarps, and

now reduce the channel to this narrow passage, are in places so heaped and jammed together by some mighty agency, as to form spacious and commodious caverns. In the rainy season especially, these doubtless prove of wonderful convenience to the wayfarer; and no tent arriving until late the following day, the re-assembled party were fain to have recourse to them for shelter against the fierce hot blast from the Salt Lake, which, unremitting in its dire persecutions, now blew directly up the ravine. But the rocks soon became too hot to be touched with impunity, and the oblique rays of the sun, after he had passed the meridian, darting through every aperture, the caves were shortly converted into positive ovens, in which the heat, if possible, was even more intolerable than ever. Unlike former stations, however, there was, in this close unventilated chasm, a luxurious supply of water to be obtained from the living rill which murmured past the entrance, and although raised to the temperature of a thermal spring by the direct influence of the solar rays, and withal somewhat brackish to the taste, it was far from being pronounced unpalatable.

Notwithstanding that the neighbourhood afforded neither the smallest particle of forage nor of fuel, it became necessary, in consequence of the non-arrival of one half of the camels, no less than from the exhaustion of many of the party, to halt a day in the hot unhealthy gully; and this delay afforded to the treacherous creese of the lurking Bedouin an opportunity of accomplishing that which had only been threatened by drought and famine. The guides objecting strongly to the occupation of the caves after nightfall, on account of the many marauding parties of Eesah and Mudaïto, by whom the wady is infested,

every one, as a measure of precaution, slept in the open air among the baggage, half a mile lower down the ravine, where the caravan had halted. The dry sandy bed of the stream was here narrow, and the cliffs—broken for a short distance on either side into hillocks of large distinct boulders—again resumed their consistency after an interval of one hundred yards, and enclosed the camp in a deep gloom.

The straitened figure of the bivouac rendered it impossible to make arrangements with much regularity in view to defence. The horses were picketted in the centre of the ravine. The European escort occupied a position betwixt them and the northern side, and the scanty beds of the officers of the party were spread close to the southern bank. A strong picket of the Danákil was placed a little distance in advance; and, in addition to the numerous other native guards in various quarters, the usual precaution was observed of mounting a European sentry, whose beat extended the length of the front of the encampment. Old Izhák slept close to the beds of the embassy, and, evidently in a state of considerable trepidation, solaced himself until a late hour by recounting bloody tales of murder and assassination, perpetrated, within his knowledge, by the mountain *Buddoos* haunting the ravine of Goongoonteh, which, being the high road to the Salt Lake, forms the resort of numerous evil disposed ruffians, who are ever on the prowl to cut throats, and to do mischief.

The first night, although awfully oppressive from the heat exhaled from the baked ground, and the absence of even the smallest zephyr, passed quietly enough; and after another grilling day, which seemed to have no termination, spent within the caverns, the

same nocturnal arrangement as before was observed with undiminished precaution. An hour before midnight a sudden and violent sirocco scoured the wady, the shower of dust and pebbles raised by its hot blast, being followed by a few heavy drops of rain, with a calm, still as the sleep of death. The moon rose shortly afterwards, and about two o'clock a wild Irish yell, which startled the whole party from their fitful slumbers, was followed by a rush of men, and a clatter of hoofs, towards the beds of the Embassy. Every man sprang instinctively on his feet, seized a gun, of which two or three lay loaded beside each, and standing on his pillow with weapon cocked, prepared for the reception of the unseen assailants. Fortunate was it that no luckless savage, whether friend or foe, followed in the disorderly retreat, or consequences the most appalling must inevitably have ensued; but the white legs of half-naked and unarmed artillerymen having passed at speed, were followed only by a crush of horses and mules that had burst from their pickets. So complete was the panic caused by a sudden start from deep sleep to witness the realisation of the murderous tales of midnight assassination which had been poured into their ears, that the flying soldiery, who in the battle field had seen comrades fell thick around them, and witnessed death in a thousand terrific forms, were rallied with difficulty. But a panic is of short duration if officers perform their duty, and the word "Halt!" acted like magic upon the bewildered senses of the survivors, who, falling in, formed line behind the rifles.

Hurrying to the spot which they had occupied, a melancholy and distressing sight presented itself. A sergeant and a corporal lay weltering in the blood with which their scanty beds were deeply stained,

and both were in the last agonies of death. One had been struck with a creese in the carotid artery immediately below the ear, and the other stabbed through the heart; whilst speechless beside their mangled bodies was stretched a Portuguese follower, with a frightful gash across the abdomen, whence the intestines were protruding. Aroused in all probability during this act of cold-blooded murder, and attempting to give the alarm, he had received a fatal slash as the dastards retreated; but almost instantaneous death had followed each previous blow of the creese, which, whilst the back of the sentinel was turned, had been dealt with mortal and unerring precision.

Two human figures being perceived at the moment the alarm was first raised, crossing the lower gorge of the ravine, and absconding towards the hills which bounded the further extremity of the camp, were promptly pursued by Mohammad Ali and his band of followers, who had seized spear and shield with the utmost alacrity; but although the moon shone bright, and the stars twinkled in the clear firmament, the broken and stony nature of the ground facilitated the escape of the miscreants under the deep shadow cast by the overhanging mountains, where objects could not be distinguished.

This afflicting catastrophe gave birth in the breast of all to a by no means unnatural feeling of distrust towards the escort engaged on the sea-coast, not only as to their ability, but also as to their intention to afford protection. The European party had lain down in full and entire confidence, only to be aroused by the perpetration of this most diabolical and fiendish deed; and although those who had been so fortunate as to escape might, now that they had become aware

of the existing peril, defend their own lives, yet such an alternative, involving the abandonment of all the government property in charge, was far from being enviable. Upon after investigation, however, it appeared probable, as well from the evil character borne by the gloomy ravine, as from the numberless murders known to be annually committed under similar circumstances of wanton atrocity amongst the native káfilahs *en route*, that a party of the Eesah Somauli, inhabitants of the opposite coast of Goobut el Kharáb, but who, to gratify an insatiate thirst for human blood, are in the habit of making frequent incursions into the country of the Danákil, had seized the opportunity afforded by the absence of the sentry at the further extremity of his beat, to steal unperceived down the inumbrated bank of the hollow, and perpetrate the dastardly and cold-blooded outrage.

No attempt to plunder appeared as an excuse for the Satanic crime, and the only object doubtless was the acquisition of that barbarous estimation and distinction which is only to be arrived at through deeds of assassination and blood. For every victim, sleeping or waking, that falls under the murderous knife of one of these fiends in human form, he is entitled to display a white ostrich plume in the woolly hair, to wear on the arm an additional bracelet of copper, and to adorn the hilt of his reeking creese with yet another stud of silver or pewter—his reputation for prowess and for bravery rising amongst his clansmen in proportion to the atrocity of the attendant circumstances. At perpetual strife with the Danákil, although the chiefs of the tribes are on outward terms of friendship, and even of alliance, no opportunity is lost of retaliating upon the mountain

Bedouin—every fresh hostility creating a new blood feud, and each life taken on either side, being revenged two-fold, *ad infinitum*.

Ere the day dawned the mangled bodies of the dead, now stiff and stark, were consigned by their sorrowing comrades to rude but compact receptacles of boulder stones—untimely tombs constructed by the native escort, who had voluntarily addressed themselves to the task. And a short prayer, suited to the melancholy occasion, having been repeated as the mortal remains of each gallant fellow, enveloped in a blood-stained winding sheet, were lowered to their wild resting-place, three volleys of musketry, paying the soldier's last tribute, rang among the dark recesses of the ravine, when the hurried obsequies were concluded by scaling the entrance to the cemeteries, in which, however, it is not probable that the dastardly sons of Satan—still doubtless watching with savage satisfaction from some inaccessible cranny—long suffered their victims to sleep.

In the grave-like calm of the night, under the pale light of the wan moon, which only partially illumined the funereal crags that hemmed in the dreary chasm, and rose in gloomy sadness over the vaults of the departed, the scene was mournful and impressive. Mohammad Ali, Izhák, and Hajji Kásim, with all their retainers, appeared deeply touched by the fatal occurrences that had so thinned the ranks of a party for whose lives they had made themselves responsible; but they referred the event to fate and to the Almighty fiat, adding that, although they were unable to restore the dead to life, or undo that which by the will of Heaven had been done, their own eyes should never close in sleep so long as danger was to be apprehended from the dreaded Eesah, whose

only honour and wealth consists in the number of foul butcheries with which their consciences are stained, and whom even savages concur in representing as sanguinary and ferocious monsters, “fearing neither God nor Devil.”

Volume One—Chapter Seventeen.

The Stricken Follower Dies—Cairns of the Murdered—Allooli and Bedi Kurroof.

It had been intended to march at break of day to Allooli, the source of Wady Goongoonteh; but the absence of several of the camels, which had gone astray during the nocturnal confusion, caused delay in this den of iniquity until ten o’clock. The altered deportment of the chiefs meanwhile tended materially to banish from the mind suspicion of treachery. Heretofore, with the single exception of Mohammad Ali, all had been cold, unfriendly, or insulting; but from the moment of the late catastrophe their manner was visibly changed, and the anxiety evinced for the safety of the survivors under their charge was unremitting. They formed a circle round the party whensoever seated, and not a single white face was for a moment suffered to wander beyond their sight unattended by a clump of spears.

The wound of the unfortunate Portuguese had been pronounced mortal, and his dissolution was hourly expected; but life still glimmering in the socket, he lingered on with fearful groans, although speechless, and too nearly insensible to be aware of what had passed. Placed upon a litter, arranged as comfortably

as circumstances would permit, the attempt was made to convey him to the next ground, but the rough motion of the camel doubtless hastened the termination of his sufferings; and the wretched man breathing his last ere he had journeyed many miles from the scene of his misfortunes, was interred under a date tree by the road-side, in a grave ready prepared for his reception.

The last rains having washed away an artificial bank of stones which had formerly facilitated the ascent of the difficult and dangerous passage leading from Goongoonteh into the Wady Kélloo—as the upper course is denominated—a delay of two hours was at first starting experienced in the bed of the torrent, during which all were on the alert. Two huge pointed rocks abutting on opposite angles of the acute zig-zag, reduced it to a traversed waist, so narrow, that room for the load to pass was only afforded when the long-legged dromedary swung its unwieldy carcass alternately from side to side—the steepness of the acclivity rendering it very frequently necessary to perform this inconvenient evolution upon the knees. Many became jammed, and were unladen before they could regain an erect position; whilst others were, with infinite difficulty, by the united efforts of a dozen drivers, who manned the legs and tail, saved from being launched with their burthens over the steep side of the descent, which consisted of a treacherous pile of loose rubbish.

To the surprise of every spectator the train passed through the defile without any material accident, and thence proceeded to pick their steps among the rocks, pools, and fissures, which abound in every mountain torrent whose course is short and precipitous. Flanked by perpendicular sheets of

basalt and porphyry, of unwholesome sulphury appearance, beneath which many deep pools of cool water had collected, the tortuous road was at intervals enlivened by clumps of the *doom* palm, environed by patches of refreshing green turf—sights from which the eye had long been estranged. Nine miles of gradual ascent brought the caravan safely to the encamping ground at the head of the stream—a swamp surrounded by waving palms and verdant rushes, occupying high table-land, and affording abundance of green forage to the famished cattle. Most fortunately the sky had proved cloudy, or the march, performed during the hottest hours of the day, would indeed have been terrific.

Hence to Sagállo, the dismal country is in the exclusive occupation of a wandering race of the Danákil, who, notwithstanding that the Sultán of Tajúra claims the sovereignty of the entire waste, only acknowledge his impotent authority during their occasional temporary sojourn among the huts of that sea-port. The guides asserted, with many imprecations, that from time immemorial few káfilahs had ever halted at Allooli without losing one or more of its members by the Adrúsi creeses, or by those of the Eesah; and on the bank opposite to the shady clump of *doom* palms, under whose canopy the residue of the day was passed, numerous cairns, consisting of circular piles of stone, similar to those left at Goongoonteh to commemorate the outrage of the preceding night, stood memorials of the dark deeds that had been perpetrated.

During about three years the road from Abyssinia to the sea-coast was completely closed by hordes of these ruffian outcasts, who continued their murderous depredations on every passer-by, until

Loheïta, the present Akil of the Débeni, a young, daring, and warlike chieftain, succeeding to the rule on the demise of his father, routed the banditti after a severe struggle, and re-opened the route. The Wady Kélloo is, however, still permanently infested by parties of wild Bedouins, who skulk about the rocky passes: lie in wait for stragglers from the caravan: assassinate all who fall into their ruthless clutches: and, when time permits, further gratify their savage propensities, by mangling and mutilating the corpse.

“See how the cowardly scoundrels marked me,” exclaimed the fiery old warrior Ibrahim Shehém Abli, drawing aside his checked kilt, and displaying sundry frightful seams, which had doubtless been the work of a sharp knife. “Behold these tokens of Eesah steel upon my thigh; I received them in this wild wady; but, by Allah, I had a life for every one of them. We have a blood feud now, and it behoves all who are not weary of the world, to look well to their own throats.”

Lurking bandits excepted, who prowl about like the midnight wolf, the Adaïel tribes, although sufficiently barbarous and quarrelsome by nature, are fortunately in a great measure restrained from deeds of ferocity by the certain consequences of spilling blood. None are anxious to involve their family or tribe in a mortal feud, nor would any warrior, incurring the almost inevitable consequences of a two-fold retribution, find support from his clansmen, unless sufficient cause could be shown; and thus, even in the most lawless states of society, are checks imposed by absolute necessity, which prove almost as powerful as the more civilised legal restraint upon the human passions.

Although Allooli was represented to be even more

perilous than Goongoonteh, it possessed, in point of locality, immense superiority; and every advantage that could be devised, was taken of its capabilities for defence. The baggage, formed in a compact circle on an open naked plain, was surrounded by a line of camels, and the mules and horses were placed in the centre next to the beds of the party. Guards and sentinels patrolled under an officer of the watch; and at the solicitation of the Ras el Káfilah, who was exceedingly anxious to avoid the inconvenient consequences of a blood feud, a musket was discharged every hour at the relief of sentries, in order to intimate to the evil-minded that all within the breastwork were not asleep.

Notwithstanding the presence, in the immediate neighbourhood, for several days previously, of a large band of Eesah, the hot night passed without any alarm. The non-arrival, until long after daybreak, of the camels lost at Goongoonteh, added to the length of the next march, obliging the abandonment of the intention entertained, to speed beyond the pale of this site of assassination, the party halted on the 10th. Allooli stands two hundred and twenty-eight feet above the sea, and although intensely hot, and its waters saline, it proved a paradise when compared with every preceding station. Here animal life was once more abundant. A horde of pastoral savages, who from time to time appeared on the adjacent heights, were made acquainted with the effect of rifle bullets, by the slaughter from the tent door of sundry gazelles that visited the swamp; and the venison afforded a most seasonable accession to the empty larder, which was further replenished from the trees overhead, whose fan-like leaves gave shelter to a beautiful variety of the wood pigeon.

Shortly after midnight the march was resumed by the moon's light over a succession of small barren terraces, confined by conical and rounded hills. In the lone valley of Henráddee Dowár, which opens into the wide level plain of Gurgúddee, there stood by the wayside a vast pile of loose stones, half concealed among the tall jaundice-looking flowers of the senna plant. Towards this spot ensued a general race on the part of escort and camel-drivers, who each added a pebble whilst repeating the Arabic auguration, "*Nauzu billahi mina Shaytani r rajím*."—"Let us flee for refuge to God from Satan the stoned." A tragic legend was attached to the cairn, which, from the dimensions attained, must have dated from a remote epoch. A hoary old man, accused in days long gone of incestuous intercourse with his own daughter, was arraigned before a tribunal of his assembled tribe, and, being fully convicted, was on this spot stoned to death, together with his fair partner in guilt. Throughout Syria and Palestine it is to this day the practice of all who pass the mounds raised over those who die in crime, and whose memory it is intended to dishonour, thus to contribute a stone, as well with a view to perpetuate the monument, as to shield themselves from evil by manifesting the detestation entertained of the infamy commemorated.

Gurgúddee, eight miles in length, and stretching on either hand to the far horizon, is bounded by steep mountain ranges, whence an alluvial deposit washed down by the rains, presented over the whole of the level plain a surface of cracked and hardened mud, like that of a recently-dried morass. From the southern side, where the clayey tract is thickly clothed with stunted tamarisk and *spartium*, a road strikes up the valley in a north-westerly direction to

the Mudaïto town of Aussa, distant some three days' journey for a caravan. As the day dawned, the steeple necks of a troop of ostriches were perceived nodding in the landscape, as the gigantic birds kicked the dust behind their heavy heels; and a herd of graceful gazelles were seen scouring towards a belt of stony hillocks which skirted the dry pebbly bed of a river, that expends its waters on the sun-dried plain. Ascending this stream, in which were a few stagnant pools of bitter unpalatable water, a human figure was detected skulking behind some thick green tamarisks by which they were overshadowed. But on being perseveringly hunted down by Mohammad Ali and his wild myrmidons, the prisoner proved to be a Débeni in quest of truant camels—his attempt at concealment having, according to his own account, arisen from the appearance of so many mounted cavaliers, whom he had mistaken for a foraging party of the Eesah, and was naturally desirous of eluding.

The caravan halted early at Bedi Kurroof, after a march of sixteen miles, and the camp was formed on a stony eminence of basalt and lava, affording neither tree nor shade. A day of fierce heat succeeded. There was no forage for the cattle; the water was of the most brackish description; and the spot being of old infested by Bedouins, the party passed a restless and watchful night.

A legend of blood too was attached to this wild bivouac, as to most others on the road, and thus it was related. One of the young men of a Danákil caravan returning from Abyssinia, fatigued by the hot journey, lay down to rest his weary limbs beneath the shadow of a rock, near which the tent of the Embassy now stood. It was yet broad daylight, but a band of lurking Eesah presently pounced upon the wayfarer,

like the eagle on its prey, and, ere he could resume his weapons, had stabbed him to the heart. The dying groans of the murdered man being heard by his comrades, a number of warriors started in hot pursuit of the flying assassins, and after a severe chase, succeeded in capturing the whole gang. Two were immediately speared to death upon the principle of two drops of blood for one; and the remaining miscreants, four in number, having been stripped of their clothes and arms, were kicked forth out of the place.

“The Eesah of these lulls,” continued the narrator of this tale, as, by the light of the blazing watch-fire, he fashioned a rude wooden bolster for the preservation of his greasy peruke during approaching slumbers, “are perfect *Shaytans*. Outcasts from their tribe, bands of ten or more here wander up and down like wild beasts, cutting the throats of all they meet, whether infidels or true believers—not for the sake of gain or plunder, but purely to gratify an innate propensity to murder. The monsters train for these blood forays upon raw flesh and marrow, and, well anointed with sheep’s-tail fat, can travel day and night, during the hottest season, without suffering from fatigue. *Allahu akbar*! but they are devils incarnate!”

“Who has seen the Eesah, who has heard the Eesah?” wildly challenged Mohammad ibn Izhák, starting upon his feet, and clashing his now finished bolster against his buckler, as he concluded this harangue. “Who has seen the Eesah, who has heard the Eesah?” shouted a dozen voices in various quarters of the extended camp. “Uncover your shields, uncover your shields! Count well their spears, that not a man of them escape!”

“We have not seen them, we have not heard them,” responded the patroles on duty. “No Eesah are here. Sleep on in peace!”

Volume One—Chapter Eighteen.

Territories of the Danákil Débeni—Suggadéra, Murrah, Dúddee, and Gobaad.

Some hours before dawn on the 12th, the káfilah was again loaded and in motion across a low belt of stony eminences which gradually descend to the Kóri Wady, a long water-course, varying in width from two to four hundred yards. Threading the moist channel of this stream, where the foot often absolutely left an impression on the sand, and passing the watering pool of Leilé, the road ascended a deep valley to the halting ground at Suggadéra, in the country of the Danákil Débeni. The entire borders were flanked by dwarf palms and drooping tamarisk, bounded by low hills with cliffs of conglomerate and sandstone, which disclosed dykes of porphyry at an acute angle. Flocks of goats, diligently browsing on the fat pods which fall at this season from the acacia, were tended by ancient Bedouin crones in greasy leathern petticoats, who plaited mats of the split date-leaf; whilst groups of men, women, and children, lining the eminences at every turn, watched the progress of the stranger party.

A pastoral race, and subsisting chiefly upon the fermented juice of the palm, and upon the milk derived from numerous flocks of sheep and goats, or from a few breeding camels, the Débeni, a division of

the Danákil, are during certain months of the year engaged in the transportation of salt from the deadly Bahr Assál to the Mudaïto town of Aussa, where it is bartered for grain. Architecture affords no term applicable to a structure of any kind inferior to a hut or hovel, or it might with propriety be applied to the base jumble of rough stone and shavings of the date stalk, tenanted by these nomade savages, who are divided into clans, and have no fixed habitations. Nevertheless there was something cheering in the aspect even of these frail edifices, the first human tenement which had greeted the eye since leaving the sea-coast, now ninety miles distant. Bare, desolate, and fiery, the entire intervening tract, although infested by the lurking robber and the midnight assassin, may be pronounced in all its sultry parts, utterly unfitted for the location of man.

Water of rather an improved description was obtained at Suggadéra, under basaltic rock, stained green by carbonate of copper. But not a particle of forage was to be had; and the heat, reflected from a pebbly hill beneath which the tent was erected, brought the mercury in the thermometer to 118 degrees, during the greater portion of the day; and the evil appearance of the place, surrounded by gloomy hills cast into the deepest shadow, led to the maintenance of a vigilant watch during the dark night.

Although disturbed at the early hour of 2 a.m., and denied further repose save on the bare ground, the loss of a camel, which was not recovered until late, so far retarded advance, that only four miles were achieved on the 13th. The road continued to wind with a gentle ascent along the bed of the Wady Kóri, the hills gradually diminishing in apparent height until they merged into the elevated plain of Murrah, which

exhibited pebbles of pink quartz, with a few scanty tufts of sweet-scented grass, yellow and withered. Here, at the distance of two miles from a puddle of dirty rain-water, in defiance of the impotent Ras el Káfilah, the camel-drivers, who studiously avoid trees and the vicinity of a pool, resolved to halt, as being a place after their own hearts.

In the dry water-course just left, the chirruping of some solitary hermit bird, and the bursting bud of a certain dwarf shrub which clothed the borders, agreeably reminded the traveller of more favoured climes. But most completely was the illusion dispelled by the forbidding aspect of the sultry plain of Murrah. Monotonous fields strewn with black boulders, glaring in the sun, distressed the gaze wheresoever it was turned—each cindery mass seeming as though it had been showered down during a violent eruption of some neighbouring volcano; although, on nearer inspection, it proved to be the time-worn fragment of an extensive lava sheet. The bare stony plain was decorated with numerous cairns, marking deeds of treachery and blood; and at the distance of twenty miles rose a lofty range of hot table-land, behind which the Abyssinian river Háwash is lost in the great lake at Aussa.

The presence at the watering-place of a host of wild Bedouins, whose appearance was far from prepossessing, again induced the cautious elders to anticipate an attack; and the camp occupying a very unfavourable position for warlike operations, no little difficulty was experienced in making defensive dispositions. A gloomy black hill threw its impenetrable shadow immediately in front; and on the flank, a pile of half-ruined sheepfolds, constructed of blocks of lava, afforded extensive concealment. The

night however passed away without any alarm, and the intense heat of the day giving place to a somewhat cooler atmosphere, admitted of sleep by turns in some comfort—parties of the Danákil escort contriving by chanting their wild war-chorus, to keep their heavy eyes longer open than usual.

An hour after midnight the loading commenced, and the steep rocky hill having been surmounted by a path strewed with loose stones, a terrace of slow ascent, presenting the same dreary appearance of rocks and lava boulders, continued during the residue of the moon's reign. At break of day, however, the aspect of the country began rapidly to improve. Gaining the higher and more salubrious level of Gulámo, the bare sterile land, strewed with black blocks of lava which tore the feet with their jagged edges, was fast giving place to sandy plains covered with dry yellow grass—a most welcome prospect for the exhausted cattle. Heretofore, saving in the wadys, no tree had been seen except small stunted leafless acacias, few and far between, and scarcely deserving of the name. Several small ravines were now choked with continuous groves, and a mountain stream termed Chekaïto, which rises in the country of the Eesah, and in the rainy season disembogues into the lake at Aussa, was thickly clothed on both sides with green belts of tamarisk, wild caper, and other wood, overhung with creeping parasites, and affording food and shelter to birds. The pensile nests of the long-tailed loxia depended from the boughs; and whilst the stems, covered with drift to the height of fifteen feet, gave evidence of a headlong course during the rains, water, even at this season, was here and there to be obtained.

Heaps of loose stones thrown carelessly together,

mark in almost every direction the spot where the victim lies who has been cut off by some cold-blooded miscreant—melancholy monuments connected each with a tale of assassination. But on the banks of the Chekaïto many acres of ground are covered with stones of memorial, such as were raised over Absalom, and over Achan the king of Ai, each surrounded by a circular cordon which bears the stamp of high antiquity, and has evidently witnessed the passage of ages. These sepulchres are said to cover the bones of the heroes who fell in a battle fought on the spot at the period that the country was first wrested from the shepherds. “Hai,” the designation of the spot itself, is applied also to the entire surrounding district, which is stated to have been formerly peopled by the Gitteréza, a gigantic pastoral race, who, under the chief Sango, were at enmity with all the surrounding tribes, but are now extinct.

After five times crossing the serpentine bed to the point of junction with the Sagulli, where ostriches cropped the grass around numerous deserted sheep-pens, the caravan finally halted at Dúddee, no great distance from Ramudéle. For days together the pilgrimage had led across dreary and desolate wastes, and through sterile ravines where no verdure relieved the eye, no melody broke upon the ear, and so few living creatures were to be seen, that the unwonted appearance of a solitary butterfly which had become bewildered in the desert, was duly hailed as an event. The general character is that of a stern wilderness, parched by the intolerable heat of a vertical sun blazing in fierce refulgence over the naked landscape, of which the chief varieties consist in immense plains of dry cracked mud, or in barren

rocks towering towards an unclouded and burning sky. The utter sterility of the soil is rather marked than alleviated by occasional sickly plants of most puny growth, and by the scanty verdure of the few valleys wherein water is to be found, generally in a state of stagnation. But at Dúddee, forage and fuel were abundant. The water obtained by digging in the channel of the stream was no longer brackish. The heat, although the thermometer rose to 110 degrees, was infinitely more endurable than it had hitherto proved; and the insatiable thirst by which all had been incessantly tormented on the lower ground, had well nigh disappeared.

A march of twelve miles over a succession of grassy plains, untenanted by man or beast, but presenting the first cone of the termites that had been seen, brought the party on the 15th to the enclosed valley of Gobaad, a thousand and fifty-seven feet above the ocean. Volcanic ashes, jasper, chalcedony, and quartz, strewed the sandy route, low volcanic ridges, of comparatively recent formation, intersecting the landscape from west to east. The encamping ground, among heaps of hard gravel, near which water was good and plentiful, had only two years previously formed the scene of the discomfiture of the Ras el Káfilah and his party, who had been plundered of all they possessed by two hundred and fifty mounted Eesah. The recollection of the disaster being green in his memory, he had, before leaving Dúddee, donned his folio Korán, in the place of a duodecimo edition which previously graced his shoulder. This was a not-to-be-mistaken sign of "*khouf fee*" (i.e. There is danger to be apprehended) and with a terror-stricken face he now came to intimate, that the presence of a band of these lawless ruffians in the opposite hills,

together with a gathering of the Mudaïto at the neighbouring pools of Sábala and Dagatéli, leaving no sort of doubt upon his mind of a meditated attack during the night, it behoved every man to be more than usually on the alert.

The equanimity of the brother of the Sultán of Tajúra was somewhat disturbed at the assurance in reply to this exhortation, that the Danákil camel-owners were the thieves most to be dreaded, their dirty and dishonest fingers being unhesitatingly thrust into the bags of rice and dates, whensoever opportunity proved favourable; and that the hired escort, whose business it was to prevent this malappropriation of the property of the Embassy, far from assisting to keep watch, left the duty to be performed by the Europeans, and invariably went to sleep on their posts.

“Not one of them shall close his eyes to-night, at all events,” grumbled the Ras. “I shall myself superintend the business, and see to the safety of the camp; for, by the life of the Prophet, this is an evil spot!”

As the red sun went down there was certainly a considerable display of erect spears; but their number gradually diminished as the night closed in; and when the ten o’clock sentry was relieved, Izhák was snoring aloud, according to his wont, whilst each doughty warrior lay fast asleep, with his greasy head upon his shield, and his broad lance in the precise position that it assumed, when it fell from the relaxed grasp of the slumberer.

Volume One—Chapter Nineteen.

Interview with the Ogre.

Loheïta ibn Ibrahim, Makobúnto, Akil, or chief of the Débeni and a section of the Eesah, asserting supremacy over Gobaad, as a portion of his princely dominions, which extend from the Great Salt Lake to Ramudéle, a messenger had, immediately upon the arrival of the caravan, been despatched to his encampment in the neighbourhood, to invite the hero to the tent; and the peaceful night passed, having inspired the leader of the alarmist party with new confidence, the non-arrival of the expected visitor was made an excuse for halting the following day.

Attended by a numerous and disreputable retinue, dragging as a gift an obstinate old he-goat, the potent savage, whose exploit of clearing the high road of the restless marauders, who long obstructed the passage of káfilahs, has already been noticed in terms of commendation, sauntered carelessly in during the early hours of the forenoon. Not one whit better clad than the ragged and greasy ruffians in his train, he was yet distinguished by weapons of a superior order —the shaft of his spear, which resembled a weaver's beam, being mounted below the broad glittering blade with rings of brass and copper, whilst the hilt and scabbard of a truly formidable creese were embellished in like ostentatious fashion. The wearer's aristocratic air, and look of wild determination, were well in unison with the reputation he had acquired as a warrior chief. Long raven locks floated like eagle's feathers over a bony and stalwart frame. A pair of large sinewy arms, terminated in fingers tipped with nails akin to bird's claws, and the general form and

figure of the puissant Makobúnto, brought forcibly to mind the Ogre in the nursery tale, who breakfasted on nought save the flesh of tender innocents, and was cut short in his career of cannibalism by Jack the Giant-killer. A mighty man of valour, and presiding over a numerous clan of fierce and savage warriors, he is feared and respected by all the country round, and seemed to be right well aware of his consequence upon the road.

For some reason of his own, which he did not think proper to divulge, the audience was deferred until dusk, when the warrior stalked consequentially into the tent, and deposited himself between the arms of a chair placed for his reception, with as much dignity and self-possession as if he had never in his life been seated upon the ground. Although his covering was restricted to a very dirty cotton cloth, he wrapped himself in the impenetrable mantle of silence, and, comprehending no Arabic, gave ear to all the compliments that were translated for his edification into the Dankáli tongue, with the most perfect indifference and mental abstraction; until, having swallowed a sufficiency of hot coffee, and stuffed his nostrils with a becoming modicum of Regent's mixture, he deigned to lay aside a portion of his reserve, and in slow, measured language, vouchsafed a brief detail of the energetic measures that had been adopted at his behest, towards the recovery of certain horses sent by his ally, the King of Shoa, to Her Britannic Majesty, and which had, by some unfortunate chance, been stolen in their transit through Gobaad: adding, that he would impart to the Embassy the boon of his protection, and in earnest thereof might probably condescend the favour of his countenance a few stages in advance.

Izhák with his compeers sate in gloomy silence during the entire conference, evidently annoyed at the good understanding that subsisted betwixt his rival Mohammad Ali, and the illustrious guest. The presents designed for the propitiation of the Ogre having been duly transferred, were eagerly clutched and hastily conveyed beneath his buckler, or below the ample folds of his greasy garb, as being far too choice for the prying eyes of attendants; and after sitting another half hour in taciturn dignity, the prince of savages rose deliberately from his chair, and, loaded with broad-cloth and trinkets, walked away as he had come, without condescending to pay attention to, or say a parting syllable to any one.

The extraordinary hour chosen for this curious audience, had obviously been dictated by a desire to conceal from the covetous gaze of the wild spirits around him, the tribute which he had reasonably calculated upon receiving from the British pilgrims, on the occasion of their transit through his territories; for, in truth, it must be confessed that the social state of these savages does not by any means betray that primitive simplicity so lauded and extolled by Rousseau. Rude barbarians they are, saturated with Moslem intolerance as with mutton fat; and although they tend their flocks in the parched valley after the most approved Arcadian fashion, yet the persons of even the boldest chiefs are not always secure: and however poets may have embroidered the subject with the flowers of their fancy, there is not to be found one individual of the whole community, who would hesitate to cut a throat for the sake of the last remaining button on a waistcoat.

Betwixt savage and civilised existence there yawns a wide gulf. The savage man and the civilised man,

although descended from a common parent, can scarcely be said to belong to the same stock of humanity, and he who has been pronounced the only true man, the lordly lord of the wilderness, might here more appropriately be designated a devil incarnate. An interesting trait in the children of nature was witnessed on the occasion of the slaughter of the rank buck goat presented to the Embassy by Loheïta ibn Ibrahim. No sooner had the razor-like creese been drawn across the throat, with the concomitant ejaculation, "*Bismilláhi rahmáni rahím*,"—"in the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful,"—than a savage threw himself upon the expiring animal; and having, vampire-like, quaffed as much of the hot flowing blood as he could obtain, besmeared his greasy features with the residue, and wiped them on the still quivering carcass. No tiger could have acted in more ferocious guise, or displayed a greater relish for the tide of life.

This had been a day of feasting and carousal; for both Izhák and the son of the Rookhba chief had likewise received sheep, and the slaughter of each had been followed by a general tussle for the possession of the caul. For the purpose of larding the head this is a prize infinitely preferred even to the tail, which appendage in the Adel sheep is so copiously furnished, that the animal is said to be capable of subsisting an entire year upon the absorption of its own fat, without tasting water. It was truly delightful to witness the process of greasing the poll at the hands of the Danákil barber. The fat having been melted down in a wooden bowl, the operator, removing his quid, and placing it in a secure position behind the left ear, proceeded to suck up copious mouthfuls of the liquid, which were then sputtered over the frizzled

wig of a comrade, who, with mantle drawn before his eyes to exclude stray portions of tallow, remained squatted on his haunches, the very picture of patience. The bowl exhausted, the operator carefully collects the suet that has so creamed around his chaps as to render him inarticulate; and having duly smeared the same over the filthy garment of him to whom it in equity belongs, proceeds, with a skewer, to put the last finishing touch to his work, which, as the lard congealed, has gradually assumed the desired aspect of a fine full-blown cauliflower.

The Dankáli who has prevailed over his foe, adorns his cranium with a perfect frost of tallow, dons a leopard-skin decorated with monkey tails three times in excess of the highest bashaw in the Ottoman empire, and tricks himself out with feathers in all the variety of savage fancy, the lobe of his ear being pierced for the reception of pewter rings, which denote the number of his victories achieved. Many warriors thus distinguished had strolled in during the day; for there had been an onslaught upon the Eesah, who, among other recent atrocities, had only the preceding week ripped up six pregnant Débeni females. The same wearisome string of enquiries on the part of each member of the káfilah, were responded to in the same cold monotonous drawl, and then bandied back by the new arrival—apathy and indifference pervading the features of both parties throughout the endless mechanical repetitions of "*Wogérri*?" and "*Wogérri maani*?"

To Gobaad, from the shores of Lake Abhibbab, which is formed by the waters drained from Abyssinia, it is said to be one easy day's journey for the pedestrian. Amongst other Mudaïto visitors from its borders, there came one of the Galeyla, an outcast from his

clan, who bore amongst his fellows the reputation of being a *veritable* cannibal. This villain became at once the cynosure of every eye, and stood confessed the vilest of the vile. A coil of putrid entrails which encircled his neck had been distended with mutton fat into the figure of monstrous sausages; and the shaggy mane of a filthy hyena, that he had destroyed and devoured the preceding day, being twined in a becoming wreath around his dark brow, mingled wildly with his dishevelled locks. Under the gaze of so great a crowd, his calm repose was calculated to elicit the highest admiration; and fully sensible of his own merit, the man-eater endured the scrutiny of the curious populace with an air of conscious dignity, which was scarcely disturbed when the temerity of the more juvenile spectators called imperatively for the interference of his heavy mace.

It is difficult to comprehend the motives which may have induced this worthy to venture thus rashly among his bitterest foes; but the nature of the terms occasionally subsisting between the Mudaïto and the Danákil are not more singularly anomalous than those that bind the Danákil and the Eesah, over a portion of which latter Loheïta ibn Ibrahim exercises nominal supremacy. Making common cause, and assisting each other against the Mudaïto, international hostilities are nevertheless almost unceasing; and mutual interest, added to the aversion entertained to the perpetuation of blood feuds, affords perhaps the only substantial argument for their temporary cessation.

Of three chieftains who take the title of Ougass, and whose authority is in some sort acknowledged by the Eesah, the principal is Ougass Robiley, who resides with the Gidderboosi, south of Zeyla. Hoossain ibn

Fara, the next in order, is related by marriage to the Makobúnto of the Débeni, and asserts influence from the Reahmoosa tribe of Somauli, bordering on Goobut el Kharáb, to Kore Korágureet, within thirty miles of Zeyla, where commences the country of the Hebrowal—thence south to the limits of the Galla territory, and north-west to Killulloo. Here it is bounded by Errur, the residence of the old sheikh of the Wóema, and by the independent Mohammadan principality of Hurrur, whose Ameer annually confers upon each Eesah chief a conical skull cap and turban, in recognition of his alliance.

Not a cloud blotted the sparkling vault overhead, which now blazed out in a perfect galaxy of light, engirdled by the luminous zone of the milky way. Attention was early directed to its beauties by the shower of meteors that in rapid succession shot through the innumerable host of heaven, and temporarily eclipsed their brilliancy. The night was already somewhat advanced when Loheïta sent to demand a private audience upon two points of vital importance; and Mohammad Ali being the agent employed, no time was lost in arranging the desired interview. “My beard is troublesome,” whispered the Ogre in a most mysterious tone, after he had been some minutes seated in silence; “my tough beard is not readily trimmed with a creese, and a razor would therefore have been desirable.” A first-rate Savigny was immediately placed within his grasp. “And, secondly,” he continued, trying the keen edge upon the largest of his formidable talons, “my sister, who is far advanced in her pregnancy, has lately rejected food—mutton, beef, every thing in fact has been offered, and equally loathed. Now I am desirous of trying whether she might not fancy a bag of dates.”

Volume One—Chapter Twenty.

Showing how the Ogre Acquitted Himself at Gootabélla.

Many and tragic were the tales narrated of the prowess of the Ogre when the hot blood of youth boiled in his warrior veins. The first feat of his early days, ascribed to the year of the great comet, is still green in every recollection; and as it was recounted by Ibrahim Shehém, so was it vouched for by those of the Danákil braves, who during the recital crowded around the watch-fire at Gobaad.

The grey-bearded elders had sate for many nights in deep consultation, and the chicken-hearted of the Débeni had exhausted all the usual epithets upon the countless number of the foe, and the consequences of rash and fool-hardy adventure, when the youthful chief raised his manly form in the circle, and his brawny proportions seemed to dilate into colossal stature in the dimness of the evening mist.

“Listen to my words,” he exclaimed, “for they are the sentiments of my heart. Children of Loheïta, hearken to the voice of your leader! Has the spirit of the foul hare entered into the breast of the warrior? Is the shield no longer to clash, nor the broad spear to glitter in the valley of Gobaad? Are the Débeni tamely to suffer their wives and their daughters to be carried into captivity, their flocks and their herds to be swept off, their wells to be taken possession of, and their very name made the scorn and the laughing-stock of the dastardly Mudaïto, without one struggle to prevent it? Dust be upon my head if the brave sons of

the desert should thus root themselves in a quiet spot, like the withered and dying acacia, without a single thorn to avenge an insult! Rouse ye, my children, for in the name of the most holy Prophet I will even dare the danger of the war; and ignominy sully the fame of him who shall suffer his chief to mingle singly in the strife."

Reseating his sinewy form upon the rock, Loheïta covered his face in the folds of his garment, and in anxious silence awaited the result of this appeal. But the chord of feeling had been struck by a master hand. A low murmur of voices was quickly followed by the deep hum of approbation accompanying the confused clatter of the bucklers, and the elders, rising simultaneously, proclaimed, "It is the voice and the will of the Most High. Even so let it be!" The erect spears sank with one accord to the ground, and the stern "Ameen" of the assembled tribe, rolled ominously amongst the surrounding cliffs.

For some days after this harangue, the Débeni maintained a peaceable demeanour: but it was now the still, treacherous calm which precedes the hurricane. The Galeyla Mudaïto, who had already possessed themselves of all the choicest grazing grounds in the neighbourhood, and completely closed the caravan route from Abyssinia to the sea-coast, meanwhile continued their depredations with impunity; one subdivision of the tribe settling in the small valley of Gootabélla, where they erected permanent habitations, and boasted of their unmolested vicinity to the graves of the ancestors of Loheïta.

The Galeyla subdivision of the great nation of Mudaïto had rendered itself more particularly

obnoxious by its aggressions. Many were the young men of Gobaad who had fallen under their sharp knives. Scornful taunts were ever rife upon the tips of their insulting tongues; and few indeed of the huts in the valley had not at some period sent forth the voice of wailing and lamentation for captive maids or for harried flocks. But the day of dire retribution was fast speeding on. The wane of the moon was the appointed signal of rendezvous to the heretofore slothful tribe; and as the darkness of the unlit night shrouded the valley and the hill, all those members of the clan whose spirit had not been utterly quelled by the frequent disasters experienced at the hand of the sanguinary invader, mustered around their youthful chief.

Silently, like the descending wreath of snow, the files of warriors poured in from every quarter of his extensive though distracted domain. The nation had responded to the call of its leader; and the wrinkled brow, and the full oily cheek: the thin sinewy shank of the veteran, and the graceful form of the untried but aspiring stripling, were soon mingled together. The sun set upon a busy scene in the lone valley of Gobaad. Two thousand savages, enjoying the rude feast that had been amply provided for their wants, were engaged in close whispering consultation on the coming strife; and wrought to a pitch of frenzy by the spirit-stirring words of their warlike chief, no less than by the exhortations of his wily emissaries, who ever and anon mixed with the carousing groups, to feed their panting passions against the hereditary foe, each warrior firmly clenched his teeth in dread determination, whilst he whetted his sharp weapon to the keenest edge upon the nearest stone.

As the fire blazed brightly upon shield, and spear,

and stalwart frame, Loheïta moved forth in front of his enclosure, buckled for the fray. His active form was fully revealed by the fitful flame; and a dark smile played for the moment over his stern visage, as his followers, rising with one accord, unsheathed their murderous creeses, and, bursting into a loud murmur of applause, swore by the Sacred volume that the steel should that night reek in the hot blood of the accursed Mudaïto.

Placing himself at the head of his animated retainers, the chief now led the advancing van, and the tramp of the eager savage fell light over the steep mountain and the boundless plain. Deep darkness was esteemed of small account by these children of the desert, who, like the course of the falling thunderbolt, held on their progress in the true direction. Starting as the dense phalanx advanced, the timid gazelle scoured in terror over the valley, and the prowling lion yielded the path to men who were now in a mood not less desperate than his own.

The last rocky defile gained, a deep impenetrable gloom pervaded the scene. The very stars were hid under a partial mist, and naught gave token of the habitation or the presence of man, save at intervals the disturbed bleat of captive Débeni flocks. “They were ours once,” scornfully muttered the chief betwixt his closed teeth, “and Wullah! if there be faith in the sharp steel of a true believer, they shall this night return to their pastures.”

“All know the valley of Gootabélla,” observed the narrator, “closely hemmed in on three sides by towering cliffs, over one perpendicular rock at the neck of which, the river Chekaïto, leaping, extends its sandy bed throughout the entire centre, so that ten

resolute spirits might defend the only outlet against countless legions. None save the sons of asses would have pitched their tents in that spot; but the Galeyla were overweeningly conceited and vain of their exploits, and held in utter contempt the dispossessed proprietors of the soil, whom they had hitherto so easily despoiled."

No timely note of alarm announced the approach of danger; and the noiseless step of the foe gliding unheard round the devoted hamlet, it was encompassed on every side. Infuriate warriors in appalling silence beleaguered the narrow aperture of each matted wigwam. The recollection of captive and murdered relatives, of burning huts and harried flocks, entered deep into the stern soul of each grim assailant; and as the edge of the naked creese was passed cautiously along the finger, a prayer was breathed on high to the throne of the Eternal Avenger.

The unsuspecting inmates of every abode were hushed in deep repose. The spear lay entangled in the folds of the scattered garments, the shield had been cast idly in the corner, and the warrior, surrounded by his wives and little ones, was wrapped in peaceful rest, such as he was wont to enjoy when lulled by the gentle murmur of the breaking waves of the Bahr el Shub, in his own far distant land.

The suffocating fumes of smoke soon stole upon the sense of the drowsy slumberers; the crackling of flames aroused all abruptly from their dreams of security, and the lurid glare that enveloped the blazing hamlet caused each affrighted inmate to rush to the door, where the crooked steel, driven by the hand of desperate revenge, was sheathed in many a

bare bosom.

Sudden, electric, and complete was the surprise, and vain were the efforts of the unarmed warrior. Loheïta raged through the scene like the demon of the angry element, and each follower ruthlessly strove to emulate his example. A dozen spear-blades transfixed the body of every fugitive. Two thousand of the foe fell during the murderous onslaught; and in that fearful night all ancient injuries were well washed out in the warm blood of the Mudaïto.

The pent-up wrath of the savage, like the checked waters of an impetuous mountain torrent, bursting all bounds, careered along without restraint. Mockery and insult were bandied back to the frantic screams of the women, as their tender babes were barbarously pitched into the hissing flame; and the red sun rose above the beetling crags to witness a frightful scene of carnage and desolation.

Flocks and herds had burst from their folds, and betaken themselves to the wilderness. Scorched and mangled bodies thickly strewed the ground, or lay half consumed among the smouldering embers of the pile. The groans of the dying mingled with the bitter wailing of captive females bereft of husband and offspring; and the chief surrounded by his exulting host sat in grim triumph beside the dense column of smoke, which with an eddying flame ascended high into the vault of heaven from the black and burning monument to Débeni vengeance.

A deep fissure in the bowels of the hill had given refuge to a determined few who had sought safety within its rocky sides: but the keen eye was not long in discovering the track of the fugitives; and the

insatiate chieftain, speeding upon the trail, tore from the aperture the thorns and overhanging shrubs, and dashed into the cave with spear and buckler. The only resistance made during the foray was in this last stronghold; and Loheïta received a deep wound on the breast, the scar of which will be borne to his grave. Desperation nerved the limbs of the surviving Galeyla, who, well knowing that no quarter would be granted, sullenly fought on with the few weapons they had snatched up in their hurried flight; but all died in the unequal strife upon the spot where they had taken their last stand.

Crowned with brilliant success, the return of the dauntless young chief from his first expedition was swelled by troops of captive maids and by the pillaged herds of years. But the triumph had been achieved with no trifling loss to his clan. The bodies of thirteen braves, borne by their comrades upon green branches of the palm, closed the order of march, and the war-chorus pealed wildly among the rocks as the victorious host poured back through the valley of Gobaad.

A burst of savage acclamation, which rose shrill and high in the noontide heat from the assembled population, was succeeded by a solemn pause as the dread tidings were imparted to the relatives of the fallen. A path was cleared through the now hushed and silent phalanx, whilst muffled females, beating their bare breasts, passed towards the biers between the open ranks. The boldest and the bravest had been untimely cut off; and their widows, throwing themselves upon the lifeless bodies, indulged for a season in the most piercing shrieks and extravagant grief. But the deep loud chaunt of the elders, “It is the decree of the Most High,” drowned the hysterical

sobs of the bereaved; and the host again moved on in boisterous mirth to indulge, after the successful foray, according to the bent of their inclinations, and prepare for a series of achievements, which have since cleared the surrounding plains.

To this day none but the boldest dare, after nightfall, to enter the valley of skulls. The moans of the Galeyla warriors who fell in the affray are heard amidst the funereal sighing of the wind; the plaintive song of the Bedouin maid still chronicles the event; and long will be remembered in the red house of Mudaïto the night of the massacre of Gootabélla.

Volume One—Chapter Twenty One.

Sankul, and Suggagédan. Dawáylaka and Amádoo in the Limits of the Galeyla Mudaïto.

Ascending by an extremely bad road the broken range to the southward, which commands a fine prospect over the valley of Gobaad, the káfilah reached Sankul on the 17th. It forms the focus of several small dales converging from the table-land, and shut in from all breeze by the surrounding steep black cliffs of basalt, passing into hornblende. A small cave near the encamping ground was occupied by a colony of industrious bees, and at the only well, flocks of the diminutive black-faced Berbera sheep were drinking from a trough formed of an ox-hide stretched between four stakes, to which the water was transferred in gourds by greasy Bedouin shepherdesses. The evening was passed in perpetual wrangling with these matrons during the

operation of filling up the water-skins; and sad presage was afforded of a coming day of drought, which the exhausted and sinking cattle of the caravan were hourly waxing less able to endure.

The next march led over the high table-land of Hood Ali, a stony level thickly studded with dry grass, and extending in one monotonous plateau far as the eye could reach. The fetid carrion-flower here presented its globular purple blossoms among the crevices, and a singular medicinal plant, termed Lab-lubba, was detected by the keen eye of a savage who had before evinced a latent taste for botanical studies. The usual encamping ground at Arabdéra was found to be pre-occupied by a nomade tribe of Bedouin goat-herds, who monopolised the scanty water. Descending the range, therefore, the bluff brow of which commanded an extensive prospect over the wide level valley of Dullool, the káfilah halted at Suggagédan. This arid spot in the strand-like waste was covered with masses of lava and with blocks of basalt from the adjacent hills. It was parched by a burning atmosphere, and afforded no water whatever —calamities which resulted in the abandonment of a horse and two of the mules that were no longer able to bear up against thirst and fatigue; whilst many others now dragged their weary limbs with difficulty, and seemed but too well disposed to follow the example.

Dullool is one thousand two hundred and twenty-eight feet above the level of the sea—a perfect flat, covered with alluvial deposit, and studded with extensive tracts of coarse dry grass in tufts, among which, as the almost interminable string of camels crossed the following morning, both ostriches and gazelles were descried. It is bounded by a bold

mountain range, and the further extremity of the plain, towards the foot of Jebel Márie, is perfectly bare, stretching away to the westward, in one uninterrupted sheet of hard compact mud, which imparts the aspect of the Runn of Cutch. A herd of wild asses, precisely similar to those found on the Indian salt desert, materially enhanced the resemblance; and the sun, which had now attained considerable altitude, casting his rays in a full blaze over the naked plain, called up the dancing mirage that was alone wanting to complete the picture.

On this level expanse, which terminates in a *cul-de-sac*, shut in by high basaltic walls, inaccessible either to man or beast, the Adaïel affect to ride down the wild ass, upon lean mules forsooth, and to rip up the quarry with their creeses. There had been much vain-glorious talking upon this head, but it ended, like every Danákil boast, in nothing. The hawk-eye of the Ogre detected an out-lying mare among the ravines at the foot of the range, and he dashed off the road with such lightning speed, that the animal narrowly escaped being hemmed into a corner; but once on the broad desert, and she tossed her arched neck, kicked up her wanton heels, and laughed at the absurd efforts of her impotent pursuers.

Loose stones again strewed the approach to the Márie range, which is of trap formation, of a slaty texture, stained with red iron oxide, and intersected by veins of iron clay. A breach in the hills, here about a thousand or twelve hundred feet high, formed a steep sloping ridge of lava rocks, containing quantities of carbonate of lime, disposed in rhomboids and hexagonal sheets. In this nook, surrounded by a thick jungle of acacia, were sundry basins filled with clear water, to which the solar rays

had not penetrated. They afforded most refreshing draughts; and the skins having been replenished, the encampment was formed at Dawáylaka, a full mile beyond. Márie is not a word of either Arabic or Dankáli derivation; whence it seems not improbable that this bold range of hills may in days of yore have been named by some wanderer from the West.

A fine fresh morning succeeded to a very sultry night, passed upon the hard hot stones; and at break of day, the cattle having been taken to the pools, where, at so early an hour, they would drink but little, the skins were again replenished, and the caravan pursued its march to Oomergooloof, which can boast of no water at any season. Of two roads, the lower, but more level, was adopted, in consequence of the exhaustion of the beasts of burthen. It led across a dry desert plain of six miles, over which the delusion of mirage was complete. Covering the valley far as the eye could reach, to the foot of the hills which rise abruptly on all sides, it imparted the appearance of an extensive bay, shut in by projecting headlands—a still calm lake, so unmoved by the wind that every cliff was most distinctly reflected on the mirror of its glassy bosom.

Approaching from a higher level, a ripple played upon the surface of the visionary water; and the vapour being too subtle to screen irregularities of the ground, the aqueous expanse soon became gradually disunited, until it ultimately vanished altogether. The scene, cool and pleasant whilst it endured, formed a striking contrast to the baked alluvial desert under foot, destitute of even a vestige of vegetation, but over which was wafted a zephyr as unlooked-for as refreshing. Thrown in a particular way, and on certain atoms, rays of light produce illusions to the vision

which are often embodied after the likeness of objects most deeply dwelling in the imagination. Thus it was that the character of the headlands of Dullool, square and perpendicular, together with an islet riding like a ship at her cable in the centre of the molten basin, aided the striking similarity of names in the respective neighbourhoods, to bring vividly before the eyes of all, the apparition of the bay of Goobut el Kharáb.

Immediately opposite to Oomergooloof is a projecting spur from Jebel Oobnoo, a lofty range visible to the westward; and this divides the plain into two valleys, whereof the southern-most is denominated Wady Arfa. The Márie range here towers overhead, steep and precipitous, to the height of about nine hundred feet; stupendous masses of rock which have been detached from the summit, and strew the entire base, corroborating the assertion of the Danákil that earthquakes are frequently felt in the vicinity. Nomade tribes with their families and flocks, having settled at the wells which exist at a distance, had compelled the gentler portion of the Libyan creation to resort to regions more blest with water; and not even a desert-loving gazelle was espied during the march of twelve miles.

Ibrahim Shehém Ablí had long viewed with the eye of bigoted disapproval, the attentions paid by one of the Mohammadan followers to two canine companions of the party, pets that had survived the passage of the fiery Teháma, but whose feet had become so lacerated by the hot lava boulders as to incapacitate them from walking. Quilp—for so the offending Moslem was styled from his striking resemblance to that notable character—was in the act of extricating his wire-haired charge from the panniers wherein

they travelled, when the irascible little warrior approached, and, drawing his trenchant blade, swore with a dreadful anathema to exterminate him on the spot. “Dog, and father of dogs,” he exclaimed, seizing the dismayed mortal by the throat, “beware how thou again defilest thy fingers with those accursed curs, or by the beard of the Prophet I will sever thy gullet as one who has brought foul discredit upon the faith.” Then relaxing his grasp, and sheathing his creese with a horizontal flourish, he threw himself into the attitude of a slaughtered victim, and closed the significant lecture by mimicry of the gurgle heard in a divided windpipe, whence the tide of life is welling.

Several herds of cattle pertaining to the Issehirába Mudaïto, grazed in the neighbourhood; and these were said to derive their supply of water from pools formed by a cluster of hot sulphureous springs at the further extremity of the plain, which, with a loud noise, rise bubbling from the earth at a boiling temperature. Possessing marvellous medicinal properties, they are believed to be a panacea for every malady: but the tribe not being on terms with the Danákil, these thermal wells could not be visited, neither could water be obtained either for man or beast. A few Mudaïto females, with their children, strolled into the camp to sell sheep, and stare at the Feringees; but the Ras el Káfilah would scarcely permit them to be spoken to, and was in a nervous fidget until they departed. Avowing that these greasy dames had come for no other purpose than to spy out the nakedness of the land, and that the creeses of their liege lords would prove troublesome during the night, he strictly interdicted all wandering beyond camp limits, and insisted upon the discharge of several volleys of musketry in addition to the

cartridge expended at guard-mounting, and at every relief of sentries.

The sky having become gradually overcast towards evening, a deluge, equally to be desired and dreaded, was deemed close at hand, but the threatening appearance passed off with the hot blast of the Shimál, accompanied by a cloud of dust, and followed by a close oppressive night. Skirting the Márie range to a tract thickly strewed with rounded masses of lava and basalt, the detritus from the adjacent hills, the road now wound over a volcanic ridge which divides the valley of Dullool from that of Amádoo, running exactly parallel to it. In this latter the caravan halted on the 21st, about a mile from a large pool of rain-water, occupying a rocky nook formed by huge blocks of basalt. The stagnant green fluid was far more palatable than it looked, although troubled by a legion of homed cattle, asses, goats, and sheep, the property of the Galeyla Mudaïto, who were encamped in great force in the neighbourhood, and looked what they are said to be—most desperate villains.

Altogether it was a bustling scene. Herdsmen shouted in every direction to their kine, whose sinister glances and lowered heads proclaimed their dislike of the white intruders; flocks of Somauli sheep, with incommodiously overgrown tails, swam about like otters to cool their heated skins; numbers of Bedouin damsels, after laving their own greasy persons, replenished their dirty water-skins; and one wrinkled old hag, in direct breach of the Moslem prejudice against “man’s friend,” was absolutely detected in the act of cleansing the rough coat of her own pet-dog.

This pastoral scene of savage life, where the

peaceful occupation of the shepherd contrasted strangely with the presence of spear and buckler, was about mid-day exchanged for the tent. A crowd of listless, tattooed savages, bearing very indifferent characters for honesty, soon swaggered in to see what they could pick up, and presently waxed so passing insolent that it was deemed prudent to intimidate them by a display of rifle-practice. Emboldened by numbers, they had begun to question old Izhák regarding his right to conduct strangers through the country without the permission, first duly obtained, of the "lords of the soil;" but seeing the stones fly about in splinters at two hundred and fifty yards they were not long in decamping, and gave no further annoyance. The Galeyla tribe of Mudaïto, which still boasts of the most expert and notorious thieves in the country, is, as might be conjectured, on no very amicable terms with the Danákil; and the very severe chastisement it received at the hands of Loheïta ibn Ibrahim sufficiently accounted for the sudden desertion of the unattended Ogre, who donned his seven-league boots, and strode back to his castle from Dawáylaka, after he had pledged himself to accompany the party to the borders of the territory occupied by Mohammad Ali's clan.

From Amádoo, Aussa was represented to be only one day's journey for a swift mule, and two for a caravan of laden camels, the road branching off across Wady Arfa, and over the Jebel Oobnoo range, by which the extensive valley is bounded. At this point, moreover, had ceased the pretended influence of Mohammad ibn Mohammad, Sultán of Tajúra, the utter futility of propitiating whom had long been sufficiently apparent. Although in the eyes of the uninitiated it was no difficult matter to invest this

avaricious imbecile with supreme authority over a fiery desolate tract, in most parts obviously unfitted for human location, his own immediate retainers did not now conceal that Mirsa Dukhán, and the Gollo mountains near the Salt Lake, bound even his nominal jurisdiction. He is in fact Sultán of the sultry strand whereon his frail tenement is erected; for the few lawless wanderers beyond, over whom he would assert supremacy, are universally thieves and murderers, who disdain all fixed abode, disclaim all mortal control, and acknowledge their own unbridled inclinations as their only master.

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Two.

Red House of Mudaïto—Chronicle of the Conquest of Aussa.

Distinguished like the houses of York and Lancaster by their respective colours, “the white house” of Débenik-Wóema, composed of various Adaïel clans, who in time of need rally under one standard, is banded against the Assa-himéra, “the red house” of the Mudaïto, with the same bitter feud and animosity which spread desolation through the fair domains of England, and poured out the best blood of her heroic sons. Well would it be for the cause of humanity were these savage combatants animated also with the same noble and chivalrous feelings which in days of yore reigned paramount in the breast of the British knight, and met together only in the open field of honourable contest. But the case is widely different indeed; and under whatever circumstances the hated and hereditary foe may here be discovered, the unarmed bosom of the lone, sleeping, or unsuspecting wanderer, rarely fails to prove a sheath for the murderous knife of the assassin.

Aussa, formerly an important town, was, less than a century ago, the capital and principal seat of the united tribes of Mudaïto, who extend thence to Ras Billool, and are represented to be countless as the hairs of a Danákil head. Regarded as the seat of wisdom and learning, and governed in the latter days of its strength by Yoosuf Ali ibn Ajdáhis, a brave and martial sultán, whose armoury boasted of many matchlocks, and of several small pieces of cannon, it

long flourished in powerful independence—a bright spot of beauty in a waste of barrenness. But the sun of its prosperity at length set; and the predatory hostilities long exercised towards the various united tribes of Adaïel, leading to a general invasion on the part of the Ado-himéra, the prince was slain, the stronghold of the “red house” sacked, and its garrison put to the sword: nor in these degenerate days is this once important place more than an extensive encampment, whereat is held a perpetual fair, frequented by all the tribes of Danákil, Eesah, Somauli, and Mudaïto.

The site of Aussa, a wide-stretching valley, described to be from eight to ten days’ journey across for a caravan, is hemmed in by lofty mountains, and fertilised in all its extended quarters by the Lakes Guraaïd, Abhibbab, Hilloo, and Dugód—the first situated a little to the eastward of the town, and the last by far the largest of the four. These vast stagnant basins in the plain receive the Abyssinian waters of the Háwash and its tributaries, in addition to the contributions of all the streams from Jebel Oobnoo and other collateral ranges—the abundance of fluid thus lost upon volcanic formation, so enriching the soil as to enable this district to produce wheat, juwarree, barley, Indian com, pepper, and tobacco, in quantities sufficient for the supply of the entire coast.

The Háwash may be conjectured to have experienced interruption in its course to the Bahr Assál and Bay of Tajúra, at the same period that volcanic agency divided the waters of the great Salt Lake from Goobut el Kharáb. Miles around the wonted boundaries of each lagoon now become annually inundated during the spreading of the great freshes; and, as the floods, carried off by absorption

and evaporation, again recede, the soil is covered with a fertilising sediment—a fat alluvial deposit, which with little labour yields an ample return. Even the lazy and listless Danákil, who neither sows nor reaps elsewhere, is here induced to turn agriculturist; but not a single acre of ground in any direction is to be found under the plough from the sea even to the mountains of Abyssinia—a distance exceeding three hundred and fifty miles.

Pastoral as well as agricultural pursuits engage the population of Aussa; but whilst the cultivating portion of the inhabitants are permanent residents on the soil, the shepherds are annually driven away by the gad-fly, which attacks the flocks from the setting-in of the rainy season until the termination of the fast of Ramzan, when the waters have again subsided, and the herdsman, descending from the mountains, returns to his occupation in the valley. An extensive commercial intercourse is moreover carried on with Tajúra. Salt from the Bahr Assál, blue calico, which is in high demand for the caps universally worn by the married Bedouin females, zinc, pewter, and brass or copper wire, used both for personal ornament, and for the decoration of weapons, are bartered for the produce of the luxuriant soil—some few caravans crossing the Háwash, and pursuing their journey along the western bank to Dowwé, on the frontier of the Wollo Galla, in order to purchase slaves; or striking into the main road at Amádoo, and so prosecuting their way to Shoa for a similar purpose.

Mudaïto tribes occupy the entire plain of Aussa, but they are now divided into five distinct nations. The Assa-himéra are under the rule of Humferi, a descendant of the ancient house of Ajdáhis, who preserves the empty title of Sultán, and resides at the

decayed capital. Eastward are the Issé-hirába, governed by Das Ali, an independent chief, and the Galeyla, under Daamer Ibrahim; south are the Dár, who own allegiance to Akil Digger Myárgi; and west are the ferocious Koorhá, under the sway of Yoosuf Aboo Bekr, who, also with the title of Akil, resides at Alta, and wages war indiscriminately on both Assa-himéra and Débenik-Wóema.

South-westward of the valley of Aussa are the independent Adaïel tribes Hurruk Bodaïto, over whom presides Gobuz Elincha, a powerful chieftain, who has espoused Léni, daughter of Birru Lubo, the Prince of Argóbba, and through whose territories lies the high caravan route to Dowwé, with which the traffic is considerable. On the north, the Mudaïto are bounded by the distinct nation styled Hírto, under the rule of Yingool Ali—Mohammadans, deriving their origin from the Arab invaders of the seventh century, and speaking a language not very dissimilar from the Adaïel, who claim the same descent.

Aussa is still the abode of all the Uleemas, Aukál, and learned doctors, for whom the Mudaïto have ever been renowned, but the present government is singularly constituted. The aged Sultán Humferi, son of Yoosuf Ali ibn Ajdáhis, has retained with his high-sounding title the mere shadow of authority, which is in truth vested in Mohammad Ali, the vicegerent of the Débenik-Wóema, appointed by general suffrage from Tajúra. Residing at Kulloo, and ruling with an iron hand, he admits of little interference; and, in all cases where disputes between the “red” and “white” houses of the proprietors of the soil and their invaders, terminate fatally to the latter, takes two lives for one, according to the immemorial observance in blood feuds.

Ameer Sulaam, the Wuzír of the Mudaïto, is head of all the sages, and he is aided in the administration of justice by Hurrur Hássan, Téeoh, and Bérbera or "Pepper" Ali, the latter so styled from the volubility of his sarcastic tongue. This triumvirate of venerable sheikhs, whose wisdom and learning is reputed to be *kum el báhr*, "profound as the sea," is referred to on all occasions where knotty points are at issue, whether amongst the Ado-himéra or Mudaïto; and even the Sultán of Tajúra was on a late occasion held bound to abide by their arbitration, relative to the projected marriage of his son to a bride from another clan of the "white house," a measure which was resisted, and which he was desirous of enforcing. Yet a transit duty of fifty per cent, is levied by Mohammad ibn Mohammad upon all exports made by the Mudaïto, whereas ten per cent, only is exacted from the numerous Danákil tribes.

"A large Arab force from Zeylá," observed Ibrahim Shehém Abli, who was well versed in the chronicles of Aussa, "was induced to join the Débenik-Wóema in their invasion of the predatory Mudaïto hordes; and overtures of capitulation having been made by Yoosuf Ali ibn Ajdáhis, they were thrown off their guard. During the night the Wóema, who knew with what villains they had to deal, bivouacked upon the heights of Dugódlee and Hy Tunkóma, where they rested safely enough. But the blockheads of Arabs choosing to sleep in the plain, the garrison took advantage of their folly to make a *goom*: and so cleverly was it managed, that by Allah! they succeeded in drawing their creeses across the throats of all save one."

Nothing intimidated by this reverse, and joined by fresh allies from the coast, the Wóema were not long

in renewing the attack; and the whole of the Adaïel tribes who rally under the standard of "the white house," making common cause, the Mudaïto sustained a murderous defeat, when their stronghold, which had maintained its integrity unimpaired for so many centuries, fell at last into the hands of their hereditary foe.

A long term of years elapsed, but the hearts of the scions of the "red house" still rankled under this disaster; and, bent upon retaliation, the assembled clans, designing to plunder the now decayed sea-port whence their Arab invaders had been furnished, made a rapid inroad into the country of the Eesah Somauli. Unprepared, the tribe fled before the host in dismay, but presently recovering from the panic created by the sudden burst of war, rallied in great numbers, fell furiously upon the foe, and left not one marauding Mudaïto alive to tell the issue of the disastrous day. The "great battle," as this signal rout is still termed, was about three years ago fought within sight of Zeyla, on the plains of Takoosha, now white with the skeletons of a tribe.

"Brave men are these Mudaïto," continued the old warrior, playing carelessly with the hilt of his creese, which was seldom suffered to repose quietly in his girdle; "but they are not to be compared with us. *Hamdu-lillah*, 'Praise be unto the Lord,' I slew their sheikh with my own hand; and here is the identical scratch that I received in the scuffle. As for the Eesah," he concluded, "with their childish bows and arrows, they are sad cowards. One Dankáli spear is an over-match for fifty of their best marksmen in a fair fight; and I have myself dealt single-handed with six, although the villains came like thieves in the dark."

Ibrahim Shehém was requested to reconcile this character with the issue of the great battle just recounted, wherein the despised tribe had so signalised itself. “That,” quoth he of Tajúra, “was a dastardly surprise; and *Wullah*, had I been the invader with a handful of Danákil spearmen, there would have been another tale to tell.”

Bas Ali, late sheikh of the cultivating portion of the Aussa population, some years since made an attempt to restore the exclusive rule to the Mudaïto, and to this end headed a conspiracy sworn upon the Korán to plough the field no more until the head of the Wóema vicegerent should be exalted upon a pole at the city gate, and his body have been cast out to the hyaenas. He was however waylaid and assassinated by Ibrahim Shehém Abli, who received a wound in the cheek. The numerous scars which adorned the diminutive person of this hero proclaimed him to have made one in many an affray; and, if his own account might be believed, all were honourably gained. Nevertheless the singular aversion that he displayed to passing certain watering-places in brood daylight, and his skulking port at Amádoo more especially, had tended not a little to confirm the disparaging anecdotes maliciously narrated by his compatriots, relative to the mode in which some of these much-prized distinctions had been acquired.

The veteran Ali Arab had sat in gloomy silence during the early part of the conversation, but his light wicker cap started to the apex of his bald crown as he rose in wrath at the last vaunting words of the son of the Débeni. “Heed not the empty boast of that braggart,” he exclaimed, with boiling indignation, forgetting his wonted taciturnity—“Brave as the lion’s whelp are the

hardy children of Yemen, and but for the cowardly desertion of their false allies there would have been a different issue to the fell night at Aussa. Do the Wóema to this hour not pay tribute to Zeyla in acknowledgment of the assistance rendered? The event was written in the sealed volume of Fate. The decree of the Almighty was fulfilled. But lest you should have believed the disparaging statements of this vain-glorious scorner, I will even recount the misfortunes of a campaign fraught with sad disaster to my kindred."

Uttering these words, he led the way to his enclosure, reared of bales of the most costly wares which had been committed to his tried integrity; and there, seated upon the rich shawls of Cachemire, or upon the choicest manufactures of the British loom, the party, provided each with a tiny cup of most potent coffee, gave ear in silence to the old man's tale, which in the two ensuing chapters shall be presented in the form that would appear best calculated to afford a picture of warfare in the Desert.

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Three.

Arab March over the Téhama.

All was bustle and confusion in the small sea-port town of Zeyla. Camels were screaming as the well-filled sacks were tied tightly upon the saddles. The idle portion of the population had assembled to admire the pride and pomp of war. Women were running to and fro with more than usual briskness, to deliver some forgotten package to a body of men

who stood under arms in the market-place; and crowds streamed to join the group through the narrow bazaar, which had been lit up for the occasion, whence arose a confused hum of higgling and barter, as each last want was supplied by the merciless Hindoo trader, on the credit of a successful return from the foray.

A motley diversity prevailed in the age, dress, arms, accoutrements, and bearing of the assembled party; but the turban and the checked kilt, the frequency of the long, ornamented matchlock, and the thousand strange-fashioned leathern pouches and pockets, dangling from every part of the person, proclaimed the presence of a body of warriors of the Faithful. And more than sufficient for the sultry climate was the cumbrous attire of the foreign mercenaries. Every colour of the rainbow had been appropriated to their full varied vestments. Red, and yellow, and green, surmounted the dark elf-like locks of the soldiers of Yemen; knives and long heavy swords glittered in their rich shawl waist-cloths; and the national cloak of Arabia, clasped across the tawny breast, floated gaily over each stalwart frame.

Numerous mules stood ready saddled in the busy square, and many were the long provident bags and water-skins strapped behind each high wooden cantle. The band had not been engaged to act as cavalry, but Arab troops are somewhat self-willed as to their tactics and style of movement, and at no time relish interference in any of those little private arrangements which they can afford for their personal comfort.

The grey eye and the grisly beard of the veteran from Hejáz, and the fierce glance and the long raven hair

of the inhabitant of Medina, were exhibited together under the light of a blazing fire; and it might have been observed that the strongest current of female attention set towards the spot where the youth were collected, hammering the hard bullets down their rusty matchlocks.

“God is great!”—ejaculated a gaily-bedecked stripling, as he added an extra pinch of powder, for good luck, to the handful already poured into his long culverin. “Bring me alien, that he may feel the hands of the mighty, and *Inshallah*! if the leader of the expedition be of my mind, we shall not return empty-handed to have our beards laughed at by these fat kafirs from Hinde. Better were it to quaff at once the waters of immortality. But alas! Amru! the star was little on the ascendant when, forsaking the pleasant terraces and the cypress-waisted damsels of Mocha, thy stupid head dreamt of receiving two piastres a day from the treasury of the Sheriffe, or of being cooped up with infidels in a perfect *Jehánnam* upon earth.”

This speech was received with considerable applause, for the Reis Amru was well liked by his comrades in arms. Jokes passed freely among the youth, who were all in high good humour at being released from the dull stupidity of a hot garrison; and each talked gaily of his future deeds of prowess, although as yet nothing had transpired as to the nature or object of the enterprise.

But the veterans were crowded together in a mass, and their scowling downcast looks betokened little satisfaction in the coming march. A one-eyed ancient, who had witnessed as many fights as the remaining locks upon his wrinkled head, was employed in

grinding a notch from his long sweeping sword, whilst he ever and anon gave vent to his spleen and displeasure. “No good can ever come of intercourse with these unbelieving savages,” growled the old man to a fellow gambler. “The skulking sons of the Débeni have been in close conference with the Ameer for the greater part of the day; and the youth Osmán is not the leader to conduct a party of the Faithful among the deserts and the hills of this parched land. Blood will flow from the veins of these hot-headed striplings, crimson as the cloth which flaunts above their head-gear. Aye, and the dream of the last night can be now easily interpreted. Listen to me,” he muttered, in lower accents: “I dreamt of the pleasant lands of Saba, and saw the sparkling waters flowing over the bright green turf. The tribe of my fathers had assembled together, and the ‘hail, welcome, may your arrival be happy,’ came soothingly to my wearied ear; but an impassable gulf yawned at my feet, and the cold touch of the dread Azraïl startled me from my slumbers. Nevertheless if we be fated to perish by the hand of the savage, it shall never be said that old Kásim Ali was the man to oppose his destiny.”

In good sooth the authorities had been sued for assistance by their friends the Wóema; and as immunities, and privileges, and certain percentage upon all slave caravans, were the inducements artfully held out by the sagacious tribe, the proffered alliance had been eagerly accepted. The Wóema deputation departed at sunset, after the ratification of the treaty; and a few of their scouts were alone left to serve as guides through a country hitherto untraversed by any Arab inhabitant of Zeyla.

Three quarters of the entire garrison were ordered for

immediate duty. Gunpowder, balls, and coffee, had been handed out during the afternoon, together with a promise of arrears of pay on return; and as the moon raised her broad disk above the still expanse of the Indian Ocean, the party remained grouped as above related, awaiting in the market-place the arrival of their leader.

The impatient Osmán, accompanied by the Ameer and all the holy men of the town, shortly relieved them from suspense. His scarlet *abba* floated over his shoulders, and the gold of his headdress sparkled in the beams of the pale orb, as he placed himself at the head of the party to receive the "Salaam Aleikum" of his officers.

The young chief had lately arrived from the opposite coast to take the military command, but his proud and reserved bearing had gained neither the respect nor the good-will of his inferiors. Stories were whispered about that an evil star presided over his destiny, and that the settled gloom on his swarthy brow was caused by the continued tissue of ill luck which had hitherto blasted his every aspiration after fame.

His quick ear had caught the murmurings of the discontented. "Dread not events unknown," he exclaimed as he cast a withering glance over the group. "Be not down-hearted, for the fountain of the water of life is involved in obscurity. Defile not the spring of hope with the dust of despondency, for, praise be to God! the creator of the universe, if ye walk even into the dens of the lion or the pard, they will not tear you save on the destined day."

Then raising his voice Osmán shouted aloud, "*Seero*," move on in the name of the Prophet. "May

Allah be with you! May Allah watch over you!" solemnly chanted the chief moola as he waved the holy book in the air. The troops poured through the gateway, and sweeping slowly, like a thick cloud, along the face of the plain, were soon lost in the darkness of the desert.

There be always some ardent spirits to raise the drooping mass; and in the commencement of a march, as in the beginning of life, even the most down-hearted feel a spark of hope as to the happy result. But after the first burst of enthusiasm was expended, and the troops were fairly launched into the lone waste, the loose discourse and the merry laugh gradually failed, and in sad and gloomy silence they trod on for hours, sinking in the deep hot sand, or stumbling among the black blocks of lava which were thickly strewed over this tract of fire.

The ominous bird of night flitted from left to right and hooted mournfully from a bare tree, as the gallant train swept past the last watering-place in the Wady of Takoosha; and many a "*wullah*" was poured forth, as the herds of antelope bounded along the same evil and portentous track, as if pursued by the exulting demon of destruction. "Man proposes but God disposes," muttered those whose secret misgivings were heightened by these prognostics: the heart of the bravest quailed under the accumulation of unlucky omens, and all felt for the moment, that they were doomed men.

Little order prevailed along the motley line. Mounted on his mule and wrapped in his own dark thoughts, Osmán led the van, and a group of light-limbed Wóema who clustered round the chief, pointed out the direction of march. No vestige was there of a

pathway, and the dark ravine and the lone hill were passed in weary succession, as each camel, and mule, and man on foot, struggled along during many hours of the hot night. A few pools of standing water left by a providential shower of rain were at length selected as the first halting-place, and, worn out and dispirited, the sons of Yemen, piling their heavy fire-arms, sank to sleep upon the bare ground.

The tract of country extending from the coast to Ramudéle is a bare and joyless desert, where water is to be met with only at long intervals, where little food is to be procured either for man or beast, and where the heat is like the breath of the glass furnace. But Arabs are accustomed to the arid regions of their own stony land, and as they feed like famished wolves when food is to be obtained, they can, like those gaunt animals, endure the extremity of fasting. The morning sun roused the party to renovated strength; and as the news spread through the camp that the rich town of Aussa was the object of the enterprise, and that a large force of the Wóema had assembled to cooperate in the attack, no bounds were set upon the extravagant bravadoes uttered. Amru, as he strutted along with his turban placed jauntily upon his head, declared that even the gardens of Mocha and their rose-scented *houris* might be improved by a man of taste, if provided with the requisite means; whilst the grumbling old Kásim and his compeers, cheering up for the moment, commenced a calculation as to the probable gain to be derived from sundry captives, with which on their return they had resolved to fill the market.

But although a degree of hilarity had been thus restored throughout the host, the black cloud still hung over the brow of its leader. No friendly footing

was established with his followers; no word of encouragement proceeded from his lips. Orders and arrangements were given in the cold, calm tone of desperation, and a feeling of coming evil shook each sturdy frame, as he strode in moody silence to his accustomed station in the line of march.

For seven weary days did they manfully toil through the blank dreary desert, where Nature had spread wide her plains of barrenness, and where the image of utter desolation was but seldom disturbed by the appearance either of man or of vegetation. The heat of the day caused the lips to peel. The poisonous wind dried the marrow in the bone; and at rare intervals indeed, some tiny encampment of the wandering *Buddoo* alone cheered the site of the stagnant pool. A few camels dotted the unbroken expanse of the forbidding plain, and here and there a withered acacia threw her thorny limbs wildly into the hot atmosphere.

The camp of the Wóema was pitched at Ramudéle, and fer on either hand as the eye could compass, stretched along the low belt of bushes which mark the course of the river Chekaïto. A confused mass of fragile mats, and animals, and human beings, lay huddled together. From the midst of the disorderly array arose a thick forest of broad-headed spears; and as the men clustered in hundreds to greet the arrival of their allies, the ferocity of their appearance elicited universal applause. The indomitable spirit of savage independence shone in their dark lustrous eyes, and their lank, but well-moulded figures were surmounted by the white ostrich feather drooping gracefully over the matted hair, the token of bloody prowess in the fight.

In barbarous profusion an ample entertainment stood ready prepared. Large messes of meat and dishes of melted ghee were smoking in every quarter of the camp; and after the welcome had been received from every hand, Osmán retired with the sheiks of the tribe to their temporary domicile, leaving the Arab host to resign themselves to enjoyment, and to rest after their long and weary march over the frightful Teháma.

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Four.

Massacre of the Five Hundred.

Feasting and amusement wiled away the hours until the appointed day, when the necessary reinforcements having joined, the entire force moved hurriedly off towards the unsuspecting object of attack.

On the third morning of their march the hills of Dugódlee were crossed, and the smiling valley of Aussa was seen peacefully stretched at the feet of the invaders. Nothing could exceed the beauty of this oasis in the desert, so strangely expanded between two gigantic mountains; the crest of the one frowning black, broken, and abrupt, whilst the other rises in steep but gradual turfy acclivity to the very summit, whence rich indeed was the wide prospect displayed.

Green fields extended far as the eye could see. Flocks quietly ranged among the grassy nooks, and four lakes, unruffled by a breeze, reflected back the Iris rays of the morning sun upon the broken sides of the wooded lulls. Hemmed in by fantastic ranges, the

river Háwash threaded the upper portion of the long valley like a cord of silver, and rushing into the broad expanse of Lake Hilloo, at length found rest for its troubled waters in the deep, mysterious basin, from which no visible stream adds its tribute to the blue ocean.

The city of Aussa was pleasantly situated on the upper extremity of the lake, and its low, conical, thatched roofs were half concealed among the towering verdure of the shadowy trees. As the host crowned the opposite hill, herds of beasts, and crowds of human beings, streamed from every side through the stout hedge of thorns that encircled the wall, and the voice of the muezzin rising faintly from the distant mosque, summoned the inhabitants to prayer in this most unlooked-for tribulation.

Confident of success, and exulting in their own numbers, and in the potent fire-arms of five hundred bearded allies, the savage host rushed whooping down the hill, their spears erect, and their souls hungry for the prey. But no shout responded from the silent town of the Mudaïto, and no weapon glittered in its defence. Already had the Wóema formed in serried lines, and already were the eyes and the shields of the warriors agitated by those portentous revolutions which are the prelude to the fatal rush, when a portion of the thorn fence was quietly drawn aside, and a band of aged men stepped upon the intermediate plain. A green branch waved in their unarmed hands, and their venerable white beards flowed nearly to their girdles. The sages of Aussa, whose wisdom was “as the depths of the sea,” and who engrossed all the learning and holiness of the land, were there congregated together. The prejudice of the savage was aroused, and the presence of men

acknowledged, to whom every dispute among the tribes had hitherto been referred, and whose decisions had been always most implicitly received. The cause of complaint, and the hope of plunder, were for the moment almost forgotten, and every spear sank to the ground as sheikhs and akils advanced to the front to receive the message from the beleaguered city.

Assuming the posture of earnest entreaty, the elders of the Mudaïto were not sparing of their oily words:—"All ancient differences should be fully adjusted, and the Wóema should depart to their own tents, loaded with the richest produce of Aussa as a free gift of its elders; but the great conference could not be held until the morrow; the chief, Yoosuf Ali, was absent, and a swift messenger could scarcely reach him before nightfall. Would the Wóema meanwhile destroy the seat of learning and of religion? Would the sons brandish the gory spear where their fathers were wont to fall prostrate in prayer? If camels had been stolen, the thieves should be delivered over to punishment, and every point of dispute should be most satisfactorily arranged."

The chiefs of the Wóema withdrew in order to deliberate apart, and divers were the opinions given in the ensuing discussion. The fiery Arab urged an immediate attack, now that the enemy were unprepared and fully given into the hand of the spoiler; but the words of mercy at length prevailed, and the terms having been acceded to, the wily elders, as they took their departure, displayed features lighted with a grim smile of inward satisfaction.

High raged the storm in the camp of the invading

chiefs. Expressions of contempt were bandied back upon the term of coward, with which Osmán had taunted the Adel conclave. Swords and creeses were drawn, and stout adherents were not wanting with spear and matchlock to support their respective leaders. The veteran Sheïkh nevertheless contrived to still the troubled waters. Commanding his clan to draw back, and be at rest, he succeeded in convincing the Arab that *he* was not to be forgotten in the forthcoming division of the spoil. Finally the parties separated in sullen mood—the Wóema to ascend the hills of Hy Tunkóma, where they had resolved to rest among the rocky caverns, whereas the fearless sons of Arabia remained upon the open plain on which the angry dispute had taken place.

Meanwhile the town was in a state of hot fermentation. The few warriors who were accidentally at home, inflamed by the speeches of their respected elders, prepared quietly for the most desperate resistance. Swift-footed messengers stole out ever and anon through various cuts and passages in the hedge, with orders to call to the rescue every member of the tribe; and the most fearful denunciations were prepared for any who should refuse aid in this the day of national distress. Onwards over hill and dale sped the untiring scout. At his warning voice the shepherd left his flock, and the hunter stayed his successful chase. Sheïkhs and akils seized spear and shield, and with all disposable force obeyed the hasty summons. Every encampment joined its quota to the fast swelling host, now streaming towards the valley of the deep waters; and long ere the moon raised her pale disk above the hills, full communication had been held with the city, and every arrangement was thoroughly matured for

the attack.

Blinded by the feint of abject submission, the doomed body of Arabs had encamped upon the open plain. Little order or arrangement could be observed, and not a symptom was there of military vigilance. No watchful sentry paced his steady beat, nor had any disposition been attempted for safety or for defence. All had bivouacked on the spot where they happened to be standing, and after their appetites had been sufficiently appeased, the lazy partisans lay grouped together with their long pipes, talking over the pleasant hopes of the morrow, or uttering the scornful taunt on the coward folly of their infatuated allies. The song and the keen joke of their distant country occupied the first hours of the evening, and then the greater portion sank to rest upon the green sward.

But the slumbers of many were of a disturbed and fitful nature; and at midnight old Kásim Ali, whose advice, though ungraciously given, was generally attended to, repaired to the light pall under which reposed his leader. Osmán was still awake, and after listening to the words of the veteran, who predicted coming evil, the first orders were given. Guards having collected under arms, matches were lit, and some preparation attempted for defence. But the warning voice had come too late. The Mudaïto host, crouching warily upon the ground, had glided like serpents along the dark plain till they had gained the requisite distance for the onset; and as if starting from the very bowels of the earth, a countless array showed suddenly a bristling front, not one hundred yards from the encampment.

Short was the time allowed to awaken the drowsy soldiery. A hurried exclamation from the chief to

stand like men, and a feeble cry from his followers in reply, was succeeded by the rush of the savages. Forward they came, carrying their broad spears erect, whilst their black ferocious eyes gleamed at the thoughts of blood, like the fiery orbs of the basilisk. A volley from the matchlocks only checked their progress for a moment; and as the firing ceased, there arose to heaven a wild unearthly yell, which was closely followed by the fierce shouts of men in contention, and by all the sounds of terror, confusion, and despair.

No walls or enclosures were there in that naked plain, or the sons of Ishmaël, who well understand their defence, might have fought on more equal terms; but overwhelmed by masses of the reckless foe, and hemmed in on every side by ten times their own number, the struggle was but the effort of individual desperation. Dropping shots had continued for some time in all quarters of the straggling encampment, and Mudaïto spear still clashed heavily upon Arab scimitar, when the war-cry of the Wóema rose pealing among the cliffs. As the tramp of their footsteps was heard descending to the plain, a short respite was allowed. The assailants withdrew from the murderous onslaught, and the fainting hearts of the survivors again bounded with hopes of life. But transient indeed were their expectations of succour and assistance. The wary eye of the Wóema had scanned, even in that uncertain light, the overpowering masses of the foe that crowded the plain; and suddenly wheeling round the shoulder of the hill, they disappeared like a wreath of the morning mist.

The Mudaïto meanwhile, like hungry wolves, hemming in the devoted party, awaited only the dawn

of day to complete its destruction. But the remnant of the Arabs who had escaped now first found leisure to close their ranks; and, taking up a position at the foot of the isolated Jebel Gúrmah, they resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Osmán, wounded and bleeding, was still alive; himself, with Kásim Ali and about fifty men, being all that survived of the gallant five hundred who had marched from Zeyla. The excruciating pangs of thirst were added to the tortures of creese and spear-wound: and in this, their last extremity, the solemn prayer arose to the Prophet of the Faithful, as of men whose hours were numbered.

As the day broke, Kásim volunteered to carry a message of capitulation to the savage army; and reposing full confidence in the white cloth waving in the hand of the veteran, each anxious eye was strained in the direction of his footsteps. Received in moody silence by the Mudaïto band, a ferocious savage was about to drive a spear-blade through his unflinching breast, when the son of the Sheikh bounded suddenly to his side, and warding off the descending shaft, seized the hand of the old man, kissed it with every reverence, and addressed a few words to the tribe. In days gone by the youth Boorhán had been saved under the creese by the son of Yemen, and gratitude, rarely found in the savage, now paid her outstanding debt.

The veteran's overtures of surrender having been received, he turned again towards his comrades, but a fearful sight fell on his sickening gaze. Two large bodies of the enemy had in the interim stolen round the hill, and clustering upon the very edge, were already swarming unseen to the last attack. Vain were his frantic gestures to direct the attention of his

doomed comrades to the coming storm; he was seized and pinioned in the iron grasp of a multitude, and the succeeding rush was as the burst of the overcharged thunder-cloud.

And feeble was the defence made by men weary, and thirsty, and unprepared. With an appalling whoop, the triumphant savages soon joined the ranks of their sheïkh, and not one turbaned head remained visible above the wide plain. All had found a gory pillow in a far distant land. Creese and matchlock, mingled together, plentifully strewed the ground; and clutched in the cold hand of each grim warrior, lay the long Arab sword, dripping to the hilt in the blood of the assailant.

The acacia still throws her scanty shade over the bones that whiten on the scene of this conflict. Although of the same persuasion as the invaders, the men of Aussa could neither forgive their most unprovoked attack, nor consign to a quiet resting-place the remains of the true believers. The severe loss they too had sustained, still keeps the wound festering, for well indeed in that fatal night had been upheld the character of the sturdy children of Yemen. Taken by surprise and at every disadvantage, each had fought on fiercely to the last; and although broken matchlocks and rent shields dangle in the mosques as trophies of their defeat, many a Mudaïto mother long bewailed the loss of a beloved son, and many a bereaved widow mourned the absence of her liege lord, who returned not from the valley of the deep waters of Aussa.

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Five.

Fiálu, a Den of Thieves in the Wóema territories. Barurúdda and Killúlloo.

After a march of three miles on the 22nd, over a stony table-land thickly strewed with the never-ending basaltic boulders, the caravan entered the territory of the Danákil tribe Wóema, under the uncle and father of Mohammad Ali. A desolate hollow passed on the way, which appeared in the rainy season to form an extensive pond, was enlivened by four bee-hive-shaped wigwams, placed as usual on the site where large hot stones were most abundant, and tenanted by goat-herds, whose numerous flocks were being driven forth to graze by the Bedouin females. Their supply of water is derived from a sequestered pool, occupying a deep narrow precipitous ravine, which abounds in the Hyrax, and boasts of a few trees not dissimilar from the Casuarina. Bearing the euphonous title of Korandúdda, this gully wound at the foot of the high terrace selected for the encampment—another right dreary plain, covered with volcanic pebbles, among which the dry yellow grass peeped out in scanty tufts.

No traveller through the bleak barren country of the Adaïel can fail to appreciate the simile of “the shadow of a rock in a weary land;” for a tree is indeed a rare phenomenon—and when a few leafless branches do greet the eye, they are studiously shunned, upon the same principle that induces the savage to eschew the immediate vicinity of water. A few straggling acacias occupied the valley of Fiáloo, half a mile to the southward, which is the usual encamping ground, and here were large herds of cattle, eccentrically

marked and brindled, and glorying in superb horns raking gracefully from the brow. A fat ox was purchased without difficulty, together with a supply of fresh milk, which, if not improved by confinement in a greasy skin bag, proved nevertheless an extraordinary luxury.

One of the retainers of Mohammad Ali was now despatched to acquaint Ali Abi of the arrival of the káfilah. It had all along been promised that after entering the territories of the old Sheikh, every danger was to cease, but the goal now gained, the country proved to be a perfect nest of hornets. The thieving propensities of the Galeyla Mudaïto having been lately exercised upon the Wóema, it had been resolved to inflict summary chastisement, and rag-a-muffins were collecting from all quarters, preparatory to a "*goom*." From morning till night the camp and tent were unceasingly thronged with scowling knaves, amongst whom were several of the Eesah—their heads decorated with white ostrich plumes in token of having recently slain an antagonist in single combat, or more probably murdered some sleeping victim.

Towards evening a gang of the Abli, whose chieftain is appropriately surnamed Jeróaa, or "the thief," made a desperate attempt to carry off the best horse, upon which they had strongly set their affections; but the rogues were fortunately observed by the lynx-eyed Kákoo, henchman to Mohammad Ali, just in time to admit of the animal being recovered. The war-cry caused all to fly to their arms; blows were exchanged without any blood being spilled, although one of the Wóema shields was perforated by a well-launched spear; and the ringleader of the horse-stealing gang, who had thus narrowly escaped a

mortal feud, having been secured to a tree, was by his own tribe severely castigated on the spot.

A dense cloud of dust rolling along from the north-eastward, closed the day. Revolving within its own circumference, and advancing on a spiral axis, it burst in full force in the very centre of the camp. The tent fell on the first outpouring of its wrath, and the consistency being so dense as to render it impossible to keep the eyes open, the party were fain to take refuge beneath tarpaulins, and stretched upon the ground, to listen with quick and difficult respiration, until the whirlwind had expended its violence among chairs, tables, and bottles. A few drops of rain ushered in the night which was passed by a newly-entertained Bedouin guard in carousing upon the choice dates of the Embassy, a bag of which had been unceremoniously put in requisition by the Ras, "in order to keep the savages in good humour," or, in other words, to save them the trouble of stealing it; and the musket announcing relief of sentries was discontinued by request of the same authority, lest the smell of gunpowder might have a prejudicial effect upon the voracious appetites of the savages.

Before dawn the chief of the nomade tribe Hy Somauli arriving with a hungry and dissatisfied retinue, a halt was proclaimed, to the end that they also might be fed, pacified, and propitiated. The potentate was duly introduced by Izhák as a most particular friend, who had journeyed a long way for the express purpose of making the acquaintance of his English charge; and a deep sense of the honour conferred having been expressed, it was ascertained that the secondary object of the visit was to inquire by whose authority so formidable a party of foreigners were being smuggled through the country, and how it

happened that they were suffered to build houses wheresoever they thought proper?—this last allusion having reference to the tent, which had again been pitched, and was very sapiently conjectured to be a permanent edifice.

The “Kafir Feringees” therefore continued to be objects of undiminished curiosity during the whole also of this sultry day; a greasy disorderly rabble, which occupied the tent from an early hour, being continually reinforced by parties weary of the debate held immediately outside, which lasted until the going down of the sun. Each new visitor, after staring sufficiently at the white faces, invariably exclaimed “Nubeeo,” “Holy Prophet,” a mark of undisguised disapprobation, which was further elicited by every occurrence that did not exactly coincide with his nice ideas of propriety, such as eating with a fork, keeping the head cool under a hat instead of under a pound of sheeps’ tail fat, or blowing the nose with a handkerchief in lieu of with the fingers. Paws were nevertheless incessantly thrust in at every door, accompanied by reiterations of the Dankáli verb “to give,” used in the imperative mood; the never-ending din of “Ba, Ba,” being uncoupled with any noun designative of the commodity required—a proof that he who demanded was a ready recipient for any spare article that might be forthcoming.

A long and tedious palaver, in which voices occasionally ran extremely high, at length terminated in a general uprising of the senators. Izhák was seen curling his scanty side locks in token of victory. The chief had become satisfied of the temporary nature of the tenement inhabited by the “Christian dogs,” after one or two of the savages had thrust a spear-blade through the canvass; and the malcontents having to a

man been sufficiently crammed with dates, coffee, and tobacco, finally took their departure, chuckling at the success of the foray, and having ingeniously contrived to turn their time to account by stealing one of the mules.

Many significant glances had been exchanged over portions of the baggage that had unavoidably been exposed; but a night of redoubled vigilance was cut short by a summons to relinquish sleep and bedding at two in the morning, and a march of sixteen miles over a vast alluvial flat conducted past the Bedouin station of Ulwúlli to Barurúdda, on the plain of Kelláli. The road led along the base of the low range of Jebel Eesah, through abundance of coarse grass concealing lava pieces and volcanic detritus, the prospect being bounded by distant blue mountains towering to the peak of Kúffal Ali. A *korhaan* rose at intervals, wild and noisy as his chattering kindred in the south, but few other signs of animated nature enlivened the long sultry march. In the grey of the morning, a solitary Bedouin horseman ambled past with some message to the savages at Amádoo, and from him was obtained the disagreeable intelligence, which subsequently proved too true, that not a drop of water existed over the whole of the wide plain within a day's journey, and that the station beyond was thronged with tribes, collected with their flocks and herds from all the country round, at this, the oasis.

After a hot dusty day the sky was again overcast, and sufficient rain fell to render every one wet and uncomfortable, without filling the pools, or checking the dire persecutions of a host of cattle ticks, which covered every part of the ground. Absence of water led to another midnight march, and the moon

affording little light, the road was for some time lost, though eventually recovered by the sagacity of a female slave of Mohammad Ali's, when all the lords of the creation were at fault. This damsel, who always led the foremost string of camels, was one of those frolicsome productions of Nature, which the wanton dame pawns on the world in her most laughing moods, and the appearance of her daughter could scarcely fail to elicit the mirth of the most sedate beholder. A small round bullet head, furnished with a well-greased mop, and a pair of moist brilliant eyes, formed the apex of a figure, which, in all other respects, was that of the concentrated amazon, exhibiting a system of globes both before and behind, agitated by a tremulous vibration as the short fat legs imparted progressive motion. A blue kerchief tied jauntily over the head—ponderous wooden ear-rings, fashioned on the model of Chubb's largest lock—a necklace of white beads, and a greasy leathern apron slung about the unwieldy hips without any remarkable regard to decency—set off the corpulent charms of the good-natured Hásseinee, the exhibition of whose monstrous eccentricities in Europe, must infallibly have ensured a fortune to the showman.

The road continued to skirt the low Eesah range for several miles (see Note 1) to the termination of the plain, which becomes gradually shut in by rounded hills enclosing a dell choked with low thorns, and tenanted by the *galla-fiela* (i.e. camel-goat), a strange species of antelope, having a long raking neck, which imparted the appearance of a lama in miniature. As the day broke, flocks and herds were observed advancing from every quarter towards a common focus, and on gaining the brow of the last hill overhanging the halting ground, a confused lowing of

beeves and bleating of sheep arose from the deep ravine below, whilst the mountain sides were streaked with numberless white lines of cattle and goats descending towards the water.

Arriving at the Wady Killulloo, a most busy scene presented itself. Owing to the general want of water elsewhere throughout the country, vast numbers of flocks and herds had assembled from far and wide, and they were tended by picturesque members of all the principal tribes of Danákil composing the Débenik-Wóema, as well as from the Eesah, the Mudaïto, and their subordinate subdivisions. Dogs lay basking on the grassy bank beside their lounging masters; women, screaming to the utmost of their shrill voices, filled up their water-skins with an ink-black fluid stirred to the consistency of mire, and redolent of pollution; thousands of sheep, oxen, and goats, assembled in dense masses in and around the dark, deep, pools, were undergoing separation by their respective owners, before being driven to pasture; and, with the long files that ascended and descended the mountain side in every direction, imparted the bustling appearance of a great cattle fair.

The temporary mat huts of all these nomade visitors who boasted of habitations were erected at a distance on the table-land to the south-westward of this important wady, which occupies a rugged rocky chasm opening upon the Kelláli plain, and, receiving the drainage of all the southern portion of the Oobnoo range, disembogues during the rainy season into the lake at Aussa. Even during this, the hottest portion of the year, when the entire country elsewhere is dry, its rocky pools embedded in soft limestone, tainted with sulphuretted hydrogen, and abounding in rushes and

crocodiles, afford an inexhaustible supply, without which the flocks and herds of the entire arid districts by which it is surrounded, could not exist.

To it the horses and mules of the Embassy were indebted for a new lease of life, short though it proved to many. Two of the former and eleven of the latter had already been left to the hyaenas, in addition to the animal feloniously abstracted by the Hy Somauli, of the recovery of which Mohammad Ali affected to be sanguine. But although the pleasure of another meeting with the robber chief, whereupon he rested his delusive hopes, was shortly realised, and brought with it a train of concomitant inconvenience, no mule was ever restored. Not one of these petty Adaïel tribes are subject to that abject despotism which controls the turbulent spirits of the more powerful African nations, and, bad as absolute power must ever be acknowledged, often tends to their ultimate improvement. The influence of a chieftain is here little more than nominal. All affairs are decided in council by a majority of voices; and, were it not for the fact, that, save during the existence of a common danger, no component member of his clan works for other than individual advantage, the wild and lawless community over whom he affects to preside, might in all respects be appropriately designated a republic.

Note 1. The reader who may not feel thoroughly satiated with miles and furlongs, as embodied in this narrative, is referred to the Appendix, where they will be found detailed in a tabular form.

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Six.

Ominous Debates and Intolerable Delays at the Half-Way Stage.

The second knot in the string of the tedious journey had been unloosed by arrival at Killulloo, which is considered exactly half-way from the sea-coast to the frontier of Abyssinia. But although the worst portion of the road was now behind, the Embassy was destined to waste many days of existence in this vile spot, amidst annoying debates and discussions, most trying to the patience, which threatened to terminate so unpleasantly as well nigh to result in the abandonment of the baggage, as affording the only prospect left of ever reaching the destination.

From the very first moment of arrival, Izhák, whose sole object ever appeared to be to render himself disagreeable, devoted his talents and energies to the establishment of a misunderstanding, upon the frivolous grounds of Mohammad Ali having been suffered to distribute a small quantity of tobacco, in order to get rid of some passing unpleasant visitors. “Who gave *that man* tobacco?” he captiously vociferated, bouncing into the tent as soon as it had been pitched; “this is a piece of interference with my prerogatives as Ras el Káfilah, which cannot be borne.” And the explanation afforded not proving at all to his satisfaction, he roundly declared his determination of resenting the insult by throwing up the charge, and returning with all his paid retainers to Tajúra.

Mohammad Ali being now in the heart of his own country, and having rendered himself extremely

useful on the road, whilst his venerable rival had been idle, seemed resolved to assert his claim to a share in the conduct of the caravan. Izhák as unflinchingly maintained his resolution, as brother to the Sultan of Tajúra—a point whereon he greatly piqued himself—to hold the reins exclusively in his own hands, or to decamp with the camels; and the Embassy, avowing themselves to be merely travellers through the country, desirous of conciliating all parties, and of interfering with none, maintained the strictest neutrality, and declined mixing at all in the dispute.

It was already dusk when a visit was received from the three principal persons of the countless multitudes assembled. These were Ibrahim ibn Hámeido, Akil of the Hy Somauli, whose dominion extends from Ramudéle to Suggagédan; and the uncle and father of Mohammad Ali—to wit, Wáyess ibn Hagaïo, who divides with his brother Hagaïo Lád the government of the Derméla, the Wóema, the Rookhba, and the Midgan, collectively extending from Suggagédan to Waramilli—and Hajji Ali Mohammad, a hoary patriarch of most venerable appearance, commonly styled Ali Abi. As tokens of good-will they brought oxen, sheep, and bags of sour milk; but, owing to an obvious disinclination on the part of Izhák and his sulky colleagues to promote conversation, the interview was extremely stiff; and dates, coffee, and snuff having been duly handed round, the illustrious visitors, signifying an intention of discussing certain topics of importance which had yet to be adjusted, abruptly departed after the polished fashion of the country, without going through the ceremony of taking leave of their entertainers.

A vast concourse of armed natives, members of all

the various tribes assembled, had in the meantime convened immediately on the outskirts of the camp, where they continued during the whole night in a violent altercation, which periodical supplies of dates and tobacco proved quite inadequate to allay. The discussion was shared by Izhák and by Mohammad Ali, with their respective partisans and retainers, and it continued during the whole of the next day; meanwhile the tent being perpetually thronged with thieves and idlers, who purloined whatever fell in their way, and contrived frequent broils amongst themselves which led to the drawing of creeses in the very centre of the encampment.

Throughout the whole of the ensuing night, and part of the day following, the wrangling among the tribes continued with little abatement or intermission, the litigants occasionally breaking into small parties, to hold private *kaláms*, and after much mysterious whispering, again resuming their seats in the general assembly. The question of precedence between the elders, already adverted to, and the propriety of suffering so large a party of armed Franks to proceed into Abyssinia, formed the principal subjects of discussion; and the prevailing opinion on the latter question was, that all ought to be compelled to return, if not to be put to death, as unbelievers whose presence boded evil.

But the opportunity was also taken of arbitrating old feuds and squabbles. Elopements were investigated and arranged, and all disputes and quarrels of a private nature fully dilated upon and digested. Hundreds of ruffians thus sate from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same, and throughout the livelong night, formed in a wide circle; the chiefs and men of consequence in the centre,

and the venerable Ali Abi, with thin floating snow-white locks, and highly ornamented weapons, seated as president of the council. During the lengthy discussion of each case, every spear stood erect in the hand of the warrior; and on the decision being promulgated, the bright blades were lowered with one accord, a portion of the Korán was repeated, and at the termination of every verse, a general hum succeeding, the concurrence of all parties was chanted in a deep stern *Ameen*!

Killulloo being the great mart between the Bedouin tribes and the passing caravans, where the produce of their flocks is bartered for blue calico and other imports in demand, the news of the arrival of so large a party caused an inpouring from every quarter, and each day presented at the rendezvous some new group of exacting chiefs to be propitiated, with a fresh train of thieving followers to be fed and kept in good humour. Every greasy scoundrel possessed a vote in the congress, together with the inclination to render himself obnoxious, and the ability to add his humble mite towards the irksome detention; and it therefore became requisite to court popularity, and to canvass public favour as sedulously as at a general election for a seat in parliament.

Ever and anon, a great noise and clamour, and the rushing, spear in hand, of all the idlers to one point, proclaimed a gentle passage of arms among the savages, of which, nine times out of ten, a woman was the subject—some gay Lothario having been recognised among the crowd by an injured husband. But no sooner had the cold steel fleshed from the scabbard, than the bullies were secured by the bystanders, and being perfectly *au fait* at the business, they were easily restrained from doing

each other any grievous bodily harm. In one scuffle indeed, a hot-headed fool who had with singular want of discretion engaged in a quarrel at too great a distance from his companions, got his thick wig somewhat unpleasantly shaved to the skull a hand's breadth or more—a fortunate occurrence indeed as it turned out, since the sight of blood had the instantaneous effect of closing the senatorial proceedings of the great conclave, which had been all night sitting in deliberation, so that its members were yawning in a state of considerable exhaustion and owlish stupefaction. Tolo, the quarrelsome little warrior who thus suddenly adjourned the sessions, lost three of his front teeth by the hands of the husband whom he had injured in more ways than one —but he retained possession of the inconstant lady, and publicly pledged himself, that on his way back from Hábesh he would take measures which should set the matter at rest for ever.

The arrival from Shoa of a slave caravan in charge of the son of Abdool Rahmán Sowáhil, Kazi of Tajúra, added still further to the assembly in the persons of several hundred unfortunate children of all ages, who sought shelter from the fierce rays of the sun beneath the scanty trees which dotted the rugged basaltic valley of Killulloo, or lay huddled together beneath the hot shadow of an impending columnar rock. Each carried a small gourd as a water flagon, and, although generally in good spirits, some idea of the sufferings in store for these hapless beings could be formed by those who had just achieved the lower portion of the perilous and formidable road.

"Have all my children arrived in safety?" inquired a corpulent old slave-merchant who brought up the rear, tenderly accosting his mistress elect, and

chucking her playfully under the chin, as she flew to hold the bridle of his mule; “are all my children well?” “*Humdu-lillah*,” was the reply of the coy damsel, a really beautiful Christian from Guráguê, with long raven tresses, and a very pensive expression, who had been compelled to profess Islamism. Honoured with the caresses of her flit and bigoted purchaser, the poor girl had been made responsible for a drove consisting of three score little sister slaves, all distinguished like herself by a tassel of green beads in the braided hair, and who were now about to be counted by their “father.”

The son of the Kazi having brought letters from Abyssinia, was shortly introduced by Hajji Kásim, own cousin to Izhák, and by far the most reasonable of the Tajúra party. Being in the course of conversation quietly interrogated touching the cause of the Ras el Káfilah’s continued irritation, he turned at once to his companion, and solemnly adjured him by the beard of the Prophet to answer conscientiously the following questions. “A head is ahead, is it not, all the world over?”

“Of course,” responded the descendant of the chief justice, “there can be no disputing that fact.”

“A tail, too, is a tail, or I am much mistaken,” continued the logician, pursuing his thesis,—and this axiom was also unhesitatingly admitted as beyond all controversy. “Well, then,” resumed Kásim, whose intellects had been sharpened by a pilgrimage to the shrine at Medina; “no Káfilah can possess two heads; and so long as Ali Mohammad, who is in fact the tail, continues these underhand attempts to usurp the authority vested in the brother of the Sultán of Tajúra, our acknowledged head, matters can never go on

smoothly."

The old man was quietly reminded that the raw tobacco, which had given rise to so much heart-burning, bickering, and dispute, was the sole property of the British party, and that, with every deference to Izhák's supreme authority, some control might with propriety be conceded to the owners over their own wares; but that as to any interference in the quarrel for the Ras el Káfilah-ship, the thing was clearly impossible—the business having already been fully discussed and arranged with due Danákil patience, by the Sultán, in some twenty tedious conferences with the camel-owners and chiefs of Tajúra. Izhák, who had been listening to this conversation with a dark scowl upon his brow, now entered as if by accident, twirling his scanty locks, and beaming with smiles; proof of his restoration to good humour being immediately afforded in the extension of his right hand, not to perform the usual ceremony of reconciliation, but in view to the palm being filled with a sufficiency of Dr Ruddiman's Irish blackguard, to admit of indulgence in his favourite recreation.

Hopes were now reasonably entertained of an amicable adjustment, the real cause of dispute having meanwhile been traced to a jealousy respecting the reward which it was conjectured the leader of the caravan would receive at the hands of His Majesty of Shoa. Mohammad Ali had already been privately satisfied upon this point; and Izhák, in order to strengthen his own claim, falsely asserted himself to have received by the Kázi's son a letter from Sáhela Selássie, appointing the Sultán of Tajúra to the charge of all his European friends who might desire to visit Southern Abyssinia. But the congress still sat as usual. The dispute arranged to-night was

renewed at morning's dawn, as though it had never formed the subject of deliberation; and at a period when the near approach of rain in the higher regions, and the consequent flooding of the Háwash, rendered every hour one of the utmost importance, not the slightest prospect of departure could be discovered, beyond the oft-repeated assurance, as often followed by disappointment—"*Bád bokra Inshállah*," "If it please God, the day after to-morrow."

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Seven.

Persecutions of the Gathered Clans—Parting Interview with the Avaricious Chieftains.

Throughout this period of irksome detention, the thermometer stood daily at 112 degrees, and the temperature of the small tent, already sufficiently oppressive, was rendered doubly unbearable by the unceasing obtrusions of the wild, dirty, unmannerly rabble who filled the ravine. Imperiously demanding, not suing for snuff, beads, and tobacco, with paper whereon to write charms and spells for defence against evil spirits, swarms forced in their greasy persons from the first dawn of day to the mounting of the guard at night. Treating the pale-faced proprietors with the most marked insult and contumely, they spat upon the beds, excluded both air and light, and tainted the already close atmosphere with every abominable smell. Not one of the greasy crowd could be persuaded that the "cloth house," as the tent was denominated, had not been each day re-erected solely for his individual use and accommodation. Many attempted with their creeses to curtail the much

coveted blue calico with which it was lined, and one lank ruffian, who was detected leisurely searching for a peg whereon to hang the skin and entrails of a newly killed he-goat, wrought himself into a positive fury on being civilly apprised that he must look for shambles elsewhere.

Neither on the part of those composing the caravan was much privacy allowed during the sultry day, when seclusion was so highly desirable. Here, as throughout the march, offensive camel-drivers obtruded themselves without any regard either to time or season; occupying the chairs, composing themselves to sleep in groups upon the beds or on the table; and, whilst they picked their ears and teeth with the pens, or employed the knives in the pleasing operation of paring their filthy talons, spitting without remorse wheresoever they listed. Hating and despising a Frank with all the zeal of the bigot, they yet insisted upon shaking hands, on each intrusion, with the most scrupulous attention to Danákil etiquette, and with unhesitating alacrity devoured the biscuits and swallowed the coffee of the “Christian dogs.”

The despotic arrangements enforced by the Ras el Káfilah, although doubtless materially conducive to his own personal convenience, and to that of his unaccommodating followers, were moreover far from enhancing the comfort of the Embassy. Boxes and bales, after having been unceremoniously dashed upon the ground, in utter disregard of remonstrance or of the fragile nature of the contents, had on this occasion, as on the termination of each march, been piled in a circle, each component heap consisting of three sides of a square, which, with the addition of a few mats thrown over the top, formed a habitation

fully as commodious as a Dankáli is ever accustomed to. Any attempt to disturb the economy of these tenements, by referring to the boxes employed in their construction, being regarded as an act of premeditated injury and insult, was stoutly resisted; and as no portion of the baggage once removed to the tent, was ever received again without a battle, the materials of comfort or occupation were very rarely obtainable. In the selection of his load at Tajúra, every self-willed driver had suited his individual inclinations, and as no persuasion could now induce him to deposit any portion in a spot where it might be under surveillance, the provisions, placed beyond the reach of their owners, but accessible to every hungry knave, were perpetually pilfered and purloined.

Universal somnolency on the part of the hired guard, had rendered two European sentries and an officer of the watch indispensable throughout the journey; and in such a nest of robbers as Killulloo, the precaution was more than ever requisite. In a fine climate, with a manly foe in front, a night watch is far from being a disagreeable duty. Here it was beyond all things annoying. Pacing up and down over the same re-trodden ground, to keep the heavy eyelids on the stretch, in order to prevent the prowling Bedouin from pilfering a bag of dates, or to detect the lurking assassin, who in the dark creeps like a wild beast to perpetrate his dastardly deed, is but a sorry business; and it was rendered more particularly hateful from the rank offensive steam, which arose thick and hot from the small circle in which the beds were spread. Stifling exudations from the fetid mouths of one hundred and seventy camels that fed on the most disgusting rubbish, filled the suffocating atmosphere, which was impregnated with atoms still more vile

from the rancid sheep's-tail fat, wherewith every Dankáli is so liberally besmeared.

Among the motley races congregated at this crowded watering-place, were the endless tribes of Adaïel, with broad-headed spear and shield of high antiquity —the coast Somauli, armed with light lance and diminutive wrinkled buckler, scarcely larger than a biscuit—and his much-dreaded Eesah brother, carrying a long stout bow of the ancient form, with the double bend, and a quiver of poisoned arrows slung by a lion's tail. These latter were by far the most conspicuous, as well as the most agreeable figures. Their togas, although not less filthy than those of their neighbours, were thrown more gracefully over the brawny shoulder; their picturesque weapons were borne with an ease that habit can alone impart; and, notwithstanding that the white trophy floated over their raven locks in token of bloody deeds, nearly all boasted of laughing, intelligent, and far from unpleasing countenances—a delightful relief at all events from the scowling downcast look of the exacting, perverse, and impracticable Danákil.

The Wóema, deeming unlawful the use of the bow in their own persons, maintain upwards of one hundred Somauli archers, originally prisoners of war, who, although naturalised among their conquerors, retain their own language, and never intermarry. The hunting portion of the Eesah tribe, who are designated "Bone," usually carry a rude bamboo flute, the wild plaintive cadence of which is believed to charm the ostrich. Their hair, with the aid of suet, is often dressed in the figure of the "pudding" worn by children during their first lessons in the art of walking; and deeply graven on the forehead of each are to be seen the masonic square and compasses.

Universally skilled in woodcraft, the ferocious subjects of ibn Fára may be styled a nation of hunters, many being proprietors of trained ostriches, which graze during the day with the flocks in the open plain, and have their legs hobbled at night, to preclude wandering. These gigantic birds are employed with great success in stalking wild animals, a trained donkey being also in constant use—lashed below the belly of which, the archer is carried among the unsuspecting herd, when his arrows, poisoned with the milk of the *euphorbia antiquorum*, deal death on every side.

It is to the skill of these wild Nimrods that the Danákil are chiefly indebted for their shields, which are manufactured of the thick hide of the oryx, here styled the Baëza. Two bucklers of a foot or eighteen inches in diameter, fetching each four *tobes* of blue calico, value two dollars, are obtained from the animal's fore hand; and from the hind quarters are cut others of smaller dimensions, such as are in use among the pastoral Somauli. Ostrich feathers are also principally obtained from the Eesah; the unsullied plumes, when stripped from the fleet-footed bird, being deposited for the convenience of carriage, in portions of the gullet cut to the proper length. The process pursued by these children of the desert in the preparation of smaller fowls for the table, if not strictly in accordance with the directions of Dr Kitchener, can, at all events, claim ingenuity. From some superstitious motive, the feet are chopped off with the creese, and the carcase, undivested of the entrails, having been incased in wet clay, is thrust into a hot fire; on removal whence the feathers are left adhering to the paste, and in culinary phraseology, "the bird is done."

Crowds of Bedouin shepherdesses, and females belonging to all the various nomade tribes, were likewise assembled in the Killulloo ravine, and the cry of "*wúrkut, wúrkut*!" "paper, paper!" was incessant on the part of the softer sex, who, with a licence unknown and a freedom unenjoyed by the daughters of Eve in other Mohammadan countries, were unremitting in their attendance and flirtations, without exciting the jealousy of their lords. From the lips of these damsels, "*Mahissé, Mahisséni!" "Manína téni*?" "Good morrow!" "How do you do?" came not disagreeably; and trinkets such as they loved, being civilly solicited, instead of imperiously demanded, the applicants were rarely unsuccessful.

Amongst those who boasted of the most feminine and attractive appearance, were the fair partner and sister of Mohammad Ali—their wedded and single state being as usual distinguishable, from the coif of blue calico which marks the wife, and by the long uncovered plaited locks of the maid. Assembling with many of the frail sisterhood at the door of the tent, where numbers were usually lounging in careless attitudes, they one day demanded that the palm of beauty might be awarded. Unwilling to throw the apple of discord, the mirror was placed in their hands, that the coquettes might judge for themselves; and after each in succession had started involuntarily at the sight of her own greasy charms, and had defended the individual features whereof she was mistress, to the utmost of her eloquence and ability, the verdict was finally found in favour of the virgin daughter of the venerable old sheikh.

Although the majority of the slaves imported with the caravan from Abyssinia were of tender years, and many of them extremely pretty, they did not excite

that interest which might have been anticipated. Children accustomed to sorry fare and to harsh treatment in their own country, they had very readily adapted themselves to the will of their new masters, whose obvious interest it was to keep them fat and in good spirits. With few exceptions, all were merry and light-hearted. Recovered from the fatigues of the long march, there was nothing but dancing, singing, and romping; and although many wore an air of melancholy, which forms a national characteristic, the little victims to a traffic so opposed to every principle of humanity, might rather have been conjectured to be proceeding on a party of pleasure, than bending their steps for ever from their native land.

A very limited number of Shankelas and a few natives of Zingero excepted, the whole consisted of Christians and Heathens from Guráguê, whence are obtained the “red Ethiopians” so much-prized in Arabia. Kidnapping has consequently been there carried to an extent so frightful as to impart the name of the unhappy province as a designation for slaves generally. Nearly all of both sexes, however, had already become passive converts to the Mohammadan faith, and under the encouraging eye of the bigoted drivers, oaths by the false Prophet resounded through the camp. Nine-tenths were females, varying in age from six to thirteen years, and all were clad alike in dirty cotton smocks of Abyssinian manufacture, adorned in some instances with cuffs of blue calico. Their long dark tresses, elaborately greased, were plaited into thin cords with tassels at the extremity, and interwoven about the head with a band of coloured thread, to which was suspended a distinguishing cluster of cowrie shells. Bead necklaces, pewter ear-rings, bracelets, and

anklets, decorated the persons of the prettiest; and these ornaments, forming the stock in hand of the trader, are invariably resumed on each bargain effected, in order to be transferred to some victim hereafter to be purchased.

Each slave was provided with a cruse of water, and had walked the entire distance accomplished from the heart of Africa, with an endurance that in children especially of such tender years was truly surprising. A very few only, who had become weary or footsore, had been mounted on mules or camels, or provided with ox-hide sandals, which in some measure protected their tender feet against the sharp lava boulders. The males, chiefly boys, had been entrusted with the charge of camels, and required no compulsion to render themselves useful; and of the females, some, who boasted personal charms, occupied the position of temporary mistresses. Four large handfuls of parched grain, comprising a mixture of wheat, maize, millet, and gram, formed the daily food of each; and under the charge of the most intelligent, the respective droves slept huddled together on mats spread upon the ground. Some surly old drivers or wanton youths there were, who appeared to prefer the application of the whip to the more gentle persuasion of words; but in the trifling punishment inflicted there was nothing to remind the spectator of the horrors of slavery as witnessed in the western world.

Few caravans ever traverse the deadly Adel plains without losing some slaves at least by the sultriness of the climate, or by the wanton spear of the adjacent hordes. Three of the fat merchant’s children had been murdered shortly after leaving Abyssinia, and at his instigation a foray was now concerting among the

united warriors of the two caravans, having for its object the destruction of the neighbouring Wurbóro Galla, whose families were to be swept into captivity. In this unprovoked slave-hunt the Embassy were strongly urged to take part, but positively refusing the aid of British muskets in furtherance of any such object, the project was finally abandoned, more especially when a huge, brawny Shankela, the property of the Kázi's son, was one morning discovered to have effected his escape during the night, doubtless with the design of carrying to the unsuspecting tribe a timely intimation of the gathering storm.

Ominous *kaláms* meanwhile went on as usual, and fresh reinforcements arrived to take share therein. Villains of every degree continued to slide in as if hung upon wires, to stand cross-legged within the door of the tent until their curiosity was satisfied, and then to assume a seat in the congress. Hajji Abdállah and Elmi, the nephews of Ali Shermárki, listening by turns, brought hourly reports of the progress making towards final adjustment, and "*Bokra, Inshállah*!" "To-morrow, God willing!" the now undeviating reply to every interrogatory relative to departure, had become a perfect by-word in every mouth. At length, on the 28th, it was pompously announced by the Ras el Káfilah that every point at issue had *bonâ fide* been satisfactorily arranged—that the water-skins were to be filled in the evening before the flocks and herds should return from pasture to trouble the pools—and that the journey was positively to be resumed betimes on the morrow.

Upon this welcome assurance the three potent chieftains already named were again received, though with closed doors at their own request, in

order that each might be invested with a turban and an honorary mantle of scarlet broad-cloth, as rewards of their villainy. A most difficult point of etiquette had now to be overcome. The Akil of the Hy Somauli, whose liege subjects had abstracted the mule from Fiáloo, was the bosom friend and partisan of Izhák, whilst the illustrious personages who sat in regal dignity on either side were near and dear relatives of Mohammad Ali; and the rivals respectively watching with jealous eye every act that could be construed into favour or partiality, would infallibly have fired at any preference shown in the presentation of these enviable distinctions from the British Government. The presents were therefore placed on a table immediately opposite to the respective parties, and thence simultaneously launched with the same arm into the laps of the confronted recipients; when each bundle, even to the envelope, being found the exact counterpart of the others, no grounds for jealousy or heart-burning could be devised.

Misfortune had during this interim overtaken the “Sahib el bayzah,” the imp whose acquaintance was formed in the harbour of Tajúra. Detected in the mischievous dissemination of evil tales respecting his clansmen, and in circulating others of an equally discreditable tendency, purely the fruit of his own fertile invention, affecting the throng at Killulloo, he had been taken to task by Abroo ibn Aboo Bekr, upon whom he drew his creese without further ado. The bloodthirsty little savage, who had not numbered his fourteenth year, being seized, was tied to a tree, and most severely chastised. His passionate cries and shrieks under the lash had reached the tent during the interview now happily terminated, and no sooner was he taken down than he came blubbering to lodge

his complaint. No satisfactory reply being elicited, the precocious youth unsheathed his knife, with which he viciously went through the form of disembowelling a prostrate foe. His feelings thus relieved, he dried his eyes, and, with a significant toss of the head, remarked as he walked away, "'Tis of no consequence, '*maphish*,' no importance whatever; but by the grace of God I shall cut the throat of that cousin of mine, before I am many days older!"

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Eight.

Renewal of Debates by Ibrahim Shehém Abli, surnamed "The Devil"—Final Escape to Waramilli.

Affairs nevertheless began now to assume a more desperate appearance than ever. The night of this day of good tidings setting-in with a storm of dust, followed by a heavy fall of rain, a party of Bedouins scoured unperceived through the camp, and in spite of every precaution swept off many articles of trifling value. Amongst the booty was a tub of sugar-candy, which, on the hue and cry being raised, the rogues were fain to abandon, together with the bedding of one of the escort. An incessant bombardment of large stones was kept up during the whole night from the thick underwood in the vicinity, directed as well against the sentries on duty, who paced the same weary ground for the ten thousandth time, as against the position occupied by the sleepers, one of whom, having emerged for a moment from the tarpaulin which the rain had rendered indispensable, received a severe contusion.

Mohammad Ali, in a state of evident alarm, came as soon as the shower had abated to say that there existed no prospect of the march being resumed in accordance with the solemn promise of the Ras el Káfilah; and that feeling longer unable to answer for the lives of the party amongst such a congregation of lawless ruffians, he was desirous of conducting to Shoa on horseback all who felt so disposed, leaving the heavy baggage to be secured by his father as far as circumstances would admit. Should matters unfortunately reach the decided crisis which there seemed every reason to apprehend, the son of Ali Abi was clearly the staff whereon to rely, his intercourse with Europeans having rendered his manners more frank and ingenuous than those of his selfish and shuffling rivals; but although *kaláms* and altercations had again commenced, a sense of duty for the present precluded the adoption of his project.

Morning of the 29th dawned upon no preparations for departure, and a fresh source of detention was indeed found to have arisen from a new claim for precedence put in by Ibrahim Shehém, the litigious member of the tribe Abli, which ranks in the Danákil nation next to that of Adáli, to which the brother of the reigning Sultán belongs. Another tedious day of insult and debate ensued; but the question was at length disposed of by the congress, who decided the fiery little warrior to hold place second to Izhák in the conduct of the káfilah, to the exclusion of Mohammad Ali, through whose tribe the party were now to pass.

Again it was announced with due formality that all matters at issue were peaceably and satisfactorily arranged, and several bales of blue calico, with quantities of snuff, tobacco, and dates, having been distributed among the weary disputants, they were

finally induced to disperse, each carrying his *tobe* folded in triangular form, and stuck, as if in triumph of his plunder, like a placard, at the end of a slit stick. Ibrahim ibn Hámeïdo, Akil of the Hy Somauli, left at his departure a clump of twenty bold spearmen to escort the Embassy to the banks of the Háwash; and, after shaking hands with each of the European party, to the benediction "*Fee amán illah*," bade the whole "*Tarik is suláma*" God speed upon the road.

Ibrahim Shehém Abli, appropriately surnamed by his compatriots "Shaytan," or "The Evil One," carried a great soul under a very diminutive person; and being a perfect Roostum in his own estimation, was one of those who honoured the humble tent of the Embassy with a much larger share of his presence than could have been desired. No sooner was it pitched than the consequential little man strutted in as if by previous invitation, and, with an air that left no doubt as to the side on which he considered the obligation to lay, spread his mat in the least convenient position that could have been selected to the lawful proprietors of the interior. By virtue of a claim which it had heretofore been difficult to understand, he considered himself entitled to the receipt of rations in addition to the handsome pecuniary remuneration extorted at Tajúra, and to keep him out of mischief, he had daily obtained in common with the Ras el Káfilah two large handfuls of rice.

Elated by his recent advancement, he this evening, after sleeping some hours on the table, suddenly bounced upon his legs, and assuming an attitude of mortal defiance, which his contemptible presence rendered truly diverting, exclaimed with the most exaggerated want of courtesy, "You Franks don't know who I am, or you would treat me with more

respect. I am Ibrahim Shehém Abli, who slew the chief of the Mudaïto in single combat, and"—placing the hand of one of his audience in a frightful chasm of the skull, which afforded ample room for three fingers and a half—"here is the wound I received upon that occasion. Do you conceive that I can always consent to receive the paltry pittance of rice with which I have hitherto been put off? Double the quantity immediately, and see that I have my proper share of dates and coffee too, or by the head of the Prophet we shall not long continue on our present friendly terms."

An Arab of desperate fortunes, the ancestor of this pugnacious little hero, is said to have concealed himself, clothed in white robes, among the spreading branches of a tree; and his partisans having induced the simple-minded villagers to repair to the spot in the dusk of evening, the intruder, on being discovered, was accosted deferentially as a spirit. Revealing himself under the character of a great Arabian warrior, who had shun his thousands in the battle, the man of valour was entreated to descend, and become one of the tribe; but to this he would by no means consent until a pledge had been passed to recognise him as its chief, and assign as his own the whole extent of country visible from his elevated perch, which done, he was pleased to alight, and became the father of Braves. 'Tis well for his posterity that the experiment had not been made in a later day, or the cotton robe would have been stripped from the shoulder of the warrior, and a lifeless trunk been left beneath the tree to mark the interview.

Throughout the sojourn of the Embassy at Killulloo, Izhák had peremptorily insisted upon the tent being struck at sunset, lest the display of so much white

and blue cloth might excite the cupidity of the Bedouins, and the preparations making to carry this despotic order into effect, may perhaps have been the means of ruffling the never very placid temper of his now second in command. The aversion of the Ras el Káfilah to any thing like a habitable structure being well understood, the unhoused party amused itself at his expense, by the erection of stone walls of considerable extent, as a shelter during the coming night of rain. “In the name of Allah,” he exclaimed, blustering up to the spot, and kicking over a portion of the fabric with the pointed toe of the very sandal that had suffered so severely during the disagreeable debate at Ambábo,—“in the name of Allah and his Prophet, what is the meaning of all this? We shall have our throats cut to a man if you people persist in this folly: there will be no rain to-night!”

But the rain did fall in torrents, notwithstanding the assurance of the Ras; and although the ravine was now comparatively clear of ragamuffins, stones continued to rattle at intervals against the awning erected for the shelter of the European sentries. That portion of the party off duty, steamed, after an hour’s drenching, under thick heavy tarpaulins, whilst the fluid glided unheeded over the sleeping persons of the paid escort, who were well-greased and oiled, like wild ducks prepared for a long flight.

On the last day of the month, after nearly a week’s tedious detention in an insalubrious and soul-depressing spot, surrounded by black basaltic rocks, where little forage could be obtained, where water, although abundant, was extremely bad, and where the persecutions of prying savages, from whom there was no escape, were unceasing, the Embassy was again permitted to resume its march. Every hour had

seemed an age, and "*Galla gassetoï*," the well-known cry to load, had therefore never been listened to with more heartfelt delight. Until after the rear of the string of camels left the ground, and Izhák was fairly seated on his mule, it was scarcely possible to believe that some fresh cause of detention would not be discovered; but the debates were at last over, and the litigants, weary of raising new objections, suffered their victims to advance in peace.

The road wound up the Killulloo Wady, and thence over a barren rise strewed with obsidian, and with stones, the common pest of the country, to Waramilli. An interesting sight was presented in the line of march of a tribe proceeding in quest of water to the northward—a long line of dromedaries, homed cattle, oxen, sheep, and goats, interspersed by women and children, scantily clad in leathern petticoats, and laden with the rude date matting of portable wigwams, or the still ruder implements of household gear. Whilst the females thus bore heavy burdens slung across their breasts or led the files of camels, upon which rocked the long, raking, ship-like ribs of the dismantled cabin, the lazy lords sauntered ungallantly along, encumbered with naught save the equipment of spear and buckler, the ferocious aspect of all giving ample presage of the intentions entertained towards any party less formidable than themselves.

Total absence of water on the route usually pursued had determined the Ras el Káfilah, after much discussion and deliberation, to adopt the lower and shorter road, which, in consequence of the frequent forays of the Galla, had been for some years closed to caravans. But notwithstanding that so much invaluable time had been lost at Killulloo under such

provoking circumstances, and that the march finally made thence fell short of seven miles, he again persisted in halting, thus affording to Hajji Ali Mohammad and Wáyess ibn Hagaïo an opportunity of rejoining with a party of troublesome Bedouins. The renewed discussions, which did not fail to follow this influx of savages, together with the artful assurances given of the danger to be apprehended on the road selected, had nearly prevailed upon the unstable Izhák to take the káfilah back to Killulloo, for the purpose of proceeding by the upper road; but Ibrahim Shehém Abli, stepping forward in his new capacity, drew his creese, and performing sundry not-to-be-mistaken gestures, swore vehemently upon the sacred Korán to rip up the belly of the very first blockhead who should attempt a retrograde step—his object doubtless being to thwart the views of Mohammad Ali, whose tribe, occupying the upper ground, would derive advantage from the transit of the Embassy by that quarter.

Waramilli is the usual encamping ground of a section of the Gibdósa Adaïel, but their place was fortunately empty. Completely environed by low hills, it proved insufferably hot; and no water was obtainable nearer than Wady Killulloo, now distant more than two miles from the bivouac; but the party were in some measure reconciled to detention in this spot by the arrival from Tajúra of a special messenger, bringing letters which bore very recent dates. Nevertheless the Dankáli to whose hands the packet had first been consigned had nearly perished from intense heat and want of water in his attempt to pass the Salt Lake; and being compelled to relinquish the journey, had returned to the sea-port nearer dead than alive.

Petty thefts without end were committed by the

lawless rabble who had followed the caravan and located themselves in the immediate neighbourhood. Ibrahim Shehém Abli, totally regardless of the character due to his exaltation, was detected in the very act of drawing a cloth with his foot over a pair of pistols, whilst he cleverly held the proprietor in conversation. His design was to obtain a reward for their restitution,—a trick in common practice by the camel-drivers and hired escort; and this was by no means the first exhibition of his own knavery. But it was some consolation to perceive that, although the Franks were of course the principal sufferers, depredations were not altogether restricted to their property. Numerous shields and cloths were abstracted from too confident Danákil; the Ras el Káfilah's sandals were purloined; and at the going down of the sun, a proclamation went forth through Ibrahim Burhánto, the common camp-crier, that Wáyess ibn Hagaïo, Akil of the Wóema, having lost his spear, all parties possessing knowledge of the nefarious transaction were required to give information of the same to the proprietor, as they hoped to prosper!

Volume One—Chapter Twenty Nine.

Naga Koomi—Meinha-Tólli—Madéra-Dubba, and Sultélli.

Two windy nights, during which it blew a perfect hurricane, were passed in unabated vigilance, owing to the number of ruffians lurking about the broken ground, the waters whereof tumble in the rainy season into the rugged chasm of Killulloo. At an early

hour on the 2nd of July, a voice went through the camp, summoning the slothful camel-drivers to bestir themselves; and the incessant growling of their disturbed beasts, which arose in various keys of dissatisfaction from every part of the circle, followed by drowsy Danákil imprecations, and by the merciless dismantling of huts, to the destruction of bales and boxes, presently announced that the work of loading had duly commenced.

A march of fifteen miles over a country more level than usual, though sufficiently rough and stony withal, led through the Doomi valley to Naga Koomi. An abutting prong of land, under which the road wound, was adorned with a cluster of bee-hive-shaped huts styled Koriddra, and at its base the *Balsamodendron Myrrha* grew abundantly, the aromatic branches famishing every savage in the caravan with a new tooth-brush, to be carried in the scabbard of the creese. The encampment occupied a wide, dreary plain, bounded by the high mountain range of Jebel Feeóh; and although water was said to exist in the neighbourhood, it proved too distant to be accessible.

The Ras el Káfilah, at whose hands the Franks experienced about the same amount of respect and tolerance as a rich Jew in the days of Coeur de Lion, here imperiously demanded daily rations of rice and dates for the band of spearmen left as an escort by the Akil of the Hy Somauli; and on being informed that this very unreasonable request could not be complied with, in consequence of the tedious delays on the road having reduced the supplies so low as to be barely sufficient to last to Abyssinia, his brow became suddenly overcast, he relapsed into his wonted ill-humour, rejected a tendered sheep with indignation, and flung out of the tent in a passion.

It rained heavily during the greater part of the night, and an early summons to rise found the party again drenched to the skin. The inclement weather had not by any means tended to restore Izhák to smiles; and his mats having proved quite insufficient to preserve him from full participation in the pleasures of the nocturnal bath, the effect upon his temper was but too manifest. "Don't whistle, don't whistle!" he exclaimed with a sneer to one of his charge, who was so amusing himself within hearing; "what are you whistling for? I have loaded the camels under a prayer from the sacred Korán, and you are doing your best to break the spell, and call up gins by your whistling. '*La illah illallah, wo Mohammad rasúl illah*;'" "there is no God but God, and Mohammad is the Prophet of God."

"*Fein teró*? In the name of the three kaliphs where are you going to?" again vociferated the testy old man, in a terrible passion, to the same luckless individual, who, with a loaded rifle in his hand, had now left the road in pursuit of an antelope. "'*Taal henna*!' 'Come back, will you!' *Wullah*! you'll be getting your throat cut presently by the Buddoos, and then I shall be asked what has become of you. Can't you keep the road? This ugly defile is named 'the place of lions,' and one of them will be eating you anon."

Another march of fifteen miles brought the caravan to Meinha-tólli, where some hollows had been filled by the recent heavy fall of rain; but large droves of horned cattle having soiled in them, the muddy water was so strongly tainted as to be barely drinkable under any disguise. The country throughout bears signs of violent volcanic eruption of later times, which has covered one portion with lava, and another with

ashes and cinders. At the outset the road led over the usual basaltic ground, strewed with fragments of obsidian, but after crossing Arnoot, a deep ravine choked with refreshing green bushes, in which the exhausted beasts obtained a most welcome supply of muddy water, the stony valleys gave place to sandy plains, clothed with short yellow grass, and intersected by low ranges of hills.

One wide level expanse, termed Azóroo, stretching at the foot of the peaked mountain Aiúlloo, was pointed out in the distance as the scene of a signal victory gained about six years since by the Wóema over their predatory foes the Mudaïto. The bones of upwards of three thousand of the combatants which now whiten the sands, have caused the desertion of the best road by the superstitious Danákil. With the escort were many warriors who had taken part in this engagement, and they described the conflict, which commenced in a night attack, to have raged, spear to spear, and shield to shield, throughout the entire of the following day, towards the close of which the “red house” was routed.

As usual, in the evening we sent for a sheep from our flock, but the Ras el Káfilah stoutly asserted that the whole had been transferred to himself for consumption by the escort of Hy Somauli, and although eventually compelled to relinquish one, he did so with an extremely bad grace. Thunder and lightning, with severe squalls and heavy rain, again closed the day—and great confusion and discomfort was occasioned by a sudden whirl of wind, followed by the fall upon the party, of the saturated tent, from the wet folds of which escape was not easily effected. A dreary night succeeded. The watery moon shed but a dull and flitting light over the drenched camp; and

the pacing officer of the watch, after an hour's exposure to the pitiless hurricane, calling up his relief, threw himself with aching bones upon the inundated bed.

"Did I not tell you what would be the consequence of your abominable whistling," grumbled old Izhák, the first thing in the morning; "old Ali Arab is too sick to be moved, and one of my best camels has strayed, Allah knows where." The rope with which the legs of the lost animal had been fettered, was meanwhile rolled betwixt his hands, and sundry cabalistic words having been muttered whilst the Devil was dislodged by the process of spitting upon the cord at the termination of each spell, it was finally delivered over to the Dankáli about to be sent on the quest, and he presently returned successful.

Ahmed Mohammad, the messenger who had been despatched from Tajúra with an Arabic letter for Sáhela Selássie, requesting assistance on the road, returned during this delay. He had passed the night in a Bedouin encampment, the proximity of which had been betrayed by the barking of dogs at each discharge of the musket when the sentinel was relieved. The courier brought advices to the Embassy, and native letters for Izhák and Mohammad Ali. Owing to the jealousy of the frontier officers of Efát, he had been subjected to many days of needless detention, during which the king had led a distant military expedition; and although compliments and assurances of welcome were not wanting, they were coupled with the unsatisfactory intelligence that the party must trust entirely to its own resources, as in the absence of His Majesty, no assistance whatever could be rendered.

The rainy season having now fairly set in, it was believed that the pools on the upper road would furnish a sufficient supply of water, and the course was accordingly shaped towards it. Emerging upon the extensive plain of Merihán, bounded to the westward by the lofty peaked range of Feéoh, the route skirted the Bundoora hills, thickly clothed with grass, and varying in height from six hundred to a thousand feet. Wáyess, the chief of the Wóema, formerly held his head-quarters in this neighbourhood, at Hagaïo-dera-dubba; but the Eesah Somauli making frequent inroads, and at last sweeping off all the cattle of the tribe, it was abandoned. The hill ranges on both sides have sent lava streams almost to the middle of the plain, but generally it is covered with a fine light-coloured soil, strewn with volcanic ashes and small fragments of obsidian—the grass, improved by the recent showers, having partially acquired a greenish tint. A singular detached hill composed of fresh-water limestone, contained a few impressions of small spiral shells, whilst the surrounding rocks exhibit the usual cellular basalt.

No one could conceive that the rugged arid wastes whereon he trod, had ever in themselves been either productive or populous. Saving the labours of the termites, exhibited in endless mounds of vast dimensions, no monument of industry redeems the inhospitable landscape; yet these measureless plains, no less than the barren mountain ranges so lately traversed, did formerly, as now they might, afford hordes of hardy soldiers, that under a bold leader, such as the mighty Graan, who in the sixteenth century unfurled the banner of the impostor, and at the head of a countless army overran and

nearly destroyed the Ethiopic empire, were admirably adapted to possess themselves of the more fertile plains and provinces adjoining. Whatever may have been the virtues and endowments of these olden warriors, their posterity, like the dwellings they inhabit, are sufficiently rude and degenerate.

Wady Bundoora, clothed in a thicket of verdant bushes, had been selected as the halting ground, and its appearance promised a copious supply of water; but every pool proved dry, and the march was therefore continued to Madéra-dubba—a second and similar ravine, which was confidently expected to afford the desired element. Disappointment was however again in store, and the rain not having extended thus far, the usual reservoirs were referred to in vain. Worse than all, information was here received that not a drop of water would be found at the next station; whilst, owing to the wear and tear of skins, added to the too confident anticipations indulged, barely a sufficient supply for even one day accompanied the káfilah.

It had been determined under these untoward circumstances, to move on at midnight; but after an insufferably hot day, rain again interfered. Unfortunately it did not fall in sufficient quantities to be of much utility; a few pints caught in tarpaulins, which, with all available utensils, were placed for the reception of the precious fluid, proving very inadequate to the wants of the thirsty party. At 3 a.m. the caravan advanced down the valley, with cool refreshing weather, and a fine moon shining brightly overhead. From the summit of a tumulus of black lava, marking the point where the undulations of the Bundoora hills trend towards the mountains of the Ittoo Galla, an extensive view was obtained with the

dawning day, over a country bearing the most extraordinary volcanic character—huge craters on the one hand towering to the clouds, whilst on the other sank the wide valley of Kordeité, through which lay the high road to the desolate plains of Errur.

A few pools of muddy rain-water by the wayside were eagerly drained by the sinking cattle, but a deep ravine, bordered with green trees and bushes, was explored to no purpose; and after crossing the fine open plain of Eyrolúf, abounding in gazelles and swine, the road led round the base of a remarkable cone, styled Jebel Hélmund, which had long been in view. Isolated, and four hundred feet in height, with a crater opening to the north-eastward, which would seem at no very remote period to have discontinued its eruption, it is surrounded by a broad belt of lava, some three miles in diameter. This has formed towards the plain a black scarped wall, rising from fifteen to twenty feet, of which the wooded crevices teemed with quail, partridges, and guinea-fowl, and were said to be so many great dens of lions.

The sultry afternoon was already far advanced, when the weary eye was refreshed by a glimpse of the verdant plain of Sultélli, a perfectly level expanse, so ingeniously overgrown with pale green vegetation as to furnish an exact representation of a wide lake covered with floating duckweed, around which numerous camels were busily browsing on the rank herbage. During the greater part of the year, this plain presents one vast and delightful sheet of water; but the fairy form of the light-footed gazelle was presently seen bounding over the delusive surface, and although clothed throughout with the most tantalising verdure, it yet proved perfectly dry. The camels were milch females, capable of subsisting for

days, and even for weeks together, without drinking, whilst their milk serves to quench the thirst of their unwashed Bedouin attendants. Beedur, the chief of a section of the Débeni, who resides in this spot during the rainy season, had long since decamped with his clan to more distant pastures.

Every hollow in the rich black soil abounding with shells, was vainly explored; and after a seventeen mile march, the party, weary and thirsty, were fain to encamp on the opposite side, and giving up the search as fruitless, to rest satisfied with the nauseous contents of water-skins filled at the putrid pools of Meinha-tólli—a second, and if possible, a worse edition of the impurities brewed at the Salt Lake. Both amongst men and cattle the utmost distress prevailed. A suffocating blast blew incessantly, heat the most intense was reflected from the adjacent black rocks; and nearly all of the horses and mules were so completely exhausted that there appeared no prospect of dragging them other sixteen miles to the nearest reservoir.

But towards midnight the beneficent flood-gates of Heaven were providentially opened, and a violent storm bursting over the camp, in less than half an hour filled every ravine and hollow to overflowing, and afforded a plentiful and truly seasonable, although transient, supply. Tearing up their pickets from the saturated soil, the dying animals thrust into the turbid stream that rolled through the encampment their hot noses, which for two entire days and nights had been strangers to moisture, and filled their sunken flanks almost to bursting. Cackling troops of guinea-fowl flocked to the pools from the adjacent heights. Embankments were thrown up, and wells excavated; and European, Danákil, and camp-

follower—Christian, Moslem, and Hindoo—all drenched to the skin, falling together upon their knees in the posture of thanksgiving, sucked down the first copious draught of palatable water that had been enjoyed since leaving Fiáloo.

Volume One—Chapter Thirty.

Field of Extinct Volcanoes. Oasis of Yoor Eraïn Mároo.

Singular and interesting indeed is the wild scenery in the vicinity of the treacherous oasis of Sultélli. A field of extinct volcanic cones, vomited forth out of the entrails, of the earth, and encircled each by a black belt of vitrified lava, environs it on three sides; and of these, Mount Abida, three thousand feet in height, whose yawning cup, enveloped in clouds, stretches some two and half miles in diameter, would seem to be the parent. Beyond, the still loftier crater of Aiúlloo, the ancient landmark of the now decayed empire of Ethiopia, is visible in dim perspective; and looming hazily in the extreme distance, the great blue Abyssinian range towards which the steps of the toil-worn wayfarers were directed—now for the first time visible—arose in towering grandeur to the skies.

Overwhelmed by violent subterranean convulsion and commotion, which, reversing the order of things, has again and again altered the former appearance, the face of the country for miles around the base of the larger volcanoes, presents one sheet of lava. Activity would not appear to have extended much beyond the immediate neighbourhood of each; but

there is a connection between the whole cluster visible in small lava streams and a vast quantity of volcanic débris, converted into humus, in the adjacent valleys. Yet it is by no means apparent that these alone have contributed to form the present surface, the south-eastern side of the field terminating in much older formation of wacke. Neither would any one of the craters appear to have very lately poured out the fiery stream. Ibrahim Shehém Abli indeed deposed with an oath to having seen Father Abida in flames about twelve years previously; but, on further investigation, there seemed reason to believe that the conflagration he witnessed must have been confined to the long grass with which portions of the steep sides are clothed.

The well-timed deluge of rain which fell during the night had been so eagerly drunk by the thirsty desert, that when the morning dawned the only traces of the storm were presented in numberless channels left by the torrent, with here and there a muddy pool, around which the guinea-fowl were still rallying in clamorous troops. Every portion of the road having been saturated, and rendered far too heavy for the jaded camels, advance was of necessity delayed until noon, by which time they had become sufficiently dry to admit of the resumption of the journey. A bare alluvial plain, skirting the base of the Kóomi range, led to a few acacia trees of larger growth than had heretofore been seen. They occupied a hollow styled Ras Mittur, which is the point of union of the two roads from Killulloo, and hence the caravan struck off across a grassy plain, abounding in herds of graceful *mhorr*. The course followed the eastern border of the field of truncated cones; and in the fresh green hue of the bushes with which the cindery tract is studded,

was afforded abundant proof of the fertility of its decomposed lava.

Passing a cluster of Bedouin huts, whose inmates were watching their grazing herds of milch camels, the road next threaded a narrow belt of verdant jungle. This suddenly opened into the wide plain of Moolu, studded in every direction with flocks of sheep and goats, assembled from all parts of the country round; and in a deep hollow in the very centre lay the attraction—the oasis of Yoor Eraïn Mároo, a noble sheet of water surrounded by a belt of hillocks, and measuring during even this season of drought, a full mile in diameter. It was indeed a sight most refreshing to the eye. Troops of waterfowl of various plumage sailed over its glassy surface. Birds chattered amongst the autumnal branches of the numerous trees, whose tall stems, half immersed, rose thickly in the centre, and the cool waters of the basin afforded to the weary and travel-stained pilgrims the first unlimited supply of pure liquid that had been revelled in since bidding adieu to the shores of India.

In so sultry a land, where, throughout the desert and forbidding plain. Nature has dispensed the first necessary of life with a most niggard hand, those pools which have not a constant supply of running water soon become adulterated by various decompositions of organic and inorganic matter. Wacke cannot resist any long exposure, and hence fluid in contact with it imbibes oxide of iron and muriate of soda; whilst flocks and herds, corrupting the element in a still more offensive manner, not only impart a fetid taste and smell, but stir up the deposited mud, which emits a volume of sulphuretted hydrogen. Yoor Eraïn Mároo was free from all these

impurities, and its reservoir affords a never-failing supply; but the surrounding country is said during the wet season to be extremely unhealthy, violent storms and incessant rain compelling the shepherds to abandon the plains and wadies, and retreat with their flocks to the neighbouring mountains.

From Waramilli to Moolu, the country is chiefly occupied by the sub-tribes of Débeni, under the chiefs Beedur and Boo Bekr Sumbhool, the latter of whom usually resides at Hamoosa, and the former at Doomi or Sultélli. Although not always to be trusted, these wanderers appear under a friendly garb; but the lion-hearted guides and escort, with Izhák at their head, had, from the first moment of leaving Killulloo, been doing their utmost to impress upon the minds of their audience the extreme danger to be apprehended on this portion of the road, from the various wild hordes now adjacent, whom they painted as perfect dare-devils.

“The Galla are pagans,” quoth Ibrahim Shehém Abli with a bigoted sneer, “and, uncircumcised knaves that they are, never heard either of Allah or the Holy Prophet; and as for the Mudaïto, although nominally Moslems, they have little more religion than their infidel neighbours. But wait until I get an opportunity,” he added, with a caper and a sardonic grin, as he unsheathed his creese for the purpose of going through the figure of disembowelment, “only wait until I find an opportunity, and, *Inshállah*, we shall square accounts.”

Many were the harrowing tales that had been called to mind by the first loom of the Abyssinian mountains, touching the toil-worn traveller, who, having surmounted all the perils and privations of the road,

and arrived within sight of the promised land, had been cut off at the very last step towards the goal. Perpetual strife is waged betwixt the Galla and Mudaïto, and the plain of Moolu forming a sort of neutral ground between the countries inhabited by the rival clans, it proves one continual scene of foray and bloodshed. The heathen, watching like hawks from the tops of trees and eminences, pounce, whenever opportunity offers, upon the flocks and herds of the true believers: retaliation is not slow to follow, and thus the feud is well and incessantly sustained.

During the latter part of the march, the Ras el Káfilah was nearly thrown into hysterics by the sudden desertion of one of his charge, who, in defiance of the thraldom, which rendered all more like prisoners than freemen, had made up his mind to dine that night upon venison, and had accordingly taken up arms against the alluring herds of sleek and timid antelope that, with white discs on their cruppers, bounded in all directions before the advancing string of camels. Repeated interrogatories of "*Fein tóro*?" "whither are you going?" were launched in a commanding tone of voice after the truant, without eliciting the smallest attention or reply. A shot was fired—a fat buck fell—and the successful Nimrod, dismounting, proceeded to secure the spoils; an operation which brought from their occupation in the adjacent pasture, two ancient Bedouin crones in wrinkles and leathern aprons, to be spectators of the dissection.

Izhák was old and captious, and not seeing very clearly, the apparition was too much for his shattered nerves. "Allah, Allah!" he peevishly exclaimed, seizing his broad-headed spear from the hand of his henchman, and violently kicking the flanks of his

jaded mule towards the spot; “merciful Providence, what childish folly is this? Is the commander a babe that he thus trifles with the safety of the caravan? I did fancy that he possessed some sense, but this is positively the act of a madman. Look at those Buddoos, they will cut his throat immediately, and then we shall have a pretty blood feud, involving the lives of half a dozen Danákil.”

Despite of all the twaddling old blockhead could do to prevent it, the haunch was nevertheless brought in, and its appearance hailed with considerable delight. But it might almost as well have been abandoned to the vultures of the air, since the Persian cook, who had taken alarm at the menace extended to Quilp in the prosecution of his kennel duties, peremptorily refused to convert the venison into *kabábs*, upon the grounds that the knife of the true believer had not passed across the throat of the victim.

“Whose dog is Hajji Abdállah Kurmani?” he exclaimed in tones that might have been believed to issue from a dilapidated bagpipe; “whose dog is he, I repeat,” throwing the haunch upon the ground, “that he should be invited to deal with any such abomination? Allah and his Prophet defend us, but the Hajji would as soon think of polluting himself with the touch of the unclean beast.”

This spirited public declaration was by the Moslem audience received with the rapturous applause it claimed; and the worthy pilgrim, fairly carried away by the over-boiling of his virtuous indignation, was actually proceeding to wreak his last vengeance upon the venison, when arbitrary measures were adopted, which resulted in the imposition of twenty-four hours’ fast in excess of the many inflicted by the apostle

whose shrine he had visited at the holy city.

Now the Hajji bore a striking personal resemblance to Hudibras, and like that hero, regarded discretion as being the better part of valour. Since the melancholy disaster at Goongoonteh, he had encumbered himself with a musket and a modicum of cartridges; but even by his warmest admirers it must be confessed that there had never in his demeanour been observed the slightest indication of a design to throw himself away by rash exposure. Entertaining the highest respect for himself, the prudent son of Irán was rarely heard to speak of Hajji Abdállah save in the respectful third person singular. The words of Ibrahim Shehém had sunk deep into his soul, and after the affair of the venison, it was not a little diverting to hear him, in his wonted croaking accents, apostrophise the folly and the infatuation which had prompted him to brave the wilds of unexplored Africa.

“Hajji Abdállah was never taxed with lack of common sense,” he exclaimed musingly in self-reproach. “Allah knows there be many greater blockheads in this sublunary world than his servant the Hajji. Is it not wonderful that the chief cook to Khwajah Mohammad Rahim Khan Shirázi, and master, too, of recipes for no fewer than nine-and-thirty piláos, should have proven himself such an ass, such a son of a burnt father, as voluntarily to get in the way of abuse for refusing to *kabáb* unhallowed meat which died without the knife or the Bismillah; and, worse still, in the way of having his own throat divided every minute of each day and night by these bloodthirsty infidels? ‘*La houl willah koowut illah billah ali ul-azeem*,’ ‘there is no power nor virtue save in God.’ What true believer in the fair province of Kurmán would ever have suspected Hajji Abdállah of bringing

his beard to so vile a market?”

Volume One—Chapter Thirty One.

Menace of the Dar Mudaïto. Moolu Zughír, and Burdúdda.

Boo Bekr Sumbhool and Datah Mohammad, co-chiefs of that section of the Débeni styled Sidi Hábroo, shortly sneaked into the camp at the head of an appropriate retinue of ruffians, and having been duly propitiated with tobacco and blue calico, deputed a son of the latter to represent the tribe, as an earnest of the black mail having been levied. Mohammad Ali proposed under these circumstances to halt a day, both in order to profit by the first opportunity enjoyed of purifying raiment, and, which was of still higher importance, to refresh the way-worn beasts. But the Ras was in such dire alarm of the Bedouins and Galla, that he had been with the utmost difficulty prevailed upon to encamp near the water, and no persuasion could now elicit his consent to tarry. Columns of smoke which arose high and dense from the country in advance, did not tend to diminish his apprehensions. A shadowy human figure stealing along the summit of the gloomy cliffs which overhung the camp, redoubled his mental perturbation; and anathematising Moolu as the most dangerous nest of thieves and cut-throats along the entire road, he would that minute have resumed the march in the dead of night, had not heavy rain compelled him to bite his nails until a late hour the following forenoon, by which time the camel furniture had become dry.

But the event proved that there were on this occasion some grounds for uneasiness. During the process of loading, three mounted Mudaïto scouts, wild-looking beings, rode into camp in a suspicious manner; and immediately after moving out of the bed of the hollow, whence the road led over an extensive plain covered with low shrubby undergrowth, the Ras el Káfilah, who momentarily waxed more fidgety and excited, called a general halt, and assumed his shield and brass-mounted spear.

“Look well to your weapons,” he observed with a truly commander-in-chief-like delivery, “and let all the proprietors of fire-arms lead the van with myself. Two thousand of the Dar Mudaïto are out on a foray against the Galla of the neighbouring hills, and I have received certain intelligence that they purpose this day to fall upon the caravan. May Allah protect his servants in the coming strife!”

Suitable defensive preparations were made without delay, and the camels formed ten deep to admit of the whole line being enfiladed by rifle balls; whilst the Danákil and Hy Somauli escort, with loins girded for the fight, brought up the rear. Scarcely had these arrangements been completed, when a band of fifty warriors were descried advancing in a compact body over the brow of an adjacent eminence. Carrying their round bucklers on the left arm, and bristling their bright spears, they pressed rapidly towards the front of the line, “on hostile deeds intent.” Out to meet them sprang the fiery little champion Ibrahim Shehém, who panted to flesh his creese in the body of another Mudaïto, and twenty stout warriors, casting off their upper garments to give freedom to their limbs, were not far behind him. The caravan remained motionless to watch the event, and the

formidable line of rifles fronted the foe, who no sooner perceived the muzzles bearing directly on their phalanx, than they lowered their spears to demand a parley, and described themselves to be *en route* from Jebel Abida to join their clansmen, who were gathering at the waters of Mároo, preparatory to a "*goom*" or onslaught, upon their hereditary enemies, the Alla and Ittoo Galla.

The march was resumed immediately upon this banditti passing quietly to the rear, and Ibrahim Shehém Abli relapsed into his wonted composure; but the foot-prints of several other parties being shortly afterwards discovered, the beaten track was abandoned altogether, in order, if possible, to avoid meeting the marauders in number, when the plunder of so rich a caravan would doubtless have been essayed. An advance guard reconnoitred the country round from the summits of trees and termite cones, which alone admitted of an uninterrupted view over the thick verdant bushes that clothed the entire face of the plain. These were interspersed with rich yellow grass, swarming with antelope, hares, bustard, and florikin; whilst fine cedar-like camel-thorns stretched their long arms over troops of pintadoes, coveys of partridges, and spur-fowl. Not a trigger was suffered to be drawn, lest the report should attract to the spot the much-dreaded Mudaïto; but although hundreds of warriors might have been ambushed in the dense covert unperceived, it was safely traversed without further hostile demonstration; and the country becoming gradually more and more open, the view extended to the fine peaked range near Afrubba, inhabited by the Ittoo Galla—war-hawks of the mountains, who are distinguished for their sanguinary ferocity.

A cloud of dust in the extreme distance being believed to prognosticate a rush of these wild horsemen, the caravan was again halted ere it had proceeded far over the open plain; but the magnifying powers of a pocket telescope converting the objects of alarm into a troop of scudding ostriches, Izhák's confidence once more returned. The residue of the march lay over cracked and blackened soil, from which the vegetation had been burnt the preceding day, the embers still smouldering in various directions, although the columns of smoke had ceased to ascend.

Neither fuel nor water could be discovered at the ground selected for the bivouac, but a small supply of the latter requisite was obtained on the way, from a muddy brook trickling over the charred surface of the soil, and filling the gaping cracks and crevices on its progress towards the lower ground. This strange phenomenon arose from the wady at Moolu Zughír, near Afrubba, some miles to the southward, having been filled to overflowing by the recent heavy rain. Moolu Táni, or "the other Moolu," afforded a most alluring spot of bright green vegetation just sprouting from the rich soil which here abounds, and among it the cattle luxuriated until dark. Sundry invocations were now performed with horrid yells, to enable one of the savages to divine the coming of rain; but a night passed in vigilance by sentinels posted on ant-hills, which afforded an uninterrupted view over the surrounding plain, gave place to dawn without any molestation from thunder-storm, Galla, or Mudaïto.

Betimes in the morning the march was resumed across an alluvial plain, which a few days later in the season would probably have presented a swamp impassable to camels; but no difficulties were now

experienced, and the caravan passed merrily on towards a conspicuous barn-shaped hill, which had been visible for many miles. At its base, among sundry other cairns, stood a mound of loose stones encircled by a thorn fence, and almost concealed under the forest of withered boughs that decked every part. Beneath this grotto reposed the sainted bones of Othmán, a celebrated Tukhaïel sheïkh of days long gone. Amidst prayers and ejaculations in honour of the departed, according to the custom still prevalent in the southern parts of continental Europe, each warrior of the Bedouin escort first in order, and then the drivers as they passed, having previously plucked from some adjacent tree a branch of verdant mistletoe, adorned the venerated pile; and long ere the arrival of the last camel, it had exchanged its sober autumnal garb for the bright green mantle of spring.

Picturesque clumps of magnificent camel-thorns of ancient growth here studded the face of the landscape, and, covered with golden blossoms, perfumed the entire atmosphere. The myrrh tree flourished on the hill-side, and the "*garsee*" was first found under a load of fruit resembling the "*leechee*." The bright crimson pulp possesses an agreeable acidity, and the kernel that it envelopes pleases the Danákil in a mess of sheep's-tail fat. No wood had hitherto been seen sufficiently dense to invite the elephant; but in this covert the giant evidently existed; and the oryx, appropriately styled "*Aboo el kuroon*," "the father of horns," ranged in considerable numbers; the half-devoured carcase of one which had been slain the preceding night, attesting the presence also of the "king of beasts."

The agility of the Adaïel in reclaiming a refractory

camel, although often witnessed with admiration, had never been more prominently exhibited than during this march. One of the most skittish and unmanageable animals of the whole hundred and seventy, had very judiciously been selected by Izhák for a large chest containing medical stores, and the halter was usually held by a gentle slave girl, whom it was the delight of the Sahib el Bayzah to cuff and maltreat. Taking a sudden whim into its head, the restive beast, after the performance of sundry preliminary plunges to ascertain if the load were firm, dashed off the road, galloped over the feeble maid, and, smashing her water-gourd into a thousand fragments, roaring and bellowing, pursued its headlong career across the stony plain. Phials and bottles were undergoing a most destructive discipline, when a fleet-footed savage, who was in hot pursuit, and had already twice turned the fugitive, darting across its orbit, abruptly terminated these gratuitous and uncouth gambols by a sudden twitch of the nose-rope, which brought owner, dromedary, and medicine-chest simultaneously to the earth, with a crash that sounded ominously enough, although not the slightest injury was sustained by either.

Meanwhile the caravan had reached Burdúdda, where a large pool of dirty rain-water extended strong inducements to encamp, and again led to a violent altercation between the authorities. Apprehensive of misunderstandings with the Bedouin shepherds in the vicinity, Izhák had sapiently resolved to proceed some miles further to a waterless station, whilst Mohammad Ali, insisting that the káfilah should halt, commenced the work of unloading. The camels of either party were for some time divided; but the Ras, after trying the stratagem of advance without shaking

his rival's resolution, finally yielded up the point with a bad grace, and all set up their staff.

The outline of the highlands of Abyssinia, which had been first indistinctly visible from Sultélli, now stood out in bold relief; and to the southward the view was bounded by the lofty hills of the Afrubba, Farsa, and Azbóti Galla, where coffee grows wild in abundance. An intermediate extensive prospect is obtained over the thickly-wooded Moolu plain, stretching some thirty miles in the direction of Errur. This latter is the residence of the old sheikh Hajji Ali Mohammad, and the head-quarters of the Débeni, who take hereditary share in the waters of the valley with their brethren the Wóema. It forms, moreover, a place of resort for every wandering vagabond in the surrounding country who possesses a sheep, a goat, or an ox, or has the ability and the inclination to assert his privilege of erecting a temporary cabin; and thus the recurrence of each season of drought, compelling the abandonment of less favoured pastures, pours in its migratory swarm to swell the more permanent muster upon the sultry plains of Errur, and to create the strife inseparable from a gathering of these lawless hordes.

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Two.

A Tale of the Plains of Errur.

Aylia was the comeliest of the dark-eyed daughters of the desert. Sixteen tropical summers had already ripened a form modelled in that exquisite perfection which nature is wont to bestow upon her wildest works, and the native symmetry of the sylph-like maid

was yet unblemished by any of those barbarous improvements wherein her nation delight. Her sparkling eye, fringed with long silken lashes, in brilliancy eclipsed the pet gazelle that ever bounded by her side; and the graceful gambols of the sportive fawn would seem to have been inspired by the fairy footstep of its blooming mistress. Luxuriant hair fell in elf-like tresses over her ebon shoulder. Teeth of ivory whiteness were revealed by a radiant smile that ever played over her animated features; and few indeed of her virgin charms were veiled under the folds of the slender drapery that belongs to the Bedouin shepherdess.

(Note 1. The following narrative, recounted by one of the Wóema escort, although necessarily enlarged, is as strictly literal as the embodiment of the subject would admit; and it will convey to the English reader a better picture of life in the desert than could be painted in a less connected form.)

The maid tended her father's flocks in the vale of Errur, which forms a constant scene of predatory incursion on the part of the ruthless savages that hover round the border. When least expected, the Galla war-hawks of the adjacent mountains were wont to stoop from their rocky fastnesses, and to sweep away the riches of the Wóema. The treacherous Eesah, although ready to extend the hand which should have denoted friendship, was nothing loath to the appropriation of other men's chattels; and throughout all the nomade Adel hordes, whose tents were erected during the more sultry months, the feud and the desultory skirmish favoured the inroads of the foe. Amongst the surrounding clans, even her own tribe was not notorious for its honesty, and by frequent depredations abroad, it

invited the foray of reprisal. Thus the brawl and the mortal encounter would follow the stillness of indolent existence with a rapidity not less startling than frequent, and none knew what the next hour might bring forth.

But fear had no place in the breast of the daughter of old Ali. Nursed in the lap of strife, the Bedouin blood of her roving sire coursed through her young veins, and she pursued her Arcadian occupation beneath the spreading boughs of the venerable acacia, chanting to her gazelle the wild ditty that revealed the thraldom of her heart, or listening to the bleat of her black-faced lambs from the Hejáz. Often had the shrill war-whoop rung through the wild valley, and the rush of the gathering warriors who flew to answer the summons, arrested her plaintive song, but only lately had it caused her to spring to her feet with a bosom throbbing audibly; and now she would sigh as she sank again upon the smooth bank that formed her favourite seat, for the swain for whom her soft eyes had been strained across the flickering desert was not among the number of those that had swept past, and she knew not why, nor whither he had gone.

Many were the ardent suitors who had wooed the hand of the blooming Aylia, and often-times had she been sought from her avaricious father, who viewed the still expanding attractions of his daughter as a certain source of increase to his ill-gotten and idolised wealth. None, however, had yet been able to produce the price set upon the damsel's charms, neither had any possessed an advocate in her eloquence. Her heart had already been tacitly relinquished, but her hand she knew to be in the gift of her sire, and therefore not her own to bestow.

Ambeesa it was who had silently gained this ascendancy over the green affections of the maid. The milch goats of Irripa, his mother, were by her driven daily to pasture, and his wigwam was within spear's throw of her own. The twain had known each other from earliest infancy, for they came upon the world's stage in the self-same hour. They had feasted and they had played together as children; and now that their young hearts had become entwined, it was his wont to accompany the nymph into the vale, where they would hold converse the livelong day. The vapid language of the savage admits of but a limited embodiment of the softer passions; but the simple courtship of the uncultivated was ably sustained. Aylia felt the force of her charms when she saw the warrior grasp the spear and the shield, without which no Bedouin ever crosses the threshold of his cabin—in order that he might chase the fawn that she had coveted; or when he drew water from the well in her gourd, to replenish again and again the ox-hide that formed a drinking trough for her thirsty flock. And Ambeesa felt himself amply rewarded when the slender fingers of the blooming girl decked his hair with the aromatic herbs that she had plucked in the wild meadow, or she counted over the ewes that they were shortly to possess in common.

Ambeesa was ever in the foremost rank when the spear was thrown over the shoulder of the brave; and successful in every foray, he had won wealth as well as fame. None appeared more frequently in the many-tailed leopard spoils which form the garb of victory; and the white feather always floated above his raven locks. But his father having been treacherously murdered by the Eesah, a blood feud

clung to the old man's sole descendant; and it formed to him a source of self-reproach, that although he had for years dogged the footsteps of the assassin, the opportunity had never yet occurred when he might wash out the stain! A skulker amongst his clansmen at a distant oasis, the cowardly savage had profited of his deep cunning to baffle the creese of the avenger; and he still vaunted his trophy of blood without any account of its acquisition having been required.

But the day of reckoning and of retribution was now nigh at hand. The mother of Ambeesa had counted out the dowry demanded of any who should espouse young Aylia, and had claimed the girl as her daughter-in-law elect. At the sight of the beeves and the fat rams and the trinkets and the trumpery cloths, the sole remaining eye of the old sheikh glistened with a lustre that it had not known for years; but his haughty soul could ill brook the thought of his daughter being wedded to one whose father's death thus rested unavenged. "Get thee hence, young man," he exclaimed sternly, shaking his silvered locks, after a short inward conflict with his avarice —"Get thee hence, nor show thy face again within my doors as a suitor until thou hast appeased the spirit of thy murdered sire. The blood of him to whom thou art indebted for existence crieth aloud to thee for vengeance; and *Wulláhi*, until the grave of Hássan shall have been soaked by thy hands, thou shalt not talk to Ali of his daughter."

Ambeesa sought not his dark mistress, but snatching the spear and buckler which had been carefully deposited in a corner of the cabin, stalked forth without uttering a syllable. Passing his own hut in mental abstraction, he took the road to the brook, and

throwing himself upon his face, drew a deep draught to allay the fever that consumed him. Then whetting his brass-mounted creese to the keenest edge upon a smooth stone, he muttered a dread oath betwixt his clenched teeth, and strode moodily across the sandy plain.

The great annual fair had already assembled at the sea-port of Berbera, and tribes from all parts of the country were flocking thither with their motley wares. The curious stalls of the fat Banians from India were thronged from morning until night with barbarians from the adjacent districts, who brought peltries and drags to be exchanged; and the clamour of haggling and barter was hourly increased by the arrival of some new caravan of toil-worn pedlars from the more remote depths of the interior, each laden with an accession of rich merchandise to be converted into baubles and blue calico at a clear net profit to the specious Hindoo of two hundred per cent. Myrrh, ivory, and gum-arabic; civet, frankincense, and ostrich feathers, were piled in every corner of his booth; and the tearing of ells of Nile stuff and Surat cloth, and the counting out of porcelain beads, was incessant so long as the daylight lasted. Withered beldames, with cracked penny-trumpet voices, were meanwhile actively employed in the erection of new edifices; and more and more camels were ever pouring towards the scene of primitive commerce, loaded with the long elastic ribs, and the coarse date matting which form the skeleton and shell of the nomade's wigwam.

It was dusk when Ambeesa entered the long centre street of this busy scene. He had journeyed many days alone and on foot, and his mantle and his arms and his lofty brow were alike deeply stained with the

disguising dust of the desert. A gang of *Bones*, with a stalking ostrich, driving before them sundry asses laden with the spoils of the chase, arrived at the same moment from the opposite direction. Rude parchment-covered quivers, well stocked with poisoned shafts, hung negligently by their side, suspended by the tufted tail of a lion, and with their classic bows over their wiry shoulders, the gypsey votaries of Diana advanced swearing and blaspheming towards the Eesah quarter of the straggling encampment.

The light which gleamed through the black goat-hair awning of a Guráguê slave-merchant, fell upon the features of the wild party as it passed; and Ambeesa's heart beat high with exultation when, in the person of one whose matted locks were decorated with a dirty ostrich plume, he fancied he could recognise the very foe of whom he was in search. The archer was in truth a most truculent-looking knave—one who, if his visage did not strangely belie him, might have been the perpetrator of any given atrocity. The tail fat of four Bérbera rams encrusted his head in a perfect helmet of tallow, and the putrid entrails of the antelope he had last slain, were slung in noisome coils about his neck, to the pollution of the atmosphere he breathed. His repulsive front displayed through the accumulated filth of forty years a perfect maze of mystic figures in tattooed relief, on which were imbedded amulets stitched in greasy leather; and the distended lobes of his enormous ears were so loaded with pewter rings, that not another could have been squeezed in. A gap, consequent upon the loss of five front teeth in a recent brawl, made room for a quid of no ordinary dimensions. Two small sunken blear eyes, which

appeared to work upon a swivel, squinted alternately, as the inflamed balls were revealed by turns according to the employment of the wearer's sinister vision; and on his meagre sunken cheek yawned a seam five inches in length, which precisely corresponded with a gash known to have been inflicted by the youth's father during a certain moonless night at Errur, when a stab in the back had aroused the veteran from deep sleep to his mortal struggle.

"Stay you here, Moosa," quoth one of the bowmen, addressing this captivating hero, as they stopped before the doorway of an unfinished cabin at no great distance beyond the rover's pall,—"tarry you here, and *Inshállah*, we'll turn out these lazy wenches to unload the asses."

The name had not been lost upon Ambeesa, who, like all of his bigot creed, placed the firmest reliance in fate. He had sworn never to return until he should have given the body of Moosa to the wild beasts, where the vultures might pick out his eyes. The object of his weary journey was by the interference of destiny in his favour, already within his clutches. He who murdered his sire was assuredly alone with him in a dark lane, and Aylia was without doubt his own!

"*Wogérri maani, wogérri maani, wogérri maani*" repeated the Wóema coldly, as he extended his open hand towards the doomed victim in token of amity. "*Wogérri, wogérri, wogérri*," carelessly returned the savage thus accosted, at the same time passing his greasy fingers mechanically over the palm presented. The same triple salutation again reiterated, was thrice returned; and it gradually dwindled away to an assenting "*um hum*," in itself fully as frigid as the

wearisome repetitions of inquiry had been deeply treacherous.

Moosa stooped to shake the pebbles from his dilapidated sandal. His bare back was towards the Wóema, for his garment had fallen from his brawny shoulder. It was enough. Muttering through his closed teeth an inaudible invocation to Allah, Ambeesa suddenly drew his creese, plunged the razor-edged blade to the very hilt into the yielding spine of his unsuspecting foe, tore the vaunting white feather from his greasy locks, spumed the prostrate carcase with his foot, spat upon the unseemly features now distorted in the agonies of death, and fled into the wilderness.

Months had elapsed, and the festive season had now returned at which the Bedouins annually celebrate their weddings. Many a dark-eyed damsel had been led by her happy swain to the nuptial wigwam, when a gayer procession than usual was to be seen passing up the centre street of the encampment at Gaïel. Eight wrinkled matrons led, brandishing swords and creeses with truly Amazonian gestures, whilst they danced to a wild song in which all joined chorus to the dissonant thumping of a kettle-drum. The charms of the maiden bride who followed, and had been long betrothed, were screened from vulgar gaze beneath a canopy of blue calico, home by a party of the village belles, splendid with porcelain jewellery and grease—their arms, like those of the sister Graces, entwining each other's waists; whilst every idle blackguard that could be mustered, swelled the nuptial train. At intervals, the music of the tambourine gave place to a shrill vocal solo, when the nymphs pirouetted in a mazy circle; and the procession, after thus parading through the hamlet,

was preceded on its return by a party of dirty urchins bearing the dower in ornamented baskets woven of the wiry leaf of the palm. Massive ear-rings of brass and copper were amongst the treasures, and the much-prized, though far from becoming coif of blue calico which forms the badge of the wedded wife, had not been forgotten.

Aylia was still the fairest of all the daughters of her tribe, and Ambeesa ever the foremost when the spear was thrown over the shoulder of the warrior. Happiness and content reigned in the rude hut. No harsh word had ruffled the existence of the young pair, and the stranger never passed the door without the ready draught of milk being proffered, or the kind word exchanged. But in accordance with the barbarous usage of the Adel Bedouin, the wife was to remain an inmate of her father's dwelling, until she should have become the mother of three children.

'Twas mid-day in the sultry summer months, and the fiery sun poured his fiercest rays from his meridian throne. No human eye was able to endure the broad glare that pervaded the vast sandy plain of Errur, which at intervals was scoured by towering whirlwinds, imparting the aspect of a manufacturing town with its huge steam-engines at work. All animate nature shrank under the scorching heat, which had even curled the few scanty tufts of withered vegetation. The stillness of death pervaded a desolate scene over which floated the treacherous mirage. Not a creature moved, and no sound was heard save the roar of the angry whirlwind tearing every thing before it, as it swept in reckless wrath across the encampment, eliciting while it raged among the frail mat tenements of the location—unroofing some and filling others with dust and

pebbles—a curse from the drowsy savage whose rest it had disturbed.

Suddenly a shrill cry arose in the distance, the well-known tocsin for the assembly of the men-at-arms. Electrical in its effect, every slumberer started to his feet, and each hut, which had for hours been silent as the tomb, poured forth its warrior, armed and ready for the fight. On the verge of the plain was descried a band of the Alla Galla driving off a troop of camels, and with the points of their spears goading the awkward animals to a grotesque gallop. Their remoteness, and the unnatural speed to which they had been urged, imparted, through the medium of the mirage, the appearance of dismembered animals flying in portions through the deceptive atmosphere. Now a head attached to a long neck was separated from the body, and elevated many feet above its proper place; and now animated legs of exaggerated length could alone be perceived flitting fast over the sultry desert. Unattached tails danced in the quivering vapour, and the entire distance was alive with fragments of men and dromedaries, which seemed to have been hurled through the air by the bursting of an exploded mine.

Galla and Wóema, pursuer and pursued, scoured for some hours over the sandy waste; and it was near sunset when the pagan marauders were overtaken on the confines of their own territories. A sharp conflict ensued; and two on each side having fallen, the booty was retaken, and the unbelievers put to flight by the sons of the Faithful.

From the door of her father’s wigwam Aylia watched with inward misgivings the return of the victors; and as she saw the bodies of the fallen borne upon the

shoulders of their comrades, her young heart throbbed audibly, for her newly-wedded husband was one of those who had gone forth. As her straining gaze fell upon the still gory corse of him she loved, a flood of hot tears dimmed her lustrous eyes, and uttering a piercing shriek, she sank senseless at the threshold. Roused again to life, the bereaved girl filled the hut with her doleful cries, and shriek succeeded shriek as she bewailed her fallen condition. Death would indeed have been almost preferable to the lot accorded by her destiny. The property brought at his marriage by the deceased was resumed by his grasping relatives, and the late light-hearted wife became once again a slave under the roof of her avaricious parent, there to lead a life of drudgery until another wealthy suitor should pay the dower fixed upon her charms. But the light elastic step was gone, by which Aylia had erst been distinguished above all the Wóema maidens. The full black orbs had lost their wonted lustre, and the radiant smile no longer beamed over her faded features. The orphan pledge of her first love clung to a widowed breast, and the heart that beat beneath was broken by the untimely fate of the brave youth Ambeesa.

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Three.

The One-Eyed Family. Háo, and first Glimpse of the Háwash.

The Arab chieftain of the Foudthli, of whom flying parties still infest the deserts of Aden, is renowned for the possession of two thumbs upon the dexter hand—a proud distinction by which his ancestors have been recognised from time immemorial. Sheïkh Oomer Buttoo ibn Ali, akil of the Tukhaïel, who occupy the country from the oasis of Yoor Eraïn Mároo to Háo, a few miles eastward of the Háwash, glories in the loss of the sinister eye; and he is reputed to have forfeited it by an hereditary visitation, which through every generation has disfigured his ancestors in like manner—no single head of the illustrious line having been known to possess two eyes! This venerable Polyphemus visited the camp after dark, attended by his hopeful son and heir, who has already qualified for the succession; and after receiving each a piece of blue calico in the clandestine manner which these savages prefer to a more orthodox public presentation, they slunk away, well satisfied with their booty.

A group of slatternly females belonging to the Ittoo Galla had sauntered carelessly into camp with ox-hides for sale, and tobacco, the produce of their own high lulls; and their abrupt departure as the evening shades drew on, had led to suspicions anent the object of their visit. At the going down of the sun therefore a caution was promulgated by the Ras, enjoining a vigilant look out for Galla and wild beasts;

and his earnestness might almost have led to the anticipation of a rush of wild equestrians through the encampment, or a charge of hungry lions from the adjacent gloomy thicket, before the termination of the first watch. But the cry of “wolf!” had been too often dinned into every ear; and although both elders and escort had sworn that this night at least should be one of wakefulness, no surprise was elicited by the disappearance of their bushy heads, one after the other, beneath the mats—an example which was speedily followed by all the Europeans off duty, as the rain began again to tumble in torrents,

“Et veterem in limo ranae cecinere querelam.”

The fear of attracting the “Buddoo,” as the much-dreaded marauders of every class were generically designated, still invariably brought an order which there was no gainsaying, to strike and pack the tent before sunset, however threatening the aspect of the weather. But the despotism of the Ras was light in comparison with the tyranny exercised by his unaccommodating train. At whatever hour of the night the arbitrary mandate to load might be promulgated, it was required that the bedding of the whole party should forthwith be delivered at the quarters of the arrogant driver to whom it pertained, since he declined making his camel walk to the spot. Moreover the delay of a few minutes was sufficient to condemn it to be left on the ground, notwithstanding that preparations often occupied two hours, which might as well have been devoted to rest; and this wanton curtailment of sleep was doubly felt after the heavy nocturnal duty that devolved upon all.

The route on the 9th led across the flat of Halik-diggi Kabír, a continuation of the Moolu plain, extending

from the Azbóti and Ittoo ranges to the mountains Aiúlloo and Abida. Twelve miles in breadth, it presents one monotonous alluvial level, treeless, but thickly covered with grass, interspersed with dwarf shrubs, and enlivened by herds of the elegant *mhorr*, amongst which the secretary bird occasionally strutted in native dignity. Baézas and zebras, too, were descried on the hills which bound the flat; and a luckless leopard being detected in the act of stealing across the expanse, the savage group pursued like demons from every quarter, and having presently hooted and hunted the terrified animal into a bush, transfixed his carcass incontinently with thirty spears.

The whole landscape was alive during this animated scene, which scarcely occupied a minute; and in due process of time the panting warriors rejoined the caravan, their necks, spears, and shields adorned with strips of the victim's tail, whilst he who by dint of superior wind and fleetness had drawn the first blood, was by his comrades publicly invested with the spotted spoils that he had won. The appearance of the party on their return, accompanied by a stray horseman who had fortuitously joined in the chase, gave birth in the bosom of the Ras to an apprehension that the Ittoo Galla were descending upon the caravan. The ranks were accordingly closed, and the Europeans again took post on the flank to be assailed, until a nearer approach revealed in the savage band the features of friends.

A descent of thirty feet over a narrow tongue of land, led into the valley of Halik-diggi Zúghir, styled by the Adaïel the Great Háwash—its breadth being about two and a half miles, and the bed a perfect level, covered with fine grass, on which grazed a troop of wild asses. Bounded throughout the serpentine

progress by parallel banks of corresponding height and appearance, the hollow would seem to extend from the mountains of the Ittoo Galla north to the Aiúlloo volcano. It wears the aspect of having been once the channel of a considerable stream—that of the Háwash perhaps, which river may not improbably have been diverted into its present course at the period when the extensive volcanic tract around Mount Abida was in a state of activity, and when subterranean influence must have caused extraordinary revolutions in the entire aspect of the country.

Here occurred the last specimen seen of the Kurbéta, the myrrh-bearing tree (Balsamodendron Myrrha), of which two varieties are found abundantly over all the barren hill-sides, from the Doomi valley to the borders of the Háwash. That producing the better description of the gum resin, is a dwarf shrub, with deeply serrated crisp leaves of a dull green; whereas the other, yielding a substance more like balm than myrrh, attains a height of ten feet, and has bright shining leaves. From any bruise or incision inflicted, the "*hofali*" flows copiously in the form of a milky juice, possessing a perceptible acidity, which either evaporates or becomes chemically changed when the gum forms. Left ungathered, it becomes hard with the loss of the volatile oil, and thus crumbles away; but if the wound be cleared frequently, a very large quantity may be collected during the seasons, which occur in January when the buds appear after the first rain, and again when the seeds are ripe, in March.

Three ounces of the finest myrrh and one of dross, may thus be obtained during the year, and the secreting vessels lying immediately under the epidermis, a very slight bend in a branch makes it

flow freely. The wandering shepherds either tear off one of the lower limbs, or so bruise the stem with a heavy stone as to retard the growth of the tree; but every new sprout is spontaneously covered with gum, although in a somewhat more fluid state. Repeated injuries in the same spot lead to the formation of an ever-filling cavity, and

"The mirrhe sweete bleeding in the bitter wounde,"

is transferred by each passer-by to the hollow boss of his shield, to be exchanged for a handful of tobacco with the next slave-dealer met on the caravan road. But the Danákil are not altogether ignorant of the virtues of the drug, and invariably recommended it for those of the horses that were unable to proceed from heat and exhaustion.

It has been seen that from Yoor Eraïn Mároo, an accession to the escort was received in the person of the hopeful son of Datah Mohammad, co-chief of the Sidi Hábroo. This insatiable vagabond, a worthy scion of his stock, had received from the hand of Nature an aspect that could only have belonged to a finished cut-throat. Deeply scarred with the small-pox, his bloated half-shaven muzzle peered through a tangled web of grease-clotted hair, like a drowsy owl out of an ivy bush. He presented a truly striking picture of man in the natural state. Although never without a new quid in his mouth, and another half masticated behind either ear, he passed hours of each day in importuning for more "*timboo*" of which he was the most passionate admirer; and it was his undeviating rule never to pass a white face without repeating in an authoritative tone the trisyllable "*Irreboot*" in token of his determination to add still farther to his stock in hand of yam-needles, which

already outnumbered the quills of the porcupine.

Firmly persuaded that every mule with the party had been purchased for his especial riding, and equally convinced that his presence was indispensable to the general safety, he appropriated the very first that came within his reach, changing it as often as he thought proper, and never leaving it without a galled back. If not a professor of equitation, he was at all events devoted to the science, and it was with a fiendish scowl indeed that while crossing Halik-diggi Zughír he received an order to dismount from a steed which he had selected out of the drove for the purpose of riding down an oryx. "*Tuwwaddee*!" "attend," he mumbled sulkily as he thrust away the animal with the butt of his spear,—"*Tuwwaddee*! I am a great man's son, and have no intention of walking. If I am not to have a horse, you may even settle as best you can with my father's Bedouins."

Mules, horses, and camels, in considerable numbers, were abandoned before the termination of this tedious and sultry march—fatigue, want of water, and lack of forage, having reduced all to such positive skeletons that they walked with difficulty. Ascending three successive terraces, each of fifty feet elevation, the road finally wound into the confined and waterless valley of Háo, famous for the number of parties that have at various times been surprised and cut up by the neighbouring Galla—

> "For, with hot rapine fir'd, ensuiguin'd man
> Is here become the lion of the plain,
> And worse."

Not a month had elapsed since three ill-starred individuals of a Tajúra caravan, impatient to satisfy

burning thirst, hurrying in advance of the main body, were cut off by a band of Galla horsemen, who had lain concealed behind the rocks immediately above the present encamping ground, and who, after mutilating the bodies, bore off their barbarous trophies in triumph. The dale hard by had only two nights previously to the arrival of the present party, formed the scene of a skirmish between the Ittoo and the inhabitants of the plain, when the bodies of twenty of the former and nine of the latter were left to the vultures and hyaenas. Every hill and valley in this direction could, in fact, tell its individual tale of bloodshed and slaughter. The wild barbarians keep a constant look out to pounce upon any wanderers weaker than themselves, and few are the natives to be seen who bear not on their persons some indelible mark of hand to hand combat.

Fatigued by the long march, the Danákil were all fast asleep within their temporary sheds, a few of the drivers excepted, who tended their browsing camels among the adjacent thorns. In an instant the whole valley rang with the cry to assemble at arms, and inconceivable was the confusion that ensued. Many of the escort, only half awake, in rushing forth overthrew portions of their dens upon others who were still inside. Warrior clashed against warrior, shield against shield. The rocky hill-side was presently a living mass of half-clad savages, panting up the steep acclivity, when a few Galla scouts, whose sudden appearance on the plain had caused the alarm, were perceived mounting their steeds; and, understanding themselves to be the objects of these warlike preparations, they precipitately sped their way.

From the summit of the height was obtained an

exhilarating prospect over the dark lone valley of the long-looked-for Háwash. The course of the shining river was marked by a dense belt of trees and verdure, which stretches towards the base of the great mountain range, whereof the cloud-capped cone that frowns over the capital of Shoa forms the most conspicuous feature. Although still far distant, the ultimate destination of the Embassy seemed almost to have been gained; and none had an idea of the length of time that must elapse ere his foot should press the soil of Ankóber. A day of intense heat was as usual followed by a heavy fall of rain, which, owing to the unaccommodating arrangement again peremptorily exacted, of striking the tent at sunset, thoroughly drenched the whole party; but before finally drawing the mat over his sleepy head, the Ras el Káfilah mounted a cone which stood in the centre of the compact circle, and proclaimed in a loud voice to all, a night of light sleep and watchfulness.

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Four.

Passage of the Háwash.

Numerous were the apprehensions now in agitation relative to the state of the formidable river in advance, whose shallow stream so easily forded during the season of drought, was not unreasonably conjectured to be swollen by the recent rains. Second of the rivers of Abyssinia, and rising in the very heart of Ethiopia, at an elevation of eight thousand feet above the sea, which it never reaches, the Háwash is fed at long intervals by niggard tributaries from the high bulwarks of Shoa and Efát, and flows like a

great artery through the arid and inhospitable plains of the Adaïel, green and wooded throughout its long course, until finally absorbed in the lagoons at Aussa; and the canopy of fleecy clouds, which, as the day dawned, hung thick and heavy over the lofty blue peaks beyond, gave sad presage of the deluge that was pouring between the verdant banks from the higher regions of its source.

Passing along the face of the murderous hill, which is of wacke formation, the road descended by several sloping terraces, to the level valley through which the river winds. At first thinly wooded, the soil was covered with tall rank grass, which, in consequence of the perpetual incursions of the Galla, grew in all its native luxuriance, uncropped whether by flock or herd. But as the path wound on, gum-bearing acacias and other forest trees increased both in size and number—the jungle and undergrowth, teeming with guinea-fowl, which rose clamorously at every step, waxed thicker and thicker—groves of waving tamarisk, ringing to the voice of the bell-bird, flanked every open glade, whereon lay traces of recent inundation; and the noble trees which towered above them from the banks of the Háwash, gave evidence in their shattered branches of the presence of the most ponderous of terrestrial mammalia.

Vegetation having here assumed a luxuriance known to none of the joyless and unproductive regions hitherto traversed, it is with some difficulty that the pilgrim, anxious to behold the rare phenomenon of a running stream, forces his way through the dense thickets, which, until the foot touches the very brink of the precipitous bank, so completely screen the silent river from view, that its very existence might almost be questioned. But after a persevering struggle,

further progress was at length arrested by a deep volume of turbid water, covered with drift-wood, which rolled at the rate of some three miles an hour, between steep clayey walls twenty-five feet in height, bounding a mere break through the mud and sand. The breadth of the channel fell short of sixty yards, and the flood was not yet at its maximum; but its depth and violence, added to the broad belt of tamarisk and acacia, interlaced by large creepers and parasites, which hems in both sides, promised to offer much difficulty and delay in the coming passage. Pensive willows that drooped mournfully over the troubled current were festooned with recent drift, hanging many feet above the level of the abrupt banks; and this appearance, no less than the rubbish scattered over the borders, fully proved the assertion of the natives that the water had recently been out, to the overflowing of the adjacent flat country for many miles.

The Háwash, here upwards of two thousand two hundred feet above the ocean, forms in this direction the nominal boundary of the dominions of the King of Shoa. Izhák was therefore strongly urged to despatch a courier in advance, who might apprise His Majesty of the near approach of the British Embassy. But from some latent and sinister motive of his own, the proposal was again negatived, as it had before frequently been, upon the grounds of the dangers to be apprehended on the road. These, according to his showing, rendered it impossible for a single messenger to venture on so rash an undertaking, notwithstanding that Ahmed Mohammad, the Dankáli who had been the bearer of the letter despatched to Shoa from Tajúra, and who was still with the caravan, had so recently passed twice in safety over this

identical route.

As a measure of precaution against inundation, the camp was formed upon the summit of a small stony eminence, considerably above high water mark; and several armed Bedouins were presently lounging and prying about the tent, to the great annoyance and discomfiture of the Ras el Káfilah. “Those fellows call themselves Débeni,” he remarked, “and will not commit murder wantonly, but the villains are thieves in grain, and will steal whatsoever they can lay their hands upon. They have no business here.”

Many energetic remonstrances touching the impropriety of the obtrusion, produced not the smallest effect upon these obstinate savages; and finding that they continued to laugh him to scorn, and to set his boasted authority at defiance, the old man finally requested that a musket might be fired over their heads—a measure which quickly brought about the desired decampment. The smell of gunpowder is intolerable to every Dankáli. The bravest of the brave slide off with a growl and a sulky look, if a gun be but touched in their presence; and an unexpected discharge, as on this occasion, when a knot has collected, causes every man to start upon his feet, and, with a muttered curse, to bring his spear to the rest.

The residue of the day was devoted by the camel-drivers to the preparation of rafts for the transport of the baggage, and the working party was still at the river, when the Adaïel conch sounded to arms, and the shrill war-whoop again summoned all to the rescue. Great was the confusion that ensued, and light-footed warriors were to be seen scampering down every avenue, armed with spear and shield; but

the cry proved to have been raised in consequence of a disaster that had befallen one of the camels. Too lazy to loosen the cord which fettered the fore legs of the animal, the stupid owner had driven it, thus crippled, down the steep slippery bank to the water's edge, when, as might have been anticipated, it was swept away by the strong current, without being able to make one struggle for extrication.

At sun-down the caravan was closely-packed within a stout thorn fence, serving as a partial protection against the wild beasts and plunderers with which the dense thicket is infested—its endless depths being so entangled and interwoven that no eye could penetrate the gloom. The moonless night was passed in extreme discomfort, owing to a deluge of rain which commenced early, and fell incessantly for many hours. Deafening thunder pealed in startling claps overhead, and broad sheets of fire lighting up the entire face of the landscape at short intervals, for a moment only disclosed the savage loneliness of the wild spot, which was the next instant shrouded in pitchy darkness.

With the dawning day, preparations were commenced for crossing the river on ten frail rafts which had already been launched—transverse layers of drift-wood rudely-lashed together, being rendered sufficiently buoyant by the addition of numerous inflated hides and water-skins, to support two camel loads. The sharp creeses of the Danákil had removed many of the overtopping boughs, interlaced with creepers, which impeded transit towards the point selected for the passage, and in the course of a few hours every portion of the baggage had been deposited at the water's edge.

Casting off his garments, Mohammad Ali, always the foremost in cases of difficulty and danger, now seized the end of a rope betwixt his teeth, and, plunging into the river, swam with it to the opposite bank, where it was belayed, upon the principle of the flying bridge, to an overhanging willow—a guy which connected it with each raft serving to counteract the violence of the stream, which, in spite of the heavy rain, had fallen upwards of a foot during the night. Raiment was now discarded by every Dankáli, and the work commenced in right earnest, but difficult and laborious indeed was the task before them. The water trickled over their greasy limbs until a late hour of the evening, and the utmost exertions only succeeded in accomplishing the transfer of the endless train to the western bank before nightfall, with the loss of three beasts of burden drowned, and sundry firelocks sunk to the bottom.

This latter disaster arose from the spontaneous going to pieces of one of the rudely-lashed rafts, when one of the clumsy followers became entangled in the wreck, and but for the exertions of the son of Ali Abi would inevitably have been lost. The fair Hásseinee was amongst those who were thus cast away in the middle of the deep waters; but hers was not the person to sink, and floating like a Naiad on the surface, with long raven locks streaming over her fat shoulders, the nymph appeared to be in her native element, and was soon shaking her wet petticoat on the opposite shore.

The baggage being of necessity divided, and the whole of the native escort as well as the camel-drivers employed in loading and navigating the rafts, it was deemed prudent, in addition to an ostentatious display of rifles on both sides, to make liberal

disbursements of blue calico, in order to purchase the neutrality of the Bedouins, who infest the borders of the river. On the division of the party, some of the Adaïel females being separated from their lords, a characteristic trait of Ibrahim Shehém Abli was elicited by the proposal for solution of the old riddle of the three jealous husbands, with their wives, who found on the banks of a rapid stream which they were desirous of crossing, a boat that would contain only three persons, whereas each felt unwilling to abandon his fair partner to the mercy of the other. After puzzling for some time without being able to arrange the transit in a satisfactory manner, "*Murhabba*!" he exclaimed; "had I been one of that same party, I should soon have settled the difficulty by cutting the throats of the two jealous rascals, and taking all their women to myself."

The stream of the Háwash being exceedingly thick and troubled, from the distance it had rolled betwixt clayey banks, it was with much satisfaction that a pond of wholesome water, styled *Dubbélli*, was discovered, divided from the river by a narrow wooded neck of land, one hundred and fifty yards across. Steep shelving walls strewed with shells and the *reliquiae* of hippopotami, environed this singular basin, which appeared to be fathomless, and to measure a mile and a half in circumference. Lofty trees, in a wintry dress, cast their deep shadow over the brink; and whilst the stems of many were partially immersed, the leafless branches of some were loaded with storks' nests, and the shattered limbs of others presented tokens of the giant strength of the elephant, no less than of the terrible wrath of lightning and storm.

Corresponding tongues abutting from the opposite

banks, divide the expanse into two equal bays. A group of wild Bedouins watered their camels on the shore, and in the centre Behemoth rolled his unwieldy carcase to the surface amid floating crocodiles—protruding his droll snout, which glistened in slimy ugliness, to blow ever and anon a snort that might be heard at the distance of a mile. A two-ounce ball, duly hardened with antimony, took effect in the skull of one of the boldest with a crash that was not to be mistaken; but although the monster went down, leaving a gallon of blood to denote the disaster that had befallen him, he had temporarily disappeared; and by the incredulous Danákil the assurance was received with a sneering shake of the head that his carcass must infallibly be found floating in the morning.

Much difficulty had been experienced in bringing the horses and mules across the river, and one obstinate donkey, but too well aware of its inability to swim, having pointedly refused to take the water, was towed over by main strength at the end of a rope. Inflated skins kept the animal afloat; but the stubborn head sinking below the surface, the poor beast landed with sides distended almost to bursting by too copious draughts of muddy water. His master, an aged washerman from Hindostan, loving Neddy as the apple of his eye, in the simplicity of his old heart, adopted the prescription of some wag who had facetiously recommended suspension by the heels, in order to try the ancient discipline of the Humane Society for the recovery of drowned mortals. A fit of apoplexy was the result, and the donkey expired under the lancet.

Followed by the lamentations of the disconsolate owner, the carcass was dragged some twenty yards

beyond the limits of the encamping ground; and no sooner had the dark night thrown a shroud over it, than the foul scavengers of the forest assembled in numbers round the prey, and regardless of a blazing watch-fire that had been kindled to avert the visits of the monarch of the wilderness, commenced their revels with the demoniacal laugh indicative of a right happy mood. Whilst the rain descended in pitiless torrents, a continual chuckle of the highest merriment, which ran through all the various notes of a clear throat, resounded afar amid the crunching of bones and munching of flesh—a deeper growl from some larger beast of prey, now and then varying the infernal harmony, to be followed by another ringing laugh as of a whole legion of devils. Vivid flashes of lightning played over the scene of this midnight carnival; the violent snapping of branches in the adjacent forest proclaimed the nocturnal foray of the elephant and hippopotamus; the loud roar and the startling snort were neither wanting to complete the concert of the wild Háwash, and long ere the morning dawned, the place of the carcass knew it not, every vestige, even to the skull, having found a sepulchre in the maw of “the laughing hyaena.”

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Five.

Wadi Azbóti. Arrival of a Spy from the Abyssinian Mountains.

“The Robi is *not* dead,” was the first falsehood that greeted the ear when daylight had returned. To have told the truth on this occasion must have redounded to the personal advantage of the informant, but he

had nobly upheld the national character at the sacrifice of a handful of his much-loved tobacco. Repairing to the margin of the lake, the freckled pink sides of a defunct hippopotamus were to be seen high above the surface, as the distended carcass floated like a monstrous buoy at anchor. It had become entangled among the tall tamarisks that rose through the shallow water near the brink, but hawsers were carried out with all diligence, and with the aid of the rudder-like tail, the Colossus was towed to shore, and landed among the mud under the acclamations of the assembled caravan.

"Where the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together." A formidable band of "Bones" were already squatted at a respectful distance, to watch the progress of events, and no sooner had the teeth been hewn out than they laid aside their bows and quivers, and having stripped the thick hide from off the ribs, attacked the mountain of flesh with the vigour of a South African horde. Donkeys and women were laden with incredible despatch, and staggering under huge flaps of meat, the archers had soon left the scene of operations. Two reservoirs, each lying at the distance of a musket shot, had meanwhile been visited—the one a sulphuric basin of considerable extent, the other a vast sheet of water, embosomed in trees, dotted over with wood-clothed islets, and teeming with hippopotami. But this was neutral ground; and the fears of the Danákil conjuring into existence a host of lurking foes, the period allowed for investigation was brief.

Bidding adieu with light hearts to the muddy Háwash, the party resumed its march so soon as the camel furniture had become sufficiently dry; and skirting the Dubbélli lake, from the waters of which Behemoth

blew a parting salute, passed the Bedouin hamlet of Mulku-kúyu in the Dófah district, to a fourth pond bearing the euphonous title of Ailabello. Prettily situated in a secluded green hollow, and presenting about the same circumference as its neighbour, below which it is considerably depressed, this pool resembles a circular walled cistern, and is obviously the basin of an old crater. Its waters, alkaline, bitter, and strongly sulphureous even to the smell, receive constant accessions from a hot mineral well at the brink, and possessing the singular detergent property of bleaching the filthiest cloth, many of the Danákil were for once to be seen in flaunting white togas. Thence the road lay over a grassy plain, covered with volcanic sand and ashes, and shut in by cones of trivial altitude, forming another field of extinct craters, many very perfect, and each environed by its individual zone—whilst the circumjacent country, embracing a diameter of eight miles, exhibited through the superincumbent soil, tracts of jet black lava.

Apprehensions being entertained of the non-existence of pools at the station suited for the encampment, still some miles in advance, a détour was made from the main road to Ado, “the White Water,” a very extensive lake, at which the skins were replenished and the thirst of the animals slaked. A belt of high acacia jungle embosomed this noble expanse, which exceeded two miles in diameter, the glassy surface in parts verdant with sheets of the lotus in full flower, and literally covered with aquatic fowls. Geese, mallard, whistling teal, herons, and flamingoes, with a new species of the *parra*, were screaming in all directions as they winged their flight from the point invaded, where a party of Bedouin

shepherdesses deposed to having seen a troop of elephants bathing not half an hour before—the numerous prints of their colossal feet remaining in testimony, sunk fresh and heavy on the moist sands.

Prior to crossing the Háwash, the only sheep observed were the *Ovis aries laticaudata*, or Hejáz lamb, with sable head and neck, thick fatty tail, and fleece composed of hair instead of wool. This species had now, to the westward of the river, given place to the larger Abyssinian breed, with huge pendulous appendages of truly preposterous size, encumbered with fat, and vibrating to the animal's progress. Parti-coloured goats, armed with long wrinkled horns, still diversified the flocks, which were uniformly attended by small dogs with foxlike heads, spotted yellow and white, and evidently high in favour with their dark mistresses.

Several of these females wore around the neck large tinkling brazen bells, borrowed from the collar of an Abyssinian mule, and forming a very suitable accompaniment to the massive fabrications of pewter and copper which loaded their ears. Their long black tresses were braided into an infinity of streamers, each resembling the lash of a schoolboy's whip, and various most ingenious tattooed devices scarred their arms, temples, and bosoms. By the beaux of the caravan, unqualified homage was paid to certain coquettes, who carried milk jars curiously wrought of palm leaves, and studded with manifold cowrie shells. To the backs of sundry weird harridans were strapped skins containing sour curds, which attracted flies in the tens of millions usually seen around the molasses at a Banian's stall. No attempt was made to disturb those that clustered in their blear-inflamed eyes; and the swarms collected about the wrinkled

comers of the mouth, were only put to flight when the hand was applied to second the wonted exclamation of surprise at the appearance of a white face, "*Nubbee Mohammadoo*!"

Numerous wigwams peeped through the extensive forest of aged camel-thorns, which borders on Lé Ado, and eventually debouches upon a succession of barren plains covered with herds of antelope. Two rough stone enclosures by the wayside were surmounted by poles, from which dangled the heads of as many lions, dilapidated by time, although still enveloped in the skin, and said to have been speared on this spot many years before by the Bedouins, who exalted these trophies in commemoration of the deed.

Immediately beyond this point lay the encamping ground at Wady Azbóti, where numerous shallow pools had been filled by the recent rain, but where the ill-starred cattle were compelled to content themselves with water only, not a vestige of grass or green herb remaining in the vicinity. It had, in feet, now become a proverb, that these two essential materials to existence could never be found in the Adel wilderness in one and the same place. Vast flights of locusts, which had assisted to lay the country bare, still carrying desolation in their progress, were shaping their destructive course towards Abyssinia. They quite darkened the air at the moment that the caravan halted; and a host of voracious adjutants wheeled high above the dense cloud, at one moment bursting with meteor-like velocity through the serried phalanx, and at the next stalking over the field to fill their capacious maws with the victims which their long scythe-fashioned pinions had swept incontinently from the sky.

The groves around Azbóti afforded a welcome supply of bustard, partridges, and guinea-fowl, together with the mhorr, and pigmy antelope; and on the return of the heavily-loaded Nimrods to the tent, infinite diversion was found in the horror depicted on the physiognomy of the warlike leader of the Hy Somauli band, whose old fashioned bob wig, quaint gait, and antiquated comicalities, had justly invested him with the sobriquet of “Doctor Syntax.” The professor of natural history was as usual busily engaged in the preparation of cabinet specimens, when the old oddity advanced to see what was going on; and as the bodies of beetles and locusts were subjected to the process of toasting over the fire, his droll features were distorted by lines which revealed plainly enough an inward conviction entertained, that the operation was none other than culinary, and that the hideous insects were to be eaten.

But the war-whoop, without which few days ever drew to a close, had aroused the doctor from his cogitations; and at the head of his men he was presently in hot pursuit of a band of ruffians, who had cleverly contrived to drive off a camel pertaining to the káfilah. Returning with the booty after a long chase, the exploit was celebrated by the war-dance, which for an hour kept the camp in a fierce uproar. Formed in a circle, the excited warriors crouched low to the ground as they stomped *vis-à-vis*, and howled with the utmost fury. Then rising with one accord, they brandished their spears aloft, and vaulted frantically in the air through a maze of intricate figures. Next arrayed in line, a brave sprung ever and anon to the front, and striding up and down with mincing gait, went through strange gesticulations and contortions, as he recited the prowess of the dan,

and urged it to future deeds of valour—the clash of spear and shield responding at every pause, whilst the wild chorus pealed along the ranks. Confusion now ensued: the band was engaged in a pantomimic conflict. Savage after savage, rolling his eyeballs, sprang panther-like across the loins of his nearest neighbour, and clinging fast with his beds, tightly clasped his erect opponent with the muscles of his legs. Creeses flashed brightly in the air; mock wounds were inflicted, and the form of dividing the windpipe having been duly gone through, long and loud arose, with the renewed dance, triumphant strains of "*Awey birooah! awey birooah*!" "I have slain my foe! I have slain my foe!"

Towards the close of the day, which was hot and muggy under the steam that arose from the saturated soil, a Bedouin rode consequentially into camp, and, after making his observations, departed even as he had come, without deigning an explanation of any sort. Attention was particularly attracted to this prying stranger, from the circumstance of his grey steed being branded on flank and wither with the Ethiopian sign of the cross. Delivering no message, although he was conjectured to be a retainer of Wulásma Mohammad, the Abogáz or *custos* of the frontier of Efát, whose post was now not distant more than twenty miles, the mysterious demeanour of this spy did not fail to strengthen a report, which had long been in circulation among the mischievous Danákil that at the court of Shoa, the British were far from being regarded in the light of welcome visitors, and further, that an armed party was in readiness to oppose entrance into the kingdom—a rumour which, however improbable, was unfortunately further supported by the extraordinary and unaccountable

fact of no sort of recognition having, up to this period, been vouchsafed by His Most Gracious Majesty the King.

Rising tier above tier to the supremely soaring peak of Mamrat, “the Mother of Grace,” with her domed head ever canopied in clouds, the lofty mountains which fortify the royal dominions now shot like giant castles from the sandy plain, the most conspicuous features in the landscape. Volcanic impediments, such as had beset the heretofore weary path, had at length finally ceased, but the glowing sulphur lulls of Sullála reared their fantastic spires on the verge of the monotonous expanse; and high among the more venerable witnesses to the history of the troubled lowlands, the position of Ankóber was discernible to the naked eye, with the steep Cháka range stretching beyond at still greater elevation. The luxuriant verdure which clothed the rugged sides of the nearer slopes, whilst it contrasted strongly with the aridity of the barren tracts at their base, indicated the presence of the autumnal rains; and hereof further evidence was afforded in the low grumbling of frequent thunder, echoing like distant artillery among the serrated summits, as the heavy black clouds at intervals drew their smoky mantle across the scene, and veiled the monsters from sight.

The departure of the silent spy was followed by the arrival of a most boisterous visitor from the highlands. The hazy sun, shorn of his bright beams, and looming a dull fiery globe in the dense mist, had no sooner disappeared in wrath, than a furious whirlwind tore along the desert plain, and during the gloomy twilight, the storm, which had been cradled amid the mighty mountains, descended in desolation, like an angry giant from his keep.

Black masses of cloud, rolling impetuously along the steep acclivities, settled at length over the face of the waste, for a time shrouding the very earth in its dark dank embrace, only to render more striking the contrast to the dazzling light which in another moment had succeeded. Brilliant corruscations blazed and scintillated in every quarter of the fervid heavens, hissing and spluttering through the heavy fog, or darting like fiery serpents along the surface of the ground—at one instant awfully revealing the towering peaks that frowned far in the distance—at the next flashing in a hot sulphury flame through the centre of the encampment.

Meanwhile the deep roll of thunder continued without a moment's intermission, the prolonged growl of each startling clap varying ever as it receded in a fitful change of intonation; whilst the walling of the blast, accompanied by the sharp rattle of hail, and the impetuous descent of torrents of rain, completed the horrors of a tempest which, now at its height, careered madly over the unbroken plain. The soil had soon swallowed the deluge to overflowing. Muddy rivulets poured through every quarter of the flooded bivouac; and the heavy tarpaulins, which had afforded some temporary shelter, proving of little further avail, the shivering but still watchful party were exposed during many dismal hours that ensued to all the merciless fury of this unappeasable hurricane.

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Six.

Valley of Kokaï—Hostilities of Wulásma Mohammad.

A cool cloudy morning succeeding to this dreary, boisterous and uncomfortable night, the caravan was in motion before sunrise across the uninteresting plain of Azbóti, in parts completely swamped, and covered towards its borders with one interminable sheet of the aloë and *lilium*, growing beneath spreading acacias upon a gravelly soil. Then commenced a belt of hummocks, formed by prominences abutting from the high land of Abyssinia —a succession of hill and dale, thickly-wooded with a variety of timber, and still clothed with an undergrowth of the wild aloë, through which wary herds of Baéza threaded their way. The road soon entered the pebbly bed of a mountain stream, running easterly between precipitous basaltic cliffs towards the Háwash; but although such torrents of rain had fallen the preceding night, no water was discovered in the wooded wady of Kokaï, until reaching Dathára, nearly thirteen miles from the last encampment, where the party partook of the first crystal brook that had occurred during the entire weary journey from the sea-coast.

Three thousand feet above the ocean, with an invigorating, breeze and a cloudy sky, the climate of this principal pass into Southern Abyssinia, was that of a fine summer's day in England, rather than of the middle of July between the tropics. Here for the first time during the pilgrimage, the tent was erected under the shade of a wide-spreading tamarind, which, among many other trees of noble growth, graced the sequestered spot. Above the surrounding foliage the long white roofs of many of the royal magazines were visible, perched high on the blue mountain side. In the forked branches overhead were piled haystack-looking nests of gigantic dimensions,

thatched with every attention to neatness and comfort —the small aperture left by the feathered architect turned in every instance to the eastward, and carefully secured from the weather; and perched on every twig, an assemblage of strange birds displayed their gay glittering plumage, or filled the cool air with melodious song.

But from the summit of an adjacent basaltic knoll, which was ascended towards the close of day, there burst upon the delighted gaze a prospect more than ever alluring of the Abyssinian Alps. Hill rose above hill, clothed in the most luxuriant and vigorous vegetation. Mountain towered over mountain in a smiling chaos of disorder; and the soaring peaks of the most remote range threw their hoary heads, sparkling with a white mantle of hail, far into the cold azure sky. Villages and hamlets embosomed in dark groves of evergreens were grouped in Arcadian repose. Rich fields of every hue chequered the deep lone valley; and the sun, bidding a diurnal farewell to his much-loved plains of the east, shot a last stream of golden light, varied as the hues of the Iris, over the mingled beauties of wild woodland scenery, and the labours of the Christian husbandman.

No delegate with greetings from the Negoos awaiting the British Embassy, and the frontier town of Fárri, where caravans are received by His Majesty's officers, being now only five miles distant, a letter was prepared, of which Mohammad Ali volunteered to be the bearer. In signifying gracious acquiescence to this arrangement, the Ras el Káfilah gravely intimated that the escort of Hy Somauli spearmen, famished at Killulloo by Ibrahim ibn Hámeïdo, declined permitting the departure of the son of Ali Abi, until they should have received the sum at which

they were pleased to estimate their services. Little reason existing to be satisfied with the vigilance of this band of warriors, not one of the component members whereof, Doctor Syntax inclusive, had adopted the plan proposed by the poet for lengthening the days of existence by stealing a few hours from the night, compliance to the full extent of the exorbitant demand had previously been evaded. But as Izhák, in whom the truth was not, now falsely asserted and maintained that the Akil had taken his personal security for the sum, and as it was obviously of the last importance that arrival on the frontier should be timely reported, the money was reluctantly paid, and the courier set forth on his journey.

Rain was again ushering in the early hours of the night, when the unpleasant intelligence arrived that a certain Wulásma Mohammad was the delinquent, and that he had contrived effectually to thwart the intentions of his royal master. The king had commanded that his British visitors should be received on the western bank of the Háwash by an escort of honour. Under the commander-in-chief of the body-guard, three hundred matchlock-men had been for this purpose detached from the troops on service with His Majesty, and had actually reached Fárri, whence the jealous Moslem had dared to send them back upon the ridiculous pretext of being unable to obtain any tidings of the expected Franks.

This important functionary, in addition to his office of state-gaoler, is the hereditary Abogáz of the Mohammadan population of Argóbba on the east of Shoa, and the nature of his government exalts him in the eyes of all to the importance of a king. With the title of Wulásma—a word of uncertain derivation, known to Ludolf, the great historian of Abyssinia, who

styles the dignitary “Pro rex of Efát”—he possesses unbounded influence over the frontier, his immediate duties being to preserve amicable relations with the Adaïel occupying the plain of the Háwash, and to protect káfilahs and merchants arriving from the independent principality of Hurrur, or from the coast of Tajúra. His functions as keeper of the state prison secure for him the respect of all. Christians as well as Islams, who have the fear of a dungeon before their eyes; and although numerous Abogásoch or Wulásmoch, governors of small detached provinces, share his power, the name and influence of all are dim under the light that glares from his loop-holed residence at Góncho.

It is the invariable policy of the haughty Abogáz to assume the great man to all travellers, since it is generally understood that through him alone foreigners can be received and forwarded, or if necessary presented to the Negoos. This arrangement involves not only trouble, but considerable expense. His despotic Majesty claiming the prerogative of franking every visitor through his territories, and a portion of the attendant outlay falling upon the functionary who may be honoured with the royal commands.

Openly opposed to European innovation, Mohammad particularly disliked the advent of the British Embassy, and was obviously doing his utmost to thwart the more liberal views of the crown, by treating the strangers with disrespect. The imperial order that an escort of matchlock-men should for the first time cross the hill frontier, and proceed into the plain of the Háwash, to do honour to the Christian guests, not only rankled in his Moslem breast, but was calculated to interfere with his resolution to preserve inviolate

the avenues to the sea-coast. His intrigues had rendered abortive all attempts to communicate with the Court; and whilst the approach of the Embassy was not reported until its actual arrival at Dathára, his non-compliance with the order given had resulted most prejudicially, the Danákil guides being now more than ever unwilling to persuade themselves that the party would be welcome.

Preparations were making the following morning to continue the march to Fárri, when the burly functionary was seen pompously approaching with measured step, followed by a retinue of many hundred armed followers, whose shaven heads rose unturbaned above flowing white mantles. Far from announcing himself in the customary manner, he remained seated in portentous dignity, beneath the shade of a venerable tamarind by the road-side, until, every camel having been loaded, the caravan was moving off the ground. A peremptory message was then received through one of his myrmidons, to the effect that he stood strictly charged with the king's commands to suffer not one of the party to advance until the next day, and that he was prepared to enforce the interdiction. There seemed little reason to doubt of this being a premeditated falsehood, as it afterwards proved to be; but the Ras el Káfilah having heard the injunction repeated in presence of the Wulásma Suleïman Moosa, Abogáz of Chánnoo, as coming direct from His Majesty, timidly declined any infringement, and again threw down the loads.

Condescending at length in moody sullenness to approach with his host of retainers, the triumphant potentate, armed with the rosary, or chaplet of one hundred beads, which denoted his intolerant faith, squeezed his pursy figure into a chair, and composed

himself with much apparent satisfaction at the success that had attended his scheme of opposition. A debauched, ill-favoured, bloated specimen of mortality, the lines of intemperance were deeply graven on his truculent visage, which was at once cunning, sinister, and forbidding. But the party were not long troubled with his obnoxious presence. The reception he experienced, although civil, was distant and studiously formal, and the sun, beating in a full blaze upon his bald crown, rendered his position so extremely untenable, that after stiffly murmuring replies to the customary inquiries anent the health and well-being of his august master, he rose unceremoniously, and abruptly withdrew.

Throughout this brief and very unbending interview, a brawny retainer stood behind the chair, denuded to the waist. In his right hand he ostentatiously displayed the chief gaoler's sword of state—a short heavy blade upon the model of the old Roman falchion, enclosed in a scabbard of massive silver; and his left arm supported a buckler of stiff bull's hide, elaborately emblazoned with crescents and brass studs. The benevolent and prepossessing aspect of the Wulásma Suleïman Moosa, who occupied a second seat, offered a striking contrast to the repulsive arrogance of his scowling colleague. On his right side, protruding upwards with the curve of a scorpion's tail, he wore a semicircular weapon, also denominated a sword, though in fact more nearly allied to a reaping-hook—a proud badge of office, with a fluted tulip-shaped termination to the silver scabbard, which, according to the wont of the despot, had been conferred on the occasion of his first installation in office, but which ludicrously interfered with comfort in an armchair.

During the residue of the day, the conduct of the state-gaoler was perfectly in unison with his character and previous hostile proceedings. He brought the white visitors neither presents nor supplies, according to the rules of Abyssinian hospitality; and although made fully aware that the camp was drained of provisions, prevented purchases by the undue exercise of his influence and authority. A pelting rain during the night, from which his sleek person was defended by naught save the pervious branches of a tamarind, had not tended to soften the asperities, or to alleviate the sourness of his aspect, when the day dawned; and it was only on finding the party prepared to advance at the hazard of forcible opposition, that he finally yielded the point, and betwixt his closed teeth muttered his grumbling consent to an arrangement which he felt longer unable with prudence to oppose. “The English are a great nation,” whispered the nephew of Ali Shermárki, as he passed the haughty Abogáz, “and you had better take care to treat them civilly. *Wullahi*! one of their ships of war would carry this káfilah over the water, and you and all your host of followers into the bargain.”

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Seven.

Dinómali. Greetings from the Negoos at Fárri, on the Frontier of his Dominions.

Gradually ascending through a hilly and well-wooded country, still a positive garden of the wild aloe, the road now led through a succession of deep glades, which opened in turn upon verdant mountain

scenery; and at on early hour, after the first signs of cultivation had been afforded in the truly grateful sight of ploughs turning up the soil, the tents were erected on the open plain of Dinómali.

At this, the frontier station of Argóbba, are levied the royal import duties of ten per cent; and a scene of noise, bustle, and confusion did not fail to ensue, such as is wont to attend the arrival of every caravan. In his character of collector-general of customs, the pompous Wulásma took seat below a tree in the centre, whilst his myrmidons, beleaguering every load the moment it was removed from the camel, prevented all access on the part of the owner until scrutinising search had been instituted by the secretary for the salt trade, and the imperial scribes had, by a tedious process denominated writing, completed an inventory of contents. From time immemorial it had been the law of the realm to regard the despotic ruler as the proprietor of every moveable in the land; and it was not without many looks of incredulity and amazement that the custom-house officers now received the astounding intimation that they would touch the baggage of the British Embassy at their peril.

Thus for the first time thwarted in their prerogative of forcing open boxes, and inspecting the wares they contained, Débtera Tekla Zion and his brother scribes were tempted to attribute the opposition offered to the truth of a vague report already current, that a foreign king was being smuggled into Abyssinia for evil. And they were still standing in mute astonishment, with idle ink-horns dangling from their hands, lost in conjecture of the probable consequences involved by the unprecedented interference exercised, when a message was

received expressive of the compliments and best wishes of Sáhela Selássie. Still at a distance from Ankóber, His Majesty had resolved, in order to hasten the interview with his guests, to proceed at once to the capital, whither the English were invited to repair with all possible expedition.

The arrival of this unlooked-for salutation, which was coupled with an affirmative answer to a request previously made, that the presents in charge of the Embassy might neither be interfered with, nor subjected to the usual custom-house scrutiny when crossing the frontier, had the effect of bringing to his senses the overbearing Wulásma; and, in accordance with the king's instructions, oxen, sheep, bread, beer, and hydromel were liberally supplied without another moment's demur. But a fresh source of delay and annoyance forthwith arose on the part of the Ras el Káfilah, whose latent object being to transfer the charge of Danákil caravans from the hands of the corpulent and now civil gaoler to those of Wulásma Suleïman Moosa, made the acceptance of supplies at the hand of the former a pretext for throwing up his functions and setting out to Ankóber, exclaiming as he mounted his mule in a towering passion, for the avowed purpose of laying his complaint at the footstool of the throne, "Am not I the brother of the Sultán of Tajúra?"

But the furious elder had not proceeded far on his adventurous journey, ere his ears were saluted by repeated discharges of musketry, accompanied by martial music and a solemn vocal chorus. These served to announce the advent of Ayto Kátama, commander-in-chief of the imperial body-guard, with the escort of honour consisting of three hundred matchlock-men, who were to have received the

Embassy on the banks of the Háwash. The arrival of this important personage, whose schoolboyish sallies ill became his years and high military functions, was speedily followed by the appearance of Ayto Wolda Hána, governor of Ankóber, and first nobleman in the realm, also fraught with congratulations. His presence had the effect of recalling the irritated Ras to a sense of duty; and no efficient carriage having been provided by the Abogáz, it was finally arranged, after many difficulties, objections, and disputes, that the baggage should be transported to Fárri, other two miles in advance, where Mohammadan porters could be obtained in sufficient numbers to convey it to its final destination—the mountains in every part being deemed quite inaccessible to the camel.

Although the distance from Fárri did not exceed a mile, the lateness of the hour at which this accommodation was vouchsafed, rendered it impossible to carry the measure into effect until the following day. The governor of Ankóber meanwhile politely insisted upon charging himself with the baggage, his officious zeal extending even to the effects of private individuals, whereby much inconvenience was entailed. But notwithstanding his garrulous protestations, and the presence of so large a body of the royal troops, everything was finally left unprotected; and, before his negligence was discovered, four of the remaining mules had been stolen from their pickets by the marauders who infest the neighbourhood.

Loaded for the thirty-fifth and last time with the baggage of the British Embassy, the caravan, escorted by the detachment of Ayto Kátama, with flutes playing and muskets echoing, and the heads of the warriors decorated with white plumes, in earnest

of their bold exploits during the late expedition, advanced on the afternoon of the 16th of July, to Fárri, the frontier town of the kingdom of Efát. Clusters of conical-roofed houses, covering the sloping sides of twin hills which form a gorge wherein the royal dues are deposited, here presented the first permanent habitations that had greeted the eye since leaving the sea-coast; rude and ungainly, but right welcome signs of transition from depopulated wastes to the abodes of man.

As well from the steepness of the rugged mountains of Abyssinia, which towered overhead, as from the pinching climate of their wintry summits, the camel becomes useless as a beast of burthen; and none being ever taken beyond the frontier, many of the Wulásma's retinue now gazed at the ungainly quadrupeds for the first time. The "ship of the desert" has been created for the especial benefit of sultry, arid, and waterless plains, such as those now crossed, where no other domesticated animal could long exist, but where, even under the most scorching radiation of heat, when the skin peels from the parched lips of the pilgrim, and the horizon beams as with the fires of an hundred volcanoes, the soft lustrous eye of the patient dromedary loses not a jot of its wonted brilliancy. But numbers had been dreadfully wrung during the tedious march, those especially which carried tent-poles and other unmanageable burdens; and amongst others, two of the finest had sung under the weight of the galloper-gun. No sooner was the load now removed, than a swarm of parasitic birds, with brilliant golden eyes, here for the first time seen, swarmed around the galled part, and having dived into the gaping wounds, without causing perceptible annoyance to the

sufferer, became so engrossed in the removal of ticks and maggots with their crimson bills, that several were made prisoner with the hand.

Boxes and bales as they arrived were deposited within a stone enclosure in the centre of the area; and the bloated Wulásma, again seated in regal dignity beneath an ancient acacia, which threw its slender shade over the heterogeneous pile, placing Ayto Wolda Hána upon his right hand, with the aid of the royal scribes and their ink-horns commenced an inventory *de novo*. Vigorous attempts to force open the cases were once more resisted, with complete success. Earnest expostulations tried in turn by the Moslem and the Christian, were alike unheeded; and amid noise, clamour, and confusion, such as could ill be described, the inquisitive functionaries were fain, as before, to content themselves with a list of packages in the gross. Rough conjectural estimates of the number of muskets contained in each matted roll were however clandestinely formed, by dint of squeezing and pinching; and these too were committed to writing, as though fears were entertained lest the king might now, in his own dominions, be defrauded of a portion of the investment transported in safety thither from a distant land.

Hajji Mohammad, a respectable old slave-dealer in the suite of the Abogáz, had during this interim obligingly undertaken to solve certain puzzling geographical questions proposed, and with a staff was methodically tracing on the sand, for the edification of his European audience, the position of the Háwash in its upper course. An insane old Hássóba, long resident at Fárri, whose head laboured under the effect of sundry wounds received

in youth, had unfortunately become violently excited by too copious libations in honour of the safe arrival of his clansmen. To the annoyance of every one, he had been bawling incessantly for many hours, and he presently staggered up to ascertain if he could throw light upon the subject under discussion.

"What do you know about the Háwash?" he exclaimed, in a violent passion, as the name of the lone river fell upon his ear—"Pray where did you learn about the Háwash, or the Ittoo, or the Aroosi?"—and suiting the action to the word, his cudgel rattled heavily over the crown of the unoffending pilgrim to the shrine of the Prophet. Nettled at this unprovoked assault, the venerable man retorted with interest—blows pattered thick and fast, a crowd collected, creeses were drawn, and the friends of the respective parties felt themselves bound to interfere. The belligerent Hajji was held to prevent his committing murder; and the Adel geographer, as he walked reluctantly away, under a shower of stones, turning frequently to breathe defiance to the object of his ire, repeated with a sneer, "Here is the Háwash indeed: what the devil does that old donkey know about the Háwash?"

Meanwhile arrived a special messenger, bearing reiterated compliments from the Negoos, with a horse and a mule from the royal stud, attired in the peculiar trappings and colours which in Shoa pertain solely to Majesty. The bridles and breastplates glittered with studs and bosses of polished metal; gay embroidery in coloured worsted covered the saddle-cloth of the mule, and a collection of silver chains, jingles, and bells, encircled her neck. At sight hereof women and girls enveloped in blood-red shifts, who had thronged to the busy scene to stare at the white strangers, at

once burst into a loud scream of acclamation. A group of hooded widows, occupying an adjacent public asylum, thrust their fingers into their ears, and joined in the clamour. Escort and camel-drivers, now at their journey's end, had placed no bounds to their hilarity. A fat ox that had been promised was turned loose among the spectators—pursued by fifty savages with gleaming creeses—and ham-strung by a dexterous blow, which threw it bellowing to the earth in the height of its mad career. The rival clans of lean curs, that are respectively quartered on the dung-heaps of the twin hills, and suffer no intrusion into each other's domains, rushed to the neutral ground, and forthwith commenced an indiscriminate engagement over the garbage; and whilst Débtera Tekla Zion, still counting and recounting, amended his long list with untiring perseverance, crowds of porters and lounging visitors added the mite of their united voices to the din, tumult, and intolerable uproar which continued until close of day.

Predatory incursions of the Galla upon the Argóbba frontier are frequent, and not many weeks had passed away since six of the king's liege subjects were murdered within the precincts of the encamping ground. In defiance of tempestuous weather, two European soldiers and an officer had been on guard without shelter during every night of the long and tedious march, and the sergeant of the escort had every hour personally relieved the sentries: but the exposed position of the baggage, added to the evil character borne by the spot, and the experience already gained at Dinómali, still precluded the discontinuance of watch and ward, whereof all were heartily weary.

In the dead of night an alarm caused all to spring

from their couches on the hard ground, and to stand prepared for the reception of an unseen foe, whose approach was announced by the blast of some hideous war-horn. Halters had been broken, and mules and horses were charging over the tent ropes, nor was the real cause of the confusion discovered for some minutes. A thirsty dog, unacquainted with the artifice resorted to by the fox that needed water, had recklessly thrust his mangy head so deep into an earthen jar that he was unable to withdraw it, and rushing he knew not whither, was giving vent through his strange proboscis to fearful hollow groans, which might well have instilled terror into the breast of the superstitious, and did not fail to elicit ceaseless howls from the canine occupants of the dunghill.

The delinquent was shot, and order being at length restored, those who were entitled to slumber again proceeded to avail themselves of the privilege. After pacing his beat some hours beyond the wonted period of relief, the sentinel who mounted at midnight hailed the officer on duty. Receiving no reply to the challenge, he approached the door of the tent, and there, sad to relate, the first breach of discipline was detected on the part of the guardian of the camp, who, worn out by incessant vigils, was on this, his last watch, lying fast asleep upon his post, with a pistol in each hand!

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Eight.

A Parting Tribute of Gratitude Inscribed to the People of Adel.

Tradition asserts that prior to the invasion of Graan, “the mighty Adel monarch,” who overran and dismembered once-powerful Ethiopia, the eastern limit of the empire was Jebel Aiúlloo, known to the Abyssinians as Mount Azulo. But although frequently invaded, no portion of the wide plain of the Háwash has been reconquered, whether by Sáhela Selássie, or by his ancestors. The relatives of certain of those in authority have been made prisoners by treachery, and as hostages are held in close durance by the king, but the boasted influence of the Abogáz is principally supported by conciliation, and by the annual presentation of cloths and specie to the various chiefs and elders—a measure having for its object to preserve the avenues to the sea-coast and to the Bahr Assál, whereon Shoa and Efát are almost entirely dependant for foreign wares, and for salt, which the country does not produce.

The powerful independent chieftain of the principal section of Gibdósa, who occupy the detached hill of Rása, across the Róbi river, northward of Dinómali, is one of those in nominal alliance with the Negoos; but his wild Moslems make constant predatory inroads upon the frontier of Argóbba, slaying Christians and Mohammadans of either sex, without any compunction; and the policy of His Majesty prohibiting retaliation, however aggravated the outrage, Anbássa Ali, or “the Lion,” who like Esau of old is said to be covered with hair from the crown of the head even unto the sole of the foot, not unfrequently makes hostile demonstrations in person, which require all the Wulásma’s tact and diplomatic cunning to avert.

From Háo, on the eastern side of the Háwash, to Fárri, the intervening tract, under the nominal

jurisdiction of Mohammad Abogáz, is in occupation of a mixed nomade population, not remarkable for their honesty, and composed from numerous subdivisions of the Danákil, but principally from the Burhánto or Adáli, under ibn Hámed deen Hássan. This latter, which takes Adaïel in the plural, is the clan of the reigning Sultán of Tajúra; and being in days of yore the most powerful and important tribe in the nation, its name has been imparted to the entire country, now corrupted into Adel.

In time of war with the adjacent Galla on the south, or when called upon to repel the predatory invasions of the Mudaïto, the tribes westward of the Háwash assemble with the Tukhaïel, the Débeni, the Derméla, the Rookhba, the Wóema, and the Hy Somauli, the extent of whose respective territories has already been defined. These, with the Abli or Dinsérra, under Mohammad Ali, surnamed Jeróa, or "the Thief," which is the tribe of Hámed Bunaïto, present wuzir and heir-apparent to the throne of Tajúra—the Adaneïto and Nakur, under Shehém Mulakoo—the Dondamétta, the Duttagóora, and the Hássóba, led respectively by Ahmed Kámil, Sheïkh Déeni, and Déeni ibn Ibrahim—collectively assume the title of Débenik-Wóema, *k* being the Dankáli conjunction.

Adalo bin Hámed, who leads a section of the Gibdósa encamped at Haódé and Dunné, occasionally unites with the Débenik-Wóema in the time of their need, but he is held virtually independent. The fourth and last section of the Débeni, under the authority of Mahmóodi, has its tents at the isolated volcanic mountain of Fantáli, southward of Dinómali, where reside also the united Adaïel clans Uluaïto, Muffa, and Eyrolásso, under the

great “brave” Lamúllifan.

These tribes occupy the whole extent of country between Abyssinia and Mirsa Raheïta, near the entrance to the Red Sea, the head-quarters of Roofa Boorhán, sheïkh of a subdivision of the Duttagóora. Thence they stretch along the coast to the south-eastward, and from Góobut el Kharáb, between the parallels, bounded on the south by the Eesah and other Somauli tribes, and flanked on the north by the Mudaïto.

The Adaïel or Danákil population, which, including the Mudaïto, extends as far as Arkeeko, entitles itself Afer, and claims to be descended from Arab invaders, who, in the seventh century of the Christian era, overran and colonised the low tract which forms a zone between the Abyssinian Alps and the coast of the Red Sea. To a certain extent the northern tribes are subject to the Nayib of Arkeeko, whose authority is recognised in much the same proportion as that of the feeble Sultán of Tajúra by the southern clans; but although speaking the same language, they can hardly be said to constitute a nation, being so widely dispersed, that for many days together not a trace of man is to be discovered over the joyless deserts which form the lot of his inheritance, scorched by an ardent sun, and alive only with “moving pillars of sand.”

From time immemorial every individual has been his own king. Each marauding community is marked by a wild independence; and the free spirit of the whole is to be traced in the rapine, discord, and bloodshed which universally prevails. Theirs is “an iron sky, and a soil of brass,” where the clouds drop little rain, and the earth yields no vegetation. It is no “land of rivers

of water," nor have the "lines fallen in pleasant places." The desert stretches far on every side, strewed with black boulders of heated lava, and enveloped by a glowing atmosphere. In this country of perfidy and vindictive ferocity, the proprietors of the barren land murder every stranger who shall intrude; and the common benefits of water are an object of perpetual contest. Reprisal and revenge form the guiding maxim of all. Monsters, not men, their savage propensities are portrayed in a dark and baleful eye, and the avenger of blood is closely dogging the footsteps of one half the population.

As laziness is the chief source of African misery at large, so is it with the Danákil in particular. They possess that "conceit in their misery" which induces them to despise the labours of the cultivator; and such is the characteristic want of water, that, excepting at Aussa, agriculture is unknown, even in its rudest form. A pastoral, itinerant, and belligerent people, divided into endless clans and ramifications, under divers independent chieftains, their mode of living entitles them to rank only one step in civilisation above the positive savage who depends for daily subsistence upon the chase and upon the spontaneous productions of nature.

Born to the spear, and bred in eternal strife with his predatory neighbours, each lawless member of the straggling community inherits the untameable spirit of the descendants of Ishmaël; and it is made subservient to all the worst vices and passions inherent in the semi-barbarian. In his very attitude and bearing there is that which proclaims him in his own opinion Lord of the Universe, entitled to enjoy, with a thankless heart, all that he is capable of enjoying. No favour claims his gratitude—nothing

demands a thought beyond the present moment. Unlike the Arab Bedouin, he is too indolent and improvident during seasons of plenty, to convert the produce of his flocks and herds into a store against the coming day of drought and famine. Gorged to repletion, the residue is suffered to go to waste; and so long as his belly is full, his licentiousness gratified, and he has leisure to lounge about in listless idleness, the measure of his happiness is complete, and the sun may rise and set without his troubling his head as to the mode in which the day has been passed, or how the next meal is to be provided.

Many of the Adaïel are extensive owners of camels, and deal largely in slaves—a trade which yields three hundred per cent, with the least possible risk or trouble to the merchant; but when not upon the journey periodically undertaken to acquire the materials for this traffic, all lead a life of indolence and gross sensuality—eating, sleeping, and indulging in the baser passions, according to the bent of their vicious inclinations. Their delight is to be dirty and to be idle. They wear the same cloth without ablution until it fairly drops from the back; and abhorring honest labour, whether agricultural or handicraft, pass the day in drowsiness, or in the enjoyment of a quiet seat before the hamlet, where the scandal of the community is retailed. Basking in the sun, and arranging their curly locks with the point of the skewer, they here indulge in unlimited quantities of snuff, and mumble large rolls of tobacco and ashes, which are so thrust betwixt the under lip and the white teeth, as to impart the unseemly appearance of a growing wen, and if temporarily removed are invariably deposited behind the left ear. No race of men in the world stink more offensively; but whilst

polluting the atmosphere with rancid tallow and putrid animal intestines, they never condescend to approach a Christian without holding their own noses!

Amongst the Danákil are to be found some of the most scowling, ill-favoured, and hideous-looking savages in the universe, but the features of the majority have an Arab cast which supports the legend of their origin; and notwithstanding the influence exerted upon the lineaments by passions uncontrolled, the expression of many is pleasing, and even occasionally intellectual. All are muscular and active, but singularly scraggy and loosely knit, and to an easy shuffling gait is added a national addiction to standing cross-legged. Young as well as old take infinite pains to disfigure the person, and thus to render it ferocious in appearance. Scars obtained in brawls and conflicts from stones and cold steel are esteemed the highest ornaments, and the breast and stomach are usually seamed with a mystic maze of rhombs and reticulated triangles, produced by scarification with a sharp fragment of obsidian, so as to resemble the plan of a fortified town of days gone by.

The upper lip is denuded with the creese, and the scanty beard suffered to flourish in curls along the cheeks and over the chin; whilst the hair, coarse and long, saturated with grease and mutton fat from infancy, and exposed during life to the fiercest sun, becomes crisped into a thick curly mop, like a counsellor's wig, which is shaved behind on a line between the ears, and constitutes the first great pride of the proprietor. The picking it out into a due spherical form affords employment during his ample leisure, and the contemplation of its wild perfection is the predominant object when the mirror is placed

within his grasp. Baldness commences at an early age, and many of the ancient dandies seek protection from the solar influence under sheep-skin perukes of preposterous size, their artificial curls, in common with those that are natural, displaying an ornamented wooden spike or bodkin, which serves as a comb, and is often fancifully carved and provided with two or even three prongs.

The operation of greasing this wig without the aid of the barber is original. A lump of raw fat, cut from the overgrown tail of the Berbera sheep, having been some time masticated and mumbled, is expelled into the hands, betwixt the palms of which it is reduced by rubbing to a suitable consistency, and then transferred *en masse* to the crown. Exposure to the fierce rays of a tropical sun soon conveys the desired nourishment to the roots of the hair. A number of jets and brilliants, which first adorn the periwig, are presently fried into oily shreds, and the liquid tallow, adulterated with dirt, trickling in streams adown the swarthy visage and over the neck, exhales the most sickening of odours. All, however, cannot afford this luxury of the toilet, nor is it every one who can resist the temptation of swallowing the dainty morsel when once consigned to the mouth; and hence is seen many a poll of sun-burnt hair, in colour and consistency resembling the housemaid's cobweb broom which is quaintly denominated "the Pope's head."

The simple costume of the Bedouin consists of a piece of checked cloth wrapped loosely about the loins, and descending to the knees so as to resemble a kilt or short petticoat; whilst a cotton robe is thrown over the shoulder after the manner of the Roman toga. Miserly in disposition, few outward ornaments

grace his person, save an occasional necklace of fat, and a few armlets and bracelets composed of potent passages from the Korán either stitched in leather, or enveloped in coloured thread. A thong adorned with a metal button girds to the right hip of old and young a creese two feet in length, the wooden hilt of which is decorated with a pewter stud, whilst the scabbard is ornamented with an aromatic sprig, employed as a tooth-brush, and masticated for hours together.

Three inches broad in the blade, and possessing a truly murderous crook in the centre, the creese is doubtless a most formidable weapon at close quarters. With it the Danákil builds his house; with it he slays the animal, and flays the carcase. It is his sword in battle, his knife at the table, his razor at the toilet, his hatchet, and his nail-parer. A savage desirous of illustrating the most approved exercise, after whetting the blade upon a stone, capers about describing a series of flourishes and cuts, both under and over the shield, stabbing and parrying to the right and to the left, until at length comes the last grand touch of disembowelment, when a ripping motion is accompanied by a bound into the air, and a howl of perfect satisfaction such as might be conjectured to issue from the jaws of the glutted vampire.

The spear, which is seldom out of the hand of the Danákil, is some seven feet in length, a shaft of tough close-grained wood called "*adepto*" being heavily poised with metal at the butt, and topped by a blade from ten to fifteen inches long, by three broad, reduced to as keen an edge as constant scouring with sand and grease can impart. Great aversion is entertained to this weapon being stepped over, and its fall to the ground, independently of the damage that might be sustained, is regarded as an evil omen,

and believed to destroy its power over the flesh and blood of an enemy. The spear of a chief only is mounted with bands of brass and copper wire, but the points of all are graced alike with a lump of sheep's-tail fat. Although sometimes employed as a missive, the pike exercise is more usually resorted to —the warrior stealing onward in a crouching position, and springing suddenly with a yell and a cat-like bound to transfix the body of his foe. "None but a woman would retain the spear in the hour of battle," quoth one of the braves—"the creese is the hand to hand weapon!"

The shield, fashioned out of the stiff hide of the Báeza, or of the wild buffalo, is a perfect circle, of from one to two feet in diameter, with the rim turned outwards, and the centre convexed, for the purpose of checking the flight or launch of the missive. A button or boss which forms the apex is usually adorned with some proud trophy of the chase, in addition to the red beard of a he-goat, undeviatingly attached as a charm. A small bag, slung in the interior of the buckler, contains the portable wealth of the proprietor, and a forked stick is annexed to the hand strap, to admit of suspension to a tree. Engaged, the warrior keeps the shield in a continual revolving motion, in strict accordance with the movement of the eyes, which in fierce and violent frenzy are rolled in the sockets during the continuance of the conflict.

Cruel, bloodthirsty, and vindictive, the Danákil do not possess that spirit of individual enterprise or chivalry, or that reckless disregard of personal danger which, to certain races of men, imparts the stamp of military habits; but a season of scarcity dooms every neighbouring tribe whose pastures are more favoured

than their own, to invasion, massacre, and pillage. A fiendish whoop is the signal for the gathering of the clan; and, obedient to the call, each man at arms, grasping spear and shield, abandons his wretched wigwam with truly savage alacrity. His fierce and untamed passions now riot uncontrolled, and those who during the foray are guilty of the greatest enormities, strut about on return amongst their fellows, bedecked with ostrich plumes, and other badges of distinction, reciting each to some wild tune, the tale of his bloody exploits.

Morose, and possessing little perception of the ridiculous, witticisms and hilarity in conversation are restricted to the ribald jest; but brawls are frequent, and the bivouac is often cheered by the wild chorus selected from a choice collection breathing in every line self-sufficiency and defiance to the foe. Accompanied by savage gestures and contortions—now menacing, now mincing, and now furious—these strains are chanted during the livelong night with clear and energetic throats, chiefly with the design of intimidating, by the noisy clamour, any hostile party that may be lurking in the vicinity of the encampment, intent either upon the requital of injuries done, or the acquisition of fame by aggressions unprovoked.

Superstitious to the last degree, the itinerant Bedouin takes the field arrayed in a panoply of amulets, designed as a defence against witchcraft, and to be thrown towards the enemy in the hour of battle. A verse from the Korán, sewn up in leather, and hung about the neck, secures him against all incorporeal enemies. No whirlwind ever sweeps across the path without being pursued by a dozen savages with drawn creeses, who stab into the centre of the dusty column in order to drive away the evil spirit that is

believed to be riding on the blast. All have firm faith in the incarnation of the Devil, who is described as a monster with perpendicular eyes, capable of rolling along the ground with the rotatory motion of a ball; and Ibrahim Shehém Abli, a most unblushing liar, and no less notable a necromancer than warrior, confidently asserted his individual ability to raise seven hundred of these demons for evil, during any moonlight night of the entire year.

The mosque and the muezzin have no existence in the interior, where religion gradually shades away; and, unlike the people of Tajúra, there is here little external display of Islamism observable, save in the bigoted detestation evinced towards those of every other than the Mohammadan creed. But although prostrations are wanting, and rosaries are untold, the vagrants still preserve their knavish reputations unblemished. The white feather, which in Europe is the emblem of cowardice, is appropriately placed in the head of these midnight assassins, and the neighbouring tribes have not ill-portrayed the national character in the assertion, that “the tongues of the Adaïel are long for the express purpose of lying, that their arms are long but to admit of their pilfering the property of others, and that their legs are long in order that they may run away like poltroons in the day of danger and retribution.”

Volume One—Chapter Thirty Nine.

The Gentle Adaïel, and Farewell to them.

“Yet one kind kiss before we part,

Drop a tear, and bid adieu."

To be the wife of a true believer, in whatever state of society, from the most refined to the most barbarous, is to be cursed in the fullest acceptation of the word. But of the two extremes, many, if the choice were given, would doubtless prefer the drudgery that falls to the lot of the partner of the untaught savage, with all the manifold discomforts attending precarious subsistence, to the immolation and seclusion, which in civilised Mohammadan countries, is imposed upon the fairest of God's works. Taking no part with her lord in the concerns of this world—taught to expect no participation in the happiness of that which is to come—she is a prisoner kept to minister to the lusts of the flesh; and the higher the state of cultivation—the more exalted the rank of the captive—so much the more rigorous is the restraint imposed.

In the European acceptation of the term, small traces are here to be found of the sentiment of love; and jealousy, when it does exist, would seldom appear to arise from any regard for the object that has created the feeling. The Dankáli female has contrived to retain her natural right of liberty; and so long as the wife performs the labour required at her hands, she is at full liberty to flirt unreproved, to the full extent of her coquettish inclinations. Upon Baileela devolves the task of leading the foremost camel, or carrying the heavy burthen slung by a sharp rope which passes across her breast. She fetches water and wood, prepares the milk, and boils the meat. She it is who weaves mats of the date-leaf for the use of her listless and indolent lord; tends his flocks of sheep and goats, dismantles and erects his wigwam when migrations are undertaken to distant pools and pastures; and, seated at his feet, chases away the

flies which disturb his repose beneath the shade of the palm. Here, however, the needle is monopolised by the male, and he is sometimes to be seen industriously stitching a new leathern petticoat for his hard-worked partner, who, conscious of the fleeting nature of her charms, makes the utmost of her short lease; and in the nature of her occupation finds ample opportunities for indulgence.

The features of the Bedouin damsel, although degenerate, resemble those of the Arabian mother, from whom she claims descent; and so close a similarity pervades the community at large, that one mould would appear to have been employed for every individual composing it. Nature being suffered to model her daughters according to her will, their figures during a brief period are graceful; but feminine symmetry is soon destroyed by the constant pressure of heavy loads against the chest, and under the fiery heat of her native sands, the nymph is presently transformed into the decrepit hag, with bent back and waddling gait. A short apron of bullock's hide, with frilled edges, is tied above the hips with a broad band, the sport of every wanton whirlwind; but from the waist upwards the person is unveiled. A coif of blue calico covers the head of those who have entered the conjugal state, whilst that of the virgin is unattired; but the hair of all is arranged in an infinity of elaborate plaits falling to the shoulders, and liberally greased. So are also sundry narrow bands of raw hide, which are usually tied above the ankles by way of charms to strengthen the legs, and which, contracting as they dry, sink deep below the surface of the part compressed.

A petalled sprig, appearing to grow out of the waistband, ascends on either side of the spine, in

tattooed relief, resembling tambour work, and diverging across the ribs, finishes in fancy circles around the bosom according to the taste of the designer. This is a constant quantity, and the charms of many a belle are further heightened by scarification—an angle to break the evenness of the smooth forehead, or the arc of a circle to improve the dimple on the cheek, being favourite devices. From the ears of all who can afford personal ornament, depend two conical drops wrought of thick brass wire spirally coiled, resting on a curved iron base, and separated by two broad horizontal bands of pewter. When the wearer is in activity, the flapping of these cumbrous metallic appendages is ridiculous enough, and the rattle may be heard to a considerable distance as they come into violent collision with a necklace composed of a medley of beads, bones, cowrie shells, jingles, and amulets, strung in many rows upon a leathern collar embedded in dirt and grease, and terminating in a large rhomb of pewter. Bracelets and anklets of the same metal are usual, and the ornament of a squalling brat with inflamed weasel-like eyes slung over the back, is rarely wanting to complete the figure—a jerk to the right or to the left bringing it readily across the shoulder when occasion demands.

The Bedouin wigwam—a rectangle of eight feet in length by six broad, and five high—is constructed of a succession of branches in couples, curved before the fire, and lashed in the form of a lip-arch. A mat composed of date leaves forms the roof; and the whole fabric, wherein the hand of no master builder is visible, is thus readily transferred from place to place. "*Omnia mea mecum fero*" should form the motto of the wandering Dankáli, whose only furniture consists

of a tressel hollowed at the top to serve as a pillow—a luxury restricted to the male sex. In the huts of the more wealthy, wooden platters and ladles sometimes form part of the household gear, together with closely-woven mat baskets to contain milk; but this beverage is more usually consigned to a bag of sheep or goat skin—sun-dried flesh, grease, grain, and water, being lodged also in similar receptacles.

Milk forms the principal diet of this Arcadian race; and they deride the dwellers in cities for eating birds or fowls, declaring that the flesh must have travelled upon four legs during life to be at all palatable. An ancient camel, a buck goat, or a bull calf, is occasionally slaughtered with a *Bismillah*, and the flesh not immediately consumed cut into long thin collops, and dried in the sun to be stuffed again into the skin for future use. Meat is broiled among the embers upon closely-packed pebbles, which prevents it coming into contact with the ashes; and the master of the house, taking his seat upon the ground beside a lump of raw liver, places a wedge-shaped stone under either heel, in order to impart a slight inclination to the body, and thus preserve the balance without personal exertion. Picking the bones one by one out of the fire, he seizes alternate mouthfuls of the grilled and the raw flesh between the teeth, and with an upward motion of the creese, divides them close to his nose.

It may be received as an axiom that no Bedouin will speak the truth, although the doing so might prove to his obvious advantage. He is not only a liar by the force of rooted habit and example, but also upon principle, and his oaths are simple matters of form. The name of God is invoked, and the Korán taken to witness, in falsehoods the most palpable; and to have

sworn with the last solemnity is far from being regarded in the light of a binding obligation. A stone having been cast upon the earth, fire is quenched in water, and the adjuration repeated: “May this body become petrified, and may Allah thus extinguish me if I utter that which is not true!”

In conversation a portion of every sentence is invariably taken up by the person addressed—the last word being generally considered sufficient, or even an abbreviation to the final syllable. The salutation of the tribes, between whom little bond exists, beyond identity of language, is a cold forbidding touch of the fingers, fully indicative of the unfriendly sentiments of the heart. All prey upon each other, and every individual in whatever rank is by nature, as well as by habit and inclination, an assassin. None will hesitate to mutilate or barbarously put to death any member of another clan whom he may find at advantage, either sleeping or at a distance from succour—the appetite for plunder, and the thirst for blood, inherent in the breast, being quite sufficient to dictate every act of atrocity, and to impel every dastardly outrage, that a savage can devise or commit.

Dwelling in a scene of aridity, hostility, and bloodshed, traversed by barren chains bearing the impress of volcanic desolation, and cursed with a soil rarely susceptible of cultivation, but still more rarely cultivated, the hand of the roving Bedouin is against every man, and every man’s hand is against him. The truth of the Scriptural prophecy respecting the untameable descendants of Ishmaël, here as elsewhere is well maintained; nor were the words of the poet ever more truly exemplified than in the hot weary wastes of the Adaïel—

> “Nothing save rapine, indolence, and guile,
> And woes on woes, a still revolving train.
> Whose horrid circle has made human life
> Than non-existence worse.”

Arrogant, treacherous, and degraded barbarians, bound in the fetters of idleness and superstition—dissemblers, whose every word is a lie, and whose overbearing and unaccommodating disposition, grafted upon bigoted intolerance, was displayed on every occasion to the personal discomfort of those by whom they were paid and entertained—there was never throughout the long, tedious, and trying journey, either on the part of elders, escort, or camel-drivers, the slightest wish or effort, either to honour or oblige; and it was only on occasions when fire-arms, which they could not gainsay, might prove of service to themselves, that the blubber lip did not swell in scorn at the Christian Kafirs, who were sneered at even in conversation. And these, too, were savages who scarcely knew the use of bread, who rarely employed water for the ablution of their filthy persons, and who kept their heads and bodies floating in a perpetual sea of sheep’s-tail fat. On taking leave of the tormenting fraternity at this the happy termination of a weary and perilous pilgrimage, which had been performed without once taking off the clothes, it may safely be averred that no member of the British Embassy had ever passed so long a period with so large a party, without desiring to make further acquaintance with at least one individual: but the last touch of the cold palm was for once received with heartfelt satisfaction, and each bade adieu to the whole community with an inward hope that it might never fall to his evil lot to see their scowling faces more.

Volume One—Chapter Forty.

Ascent of the Abyssinian Alps.

Having thus happily shaken the Adel dust from off the feet, and taken affectionate leave of the greasy Danákil, it is not a little pleasant to bid adieu also to their scorching plains of unblessed sterility. Every change in the soil and climate of Africa is in extremes, and barrenness and unbounded fertility border on each other with a suddenness whereof the denizens of temperate climes can form no conception. As if by the touch of the magician's wand, the scene now passes in an instant from parched and arid wastes to the green and lovely highlands of Abyssinia, presenting one sheet of rich and thriving cultivation. Each fertile knoll is crowned with its peaceful hamlet—each rural vale traversed by its crystal brook, and teeming with herds and flocks. The cool mountain zephyr is redolent of eglantine and jasmine, and the soft green turf, spangled with clover, daisies, and buttercups, yields at every step the aromatic fragrance of the mint and thyme.

The baggage having at length been consigned to the shoulders of six hundred grumbling Moslem porters, assembled by the royal fiat from the adjacent villages, and who, now on the road, formed a line which extended upwards of a mile, the Embassy, on the morning of the 17th, commenced the ascent of the Abyssinian Alps. Hitherto every officious attendant functionary had exerted himself to the utmost to promote delay, confusion, and annoyance; and each now exhorted the respective members of the party to urge their jaded beasts to increased speed, and hasten onwards over a rugged path

which, in the toil-worn condition of the majority, was not to be ascended without considerable difficulty. The king was waxing impatient to behold the delighting things that had been imported, an account of which, so far as the prying eyes of his servants had been able to discern, had been duly transmitted to the palace; and in order to celebrate the arrival of so great an accession of wealth. His Majesty's flutes once more poured out their melody, and his warriors again chanted their wild notes among the hills, until far out of hearing of the astonished population of Fárri.

It was a cool and lovely morning, and a fresh invigorating breeze played over the mountain side, on which, though less than ten degrees removed from the equator, flourished the vegetation of northern climes. The rough and stony road wound on by a steep ascent over hill and dale—now skirting the extreme verge of a precipitous cliff—now dipping into the basin of some verdant hollow, whence, after traversing the pebbly course of a murmuring brook, it suddenly emerged into a succession of shady lanes, bounded by flowering hedge-rows.

The wild rose, the fern, the lantana, and the honeysuckle, smiled around a succession of highly cultivated terraces, into which the entire range was broken by banks supporting the soil; and on every eminence stood a cluster of conically-thatched houses, environed by green hedges, and partially embowered amid dark trees. As the troop passed on, the peasant abandoned his occupation in the field to gaze at the novel procession; whilst merry groups of hooded women, decked in scarlet and crimson, summoned by the renewal of martial strains, left their avocations in the hut to welcome the king's guests

with a shrill *ziroleet*, which rang from every hamlet. The leather petticoat of the wandering shepherdess was no longer to be seen. Birds warbled among the leafy groves, and throughout the rich landscape reigned an air of peace and plenty that could not fail to prove highly delightful after the recent weary pilgrimage across the hot desert.

At various turns of the road the prospect was rugged, wild, and beautiful. Aigibbi, the first Christian village of Efát, was soon revealed on the summit of a height, where, within an enclosure of thorns, rest the remains of a traveller, who not long before had closed his eyes on the threshold of the kingdom, a victim to the pestilential sky of the lowlands. Three principal ranges were next crossed in succession, severally intersected by rivulets which are all tributary to the Háwash, although the waters are for the most part absorbed before they reach that stream. Lastly, the view opened upon the wooded site of Ankóber, occupying a central position in a horse-shoe crescent of mountains, still high above, which enclose a magnificent amphitheatre of ten miles in diameter. This is clothed throughout with a splendidly varied and vigorous vegetation, and choked by minor abutments, converging towards its gorge on the confines of the Adel plains.

Here the journey was for the present to terminate, and, thanks to Abyssinian jealousy and suspicion, many days were yet to elapse ere the remaining height should be climbed to the capital of Shoa, now distant two hours' walk. Three thousand feet above the level of Fárri stands the market-town of Alio Amba, upon the crest of a scarped prong formed by the confluence of two mountain streams. A Mohammadan population, not exceeding one

thousand souls, the inmates of two hundred and fifty straggling houses, is chiefly composed of Adaïel, Argóbba, and merchants from Aussa and Hurrur; and among this motley community it had been ordained that the Embassy should halt that night.

Ascending by a steep stony path to an open spot, on which the weekly market is held, the escort fired a desultory salute; and whilst crowds of both sexes flocked to behold the white strangers, forming a double line, they indulged in the performance of the war-dance. Relieved occasionally by some of the younger braves who had earned distinctions during the last campaign, a veteran capered before the ranks with a drawn sword grasped between his teeth; and for the edification of the bystanders the notes of a martial song were powerfully poured forth in chorus from three hundred Christian throats.

The cone occupied by Alio Amba is only one of the thousand precipitous eminences into which the entire mountain side is broken on its junction with the plain. Swollen and foaming, the intersecting torrents appeared from the pinnacle like small threads of silver, twining and gliding far below amid green bushes and verdant fields to the great outlet, whence they escape to be soon lost on the desert sand. Together with a boundless prospect over the inhospitable tract beneath, countless villages now met the eye upon the entire intervening mountain side, and wherever the slope admitted of the plough being held, there cultivation flourished. Wheat, barley, Indian com, beans, peas, cotton, and oil plant, throve luxuriantly around every hamlet—the regularly marked fields mounting in terraces to the height of three or four thousand feet, and becoming in their boundaries gradually more and more indistinct, until

totally lost on the shadowy green side of Mamrat, “The Mother of Grace.”

This towering peak, still shrouded in clouds when all was sunshine below, is clothed with a dense forest of timber, and at an elevation of some thirteen thousand feet above the sea, affords secure shelter to the treasures of the monarch, which have been amassing since the re-establishment of the kingdom, one hundred and fifty years since. Loza forms the apex of the opposite side of the crescent, and perched on its wooded summit is a monastery forming the temporary abode of Halloo Mulakoot, heir-apparent to the throne of Shoa. But by far the most interesting feature in the stern landscape is a conical hill, conspicuous from its isolated position, and rising amid dark groves of pine-like juniper, from a lofty serrated ridge. Hereon stands the stronghold of Góncho, the residence of Wulásma Mohammad, constructed over the state dungeon keep, in which, loaded with galling fetters, the three younger brothers of a Christian king—victims to a barbarous statute—have found a living tomb since the present accession, a period of thirty years!

After much needless detention in the market-place, exposed to the impertinent comments and rude gaze of the thronging populace, Ayto Kálama Work, a tall raw-boned man with a loose scrambling gait and a dead yellow eye, introduced himself as governor of the town. He condescended in person to conduct the British guests of his royal master to a mansion which had once boasted of himself as a tenant, but was now in the occupation of a fat old Moslem dame and her three daughters, whose respective appellatives being duly translated, proved worthy the days of Prince Cherry and Fairstar. Eve, Sweet-limes, and

Sunbeam, all clothed alike in scarlet habiliments, vacated the premises with the utmost alacrity, and many good-humoured smiles; but owing to the length and difficulty of the road, that portion of the baggage most in request did not arrive until midnight—when, through the officious interference of Ayto Wolda Hana, whose garrulity had increased rather than abated, a new inventory of effects in charge of each principal of a village was to be penned by the royal scribe, and thus neither bedding nor food could be obtained.

The edifice so ostentatiously allotted for the accommodation of the party by him of the unpromising exterior, was of an elliptical form, about thirty feet in length by eighteen in breadth, and surrounded on every side by those tall rank weeds that delight to luxuriate in filth. Two undressed stakes supported a tottering grass thatch. Windows there were none. A long narrow aperture did duty for a door, and the walls, which met the roof at a distance of ten feet from the ground, were of the very worst description of wattle and dab—the former an assemblage of rotten reeds, and the latter decayed by time in a sufficiency of places to admit the light indispensable to a full development of the dirt and misery within.

In the principal of two apartments, a circular excavation in the floor surrounded by a parapet of clay, served as a stove. Heavy slabs of stone embedded in high mud pedestals, and used for grinding grain, engrossed one corner, and in another were piled heaps of old bullock hides in various stages of decomposition. Very buggy-looking bedsteads, equipped with a web of narrow thongs in lieu of cotton tape, assumed that air of discomfort

which a broken or ill-adapted leg is so prone to impart. The narrow necks of divers earthen urn-shaped vessels containing mead, beer, and water, were stuffed with bunches of green leaves. Larger mud receptacles were filled with wheat, barley, and beans; and huge lumps of raw beef, with sundry bullocks' heads, which were promiscuously strewed about, garnished the floor, the beds, and the walls, in every direction.

The inner chamber boasted the presence of mules and female slaves, who, if judgment might be formed from the evil odours exhaled, were revelling in the garbage of the shambles. Constructed on the slope of a hill, the floor of the edifice throughout was of the natural earth, and dipping at least one foot below the level of the threshold, had never known the presence of the housemaid's besom. Equalling the filthiest Irish hovel in dirt and discomfort, the cheerless abode could boast of no sleek little pig, and of no pond covered with fat ducks, both being alike held in abhorrence by the Jew-Christians of Shoa; and even the old hat was wanting wherewith to cram the gaps through which whistled the keen cutting blast of Alpine climes.

Fatigue soon closed the weary eyes; but the change in the atmosphere, consequent upon the great elevation attained, presently interfered with repose upon the damp bare floor. Rain then set in with extreme violence. The water came tumbling through the manifold apertures in the crazy walls and shattered roof, and having speedily flooded the sloping court, poured over the threshold to deluge the floor with standing pools. Although the smoke of sodden wood, unable to escape, proved an inconvenience scarcely to be borne, there was no

dispensing with a fire; and troops of fleas and sanguinary bugs, coursing over the body, by their painful and poisonous attacks, might almost have caused a sigh for the execrated plains of the Adaïel, which, with all their discomforts of watch and ward, were at least free from the curse of vermin.

But the lingering day dawned at last, and with the tedious hours of a cold and sleepless night the rain had also disappeared. As the rising sun shone against the lofty and now cloudless peaks, preparations were made for continuing the journey to Ankóber, in accordance with the royal invitation; but Ayto Wolda Hana, whose presence ever betokened evil, after wading through the compliments of the morning, proceeded with unbending gravity to unfold the dismal tidings that the monarch had altered his resolves. His Majesty would tarry yet some days longer at Debra Berhán, and in consequence graciously extended the option of visiting the court there or resting at Alio Amba, pending his indefinite arrival at the capital.

The difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of transporting the mass of baggage to so great a distance, in such weather, and with very inadequate means at command, rendered imperative the adoption of the latter alternative. Aytos Wolda Hana and Kátama, with the whole of the escort, meanwhile took their departure, to report orally the important discoveries they had been able to make relative to the nature of the presents designed for the throne, together with the particulars of the quarrel betwixt Izhák and Mohammad Ali, and the respective pretension of the rivals to the honour of having conducted the British visitors into Abyssinia.

One of those mysterious boxes, the lading of which, unviolated by the scrutinising scribes, remained hermetically sealed to the inquisitive gaze of officious spies, had, before leaving Fárri, been broken open with the design of obtaining access to an indispensable portion of the contents. To this unfortunate necessity may possibly be ascribed the sudden and unlooked-for alteration in the royal intentions. In lieu of ingots of gold were revealed to the astounded sight the leathern buckets, linch-stocks, and tough ash staves pertaining to the galloper-guns. Words of derision burst from the mouth of every disappointed spectator. “These,” exclaimed fifty vain-glorious lips at once, “be but a poor people. What is their nation when compared with the Amhára; for behold in this trash, specimens of the offerings brought from their boasted land to the footstool of the mightiest of monarchs!”

Volume One—Chapter Forty One.

Probation at Alio Amba.

Slowly passed the days of fog, and the nights of dire discomfort, during the tedious detention which followed this unfortunate discovery. From the terrace commanding a boundless view over the desolate regions traversed, the overflowing channel of the Háwash, and the lakes Le Ado and Ailabello could each morning be perceived sparkling with increased lustre, as their fast-filling basins glittered like sheets of burnished silver under the rays of the rising sun. The industrious fleas continued their nocturnal persecutions, as if never to be sated with European

blood; and a constant succession of clouds, which ascended the valley, drawing a grey cold curtain before the hoary head of Mamrat, proclaimed, amid prolonged peals of thunder, the commencement of the rainy season.

But each succeeding night and day brought no nearer prospect of release, and the change in the imperial resolves were scarcely less frequent than those which came over the towering face of the stronghold of his subterranean treasure. Remonstrances, penned with infinite labour and difficulty, were responded by endearing messages, garbled at the pleasure of those to whom they were confided; but the subtle excuse for the further delay of the desired audience was never wanting, and conjecture became exhausted in devising the true cause of the mortifying indifference displayed to the rich presents from “beyond the great sea.”

A desire on the part, of the despot to preserve due respect in the eyes of his lieges, and perhaps also to imbue the minds of his foreign visitors with a befitting sense of his importance, were the most probable motives. Under the existing disappointment, it afforded some consolation to remember that embassies of old to Northern Abyssinia had experienced similar treatment, and to know that delegates to Shoa from the courts of Gondar and Tigré are never presented to the king until weeks after their arrival—a custom originating probably in the more kindly feeling of allowing rest to the way-worn traveller at the close of a long and perilous journey, but perpetuated for less worthy considerations.

At length there came a pressing invitation to visit the

monarch at Debra Berhán, coupled with an assurance that the Master of the Horse should be in attendance to escort the party. But no Master of the Horse was forthcoming at the time appointed, and the following day brought a pathetic billet from the palace —a tiny parchment scroll, enveloped in a sheet of wax, breathing in its contents regret and disappointment. “Son of my house, my heart longed to behold you, and I believed that you would come. As you appeared not, I passed the day in distress, fearing lest the waters should have carried you away, or that the mule had fallen on the road. I commanded Melkoo to wait and receive you, and to conduct you to me; but when I hoped to see you arrive, you stayed out. The mule returned; and when I inquired whither you were gone, they told me that you were left. I have committed the fault, in that I gave not orders that they should go down, and bring you.”

Meanwhile, the most vigorous attempts were made, on the part both of the Wulásma and of Ayto Wolda Hana, to exercise exclusive control over the baggage lodged at Alio Amba. Locks were placed upon the latches, and guards appointed over the doors of the houses wherein it was deposited—fully as much care being taken to preclude access on the part of those by whom it had been brought, as if His Christian Majesty had already become the *bonâ fide* proprietor. Repeated orders on the subject, obtained from the palace, were uniformly disregarded by the over-zealous functionaries, and it was only by force of arms that the repositories were finally burst open, and that charge of the contents could be resumed.

Neither were the persecutions of the gaunt governor of the town among the least of the evils to be endured, resulting as they did in consequences the

most inconvenient. Specially appointed to entertain and provide for the wants of the guests, he supplied at the royal expense provisions alike inferior in quality and deficient in quantity, taking care at the same time that the king's munificence should be in no wise compromised by purchases, for these he clandestinely prevented. His conduct might be traced to the same jealous feelings that pervaded the breast of his colleagues in office. In the despotic kingdom of Shoa, the sovereign can alone purchase coloured cloth or choice goods; and Ayto Kálama Work, who is entitled to a certain percentage upon all imports, having formed a tolerably shrewd estimate of the contents of the bales and boxes, believed that these would effectually clog the market, and that his dues would be no longer forthcoming. Resolved to extend the most unequivocal proofs of his discontent, he was pleased to assign to the surviving horses and mules of the foreigners a tract destitute of pasturage—one mulberry coloured steed only being pampered, because from size, colour, and appearance, it was assumed that he must be intended for the king. The continued drenching rain at night during the later marches, with the intense heat and general absence of water and forage throughout the whole pilgrimage, had sadly reduced the original number. Many more had dropped on the ascent from Fárri, and of those whose strength had enabled them to climb the more favoured mountains of Abyssinia, the tails of one half were now presented as evidences of their fate.

Among the very few incidents that occurred to break the monotony of the probationary sojourn was the arrival of the "Lebáshi," the hereditary thief-catcher of the kingdom. For several hours the little town was in a state of confusion and dismay. Burglary had been

committed—divers pieces of salt had been abstracted, and the appearance of the police-officer was not one whit more agreeable to the innocent than to the guilty.

A ring having been formed in the market-place by the crowded spectators, the diviner introduced his accomplice, a stolid-looking lad, who seated himself upon a bullock's hide with an air of deep resignation. An intoxicating drug was, under many incantations, extracted from a mysterious leathern scrip, and thrown into a horn filled with new milk; and this potation, aided by several hurried inhalations of a certain narcotic, had the instantaneous effect of rendering the recipient stupidly frantic. Springing upon his feet, he dashed, foaming at the mouth, among the rabble, and without any respect to age or sex, dealt vigorously about him, until at length secured by a cord about the loins, when he dragged his master round and round from street to street, snuffling through the nose like a bear in the dark recesses of every house, and leaving unscrutinised no hole or corner.

After scraping for a considerable time with his nails under the foundation of a hut, wherein he suspected the delinquent to lurk, the imp entered, sprang upon the back of the proprietor, and became totally insensible. The man was forthwith arraigned before a tribunal of justice, at which Ayto Kálama Work presided; and although no evidence could be adduced, and he swore repeatedly to his innocence by the life of the king, he was sentenced by the just judges to pay forty pieces of salt. This fine was exactly double the amount alleged to have been stolen, and one fourth became the perquisite of the Lebáshi.

The services of the hereditary thief-catcher are in universal requisition. Should the property lost consist of live instead of dead stock, it not unfrequently happens that the disciple remains torpid upon the ground; when all parties concerned feel perfectly satisfied that the animal has either strayed or been destroyed by wild beasts, and the expenses attending the divination must be paid by the owner. With the design of testing the skill of the magician, the Negoos once upon a time commanded his confidential page to secrete certain articles of wearing apparel pertaining to the royal wardrobe, and after an investigation of four days, the proper individual being selected with becoming formality, the professional reputation of “him who catches” acquired a lustre which has since remained untarnished.

Many a weary hour was passed in listening to tales of real or counterfeit maladies, which were daily recounted in the hovel at Alio Amba. Witchcraft and the influence of the evil eye have firm possession of the mind of every inhabitant, and sufficiently diverting were the complaints laid to their door by those who sought amulets and talismans at the hand of the foreigners. A young Moslem damsel, whose fickle swain had deserted her, could never gaze on the moon that her heart went not pit-a-pat, whilst the tears streamed from her dark eyes; and a hoary veteran with one foot in the grave sought the restoration of rhetorical powers, which had formed the boast of his youth, but which had been destroyed by the pernicious gaze of a rival. “Of yore,” quoth he who introduced the patient, “this was a powerful orator; and when he lifted up his voice in the assembly, men marvelled as he spoke; but now, although his heart is still eloquent, his tongue is

niggard of words."

Equally hopeless was the case of an unfortunate slave-dealer, who crawled in search of relief to the abode of the king's guests. A Galla of the Ittoo tribe had undertaken the removal of severe rheumatism, contracted on the road from Hurrur; to which end he administered a powerful narcotic, which rendered the patient insensible. Armed with a sharp creese he then proceeded to cut and slash in every direction, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot; and when the mutilated victim awoke to a sense of his melancholy condition, the ruthless operator had disappeared. Scarred and seamed in every part of his body, he now presented the appearance of one who had been flayed alive, and the skin had so contracted over the gaps whence the flesh had been scooped, that, unless with extreme difficulty, he could neither eat, drink, nor speak. "My life is burdensome," groaned the miserable picture of human calamity; "and it were better that I should die. I have bathed in the hot springs at Korári without deriving the slightest relief. You white men know every thing: give me something to heal me, for the love of Allah!"

Volume One—Chapter Forty Two.

The Weekly Market.

Surrounded by the myrmidons who collect the royal dues, Ayto Kálama Work was every Friday morning to be seen seated beneath the scanty shelter of an ancient acacia, which throws its withered arms over the centre of the market-place. On this day alone are

purchases to be made, and the inhabitants of the adjacent villages pouring from all quarters to lay in their weekly supplies, a scene of unusual bustle and confusion animates this otherwise most quiet and uninteresting location.

Shortly after daybreak, wares of every description are displayed under the canopy of heaven, and crowds of both sexes flocking to the stall of the vendor, the din of human voices is presently at its height. Honey, cotton, grain, and other articles of consumption, the produce of the estate of the Amhára farmer, are exposed for sale or barter. The Dankáli merchant exhibits his gay assortment of beads, metals, coloured thread, and glass ware. The wild Galla squats beside the produce of his flocks, and the Moslem trader from the interior displays ostrich feathers, or some other article of curiosity from the distant tribe. Bales of cotton cloth, and bags of coffee from Cáffa and Enárea, are strewed in every direction. Horses and mules in numbers are shown off among the crowd to increase the turmoil; nor is even the wandering Hebrew wanting to complete the scene of traffic, haggling, and barter, which continues, without intermission, until a late hour in the afternoon, when the village relapses again into its wonted six days of quiet and repose.

Swathed and folded in dirty cotton cloth, behold in the cultivator of the soil the original of the Egyptian mummy. Greasy and offensive in person and in habits, he moves cringingly to pay his tax to the governor of the fair, who sits in conscious dignity upon a stone; and prostrating himself with shoulders bared among the mud, the serf hands forth the measure of grain from the leathern scrip, or scoops out the prescribed meed of butter from the jar—the

vassal token of permission enjoyed to earn his bread by the unceasing hand of labour. No spark of intelligence illumines his dull features; not a trace of independence can be discovered in his slouching gait; and the cumbrous robe with which he is invested would indeed seem far better adapted for the quiet resting-place in the tomb, than for the bustling avocations of stirring life.

Here swaggers a valiant gun-man of the king's matchlock guard. The jealousy of the monarch forbids the removal of the primitive weapon from the royal presence, but the white *herkoom* feather floats in all the pride of blood over clotted tufts moist with the beloved grease; and the dark scowl and the lowering brow betoken the reckless cruelty which stains the character of the band. But the man is a poor slave, and his degraded state has entirely destroyed the few traits of humanity which might have smiled upon his nativity.

The surly Adaïel brushes past in insolent indifference to examine the female slaves in the wicker hut of the rover from the south. His murderous creese ensures from the bystanders a high respect, which frequent disasters in the low country has riveted on the heart of the Amhára; and men turn in wonder to gaze upon the mortal who entertaineth not a slavish adoration for the great monarch of Shoa.

Squatted beside his foreign wares and glittering beads, see the wily huckster of Hurrur, with his turban and blue-checked kilt. His dealings, it is true, are of no very extensive amount, and salt, not silver, is the medium of exchange; but there is still room for the exercise of his knavery. The countenance both of buyer and seller exhibits an anxious and business-

like expression, and the same noise and confusion prevails regarding an extra twopence-halfpenny, as if the transaction involved a shower of golden guineas.

The Christian women flit through the busy fair with eggs and poultry, and other produce of the farm. Their ill-favoured features are not improved either by the eradication of the eyebrow, or by the bare shaven crown dripping with rancid butter; and the dirty persons of all are invariably shrouded in yet dirtier habiliments, from the tall masculine damsel of sixteen summers, to the decrepit and wrinkled hag who in cracked notes proclaims ever and anon, "*amole alliche bir*," "salt to sell for silver."

The free and stately mien of the oriental female, and the light graceful garment of the east, are alike wanting. The heavy load is tied as upon the back of the pack-horse, and the bent and broken figure of the Amhára dame is debarred by the severe law of the despot from the decoration of finery or costly ornament. A huge bee-hive-shaped wig, elaborately curled and frosted, and massive pewter buttons thrust through the lobe of the ear, constitute her only pride; and nature, alas! has too often withheld even the smallest portion of those feminine attractions which in other climes form the charm of her sex.

The inhabitants of Argóbba or Efát, under the control of the sinister eye of the Wulásma, are followers of the false Prophet, and speak a distinct language. Little difference, however, is observable in the external appearance of the males from that of the Amhára subject of the empire; and it is not until the removal of the muffling cloth that the rosary of bright-spotted beads is displayed in lieu of the dark blue emblem of Christianity worn throughout Ethiopia. The

women, on the other hand, are at once recognisable, no less by their Arab gypsy features, than by their long braided tresses streaming ever the shoulder, the ample smock of red cloth, dyed purple with accumulated lard, and the nunlike hood of the same material, buttoned close under the chin.

Fairer, more slender, and better favoured than their coarse Christian sisters of the more alpine regions, they are still scarcely less greasy and unattractive. Loaded with amulets and beads, their belief is proclaimed by the oft-repeated exclamation, "*Hamdu-lillah*!" "Praise be unto Allah!"—the courteous interrogatories of every passer-by, anent health, rest, and welfare, being by the burly and masculine ladies of Shoa, responded by the words "*Egzia behere maskin*!" "Thanks be unto God!" Unrestricted by harem law they fidget about in every direction, their great sparkling eyes peering through a mass of coal-black hair, half concealed by the crimson cowl, and the large shining necklace of amber reaching nearly to the waist. But the hideous sack chemise veils every feature of figure and personal beauty, and the naked hands and feet are alone exhibited, both rather misshapen from hard work and undue exposure to the climate.

The crowd makes way for a great Christian governor, probably from some distant province near the Nile. He is surrounded by a boisterous host of armed attendants, and, like them, paddles with unshod feet through the stiff black mire. The capacious stomach, and the bright silver sword with tulip scabbard, betoken high honour and command. An ambling mule tricked out in brass jingles and chains follows in his path; a long taper wand towers above his shoulder; and his portly figure is completely shrouded in the

folds of a cotton robe, bedecked from end to end with broad crimson stripes. The garment might be improved by ablution; but repose upon the hide of a bullock is no aid to purity of apparel, and it is white in comparison with those of his unwashed retinue.

The arrangement of his hair has occupied the entire morning, and the steam of the fetid butter, which glistens among the minute curls, pervades the entire atmosphere. Muffled high above the chin, the eyes and nose of the functionary are alone submitted to the vulgar gaze, and as he halts for a moment to wonder at the unwonted sight of the Gyptzi strangers, the bloodshot eye betrays the midnight debauch, and the wrinkles of his turned-up nose, the scorn of the savage at the difference of costume and complexion. Approaching the acacia his shoulders are temporarily bared to the pompous dignitary presiding over the fair, who rising to receive him, returns the compliment, and there ensues a tissue of inquiries unknown even to the code of Chesterfield. Cantering over the tiny plain—a scanty level of an hundred yards—the wild Galla enters the scene of confusion, his long tresses streaming in the wind, and his garment blue with the grease of ages. A jar of honey, or a basket of butter, is lashed to the crupper of his high-peaked saddle; the steed is lean and shaggy as the rider, and the snort and the start from either proclaim undefined terror and amazement at the strange sights, and the rugged rocks and precipices, unknown to the boundless meadows of their own green land.

Dandies there are none, in aught of outward appearance, for the arrangement of the hair is the only latitude allowed to the invention of the would-be fop. The cotton cloth in every degree of impurity,

floats over the swart shoulder both of noble and of serf. Bare heads and naked feet are the property of all, and the possession of the spear and shield alone marks the difference of rank. The chief scorns to carry a weapon except during the foray or the fight, whereas his followers never leave the threshold of their rude dwellings, without the lance in their hand, and buckler on their arm.

The terror and abhorrence in which the low country and its attendant dangers are held by the Abyssinian population, have placed nearly the entire trade of Alio Amba in the hands of the Danákil, who are treated by the monarch of Shoa with all deference and respect. Caravans arrive every month during the fair season from Aussa and Tajúra, and the traffic, considering the manifold drawbacks, may be said to be brisk and profitable. Numbers of foreign merchants, those of Hurrur especially, whilst disposing of their goods, hold their temporary residence at the market-town, the climate of which, many degrees warmer than the cold summit of the range which towers two thousand feet above, proves far more congenial to their taste and habits.

With the proceeds of foreign imported merchandise, human beings kidnapped in the interior countries of Africa are purchased in the adjacent slave mart of Abd el Russool. These wretched victims are then taken through the Amhára province of Giddem to the Wollo and Argóbba frontiers, some five days' journey to the north, and resold at a profit of fifty per cent,—the sums realised being there invested in *amoles*, or blocks of black salt, the size of a mower's whetstone. Obtained between Agámê and the country of the Dankáli, from a salt plain which not only supplies all the Abyssinian markets, but many also far in the

interior of Africa, they pass as a currency, and, being bought on the frontier at the rate of twenty-five for a German crown, are retailed in Alio Amba at a profitable exchange. A large investment of slaves is finally purchased with the wealth thus laboriously amassed, and the merchant returns to his native country to traffic in human flesh at the sea-ports of Zeyla and Berbera, or on the opposite coast of Arabia —anon to revisit Shoa with a fresh invoice of marketable wares.

Ever ravaged by war and violence, the unexplored regions of the interior pour forth a continual supply of ill-starred victims of all ages to feed the demand, and the hebdomadal parade in the market-place under the ruthless Moslem monsters by whom they are imported, is sufficiently harrowing to those unaccustomed to such revolting spectacles. Examined like cattle by the purchaser, the sullen Shankala fetches a price proportioned to the muscular appearance of his giant frame; and the child of tender years is valued according to the promise of future development. Even the shamefaced and slenderly-clad maiden is subjected to every indignity, whilst the price of her charms is estimated according to the regularity of her features, the symmetry of her budding form, and the luxuriance of her braided locks; and when the silver has rung in confirmation of the bargain, the last tie is dissolved which could hold in any restraint the appetite of her savage possessor.

Volume One—Chapter Forty Three.

The Principality of Hurrur.

Not many weeks had elapsed since certain substantial merchants of Hurrur, after visiting the shrine at Medina, and making a long and profitable sojourn in Alio Amba, had returned to their native land to enjoy the honours attaching to their religious pilgrimage. Slaves, ivory, and precious gums had been disposed of to great advantage in Arabia, and the proceeds invested in beads, berillés, and broad-cloth, with which the enterprising traders landed at the maritime town of Tajúra. Proceeding thence to Efát, they embarked their gains in slaves, mules, and cotton cloths; and designing to pass the residue of their days in ease and affluence, set out by way of Hurrur for the great annual fair at Berbera.

In advance of the time, however, these luckless individuals had ventured to speculate to their envious countrymen upon the advantage to be derived from foreign traffic and the presence of the white man. The incautious word had caught the ear of Abdel Yonag, the wily chief of the Hurrurhi, and letters were secretly despatched to his master the Ameer, representing the wealthy hajjis to be men of turbulent and ambitious views, who had devised dangerous innovations, and were plotting, with the Adaïel, the monopoly of the commerce in slaves. With hearts bounding at the sight of their native minarets, and utterly unconscious of the slander that had preceded them, the pilgrims entered the *Isma-deen* gate of the city; but ere return had been welcomed by wife or child, they were hurried by the soldiery to the presence of the despot, and, without even the mockery of a trial, were beaten to death with huge maces of iron.

The independent principality of Hurrur is a spot yet unvisited by any European, and is remarkable for its isolated position among the Pagan and Mohammadan Galla, against whose continual inroads it has hitherto contrived, with the aid of two hundred matchlock-men and a few archers, to maintain its integrity. The Alla, the Nooli, the Geeri, the Tarsoo, the Babili, the Bursoo, the Burteera, and the Gooti, compass it on every side, and making sudden descents, sweep the ripe crops from off the face of the smiling land; but their efforts against the town have uniformly proved unsuccessful, and caravans continue, in spite of hostilities, to carry on a very considerable traffic through the Ittoo and Aroosi tribes, with Shoa and the Somauli coast.

Originally founded and peopled by a colony of the sons of Yemen, the town is described to be situated in a pleasant and well-watered valley, surrounded by hills, and enjoying a cool and salubrious climate. A wall of mud and stone, six miles in circumference, with five fortified gates, affords security to the entire population, whose houses, many of them two-storied, are constructed of stone, whitewashed, and terraced. Mosques and minarets are conspicuous in every street. The matin voice of the muezzin is regularly heard, and the Jama el Musjid is believed to be the abode of guardian angels, who stretch the strong pinion of protection over the heads of the Faithful. “How could Hurrur have triumphed thus long over the unbelievers,” inquire the devout citizens, “had Allah not extended his right arm to succour the followers of his Prophet?”

Aboo Bekr, the reigning Ameer, has wielded the sceptre during the last seven years, and pursuing the barbarous custom of Shoa, his brothers and family

are permanent inmates of subterranean dungeons, which for better security are constructed immediately below the foundations of his own palace. Although cruel and vindictive, he is reputed a brave prince, heading the foray in person, and taking the front in the battle field; but suspicion of the stranger would seem to form the ruling feature of his character, nor is this to be wondered at, since bloodshed and aggression are known to have once marked the footstep of the intruder.

During the reign of Abd el Kurreem, uncle to the present Ameer, a large body of Arabs from Mocha, instigated by a disgraced member of the blood-royal, who had fled thither for safety, laid siege to the town, and assisted by guns of small calibre, which are now mounted on the walls, had nearly prevailed. Again the guardian angels stretched their white wings over the beleaguered city. The magazine blew up and destroyed numbers of the enemy, and their traitorous leader, who had induced the attack by representing his countrymen to be infidels and apostates from the true religion, falling into the hands of the garrison, had his head exalted on a pole in the market-place, after the brains had been dashed out with an iron club. Death is now the portion of every fool-hardy wanderer from the shores of Araby, and whilst the Galla is compelled to relinquish his arms at the gate, every precaution is taken to exclude from the land the foreigner of whatever nation.

In the features of the Hurrurhi is to be traced a strong resemblance to those of the parent stock. The costume consists of a checked kilt, a creese, and a cotton toga; the display of a turban being restricted to the Ameer, to the moolahs, and to those who have performed the pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet.

Although distinct in itself, the language bears a singular affinity to that of the Amhára, but Arabic forms the written character. Barter is the most usual system of commerce, but the *mahaluk*, a small copper coin resembling the *dewáni* of Jiddah, is current in the realm. Twenty-two of these go to a nominal coin styled *ashrafi*, whereof forty are equivalent to the German crown. It bears on the reverse the name of the reigning Prince, and on the obverse the quotation from the Korán, “La *illah, illilah*!” “there is none other God but Allah.”

Around Hurrur the soil is rich, and extensively cultivated, especially in coffee. Two thousand bales of the finest quality are annually exported into India and Arabia by the ports of Zeyla and Berbera, which are visited thrice during the year by large caravans laden with ivory, ostrich feathers, ghee, saffron, gums, and myrrh, which latter is produced in great abundance. Blue and white calico, Indian piece goods, English prints, silks, and shawls, red cotton yam, silk thread, beads, frankincense, copper wire, and zinc, are received in exchange, and a transit duty of one *frazil* of the latter metal is levied by the Ameer on every slave passing through his dominions from the cold hills of his brother of Shoa, where these commodities are bartered.

(The distance of Hurrur from Zeyla may be assumed at 150 miles south-south-west and from Ankóber, 190 miles East.)

Between Aboo Bekr and the Christian monarch the most friendly intercourse subsists. Letters continually pass and repass, and scarcely a month elapses without the arrival of a caravan. The chief of the Wurj or merchants of Hurrur, standing specially appointed

by the Ameer, possesses absolute power to punish all offences, and adjust all disputes amongst his own countrymen, who are not less fond of drawing the creese than their Adaïel brethren. Tullah, an inferior description of beer, being brewed and swallowed in alarming quantities, brawls and scuffles too frequently terminate the debauch in blood. Should a Christian subject of Shoa be slain, the offence is passed over in politic silence, but when the reverse is the case, the worldly wealth of the sinning Abyssinian is confiscated by the crown, and his person handed over to the tender mercies of the Moslem savages.

The continual change of inhabitants, the excessive cheapness of provisions, and the prevalent custom of hand-fasting for the visit, tend little to improve the morality of the market-town. The chains of the convenient alliances formed, are by no means binding on either party, and the sum of twopence-halfpenny is perfectly sufficient to support during the week the trader and his temporary mate. One hundred pieces of salt are considered a large dowry; the nuptials are celebrated by feasting and routing alone, and whilst the utmost indifference prevails on the part of the husband, he loosens the matrimonial knot at pleasure, by carrying his partner before the kázi, and thrice repeating the words, “Woman, I thee divorce.”

One fourth of the entire population of Alio Amba are Hurrurhi and Danákil. Of the worthies who accompanied the Embassy from Tajúra, the majority continued to reside at Fárri and Chánnoo for the convenience of foraging their camels, but flocking every Friday to the market, they never failed to confer the pleasure of their society for a few hours. Gubaïyo, the deputy-governor of the town, had been specially

appointed to the service of the foreigners, and whilst discharging his office of spy with the most creditable diligence, he exercised with strict impartiality his functions as door-keeper, enforcing, greatly to the amazement of the independent Adaïel, the Abyssinian usage, which precludes the invasion of visitors unless duly introduced. The obnoxious red man, whose iniquities had well nigh cost the lives of the whole party at the Great Salt Lake, and who had now the impudence to seek a reward for his services on the road, was the first who came under the remorseless lash of the despotic bully; and it was a not less cheering and delightful sight to behold the warm-blooded little warrior, Ibrahim Shehém Abli, flying like a football down the steps leading from the court-yard into the muddy lane, before the propulsive impetus of a Christian toe, which presently sent the tyrannical Izhák bounding after his colleague, with many a severe thwack from the wand of office, ringing across his Moslem shoulders, as he vainly proclaimed himself own brother to the reigning Sultán of Tajúra.

Volume One—Chapter Forty Four.

Escape from the Market-Town.

Abyssinian despots sully not their dignity by condescending to divulge even the smallest design to the most confidential of their courtiers. In elegant Amháric phraseology “the belly of the master is never known;” and thus it occurred that had any possessed the inclination to predict the probable period of detention, none could boast the ability. A fortnight

rolled tardily away, and the burning curiosity of the savage having meanwhile overcome the scruples dictated by state policy, it became matter of public notoriety that the king had taken up his residence at the adjacent palace of Machal-wans, where preparations were actually in progress towards the long-desired audience.

The reappearance of the commander-in-chief of the body-guard, with the escort of honour, was the first welcome sign of approaching release from the vile market-town of Alio Amba; and the most illustrious peer of the realm, attended by a junto of scribes, and a host of reluctant porters, was not far behind him. Penmanship being so extremely tedious a process, it is not the court etiquette to endite letters when a verbal communication will answer the purpose; and the visitors were accordingly charged with abundant compliments, and with an invitation to behold the royal person on the ensuing Sabbath, which had been pronounced by the astrologers “a day of good omens.”

“Tarry not by day, neither stay ye by night, for the heart of the father longeth to see his children. Hasten that he be not again disappointed.”

But, unfortunately, the hour selected by the skill of “those who read the stars” did not find approval in the sight of the guests; and in order to gratify the royal impatience, it was therefore proposed that the interview should take place one day earlier. His Majesty, however, laboured under the effects of *cosso*, a drug resorted to by all who revel in raw diet; and feeling yet unequal to appear in public, it was finally arranged that audience should be deferred until the Monday following. A fresh inventory of boxes

was immediately commenced; and, after much opposition, those intended for presentation to the throne were separated, and sent off to await arrival at a hamlet distant two miles from Machal-wans.

The next labour was to dismantle the structure of bales and packages which during the detention at Alio Amba had been piled in view to the economy of space, so as to admit of some of the party occupying the tier next the roof, whilst others had slept in cabins formed below, or upon, or underneath, the table. But no sooner had the king's baggage departed than the Wulásma came to announce that there were no more porters, and that if any thing still remained it must be left behind. Another battle followed, and a war of words, which lasted a full hour and a half, was again crowned with victory.

Ayto Kálama Work, who had been the chief instigator of this opposition, is charged with manifold affairs. Independent of his important duties at the seat of his authority, where he is responsible for all tribute in salt, in honey, and in specie, he is entrusted with the treasures lodged in Ankóber, Arámba, Debra Berhán, and Kondie, and is expected to be present on all state occasions at the palace. To assist in the discharge of these onerous and multifarious duties, he has many stewards and subordinates, of whom the chief, who superintends the *ghemdjia* house, or royal wardrobe, wherein the most costly manufactures are deposited, had already proceeded in advance to spread the carpets in the great reception hall. He was accompanied by Déftera Sena, the secretary, whose business it is to receive and register all transfers to the state revenues, and who had been for the last fortnight almost incessantly busied with his pen.

Liberated from irksome captivity, the utmost difficulty was next experienced in procuring mules—no steps to supply the place of those destroyed having been taken by the inimical functionaries whose express duty it was. The few survivors of the late numerous drove were mustered, but only one proved in a condition to proceed, and it was not until a messenger had actually set out with a complaint to the king, that measures were taken to supply the number required. A clamorous mob now assembled in order to witness the difficulties raised in the way of the foreigners; and it required the utmost exertion on the part of Gubaïyo, both with his long stick and still longer tongue, to keep the idle crowd at a respectful distance.

Mounted at length, the party turned their backs towards the market-place, and entered upon a circuitous path, winding, by abrupt declivities and steep ascents, over three mountain torrents, towards the village of Sallal Hoola, at which the night was to be passed. Kind nature had everywhere spread the ground with her gifts in inexhaustible profusion and variety, supplying all the more immediate wants of mankind, yet enforcing the doom of labour so wisely imposed upon her lazy children. Rich acres of com by the wayside were interspersed with quiet hamlets, and with luxuriant meadows abounding in trefoil and a vast variety of red and white clover. Crystal brooks leapt in numerous cascades, and hedge-rows gay with endless flowers, the dog-rose and the fragrant jessamine, imparted to the rural landscape an aspect quite European.

Southern Abyssinia proper commences with Efát, at the foot of the first range of hills, which continue to increase both in altitude and fertility to the summit of

the lofty barrier that stretches north and south to form the brink of the elevated table-land of Shoa. Violent storms of thunder and lightning, which usher in the rainy season, are attracted to this region as well by the great elevation of the mountain as by the highly ferruginous nature of the rocks. It is a land of hill and valley, smiling under the influence of the copious deluge; and so striking a contrast does it present to the general character and climate of the torrid zone, that at first sight the delighted traveller might believe himself transported by some fairy agency to his northern home.

Ayto Wolda Hana, although loquacious enough, had been somewhat subdued by the temperature of the low country, to which, as well as to every thing Mohammadan, he evinced an insuperable disrelish; but once again within the influence of the cold mountain breeze beyond the limits of the Wulásma's jurisdiction, and he was in his glory. Two running footmen kept pace with his gaily-caparisoned mule. Immediately behind him rode a confidential henchman carrying the emblazoned shield and decorated lances which denoted his position in society; and in the height of Highland anarchy the tail of the McGregor was seldom of longer dimensions than that of the pompous governor of Ankóber.

Suddenly leaving the party, the great man was observed to dive into a village by the road-side, whence in a few minutes he returned, issuing a variety of orders in a far from melodious tone of voice, which evidently had reference to the mulberry steed already mentioned as having been brought from Aden. The animal had not been seen for many days, and every application regarding it had been so dexterously evaded, that, although the tail had not

been brought in, it was believed to have gone the way of all flesh. To the surprise of every one, the charger, prancing and neighing, was now led forth, in the best condition, by one of the King's grooms. So thoroughly had the worthy functionary been impressed with the erroneous conviction, that it formed a part of the present designed for his royal master, that the fortunate beast had been turned into clover, and duly fed with the choicest barley, whereas all its companions, although surrounded by plenty, had been suffered to starve.

At Sallal Hoola, another hovel had been provided by the royal bounty, smaller in dimensions, more dark, dirty, and dismal, and infinitely better garrisoned with vermin than the abode wherein the last fortnight had been passed. Environed by miry swamps and stagnant pools, it presented an appearance the most gloomy and wretched, whilst the materials for comfort were, as usual, denied by the officious functionaries, who had taken care to deposit the baggage most needed in quarters of the village where, at so late an hour, free access was impossible. The gloomy recesses of the veranda were crowded with female slaves, occupied in the various processes of preparing bread, which the population had been called upon to supply in large quantities to the palace against the approaching arrival of the foreigners. In one corner, two old women who alternately plied their pestles to a most monotonous ditty were pounding grain in a wooden mortar. In another a group of buxom lasses were rocking themselves to and fro over mills fashioned like the high-heeled slipper of the days of good Queen Bess, upon the inclined surface of which they contrived, with a stone and great personal labour, to convert the grain into a form

something resembling flour. It trickled in a scanty stream into a vessel placed below the depressed plane for its reception, and was presently wrought into thick cakes, full a foot and a half in diameter. These were merely shown to the fire, and a crude substance was thus produced, which by a well-fed Indian elephant would certainly have been rejected with a severe admonition to his keeper.

In this dreary and soul-depressing spot, destitute of beds and not overburdened with food, were experienced the very opposite of the delights of the Salt Lake—cold, damp, and wet in perfection; but the glad prospect of an interview with His Majesty on the morrow buoyed up the spirits of all, and misery was disregarded. Ayto Kátama had proceeded in advance to Machal-wans to seek at the royal hands permission to fire a salute of twenty-one guns on the British Embassy reaching the royal lodge—a point previously urged, but without success. It had already been brought to the King's notice that the foreigners partook of food which had been prepared by Mohammadans—a proceeding which in Shoa is reckoned equivalent to a renunciation of Christianity. Ideas the most extravagant were, moreover, in circulation relative to the powers of the ordnance imported, the mere report of which was believed sufficient to set fire to the earth, to shiver rocks, and dismantle mountain fastnesses. Men were said to have arrived with "copper legs," whose duty it was to serve these tremendous and terrible engines; and in alarm for the safety of his palace, capital, and treasures, the suspicious monarch still peremptorily insisted upon withholding the desired licence, until he should have beheld the battery "with his own eyes."

Volume One—Chapter Forty Five.

Presentation at Court.

It rained incessantly with the greatest violence throughout the entire night, and until the morning broke, when a great volume of white scud, rising from the deep valleys, and drifting like a scene-curtain across the stern summit of the giant Mamrat—now frowning immediately overhead—foretold the nature of the weather that might be anticipated during the important and long-looked-for day. The baggage having with considerable difficulty been collected from the various nooks and comers wherein the porters had deposited their loads, and no prospect of a brighter sky being in store, the circumjacent morasses were waded to the face of the hill which obscured Machal-wans. Too steep and slippery for mules, this was also ascended on foot, with the aid of long staves; and the rain, which had been dropping gently for some time, again setting-in with the most malicious steadiness, as if resolved to mar all attempt at display, the whole cavalcade was presently drenched to the skin.

An hour's toil over very heavy ground opened a sudden turn in the road, whence the escort, resting their cumbrous matchlocks over the rocks, commenced an indiscriminate fire—the reports of their heavily-loaded culverins, mingled with the answering note of welcome from the expectant crowd below, echoing long and loud among the broken glens. As the clouds of smoke floated slowly away on the dense atmosphere from the shoulder of the

mountain, there burst upon the sight a lovely view of the stockaded palace at Machal-wans. Its conical white roofs were embosomed in a fair grove of juniper and cypress, which crested a beautifully wooded tumulus rising at the extreme verge of the valley from the very banks of a roaring torrent. A bright green meadow, spangled with flowers, lay stretched at its foot: the rose, the eglantine, and the humble violet, grew around in all the grace of native wildness, to recall recollections of happier lands, whilst the great Abyssinian range, which even here towered almost perpendicularly some two thousand feet overhead, and whose peaks were veiled in wreaths of white fog, formed a magnificent background to the picture. Isolated farm-houses were profusely scattered over the verdant landscape—rich fields glistened in various stages of maturity—and the rills, swollen by the recent storm, came thundering over the mountain side, in a succession of foaming cascades.

Another hour's wading through deep ploughed fields of beans and peas and standing corn, and across the rapid torrent brawling over a rocky bed, brought the draggled party to two time-worn awnings of black serge, which not five minutes before had been pitched for its accommodation in a swamp below the royal residence, and which admitted the rain through an infinity of apertures. This continued up to the last moment, thick and heavy; but the utmost efforts of the deluge had proven insufficient to cleanse the mud-stained garments; and now the tramp of six hundred porters, in addition to the vast crowd which had assembled to witness the long-looked-for arrival of the British Embassy, soon converting the ground into a positive quagmire, ankle-deep in black mud,

seemed to render utterly hopeless any attempt at the exhibition of broad-cloth and gold lace on the approaching presentation at the Court of Shoa.

The governors of Ankóber and Alio Amba, whose special affair it was to provide food, and otherwise to render assistance needed, left the visitors to pitch their own tent, whilst they lounged in the palls, and contented themselves with urging the instant gratification of the royal curiosity, which was momentarily becoming more and more intense. Persecution on the part of the unruly and boisterous mob, to whom every object was new, meanwhile waxed greater and greater—thousands pressing forward to gaze as at wild beasts, and all contributing their mite to promote confusion and discomfort, now at the climax. Sally after sally was made by the uproused commander-in-chief of the body-guard, and many were the long sticks broken to small fragments over the backs and shoulders of the wild spectators in the course of his vigorous applications. But it was to no purpose. The ring was no sooner formed than broken, and the self-constituted clerk of the course, becoming at length weary of his occupation, he joined his idle colleagues in the tent, and left the multitude to their own devices.

A remonstrance to the King, touching the indignities to which the liege subjects of Great Britain were thus exposed at the hands of the Amhára rabble, on the very outskirts of the palace, was followed by a visit from Birroo, the favourite page, bearing an apologetic message on the score of ignorance; and repeated messages through this shrewd little confidant of royalty, who possessed all the airs of a spoiled pet, elicited first permission to fire a single gun—then five—and lastly, the desired salute. With his assistance,

moreover, the crowd was to a certain extent repelled, and the spacious tent having finally been erected, amid peals of savage wonder, the floor was strewed with heather and with branches lopped from the myrtles and from various aromatic shrubs that grew thickly around, and preparations were at length commenced for the interview, which, during the continuance of the tumult and uproar, had been by a succession of messages repeatedly and earnestly desired.

It was now noon, and the weather having temporarily cleared, the British party, radiant with plumes and gold embroidery, succeeded, after much fruitless opposition, in mounting their gaily-caparisoned steeds, and escorted by the governors, the commander-in-chief of the body-guard, and by a numerous and clamorous escort, proceeded in full uniform towards the palace. Many were the attempts made to enforce the etiquette which denies ascent in equestrian order; but as, on gaining the foot of the eminence, the roar of artillery burst from the centre of the encampment, and the deep valley, filling fast with a cloud of white smoke, began to echo back the salute at the rate of six discharges in a minute, no further interference was attempted, and an universal shout arose of "*Malifia Ungliz, melcom! melcom*!" "Wonderful English, well done! well done!"

Noise, bustle, and confusion, which in Abyssinia are reckoned highly honourable to the guest, were again at their climax on reaching the outer cricket, where the form of obtaining the royal permission to pass was to be observed ere entrance could be accorded by the state door-keepers. Further detention was experienced in the court-yard, at the hands of sundry officers of the privy chamber, whose visages were

but ill-adapted to sustain the character of high official importance, and whose assumption of dignity proved singularly ludicrous. At length came a message expressive of His Majesty's unqualified surprise and satisfaction at the extraordinary celerity with which the guns were being served, and his desire to see the Embassy forthwith; but attempting to advance, opposition was again interposed, and it needed another message, and yet another command, before admission could be obtained to the royal presence.

The last peal of ordnance was rattling in broken echoes along the mountain chain, as the British Embassy stepped at length over the high threshold of the reception hall. Circular in form, and destitute of the wonted Abyssinian pillar in the centre, the massive and lofty clay walls of the chamber glittered with a profusion of silver ornaments, emblazoned shields, matchlocks, and double-barrelled guns. Persian carpets and rugs of all sizes, colours, and patterns, covered the floor, and crowds of Alakas, governors, chiefs, and principal officers of the court, arrayed in their holyday attire, stood around in a posture of respect, uncovered to the girdle. Two wide alcoves receded on either side, in one of which blazed a cheerful wood fire, engrossed by indolent cats, whilst in the other, on a flowered satin ottoman, surrounded by withered eunuchs and juvenile pages of honour, and supported by gay velvet cushions, reclined in Ethiopic state His Most Christian Majesty Sáhela Selássie. The *Dech Agafari*, or state door-keeper, as master of the ceremonies, stood with a rod of green rushes to preserve the exact distance of approach to royalty, and as the British guests entered the hall and made their bows to the throne, motioned them to be seated upon chairs that had previously

been sent in—which done, it was commanded that all might be covered.

The King was attired in a silken Arab vest of green brocade, partially shrouded under the ample folds of a white cotton robe of Abyssinian manufacture, adorned with sundry broad crimson stripes and borders. Forty summers, whereof eight-and-twenty had been passed under the uneasy cares of the crown, had slightly furrowed his dark brow, and somewhat grizzled a full bushy head of hair, arranged in elaborate curls after the fashion of George the First; and although considerably disfigured by the loss of the left eye, the expression of his manly features, open, pleasing, and commanding, did not in their *tout ensemble* belie the character for impartial justice which the despot has obtained far and wide—even the Danákil comparing him to “a fine balance of gold.”

All those manifold salutations and inquiries which overwrought politeness here enforces, duly concluded, the letters with which the Embassy had been charged—enveloped in flowered muslin and rich gold kimkhab—were presented in a sandal wood casket, minutely inlaid with ivory; and the contents having been read and expounded, the costly presents from the British government were introduced in succession, to be spread out before the glistening eyes of the Court. The rich Brussels carpet which completely covered the hall, together with Cachemire shawls and embroidered Delhi scarfs of resplendent hues, attracted universal attention, and some of the choicest specimens were from time to time handed to the alcove by the chief of the eunuchs. On the introduction of each new curiosity, the surprise of the King became more and more

unfeigned. Bursts of merriment followed the magic revolutions of a group of Chinese dancing figures; and when the European escort in full uniform, with the sergeant at their head, marched into the centre of the hall—faced in front of the throne, and performed the manual and platoon exercises amidst jewellery glittering on the rugs, gay shawls and silver cloths which strewed the floor, ornamented clocks chiming, and musical boxes playing “God save the Queen,” His Majesty appeared quite entranced, and declared that he possessed no words to express his gratitude. But many and bright were the smiles that lighted up the royal features, as three hundred muskets, with bayonets fixed, were piled in front of the footstool. A buzz of mingled wonder and applause, which half drowned the music, arose from the crowded courtiers; and the measure of the warlike monarch’s satisfaction now filled to overflowing, “God will reward you,” he exclaimed, “for I cannot.”

But astonishment and admiration knew no bounds, as the populace next spread over the face of the hills to witness the artillery practice, which formed the sequel to the presentation of these princely gifts. A sheet was attached to the opposite face of the ravine. The green valley again rung to the unwonted roar of ordnance; and as the white cloth flew in shreds to the wind, under a rapid discharge of round shot, canister, and grape, amidst the crumbling of the rock, and the rush of the filling stones, the before despised sponge staves became a theme of eulogy to the monarch as well as to the gaping peasant. A shout rose long and loud over the pealing echoes which rattled from hill to hill; and far along the serrated chain was proclaimed the arrival of foreign guests, and the royal acquisition through their means of potent engines of war.

Compliments from the throne, and personal congratulations from the principal courtiers and officers of state, closed the evening of this unwonted display; and the introduction, by the hands of the favourite page, of a huge pepper pie, the produce of the royal kitchen, with a command that “the King’s children might feast,” was accompanied by the unheard-of honour of a visit from the dwarf father confessor, who might without difficulty have concealed his most diminutive person beneath the ample pastry. Enveloped in robes and turbans, and armed with silver cross and crosier, the deformed little priest, whose entire long life has been passed in doing good to his fellow-creatures, seating his hideous and Punch-like form in a chair placed for its reception, in squeaking accents delivered himself thus:—

“Forty years have rolled away since Asfa Woosen, on whose memory be peace, grandsire to our beloved monarch, saw in a dream that the red men were bringing into his kingdom curious and beautiful commodities from countries beyond the great sea. The astrologers, on being commanded to give an interpretation thereof, predicted with one accord that foreigners from the land of Egypt would come into Abyssinia during His Majesty’s most illustrious reign, and that yet more and wealthier would follow in that of his son, and of his son’s son, who should sit next upon the throne. Praise be unto God that the dream and its interpretation have now been fulfilled! Our eyes, though they be old, have never beheld wonders until this day, and during the reign over Shoa of seven successive kings, no such miracles as these have been wrought in Ethiopia.”

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By the passage of the polar star over the meridian, the magnetic variation at Ankóber was observed, with the aid of a well-regulated chronometer, to be 7 degrees westerly.

The longitude was determined both by a series of lunars, and by the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites, the mean of upwards of 150 observations having been taken.

Remarks on the Natural History of that Portion of the Adel Country Situated along the Route from the Sea-Coast to the Frontier of Efát.

From Tajúra to Killulloo.

The advanced state of the season was unfavourable for observations in the department of natural history. Both animal and vegetable life were apparently in a state of torpor; the trees and shrubs were in general leafless; and no annual plant whatever was to be seen, even in the immediate vicinity of the watering-places. The few insects that were not in a state of chrysalis, seemed drowsily to procrastinate their existence until food for the new generation should be prepared by nature. Amphibia, Saurii, and Ophidii, which are generally not so dependent on a supply of water, existed in small numbers in their lurking-places, whilst birds and larger animals must at this season have migrated to more favoured countries.

Basaltic and trachytic hills, either isolated or in chains, rise at a distance of about half a mile from the

sea-shore, which is winding and shelving. The hills are in general rounded, and marked by broad veins of similar composition, but containing more perfectly crystallised felspar, quartz, and zeolith. They have not the sharp peak, but are broken and cliffy, and have apparently been upheaved at different periods.

On leaving the shore, a most striking specimen of columnar basalt presented itself in the ravine of Galeylaféo, which, for nearly half a mile, runs through the heart of a huge mountain. In width it is about 200 yards, and the perpendicular pillars are 200 feet in height. It is evident that water could not have been the sole agent in producing such a huge cleft, although at present the ravine presents the appearance of a regular water-course. The surrounding hills consist of the same rock, but covered with loose boulders, which are much stained with oxide of iron.

Amongst the confusion of volcanic masses on the plain of Warelissán, excepting in some rare cases, when the true lava stream could be traced to its source, it was difficult to determine the exact site of the craters from whence they had been ejected. The hill which separates Báhr Assai from the sea, with its singular tops of limestone, slate, and creta, deserves a more minute examination than could be given at this season of withering heat. The western side is the most interesting, as being more open and disclosed; there is, however, as in all formations in the vicinity of volcanic countries, no uniform inclination of the layers. The range bordering the eastern shore of the lake is basalt and basaltic wacke; on the western, it is partly gypsum and limestone, but resting on basalt.

The great salt lake is a deep extensive basin,

separated by an immense lava stream from the remainder of the bay, the head of which it once formed. Resembling the Dead Sea in the depression of its level, in the density and chemical constitution of the fluid, and in the loneliness, sterility, and desolation of its borders, it yet differs from it materially in the ways by which volcanic action has produced the strange phenomenon of the existence of shores so considerably below the level of the ocean. In the Dead Sea, the lake of Tiberias, and the valley of the Jordan between them, it has apparently been a distortion and crushing of immense masses which have subsided into subterranean caverns. In the Báhr Assai it has been produced by the erection of a new bank, serving as a dam or barrier across the head of a long narrow bay, by which a considerable body of sea-water was separated from the former common receptacle. As high as the level of the Arabian Gulf are to be found, in the basin of Báhr Assai, the salts and earthy (magnesian) precipitates of the salt water, which in the course of time was reduced to its present level by evaporation, the yearly supply of rain-water being but as a drop to the ocean. Huge heaps of lava, having been apparently in strife with the opposite element, are erected on the banks over wacke, or in other cases over a finely-grained soft mart. The latter, when clear of lava, presents a thin layer of gypsum, with numerous shells of Melania, Limnaeus, Physa, Planorbis, Cyclostoma, Unio, and Cycas, some of which are at present to be found in the distant fresh-water pools and rivulets.

The shallow water on the borders of the lake presents natural salt-pans, and a crust of fine salt, two inches thick and tolerably clean, covers nearly the whole of the surface. The supply would seem to

be inexhaustible; for when cut out with a spaddle, a new crust is soon furnished from the waters beneath. Being visited by almost every tribe of the Adaïel and Somauli, and unhappily situated on the borders of the most lawless and savage of them, this remarkable spot is almost forbidden ground for the observer, not to speak of the obstacles thrown in the way by the destructive temperature and the general absence of the necessaries of life.

In the ravine of Goongoonteh, and during the continuation of the journey as far as Killulloo, slight variations of trap formation were met with. The wacke is of a fine grain, and its constituents are indistinctly mingled; it is traversed by empty holes and bubbles, and occasionally by druses of zeolith. Coarse quartz, sandstone, and conglomerates are sometimes found towards the surface. The country must have frequently been agitated by violent earthquakes, detaching huge masses of rocks from the hills; and, bereft alike of vegetation and animal life, it presents altogether a most monotonous appearance.

The lower classes of animals, of ephemeral existence, are found on every living or vegetating body.

Of *Coleoptera* were observed: two species of Pimelia (longipes), one of Cetonia, of Copris (Isidis), of Erodius (gibbus), several Staphylini and one Gyrinus.

Of *Orthoptera*: Locusts, Blattidae, Mantidae, Truxalidae.

Of *Hymenoptera*; several bees, especially at Killulloo, one of which, marked with light brown segments on the abdomen and bearing a long sting, was

exceedingly annoying.

Of *Piezata*: many different ants.

Of *Diptera* and *Hemiptera*: several species.

Of *Lepidoptera*: two species of Papilio and several of moths; and it was a matter of great wonder whence these butterflies obtained food in a country where even one flower could not be discovered.

Of *Myriapoda*: one Iulus, and several Scolopendra.

Arachnida were in great numbers: Mygale, Epeira, Lycosa, and one small Androctenus.

Of *Crustaceae*: near the sea-shore a Pagurus existed in astonishing numbers, and in the sweet waters a Daphnia.

Vertebrata were still scarcer; and the *Reptilia* had their representatives in the three orders Saurii, Ophidii, and Batrachii. A small lizard, very agile, existed under stones; also serpents, Vipera and Coluber, and in moist places Bufo and Rana.

Amongst the Birds—

Of *Rapaces*: Perenopterus and Falco are numerous.

Of *Gallinacea*: Numida meleagris, and various partridges.

Of *Cursorii*: Struthio-camelus and Otis.

Of *Ciconidae*: Ciconia Marabu.

Of *Cantores*: Corvus, Loxia, Sylvia, Vidua.

Of *Mammalia*, three species of Antelope, one of Hyrax, one of Equus (Onager), one of Sus (Phacochaerus); and fresh holes in the sand indicated the presence of animals most probably of the order Rodentia.

The sheep of the country are the Hejáz lamb (Ovis aries laticaudata); white body and black head and neck, covered with hair, and having thick, short, fat tails; male without horns. The goats and cattle are generally small in stature, of all colours, and surmounted with very large horns. The shepherd dogs are small, and spotted with yellow and white; they have long pointed skulls like the fox.

With regard to the flora of this part of the country, the small quantity found in flower, belongs, with few exceptions, to the family of the *Leguminosae*, amongst which the order of *Mimoseae* is the most extensive both in species and specimens; they are however all stunted and shrubby, and seldom attain any size. Still the only fuel and shade found during the journey was supplied by this tribe. There exist also several *Capparideae*; Cadaba, Sodada, Capparis. Cadaba rotundifolia is the most common.

The *Asclepiadeae* are represented in the Stapelia pulvinata, which however was seldom found in blossom, and in the Pergularia tomentosa, with stately flowers and capsules.

The *Malvaceae* existed in Ruitzia and Abutilon; and the other families found by the wayside, Moringeae, Rutaceae, Tamariscineae, Chenopodeae, Amaranthaceae, Cruciferae, presented only solitary specimens.

Of the *Euphorbiaceae* there were but three; and of the Palm tribe there only appeared to be two species, the Phoenix dactylifera and Hyphaene crucifera, both of which gradually disappeared as the soil improved.

Nature has scattered the necessaries of existence with a niggard hand over these desert plains, and the supply of water is indeed scanty. In such a hot climate, those pools which are not fed by running streams soon become adulterated by the decomposition of organic and inorganic matter. The wacke cannot resist any long exposure, and thence the water imbibes oxide of iron and muriate of soda, discovered in the pools of Goongoonteh, Allooli, and Bedi Kuroof; and again the numerous flocks and cattle of the caravans which are driven into the pools taint and corrupt the liquid in a still more offensive manner. The fetid smell and taste of the waters of Duwáylaka, Amádoo, Fiáloo, and Killulloo, is indeed so oppressive as to be subdued only by a considerable quantity of spirit; and moreover the deposited mud, when stirred up, emits a volume of sulphuretted hydrogen. During the wet season all the lower parts of the country are said to be exceedingly unhealthy, violent storms and incessant rain in the plains and wadies forcing the inhabitants to retreat to the mountains.

From Killulloo to the Foot of the Abyssinian Mountains.

The desert of the Adaïel, spreading from the sea to the foot of the Shoan Alps, is not altogether a plain, as it has been most likely in remote ages, numerous wadies, with banks more or less high, now intersecting the greater part of it. These banks rise in

some instances to hills of firm rock, generally wacke. They however consist of but lightly cemented conglomerates, or loose boulders. Towards the middle, as the ground rises, extinct volcanoes make their appearance, sometimes scattered and solitary, with indistinct cones and craters, completely covered with volcanic cinders, and sending off sheets of lava in all directions; or in whole clusters, with cones and craters complete, connected with each other, and environed by belts of their products. The extensive plain of Eyrolúf is a solid level of a dark, black, undecayed lava.

The tract of land between Killulloo and Dathára especially has been visited and overwhelmed by the action from below, which, having reversed the original disposition, has covered the surface with the effects of its violence. There is little to be seen of the under parts, although here and there some of the later formation, the residuum of the calcareous waters, has spread like a thin coat over the low grounds; but violent commotions have again and again altered and destroyed the first appearance, and it is now difficult to determine the centre pool from whence the fiery stream issued. In the absence of a main volcano and a main volcanic range, it may be concluded that, similar to some violent eruptions in South America, large mountains have been thrown up in the midst of former extensive plains, the fluid and half-fluid matter having burst forth wherever they were nearest to the surface.

Small extinct volcanoes were found on the plains of Sultélli and Eyrolúf. The road passes close to the isolated cone of one of these, called Jebel Hélmund. The walls are straight and black, covered with several smaller cones of ashes; the hill itself is about four

hundred feet in height; the crater is on the eastern side, a little below the top; and the sides, which are steep and sloping, are clothed with shrubs towards the base.

On the road to Moo stands a similar volcano; but the influence of these craters does not seem to have extended far beyond the immediate neighbourhood, although there is a connexion between the whole cluster on the plain of Mittur, which may be seen in the small lava streams and débris of volcanic product on the adjoining plains of Sultélli and Eyrolúf. It is not, however, apparent that they alone have formed the present state of the surface, as the south-eastern side of the plains is terminated by a much older formation of wacke.

Between Meinha-tólli and Madéra-dubba, obsidian, pumice, clinkstone, and fresh-water limestone containing shells of Melania, were strewed about Excellent soil is found in all these situations, the low grounds being overflowed at some seasons, and, as in all volcanic countries, producing much vegetation. The extensive plains of Moolu and Burdúdda are thickly covered with grass, and intersected by small brooks and pools, terminating towards the Háwash in very broken, hilly ground, and the large plain on the eastern bank of the river bears every sign of being annually deluged.

The country of the Adaïel is throughout very sparingly watered. During spring and autumn the hills collect sufficient rain-water for numerous rivulets, which after a course of scarcely one mile are absorbed by the sands, and dry up altogether by the end of the rains, whilst the deep hollows and clefts in the firmer rock preserve small quantities for the dry months of the

year. The Háwash itself, although receiving all the rivers of Efát, and of the eastern declivity of the Shoan mountains, does not reach the sea. The banks, thickly overgrown, are about thirty feet in height, and very abrupt. Its fall is scarcely perceptible, yet the rush of the water is very considerable.

On the western bank volcanic hills and sheets of water again appear, the latter being situated lower than the bed of the stream. One of these, impregnated with alkali, is evidently an old crater filled up, and supplied by a hot mineral spring. The water is much esteemed for washing clothes; it possesses an hydrothionic smell and a bitter taste, resembling that of the salt of magnesia; but the borders are verdant, and a species of Cyperus grows luxuriantly in the water.

This portion of the country, though still sparingly supplied with the means of subsistence, is more favourable for specimens of zoology than the burning tract between Tajúra and Killulloo.

Of *Beetles* the family *Coprophaga* had many representatives: Scarabaeus, Copris, Ateuchus, Onitis, Aphodius, Trox; Melolontha; four species of Cetonia (on the Aloe); one Silpha, Hister, Abax, Graphipterus, Anthia, Staphylinus, Elater, Cantharis, Erodius, Moluria, Pimelia, Mylabria, Chrysomela.

Of *Orthoptera*, large flights of Gryllus migratorius were observed near Azbóti. Acrydium and Gryllotalpa very common throughout. Also many Neuroptera, and termite cone studding the face of the country.

Of *Acephala* only one, Unio, was found near the

Háwash.

A few frogs were seen in the waters, but no fish; and although lizards abounded on the land, there were no serpents. One large-sized tortoise was picked up.

Birds of all descriptions inhabit the plains and enliven the scanty woods: the ostrich, Otis arabs, the partridge, ducks, adjutant, Charadrius spinosus, Psittacus, Lampromis, Tanagra erythrorhyncha, Pyrrhocorax. Of beasts, the giant in creation, the elephant, and his rival in hugeness, the hippopotamus, abound in the plain of the Háwash; and rapacious animals, the lion, the leopard, and the hyaena, prowling about the camp during the night, render indispensable the protection of a stout thorn fence.

Of the order *Rodentia* the porcupine is common; also a variety of rats.

Of *Ruminantia*: a few antelopes.

Of *Fissungula*: Hyrax.

Of *Setigera*; Phacochaerus abyssinicus; and of *Lemures*: Galago.

The flora, so dependent upon the nature of the ground, offers little variety throughout this tract, although a few new plants were found in the favoured plain of Sultélli. Four *Compositae* (one Santolina), three *Leguminosae* (one Cassia, resembling Senna), one *Euphorbia* (rotundifolia), one *Solanum*, one *Cucurbitacea* (Cucumis africanus), one *Crucifera* (Farsetia linearis), three *Malvaceae* (Hibiscus urens, Althaea spec.), one *Tiliacea* (Grewia spec.), one

Cistinea (Helianthemum spec.), one *Acanthacea* (Acanthus carduifolius), four *Gramineae*, one *Cyperacea*.

There were, however, no large timber trees, though edible berries of a sub-acid taste were supplied from a Helianthemum and a Grewia. Between Waramilli and Naga Koomi the shrubs of the Balsamodendron myrrha were first discovered, and these continued as far as the Háwash. Grass too is met with on the wide plains. Large camel-thorn acacias, and a strange tree of the family Capparidea, at intervals interrupt the uniform desert waste; but even the luxuriant vegetation which prevails on the banks of the Háwash contains little besides the Tamarix africana.

A high jungle of Acacia extends near the plain of Azbóti, supplying an abundance of sweet gum-arabic, and the last stage to Dathára is encumbered with the Aloe soccotrina. There are also many fine forest trees in the valley of Kokaï, amongst which the Tamarindus indica stands conspicuous; but no cultivation whatsoever is to be seen during the entire progress of upwards of three hundred miles from the sea-coast to the green hills of Abyssinia.

Description of the Frankincense Tree, as Found near Cape Guardufoi, on the Somauli Coast, by Captain C.B. Kempthorne, Indian Navy, Commanding the Hon. Company's Sloop of War "Clive."

At Bunder Cassim, about one hundred miles to the eastward of Berbera, the mountains come close down to the coast. There is a pass and road over them, and a few hours' walking will, it is said, lead to a fine climate, and to a beautifully fertile country, abounding in the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the

lion, and thickly populated by pastoral tribes. Several rivers take their source in the high land, and, flowing to the southward and eastward, fall into the Indian Ocean, 4 degrees or 5 degrees north of the equator.

The chief town of the Miggertheyn Somauli is at Bunder Maryah, which lies twenty miles south-west of Ras Feeluk. The range is here about 5000 feet in altitude, and three miles from the shore. Ascending 1000 feet, a wide plain presents itself, bounded on every side by precipitous mountains studded with the frankincense and gum acacia trees, but looking bare and naked from the total absence of underwood.

The frankincense assumes the most singular aspect, from the fact of its invariably growing from the bare and smooth sides of the white marble rocks of which these bills are composed, without any soil whatever to nourish it. Many of the trees have even attached themselves to the huge masses that have rolled down into the valley, and now lie scattered over the stony surface. From the base of the trunk, and about treble its diameter, a very round thick substance is protruded, of a nature between bark and wood. This adheres most firmly to the stone, and at a distance resembles a mixture of mortar and lime. From the centre of the mass the stem, having first taken a bend or curve outwards of several inches, rises straight up to a height of forty feet. It throws from the top short branches covered with a very bright green foliage, the leaves being narrow and rounded at the end, five or six inches in length by one broad, crimped like the frill of a shirt; or rather bearing a stronger resemblance to that beautiful species of sea-weed found along the coast of England, and styled by urchins “the old gentleman’s ruffles.”

From a foot to eighteen inches is the usual girth of the stem, and it tapers gradually away to the summit. The bark is perfectly smooth, and consists of four distinct layers. The outermost of all is very thin, and similar to that of the beech. The two next are of a singularly fine texture, resembling oiled letter-paper, perfectly transparent, and of a beautiful amber colour. It is used by the Somaulis to write upon. The inner bark of all is about an inch thick, of a dull-reddish hue, tough, and not unlike leather, but yielding a strong aromatic perfume. The wood is white and soft, and might be applied to many useful purposes. By making a deep incision into the inner rind, the gum exudes profusely, of the colour and consistency of milk, but hardening into a mass by exposure to the atmosphere.

The whole mountain range from Bunder Maryah to Cape Guardufoi is composed of limestone and marble, and near the latter place especially the marble is so white and pure that it approaches to alabaster. Pink and greyish black are also common colours, and in parts it might be mistaken for sandstone, until chipped off with the hammer. On the plain visited the frankincense is nowhere to be found resting upon the ground, or upon any sort of soil, and the purer the marble to which it adheres the finer the growth of the tree. It would seem that this singular production of the vegetable world derives its sole nourishment from carbonate of lime. The young trees produce the best and most valuable gum, the older merely yielding a clear glutinous fluid resembling copal varnish, and exhaling a strong resinous odour.

During the south-west monsoon the pastoral tribes in the neighbourhood of Ras Feeluk collect large quantities of frankincense, which they barter to the

Banians, of whom a few reside at the villages along the Abyssinian coast. Boats from Maculla, and from other ports on the opposite Arabian shore, also come across during the fine season and carry away the gums that have been accumulated, and which are exchanged for a coarse kind of cotton cloth worn by the Somauli.

End of the First Volume.

Volume Two—Chapter One.

The Capital of the Kingdom of Shoa.

His Christian Majesty passed the greater portion of the wet night succeeding the presentation of the British Embassy, in revels amid the foreign riches so unexpectedly heaped upon him. Long tormented by curiosity which he had been afraid to gratify, he now minutely examined every novel article with all the greediness of the savage; and the royal scribes having been duly assembled, elaborate inventories were penned upon scrolls of parchment, to be deposited for the edification of posterity in the archives of the kingdom. The fire-arms and the warlike munitions were transferred forthwith to the grand arsenal; the rich manufactures of the loom were added to the shelves of the palace wardrobes; and the curiosities, including the Chinese dancing girls, were carefully immured in the mouldy magazines of Mamrat, Kondie, and Arámba, with labels and tickets setting forth their respective properties, and proclaiming to future occupants of the throne of Shoa that these wonders were added to the

state treasures by the red men called Gyptzis, who came from beyond during the auspicious reign of Sáhela Selássie.



Ere day had dawned, the favourite page was deputed from the king to inquire whether all had slumbered happily. Etiquette demanded that our reply should be in the affirmative, but if an estimate were formed from the drenched and miserable aspect of the tent, the report made to the palace must have been far from favourable. In the absence of the cap, which had been lost upon the road, the fly of the marquee was hastily lashed with cords to the pole, and becoming saturated during the night by the pelting storm, it had presently slidden down, and formed a funnel, which completely put an end to sleep.

Hajji Kásim and Izhák, who, with some of their bigoted Moslem retainers, had repaired to court to witness the reception of “the Christian dogs,” had presented themselves at nightfall, wet, shivering, and famished, to implore food and shelter, which had

been denied by the officers of the royal household. Upon the principle of good for evil, we gave them abundance to eat, and each of us contributed a share of his bedding, but the untoward fall of the canvass proved equally disagreeable to Christian and to Mohammadan. Drenched to the skin, the true believers, spite of their covering of lard, were fairly swamped where they lay; and the Ras el Káfilah's pet Korán having been trampled under foot in the confusion attendant upon repitching, he angrily left the tent in the morning by one door, at the moment that the spoiled page entered by the other, grumbling as he went, "Allah! how could the sacred volume experience any better fate at the hand of infidels?"

Six hundred peasants, who had been pressed on the service of the state from the Mohammadan villages of Argobba, after transporting the king's baggage from Alio Amba to Machal-wans, had bivouacked without food or shelter upon the bare saturated ground, and were strewed over the greensward like the slain on a battle-field. As the day dawned, their loud cries of "*Abiet, abiet*," "Master, master," arose to the palace-gates from every quarter of the valley; but they lifted up their sad voices in vain; and reiterated entreaties for dismissal passing unheeded, I with great difficulty succeeded in purchasing for them a sufficient number of oxen, which were instantly slaughtered, and eaten raw upon the spot.

The sceptic in Europe who still withholds his credence from Bruce's account of an Abyssinian brind feast, would have been edified by the sight now presented on the royal meadow. Crowds swarmed around each sturdy victim to the knife, and impetuously rushing in with a simultaneous yell, seized horns, and legs, and tail. A violent struggle to

escape followed the assault. Each vigorous bound shook off and scattered a portion of the assailants, but the stronger and more athletic still retained their grasp, and resolutely grappling and wrestling with the prize, finally prevailed. With a loud groan of despair the bull was thrown kicking to the earth. Twenty crooked knives flashed at once from the scabbard—a tide of crimson gore proclaimed the work of death, and the hungry butchers remained seated on the quivering carcass, until the last bubbling jet had welled from the widely-severed throat.

Rapidly from that moment advanced the work of demolition. The hide was opened in fifty places, and collop after collop of warm flesh and muscle—sliced and scooped from the bone—was borne off in triumph. Groups of feasting savages might now be seen seated on the wet grass in every direction, greedily munching and bolting the raw repast. Entrails and offal did not escape. In a quarter of an hour nought remained of the carcass save hoofs and horns, and the disappointed vultures of the air assembling round the scene of slaughter with the village curs, found little indeed to satisfy their hunger.

During this general carousal of the grateful host, the smooth-spoken purveyor-general, who was completely at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the liberality extended, advanced with a sleek and pampered band of parasites. The assistance of the unfeeling functionary had been craved in vain, and he now, after casting a contemptuous glance towards the sated serfs, in honied words inquired with obvious surprise, “whether the party had not rested well, that they thus troubled their heads unnecessarily about the worthless bondsmen of the Negoos?”

No suitable lodging being obtainable at Machalwans, I deemed it advisable to adopt the king's proposal of proceeding at once into winter quarters at the capital. Preparatory to setting out thither we had an audience of the king. "My children," quoth His Majesty, "all my gun-people shall accompany you; may you enter in safety! Whatsoever your hearts think and wish, that send word unto me. Saving myself, ye have no relative in this distant land. Ye have travelled far on my affairs. I will give you what I can, according to that which my country produces. I cannot give you what I do not possess. Be not afraid of me. Listen not to the evil insinuations of my people, for they are bad. Look only unto Sáhela Selássie. May his father die, he will accomplish whatsoever ye desire!"

The sun shone brightly through the fleecy white clouds, as our party left the wet encampment in the valley, and under an escort of fusiliers took the way to the capital without that regret which is usually felt on quitting the precincts of royalty. A green, swampy meadow led to the foot of the mountains, over which numberless cascades foamed furiously to the plain. Supported from the base to the utmost summit by artificial terraces, and clothed with the most luxuriant cultivation, there were parts over which it seemed hardly possible that the plough should have passed at so great an angle. But wheat and barley delight in a dry stony soil, and with a fair proportion of the "former and the latter rain," will here yield abundant return to those who, by their industry, strive to emulate the prosperity of more happily located neighbours.

From Machal-wans to Ankóber the distance does not exceed six miles; but the ascent is great and immediate, and the reduction in temperature

perceptible at every step. Springs gushed out clear and sparkling on either side of the rugged path, and beautiful plants luxuriated in the moist atmosphere. The prospect was altogether delightful, and the change more than ever striking from the hot deserts of the Adaïel, which now, at a yet greater depression, stretched away in fading tints to the extreme point of vision.

The latter portion of the road lay through the forest of Aferbeine. Cedar-like junipers, dried up by the blast of centuries, rearing towards the sky their tall skeleton forms, rocked to every breeze. Younger scions of the stock, clothed in a sombre cypress garb, flourished in vigour among the drooping and silvery *woira*, of which the pensive branches were hoary with ancient moss hanging in fanciful festoons; and saving when the zephyr sighed through the foliage, or a bird whistled from the topmost branch, silence reigned throughout the sylvan scene.

Whether in Europe or in half-civilised Abyssinia, monastic establishments are invariably seated in spots the most romantic. Deep in the recesses of Aferbeine stands the church and monastery dedicated to Tekla Haïmanót, an ecclesiastic of extraordinary abilities, who flourished during the thirteenth century, and rescuing the greater portion of the empire from the yoke of usurpation, restored it to the hands of Yekweno Amlak, the lineal descendant of the ancient Ethiopic dynasty. Subsequently canonised for his successful exertions in the cause both of Church and State, the monk, whose history is obscured with numberless superstitious traditions, is to the present day held in the highest veneration. Thrice during the year a festival is held in celebration of his birth, death, and ascension, and by the entire

Christian population he is regarded as the patron saint of Abyssinia.

Instantly on emerging from the forest, the metropolis of Shoa, spreading far and wide over a verdant mountain, shaped like Afric's appropriate emblem, the fabled sphynx, presented a most singular if not imposing appearance. Clusters of thatched houses of all sizes and shapes, resembling bams and haystacks, with small green enclosures and splinter palings, rising one above the other in very irregular tiers, adapt themselves to all the inequalities of the rugged surface; some being perched high on the abrupt verge of a cliff, and others so involved in the bosom of a deep fissure as scarcely to reveal the red earthen pot which crowns the apex. Connected with each other by narrow lanes and hedgerows, these rude habitations, the residence of from twelve to fifteen thousand inhabitants, cover the entire mountain-side to the extreme pinnacle—a lofty spire-like cone, detaching itself by a narrow isthmus to form the sphynxs head. Hereon stands the palace of the Negoos, a most ungainly-looking edifice with staring gable ends, well fortified by spiral lines of wooden palisades. They extend from the base to the summit, and are interspersed with barred stockades, between which are profusely scattered the abodes of household slaves, with breweries, kitchens, cellars, storehouses, magazines, and granaries.

Over those portions unengrossed by cultivation or by architecture, shrubs and bushes and great beds of nettles assumed the most luxuriant and lively appearance. Huge fallen masses of rock strewed the lower valleys, and others seemed ready to be launched at a moment's notice upon the clustering habitations; whilst in the distance, the bronze cross of

the church of “our Lady,” peeping above the dark foliage of the juniper, touched the chord of feelings but little in unison with the wild escort that surrounded us, above whose streaming locks floated bloody emblems, that breathed aught save conformity to the mild tenets of the Christian religion.

Ankóber, literally translated, signifies the gate of Anko. She was queen over the Galla tribe, by which this mountain was peopled from the invasion of Graan until its reconquest by the crown of Shoa, and has bequeathed her name to the narrow winding path which forms the “*her*” or gate to the suburbs. Skirting the brink of a yawning abyss, and scarcely wide enough for the foot of a mule, it is not traversed without a feeling of insecurity, and the labour of a few hours would suffice to render all approach to the capital impracticable, unless to the mountain goat. Loud cheers from the whole assembled population, female as well as male, greeted our arrival, for the thunder of our guns in the adjacent valley had given birth to a feeling of respect in the breast of all; nor was it without considerable difficulty that we made our way through the dense crowd that whitened the entire hill-side, and lined every valley. At length we reached a newly erected building fronting the palace, which had been set apart by His Majesty for our occupation, and which was now completely thronged by porters, and beleaguered by clamourous spectators.

Wistful looks were exchanged as we entered this barn-like and dreary abode, which for months, if not for years, was to form our asylum. A decent new thatch, and a neat basket-work ceiling, did indeed form a roof to the structure, but further, the crude and unfinished shell whereon they rested, could hardly

claim the denomination of “a house.”

It rather resembled a den in Exeter ’change, or an aviary upon a magnified scale; and the open hide-lashed ribs, being innocent throughout of dab or plaster to choke the interstices, wind, rain, and mountain fog considered themselves to be equally His Majesty’s guests, and entitled to the occupation of the uninviting interior. Oblong in form, windowless, chimneyless, and provided at either end with a lofty but narrow door, rudely fashioned of massive planks and beams, each of which, in the absence of a saw, had involved the demolition of an entire tree, the edifice yet afforded an unusually favourable specimen of Shoan architecture; and to account for its desolate and unfinished condition, it may be proper to add, that the proprietor, who had been honoured with the fair hand of a princess of the blood royal, having a few weeks previously been so unfortunate as to incur the displeasure of his despotic father-in-law, now occupied apartments in the state prison, whilst the management of his estate was, *ad interim*, considerately undertaken by the crown, without even the preliminary of a *fieri facias*.

Inner walls divided the centre room from two narrow verandahs, intended for the reception of mules, horses, and household lumber. The floor was precisely as nature made it, depressed rather than raised, and little improved by the many recent inundations to which it had been subjected. Torrents of muddy water filled the trench which environed the entire structure, and occasionally bursting the banks of the dyke, oozed copiously between the palisades, to cover the soil with artificial lakes; whilst the small open area beyond, into which it disembogued—hemmed in on all sides by rank vegetation, stinging

nettles, and half-ruined but noisily inhabited hovels—was, without any exaggeration, eighteen inches deep in honest mire.

Although our pilgrimage had at last terminated, the prospect, both within and without, was still far from encouraging. The mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 58 degrees, and it became necessary to adopt immediate measures towards the exclusion of the cold driving mist and the whistling wind, which the absence of a fire rendered far from agreeable. The union flag of old England, stretched across the hall, lent the aid of its ample folds to enliven the interior. Tent walls and tarpaulins composed tolerably comfortable cabins in the verandah closets. Gun-cases, placed on end, and connected by the lid of a chest, formed a temporary table, and with a puncheon as a washing-stand, and two swinging shelves overhead, completed the furniture of each apartment. Boxes and bales, as they continued to arrive, were piled around the inner walls, and soon reaching to the ceiling, the appearance of a booth at a country fair, on a rainy day, ere the wares have been exposed for sale, was gradually imparted to this highly unique residency in the capital of Shoa.

Volume Two—Chapter Two.

Residence in Ankóber.

But darkness now reigned within our cheerless abode. Candles that will burn for more than ten minutes together, or afford light sufficient either to read or write, are luxuries which have no existence in

so primitive and benighted a land; and strips of old cotton rag dipped in unpurified bees' wax, forming, like most other good things in the empire, a royal monopoly, are doled out by the purveyor-general to the favoured few with but a niggard hand; whilst the absence of glass or other transparent substance, and the continued presence of rain, sleet, clouds, and fog thicker than the steam of a wash-house, rendered it for some time difficult to admit the scanty light of heaven during its fitful visits through the overcast atmosphere.

Wood, too, belongs exclusively to the despot, and is far from being abundant in the timberless realm; but packing cases, as they became empty, were furnished with a sheet of oiled parchment, and these admirable substitutes for glazed sashes, were, in defiance of exhortations not to deface the king's walls, inserted therein from time to time. A chafing dish, raised upon a high mud pedestal, at length cheered the long dreary evenings, although the wet sodden fuel yielded a very feeble blaze, whilst its dense smoke, choking the chimneyless room, covered walls and roof with soot. Last, but not least among our improvements, were tallow dips, which we manufactured of the fat tail of the Ethiopian sheep, and these afforded us sufficient light by which to retire to bed, where fleas, revived by the unwonted warmth of English blankets, denied all rest.

The low moaning of the storm behind Mamrat, and the distant growl of the thunder, usually ushered in the night. There was a sound as of the surf breaking over a rocky shore, and before many minutes the hurricane was at its height. Crashing reverberations of thunder rattled among the serrated cliffs, whilst the gates of heaven poured forth a deluge, which

rendered every lane and footpath throughout the town, ankle deep in running water.

Often after one of those falls of rain so common in tropical countries, the face of the lowlands for fifty miles would be concealed under an impenetrable fog. The spectator rode upon a sea of billowy clouds which rolled beneath his foot, lashing with their spray the dark islands formed by the peaks of the higher mountains: and beyond, in the hot Adel plain might be seen the Háwash winding through the distance, until melted into the limits of the horizon. As the great bank ascended, all around became wet and clammy to the touch; and the mist, although sluggish and slow to move, was of a nature so keenly searching, that in defiance of all muffling, it seemed to penetrate to our very bones.

Together with those privations which are common to a residence among all savage nations, there are many which Abyssinia claims exclusively as her own; nor, if viewed only as a place of abode, does the country possess aught save the salubrity of the climate to counterbalance its manifold discomforts and disadvantages. Although in the midst of abundance, we experienced the utmost difficulty in obtaining the most common necessaries of existence —bread, meat, and water; and notwithstanding that a sufficiency of wheat to sustain life for an entire year may be purchased for one German crown, yet where the stranger is concerned, the grain, without the assistance of the monarch, can scarcely be converted into the staff of life—the process entailing all the petty worry and annoyance which in other lands are solely undertaken and performed by menials.

In a kingdom where the inhabitants are solely dependent upon the exertions of slaves, the difficulties are increased ten-fold to those who are obliged to employ hired domestics. The markets are at a great distance from the capital, and held at long intervals; nor are they ever so well supplied as to admit of the requisite weekly stock being purchased at any individual place. Hence much trouble and inconvenience arose from the necessity of dispatching messengers simultaneously to the various remote bazaars; and very great difficulty was experienced in preserving even the small number of live stock required for consumption in a country where all the surrounding meadows pertain alike to the crown, and where labour is so difficult to be procured.

Whilst porters are not to be obtained unless through a direct mandate from the king, the unwillingness of mule-owners to hire their cattle at the existing low rate, the displeasure and heartburning of the authorities if a larger bribe were offered, the badness of the roads, and the steepness of the hills, all combine to render it a perplexing matter to dispense with this species of service. On the other hand, the greatest difficulty is experienced in providing for a permanent establishment of baggage-horses with their attendants, owing to the existing necessity of distributing them in small lots among the limited private grazing grounds in the vicinity, whence, when wanted, they are not to be obtained without infinite difficulty.

Every arrangement, however minute in detail, or trivial in importance, here demands a sacrifice of time and temper in a tedious and lengthy conference, which, in accordance with the custom of the country,

must be carried on by the principal persons engaged in the transaction. No article is readily to be purchased, nor can any thing, how trifling soever, be accorded without the royal mandate, and when that is at last obtained, the applicant would appear to be further than ever removed from the realisation of his object. “It is done,” is the mode of signifying that a request is granted, and the despot believes that to will is to accomplish; but whilst his commands are usually obeyed more to the letter than in the spirit in which they have been given, his public officers embrace every opportunity of consulting the interests of the privy purse, to the stranger’s disadvantage.

In utter abhorrence of the country and its inhabitants, the Moslem servants who accompanied the Embassy from India all took their departure, willing rather to brave the dangers and difficulties of a long journey through the inhospitable deserts of the Adaïel, than to prolong a hateful sojourn in Abyssinia. One half of the number were murdered on the way down, and the places of all long remained empty. In any part of the world it would be difficult to find domestics inferior to their Christian successors. The consumption of *brundo*, or raw beef, and the sleeping off a surfeit which, in its progress towards stupor, exhilarated them to positive intoxication, formed the sum total of their services; yet every idle noisy vagabond who was in the receipt of four pieces of salt per mensem, with the promise of a new cloth annually, value three shillings and nine-pence sterling, held himself entitled to a permanent place before the drawingroom fire.

All stipulated for one day out of the thirty on which to drink *cosso*, and during the other twenty-nine, few ever stirred without grumbling. Honesty is not prominent among the Abyssinian virtues, and the lack

of it sometimes redounded to the discredit of the master. A youth who was entrusted with a dollar to purchase sheep in the adjacent market, ingeniously contrived to smuggle into the flock, two for which he had not paid, being convinced that such an economical arrangement must prove highly agreeable to his employers, and thus lead to his own advancement. A hue and cry was raised on the discovery of the theft, and it required some time to persuade the magisterial authorities that the goat-herd had not been defrauded with the cognisance of the *bála-beit*. (Master of the house.)

An *áfero*, or janissary, had been specially appointed as a spy over the actions of the foreigners, and he rendered himself sufficiently obnoxious. Not satisfied with prying into the contents of boxes for the information of the purveyor-general, his immediate superior, he reported to the throne every the most minute circumstance that occurred; and besides originating several ingenious falsehoods, was so indefatigable in proclaiming us to be heretics, that he was shortly turned out of the house in disgrace, with an order never to show his face again.

Ethiopia derived her faith from the fountain of Alexandria; but how is her Christianity disfigured by folly and superstition! The intolerance of the bigoted clergy, who rule with the iron hand of religious ascendancy, soon proclaimed the British worse than Pagans, for the non-observance of absurd fasts, and blasphemous doctrines; and the inhabitants, priest-ridden to a degree, received their cue of behaviour principally from their most despotic tyrant, the Church. Unquies, the Comus or Bishop of Shoa, was the most open and undisguised in his hostilities. Beset by evil thoughts at an early age, he imitated

the example set by the celebrated Origenes; and so much is he respected by the monarch for his austerities and religious devotion, that His Majesty invariably speaks of him as “the strong monk.” To him was traced a report that the Embassy were to be summarily expelled the country, in consequence of the non-observance of the fasts prescribed by the Ethiopic creed, and because a Great Lady, whose spies they were, was on her way from the sea-coast, with a large military force, to overturn the true religion, put the king to death, and assume possession of all Abyssinia.

On the festival of the Holy Virgin, the cemetery was thrown open, wherein rest the remains of Asfa Woosen, grandsire to Sáhela Selássie. It is a building adjoining the church of Saint Mary; and being anxious to visit the mausoleum, I sent a message to the Lord Bishop, requesting permission to do so. An insolent reply was returned, that since the English were in the habit of drinking coffee and smoking tobacco, both of which Mohammadan abominations are interdicted in Shoa upon religious grounds, we could not be admitted within the precincts of the hallowed edifice, as it would be polluted by the foot of a Gyptzi.

Nevertheless, we were permitted to attend Divine service in the less inimical of the five churches of the capital, and offerings were made according to the custom of the country. The cathedral of Saint Michael, distinguished above all its compeers by a sort of Chinese lantern on the apex, being invariably attended by the monarch, came first in order; and after wading through the miry kennels that form the avenues of access, our slippers were put off in accordance with Jewish prejudice, and giving them in

charge of a servant to prevent their being stolen, we stepped over the threshold. The scowling eye of the bigoted and ignorant priest sparkled with a gleam of unrepressed satisfaction at the sight of a rich altar-cloth, glowing with silk and gold, which was now unfolded to his gaze; and a smile of delight played around the corners of his mouth, as the hard dollars rung in his avaricious palm.

A strange, though degrading and humiliating sight, rewarded the admittance we had thus gained to the circular interior of the sacred building. Coarse walls, only partially white-washed, rose in sombre earth but a few feet overhead, and the suspended ostrich-egg —emblem of heathenish idolatry—almost touched our heads as we were ushered in succession to the seat of honour among the erudite. In a broad verandah, strewed throughout with dirty wet rushes, were crowded the blind, the halt, and the lame—an unwashed herd of sacred drones, muffled in the skin of the *agázin*; but beyond this group of turbaned monks and hireling beggars there was no congregation present.

The high-priest having proclaimed the munificence of the strangers, pronounced his solemn benediction. Then arose a burst of praise the most agonising and unearthly that ever resounded from dome dedicated to Christian worship. No deep mellow chant from the chorister—no soul-inspiring anthem, lifted the heart towards heaven. The Abyssinian cathedral rang alone to the excruciating jar of most unmitigated discord; and amid howling and screaming, each sightless orb was rolled in the socket, and every mutilated limb convulsed with disgusting vehemence. A certain revenue is attached to the performance of the duty; and for one poor measure of black barley

bread, the hired lungs were taxed to extremity; but not the slightest attempt could be detected at music or modulation; and the dissonant chink of the timbrel was ably seconded by the cracked voice of the mercenary vocalist.

No liturgy followed the cessation of these hideous screams. The service was at an end, and the *Alaka*, beckoning us to follow, led the way round the edifice. The walls were adorned with a few shields, and with miserable daubs representing the Madonna, the Holy Trinity *in caelo*, the Father of Evil enveloped in flames, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Saint George and his green dragon, Saint Demetrius vanquishing the lion, Saint Tekla Haïmanót, Saint Balaam and his ass, the Patron Saint, and every other saint in the Abyssinian calendar. But they boasted of no sculptured monument raised to departed worth or genius—no proud banner or trophy of heroic deeds—and no marble tablet to mark the quiet rest of the soldier, the statesman, or the scholar. In the holy of holies, which may be penetrated by none save the high-priest, is deposited the sacred *tabot*, or ark of the faith, consecrated at Gondar by the delegate of the Coptic patriarch; and around the veil that fell before this mysterious emblem, there hung in triumph four sporting pictures, from the pencil of Alken, which I had lately presented to His Majesty. They represented the great Leicestershire steeple-chase; and Dick Christian, with his head in a ditch, occupied by far the most prominent niche in the boasted cathedral of Saint Michael!

Volume Two—Chapter Three.

Interviews with the King.

Meanwhile, during the tedious fast observed by all classes in commemoration of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, the king continued his residence at Machal-wans. On such occasions. His Majesty seeks the retirement of a country seat, and subsists upon raw fish, with vegetable oil and pepper. He is moreover averse to occupy the palace at Ankóber in the rainy season, when the elevated position of the isolated peak whereon it stands becomes a fearful mark for lightning, by which it is often struck; whilst huge masses of rock, loosened from the adjacent heights, come thundering into the valley, to the annihilation of every house that opposes their headlong course. The greater part of the court, however, continued to reside at the capital, and many were the demands made for presents by public officers of the state, amongst whom the Abyssinian habit of begging is sufficiently rife.

“There be pleasing things in my country which are not in yours,” was the usual form of application, “and fine things in your country which are not found in mine.” Well assured that no return would be accepted for what they coveted, many had recourse to a species of refinement in the art of begging—the offer of block salt—and *ámole* in hand, they desired that the wares brought for sale might forthwith be exposed. Others tendered *mamálachas*, or trifling offerings, which, if once accepted, are considered to establish a claim to ready acquiescence in demands the most preposterous. Broken decanters were exhibited four times over by the domestics of the royal household, who, with tears in their eyes, entreated the price of the vessel as the only means of saving them from

condign punishment. A shield was never defaced, nor a mule lost, that the delinquent did not refer himself to the Residency for the amount of the fine imposed; and one of the imperial footmen finally sought to place beyond all question his right to appropriate the very cloth upon the table. “I am the waiter in the great banqueting-hall,” quoth the modest applicant, “and therefore I require this cloth as a dress.”

Nor were even the royal family idle during this interval. Belete-Shatchau, “superior to all,” a notable shrew lately divorced by the governor of Mans, and daughter of the queen by a former marriage—first in order—and then Worka Ferri, “golden fruit,” another of the princesses royal—established their respective claims to articles of British manufacture, beads, chintz, and tinsel, by the presentation of potent hydromel in long-necked *barilles*, screened under wicker cases. Their example was speedily followed by the illustrious Queen Besábesh, “thou hast increased,” who begged to be informed what “delighting things” had been brought for *her* acceptance. But the report of this fact being immediately conveyed to the despotic ears, His Majesty lost not a moment in hinting “that it were desirable that all presents intended for the palace, should pass through his own hands.”

It is not permitted to any subject of the realm to receive the smallest gift without submitting it forthwith to the Negoos, who either appropriates it with an “*Egzihér istikh*!” “May the Lord reward thee!” or accords permission to its retention; and concealment is sure to be visited, on discovery, with the severest punishment. Birroo, the son of a defunct nobleman, and the especially favourite page of the king, had been appointed *báldoraba*, or “introducer” to the

Embassy, and in this dignified capacity had occasion to pay me almost daily visits with messages or commissions from the throne. Dilapidated matchlocks and swivels were to be restocked by the carpenters of the European escort, musical boxes to be repaired, garments were to be embroidered, or state umbrellas to be renewed; and every task had fortunately been achieved to the entire of the royal satisfaction. Before taking leave, the court favourite never failed to beg for something, and, being a pet with all, he never asked in vain; but it shortly became matter of public notoriety that he had been disgraced, and thrown into durance, upon being detected in the act of burying the dollars and other presents that he had received.

The king commanded that a portion of the gifts which had led to this disaster should be returned to me, and I entreated pardon for the juvenile indiscretion of the page. “Birroo has been degraded,” replied His Majesty, “but you must not be concerned thereat; for not only did he conceal from me all that you had given him, but, on being detected, swore falsely upon my own life that he had received much less than proved to be the case. I have dismissed him for ever from my presence, but his punishment is light when compared with the enormity of his transgression.” The delinquent was, however, released upon a second representation, and restored to the possession of his gun, which had been forfeited; and although not reinstated in the royal confidence, he was subsequently appointed one of the *adrásh adáree*, or “keepers of the great room.”

The first visit that we paid to Machal-wans was on the occasion of the king’s indisposition. The high-priest, the chief eunuch, the purveyor-general, Wulásma Mohammad, and ten or twelve other of the courtiers,

were in attendance; but they were dismissed after the customary compliments had passed; and His Majesty, reclining as usual upon the throne, thus proceeded, through the interpretation of the Reverend Dr Krapf, to detail the long catalogue of his ailments.

“You may listen. I am not now so hale as in my younger days. Mine eyes trouble me day and night. I have pains in the neck. My teeth have grown long and become loose from fever, and my body has wasted away. Draw nigh whilst I recount the particulars of my late illness.

“I was returning from the expedition against the rebel Galla. I felt suddenly unwell. My head grew giddy. The earth turned round. It became blue under my feet. I fell from my mule. I believed myself dead. I was no longer sensible. My gun-men became afraid. They ran away to a man. The enemy made a show of attack. The army was in confusion. A governor rebelled. He sought to place his son upon the throne. The people dashed cold water over me. I recovered my senses. I was able to resume the command, and order was restored.”

Priest-ridden and superstitious to the last degree, the monarch undertakes nothing without first consulting the superiors of the Church, and is deterred from change of residence, or from projected military expeditions, by their prophecies and pretended dreams, which are of course modelled according to the bribes that have been received from parties interested. On two occasions only is he said to have acted in opposition to the ecclesiastical counsel. The first cost him eight hundred warriors, who were cut up by the Galla during the passage of a morass, and the

second the severe indisposition of which he still felt the effects.

The royal swoon, thus amusingly narrated, had been followed by the consignment to captivity for life in the dungeons of Góncho, of the traitor who had so prematurely sought the elevation of his son, and who was the proprietor of the Residency. Medicines administered to the king are invariably tasted by the physician in the presence of the patient, and on a phial of goulard lotion being now sent to the palace for external application to the despot's neck, it was returned in consequence of its being labelled "Poison." Of this he entertains the most undisguised dread, and it was not possible to overcome his apprehensions that a drop might find its way into his mouth during the hours of repose, and so cut short his reign.

But although living in perpetual alarm of assassination, and never moving abroad without weapons concealed under his garments, or unaccompanied by a numerous and trustworthy escort. His Majesty's fears did not extend to his British guests; and during our subsequent visits to Machal-wans, he hesitated not to trust us all about his person with loaded fire-arms, when none of his attendants were present. Many were the curious discussions held at these confidential interviews. Portraits were executed by the royal command—architectural plans prepared—and hunting expeditions or wars of extermination plotted against colonies of baboons and monkeys, the only quadrupeds of which the country can boast. Magazines were exploded by means of detonating shells—seven-barrelled pistols and stick-guns for the first time introduced at court—and a liege subject of

the realm was nearly shot dead by the royal hand, when clumsily making trial of an air cane, from which a wax bullet had previously been fired through the wicker table.

“My son,” quoth the king, “I am old, and have but few years more to live. I have seen many strange things from your country, but none that surpass this engine, which without the aid of gunpowder can destroy men. Sorrow were it that I should have died and gone down to the grave before beholding and understanding so wonderful an invention. It is truly the work of a wise people who employ strong medicines!”

Volume Two—Chapter Four.

Special Summons to Machal-Wans.

His Majesty had more than once intimated an intention of holding consultation relative to his projected expedition on the termination of winter, and early one morning an express courier arrived to desire our immediate attendance at the palace. Blacksmiths and workers in silver were as usual plying their craft in the verandah, under the royal eye—artists were daubing red and yellow paint over the pages of the Psalter, or illuminating the lives of the saints with white angels and sable devils—saddles and warlike furniture were in course of repair—spears were being burnished—gun-locks cleaned—and musket barrels engraved with the despot’s name; but the artificers were all summarily dismissed, and the king, rising from his seat in the portico, beckoned us

to follow into the audience hall.

"*Gaita*," "master," he cautiously began, "there is yet another subject upon which I am desirous of taking counsel, and wherein I need your assistance. It is my intention shortly to undertake an expedition to the great lake in Guráguê. In it be many islands which contain the treasures of my ancestors. There are jars filled with bracelets of solid gold. There are forty drums made of elephants' ears, and many holy arks pertaining unto ancient churches, besides seven hundred choice Ethiopic volumes, some of which have unfortunately been defaced by the animals called *ashkóko* (Hyrax Abyssinicus). Elephants abound on the borders. In the trees are found black leopards of a most ferocious nature, multiplying always among the branches, and never descending upon the earth; and the waters of the lake, which are smooth as glass, and without bottom, teem with monstrous *gomári* (Hippopotamus amphibius), and with fish of brilliant colours, red, yellow, green, and blue, such as have never before been seen.

"Moreover there are specifics against small-pox and other dreadful diseases. No resistance is to be anticipated, for the inhabitants, who are chiefly Christian monks, have often invited me. I must no longer delay to recover the lost wealth of my forefathers, and it is fitting that you, with the British officers who have come hither from a far country, should accompany me and construct boats. Hereof my people are ignorant, and your name as well as mine will therefore become great, and will live in the annals of this kingdom.

"From the summit of a lofty hill near Aiméllele, I have beheld through a telescope the lake and its tall trees,

but the elephants came in numbers. I feared that my people would be destroyed. I ran, and they all ran with me. Now, what say you? What is your advice in this matter? Are you able to build boats?"

In furtherance of His Majesty's intentions, I caused models of skin punts, gun rafts, and a pontoon train, to be prepared upon the most approved design, with crews and ordnance complete, and advised that every requisite should be prepared at Ankóber whilst leisure served, in order that he might take the field with ample means at his disposal. The king expressed himself above all things pleased both with models and advice, which he declared to come from wise and expert soldiers; but he was still obviously undecided, and the fear of wild beasts and of the lone forest at length kicked the vibrating beam. The castle visions of glory mounted far out of reach, and his fickle ambition evaporated in a bluster of empty words—

"My people will weep at the carriage of such ponderous engines." "The preparations must be made on the banks of the Háwash, or on the borders of the Lake Zooai, where timber grows abundantly. A man of rank, one of the frontier governors, who resides near Aiméllele, should be summoned as guide to the expedition, and might then be consulted." But the presence of the great functionary was ever wanting—no further wish escaped the lips of the vacillating monarch—and engrossed with the passing whim of the moment, the chivalrous project of the day had vanished. So passed the dreary winter on. The arrival in the kingdom of Shoa of the many valuable presents brought by the Embassy, had not proved more agreeable to the traders from Gondar and Tigré who reside in Ankóber, than to the narrow-

minded governor of Alio Amba. These men had been in the habit of selling glass-ware, cloths, and fire-arms to the king at a very considerable premium, and now did not fail to repeat and to improve the absurdities circulated by the mischievous Danákil regarding the foreign intruders. The Gypzis were pronounced eaters of serpents, mice, and other reptiles, and had come with the design of possessing themselves of the country by the aid of magic and medicine.

Great umbrage was taken at our practice of toasting the wretched half-baked dough which we received, under the denomination of bread, from the royal stores; and a soldier who carried a metallic pitcher to the stream, was roundly taxed with having used charms to poison the water, which was consequently condemned as unfit for use until purified by the blessing of the priest. Predictions of the impending fate of Abyssinia were derived from the fact of the foreigners employing instruments which read the stars; and the despot was repeatedly and earnestly warned to be upon his guard. But His Majesty cut short these insinuations by threatening to extract the tongues of three or four of the maligners, and paid no attention whatever to the threat of excommunication extended to him by the fanatic clergy of Arámba, who had declared the ban of the Church to be the just punishment due for the admission into the empire “of red heretics, who ought carefully to be shunned, since they practised witchcraft, and by burning the king’s bread threatened to bring a famine upon the land.”

Taking their cue from the feelings of the people, the Shoan sorcerers gave out that Sáhela Selássie was to be the last of the Ethiopian dynasty, descended

from the house of Solomon, who should sit upon the throne of his forefathers, and that a foreign king would come by way of Alio Amba to usurp the dominion. It is, amusing to trace the progress of these crafty insinuations among an ignorant and weak-minded people. In some of the northern provinces it was confidently asserted that the Sultán of the Mohammadans had already conquered Shoa, and that all the surrounding Moslem potentates were about to unite with him in a war of extermination against the Christians; whilst in others it was believed that an Alaka, or chief of the Gypts from Grand Cairo, had contrived to smuggle himself into the capital, carrying his sovereign in a box, and that after consulting the heavenly bodies until a favourable horoscope was presented, he stamped his foot upon the ground, which opened, and ten thousand red soldiers, with beards flowing to their girdles, springing forth out of the chasm, placed the aforesaid monarch upon the throne. “Now,” said the magicians, “will Theodórus arise according to the tradition, that he will come in the latter days of -Ethiopia, and create a kingdom of Peace.”

Theodórus was one of the emperors who reigned during the fifteenth century, and was canonised. It is recorded, that during the observance of his festival the queen-dowager had prepared a great entertainment, and the guests being all assembled, the heavens rained down a shower of fishes ready roasted. In the Ethiopic liturgy, the miracle is thus commemorated. “Peace be upon thee. King of the Agaazi nation, Theodórus, Son of the Lion; thy memory shall this day be celebrated with the slaughter of oxen and sheep, with which alone Zion Mogáss, thy mother, kept it not, for the clouds also

dropped fishes." It is confidently believed that this saint will rise again from the dead, and reign a thousand years, during which period neither war, famine, nor discord, is to disturb the happiness of Abyssinia.

Volume Two—Chapter Five.

Termination of Winter.

In due process of time, spite of the denunciations of the fanatic priesthood, the silver and beef of the foreigners attracted the denizens of the adjacent villages, and we acquired a respectable retinue, such as an Abyssinian deems indispensable on all excursions abroad. A house better adequate to our wants had been purchased, and the bargain duly concluded according to the custom of the country by an oath on the life of the despot; but this was shortly annulled through the officious interference of the governor of the town, and it was not until the eleventh hour, when rain had begun to abate, that the Master of the Horse was prevailed upon to rent his newly-erected domicile. A fat ox having been slaughtered to drive out the Devil, it was handed over to the domestics, and wading through the blood which flowed over the threshold, we entered upon the premises in due form, and having hoisted the Union Jack over the new Residency, we quaffed with the burly landlord several horns of old hydromel for good luck. "Have you a better house than this in your country?" he inquired exultingly: "I rather suspect not."

Ayto Melkoo, the Baldarás, or King's Master of the Horse, has under his charge the royal stud, saddles, and accoutrements, as also the workers in leather—is equerry in waiting, and conservator of pastures and meadows pertaining to the crown. He is moreover the greatest gourmand in the kingdom, and condescending to honour the denounced Christians with his company at the house-warming, did ample justice to the novel viands that were placed before him. He even submitted to the innovation of a silver fork, and politely partook of a salad, notwithstanding his firm conviction that the undressed vegetable would cause a return of ailments to which he had been a martyr in youth. The circulation of water for the ablution of fingers caused no little diversion on the removal of the cloth; but the marasquino which followed was unhesitatingly pronounced to be a nectar fit for princes alone. "Were but the Negoos aware with what good things the board of you English is spread," he exclaimed, smacking his lips after the last glass, "His Majesty would come and dine with you as often as you chose to invite him."

"But let me give you a lesson in politeness," added the old man, when, in reply to his abrupt intimation of intended departure, he was wished a "safe entrance to his house," in accordance with Abyssinian etiquette—"You should have said 'stay.'" "Such is not the fashion of the countries across the water," was Graham's reply: "every man is permitted to withdraw as he lists, and be happy in his own way."

"Ay, ay," returned the guest; "but then if you had pressed me to tarry, I would at all events have stopped with you until the moon rose. Do you see?"

The fast of the Assumption having meanwhile

terminated, the king announced his intention of removing to Angollála, his favourite place of residence; and thither, in defiance of excessively heavy rain, he set out on the day appointed by the household priests. “My children,” said His Majesty at parting, “ye have travelled far on my account, and have no kinsman saving myself. My people are bad people, and I am sorry thereat. They bring me daily all manner of reports regarding yourselves and your evil intentions. The rumours have doubtless reached your ears, but ye must not suppose that Sáhela Selássie believes one of them. Ye are my friends, and I will deal with you accordingly. I will that ye come shortly to Debra Berhán and witness the great annual review at the feast of Máskal. Ayto Wolda Hana shall conduct you.”

But the important functionary thus selected was of all others arrayed in the most open hostility, and, unlike the majority of his avaricious colleagues, his enmity had been proof against overtures and advances. “I am a lone man,” he invariably replied, “and have neither wife nor child. Grey hairs have come out on me. I am the son of sixty years. I want nothing in this world but the favour of the king.” To judge from appearances, the pinnacle of his loyal ambition had already been attained. Governor of Ankóber, and president of the *mádi beit*, or kitchen, wherein are prepared hydromel, pepper soup, and sour beer—comptroller of all the royal porters and of the household slaves, who are the hewers of wood and the carriers of water, who grind, bake, express oil, and manufacture candles—receiver-general into the imperial magazines of all tribute in cotton, grain, thread, sheep, and poultry—and charged with the superintendence, the erection, and the repair of all

public buildings throughout the realm, as well as with the arrangement of the interior economy of the capital —Ayto Wolda Hana can have little left to desire; and so conscientiously does he acquit himself of these manifold onerous duties, that it is affirmed his royal master could scarcely exist without him.

A visible diminution in the male population of Ankóber follows the departure of the monarch to either of his more distant places of residence. During his absence the administration of affairs devolves chiefly upon Ayto Kidána Wold, who may be termed the viceroy. In charge of the secret police and magisterial department, he adjusts all private differences, watches over the public safety, and besides ministering daily to the wants of all consigned to him, gives annually three great entertainments at the expense of the crown. He has been honoured with the hand of Woïzoro Askuala Work, sister to the queen-dowager, and as the receipt of the promised invitation to Debra Berhán required an intimation of intended departure, it afforded me a long sought opportunity of making the acquaintance of this stately dame. Seated in the utmost of Abyssinian pomp, and surrounded by a goodly train of slaves, pages, and handmaidens, she received us with the greatest affability, and in the temporary absence of her lord, expressed the highest gratification at the attention of our visit, although unable to accept the presents that I offered, from an apprehension of the royal displeasure.

But conversation during a morning call is here little more than a string of the most earnest and pathetic inquiries respecting one’s own health, and that of one’s wife, relatives, and children. Even two old crones, who are obviously tottering on the very brink

of the grave, and who are afflicted with every pain and with every sorrow entailed by the fall of our first parents, never meet in the street without indulging in a string of good wishes which are reiterated so long as their breath will permit. “How are you? How do ye do? How have you passed your time? Are you well? Are you very well? Are you quite well? Are you perfectly well? Are you not well?”—are questions which serve as the prelude to a thousand other interrogatories; and at each response the Deity must be invoked as to the unadulterated happiness and perfect felicity that has been unremittingly experienced since the last meeting.

Should the encounter take place twenty or even a hundred times during one and the same day, a repetition of the ceremony is enforced, and for each progressive stage of morning, noon, evening, and night, there exists a distinct set of phrases, which, from the never-ending repetition, are grating and wearisome. Passengers stand in the lane, denude their shoulders, and roar out salutations intended for the inmates of huts some hundred yards from the hedge. The slumberer is started from sleep by the dinning “How do ye do?” from some gentleman passing ere the day has dawned to his country residence; and from morning until even-tide, one’s ears are assailed by a most harassing tissue of polite inquiries from every individual of whatever rank, who may think proper to pass himself off as an acquaintance.

Volume Two—Chapter Six.

Debra Berhán, the Hill of Glory.

In Shoa the preliminaries of a journey are replete with noise, inconvenience, and confusion. Friends come to “see you off,” as an indispensable piece of etiquette, and the lounging townspeople, who have at no time much business of their own, flock to assist the traveller by filling the court-yard, choking the door-way, and amusing themselves by canvassing the property packed. Should rain be falling, which is too frequently the case, the rabble take shelter inside the house, subject every article within their reach to the pollution of greasy paws, leave the carpet an inch thick in mire, and, unless by dint of shoving and elbowing, debar all egress to the lawful proprietor.

It was in the midst of attentions such as these on the part of the idlers of Ankóber, on a raw, cold, foggy morning in September—the last of the Ethiopic year—that we took the road to Debra Berhán. The sun was already high when the sure-footed mules were mounted, and as the retiring mist scudded over the face of the mountains, many were the bold beauties revealed. Cascades tumbled down the stupendous range on the one hand, amid snug houses and tufted knolls, and on the other, at the foot of perpendicular crags thundered the river Airára. On its bank stands the only piece of machinery in the kingdom—a rude watermill constructed by an Albanian visitor; but the intolerant and ignorant priesthood pronouncing the revolution of the wheel to be the work of devils and genii, its use was interdicted after three days, and it has since remained silent.

Beyond the ford of the foaming torrent the road becomes extremely rough, steep, and difficult. The

first traveller had been unable to breast the mountain side outright; and his zigzag route remains untouched by the hand of the pioneer. The craggy rock must be surmounted, and the narrow and slippery channel be still threaded with the same risk as when the first bold foot was planted on the serrated ridge; and the torrent of centuries, whilst indenting the furrow yet deeper, has added the impediment of slimy residuum.

The range whereof the Chaka forms a part divides the streams that flow into the Nile, from those which are tributary to the Háwash; and the ascent above Ankóber being not less than two thousand feet, the difference in temperature on the summit was fully perceptible. Half an hour was occupied in the scramble to a crumbling basaltic pillar styled "*Room dingai*," "the standing stone," which very aptly transfers its name to this most indifferent pass to the new capital of Shoa. Mamrat still towered overhead full three or four thousand feet, making its total height above the level of the sea at least thirteen thousand; yet is snow a stranger to its cloud-capped summit, and indeed to the language of all Amhára, south of the cold mountains of Simien.

It is from June to September that old Father Nilus carries plenty into "the land of marvels"—and rolling on to its mouths in solitary grandeur, without receiving a single tributary in its long course of thirteen hundred and fifty nautical miles below the junction of the Tacazzé, it may fairly be stated that Abyssinia holds in her Christian hands the inexhaustible riches of Egypt. Hatzé Tekla Haïmanót the Great, had therefore reason on his side when, in the beginning of the twelfth century, he wrote under the style of "Son of the King of the Church of Ethiop

to the Pacha and the Lords Commanders of the Militia at Grand Cairo, desiring attention to the fact that in himself for the time being was vested power to render the Nile an instrument of vengeance for overt acts of hostility—the Almighty having given into his hands its fountains, its passage, and its increase, and thus entrusted him with power to make the river work good or evil."

Among the numberless fictions recorded of this emperor, it is said that when he was about to relinquish the cares of government in order to retire to a cloister, he divided his countless wealth with his feet into two parts, the one designed as an offering to the Church, the other to be distributed in alms among the poor: and both heaps, although mountain high, were, on being weighed, found exactly equal. Lalíbela, one of his successors, is believed to have attempted the diversion to the Indian Ocean and to the Lake Zooai, of all those principal tributaries to the Nile which take their source in the highest table land. The measure was in resentment for the persecutions exercised towards the Christians in Egypt after the Saracen conquest, and the monarch was only induced to relinquish his gigantic project by the earnest remonstrance of the monks, who strongly urged the impolicy of fertilising the arid Moslem countries that intervene betwixt the mountains and the sea.

On the summit of the Chaka commences an uninterrupted terrace, stretching hundreds of miles to the southward, through the fair territories of the Galla. Glimpses of blue sky, of a brightness unseen for months, now gave happy presage of coming fine weather, and a cold bracing breeze from the eastward announced the termination of the protracted

season of rain. The country had assumed the uninteresting character inseparable from elevated downs—rich swampy meadows, clothed with camomile, clover, and trefoil, and covered with oxen, horses, and sheep, being intersected by gentle undulations of moor-land, with occasional oviform hills. Bare-banked rills, streaming through the lower tracts, succeed each other in quick succession, and drain the table-land to the sources of the Beréza; whilst the great extent of ground under cultivation, waving crops of wheat, beans, and barley, with independent farm-houses scattered over the face of the landscape, proclaim a government which cannot be of a very bad description, and regions long exempt from the presence of an inimical power.

Across the Toro Mesk, the principal streamlet that intersects the road, and the sources of which are visible at a great distance to the north-east, is a rude pile of stones bearing the dignified appellation of “the King’s Bridge.” Johannes, the Armenian architect, received the hand of a high-born dame in reward of his skill, and by no foot save that of the despot, is the barred entrance ever passed. Two other bridges, upon the same primitive principle, have since been constructed over nameless but rapid rivulets, and if not very durable, they serve greatly to facilitate the royal progress at periods when the country is inundated.

During the reign of the sire and grandsire of the present monarch, the entire tract between Ankóber and Debra Berhán was in the hands of the heathen Galla; and Tenna Káloo, the last daring chieftain who disputed its possession, has left in the minds of the present generation the recollection of the prowess in arms that he evinced to their fathers, numbers of

whom fell in the strife. Not a tree, nor even a shrub higher than the Abyssinian thistle, is to be seen, save here and there a solitary “cosso,” whose venerable boughs, the witnesses of idolatrous rites, mark the ancient site of villages now gone to decay. Flourishing Christian hamlets have risen in their stead; yet the visible population is small, and the long naked sweeping plains, silent and lonesome, present a stern and melancholy appearance, which the absence of groves and hedges and singing birds tends materially to heighten. The vulture and the eagle are alone seen wheeling above the green cliffs, or a solitary buzzard soaring in quest of his prey over the great sheets of cultivation. Shepherds, wearing high conical hempen caps, lay ensconced, with their large shaggy dogs, under the shelter of knolls and caves; and in some few of the fields, where last year’s crops were yet unhoused, or the land remained untilled, the peasantry pursued their industrious occupation.

At length the monotonous view opened over a wide plateau sloping gently to the west. The blue peaks of Sallála Moogher, beyond which flows the infant Nile, rose faintly in the distance, and the intervening country, still destitute of wood, was traversed by broad, broken, precipitous ravines. On a hill to the northward is visible the extensive market-place of Bool Worki, “the cave of gold,” a great mart for horses, mules, and woollen cloths, which, with grain, asses, and horned cattle, are brought every Saturday by the adjacent Galla tribes. and, when sold, pay a heavy duty to the crown. To account for the name of the place, there is a tradition extant, that in days of yore, many holy arks with vast quantities of the purest gold were deposited by the emperors of

Ethiopia in a certain deep cave having a bottomless lake interposed to save them from the grasp of the avaricious. Its waters form the abode of a legion of evil spirits, whose Alaka gratuitously exhibited himself one market-day, mounted upon an ambling mule loaded with massive golden trappings, and attended by a black cat wearing about its neck a bell of the same costly metal—a sight quite sufficient to deter intrusion on the part of the curious.

A cluster of white-roofed houses, straggling beyond the walled palace and the church of the Holy Trinity—long indistinctly visible—now rose rapidly to view; and a small eminence having been ascended, the goal was presently attained. As we passed the royal lodge, a page mounted on one of the king's horses rode forth to reconnoitre, and, taking a hasty glance, galloped off to make his report. The customary announcement through an Afero, who has always access to the palace, elicited a pair of monstrous Galla rams, which were thrust into observation while the message which follows—one strictly in accordance with Abyssinian etiquette—was delivered with shoulders bare by him to whom it had been confided:—"Are you well? Are you well? Are you well? Have you been quite well since our last interview? Are you all well? Have my children had a good journey? Have they entered in safety? My love amounts to heaven and earth; therefore the king said, they might eat these sheep."

Awnings, wrought of goats' hair, and resembling the black tents of Kedar, had meanwhile been erected for us on the green-sward, and we had no sooner taken up our quarters than there came, by a succession of maids of honour, bread in wicker baskets, old hydromel in coloured decanters, pots of honey, and

compliments in profusion from the queen. Many of the courtiers visited us in the evening, too evidently fresh from the royal banquet, which is daily spread in the great hall, and from which few ever rise in a state of sobriety—their amount of friendship professed, and the modicum of flattery that they bestowed, being in the exact ratio of the potations swallowed during their revel. Glimmering lights soon illumined the straggling hamlet—dancing and singing occupied both sexes of the inhabitants—and with almost as much pomp and ceremony as in more civilised lands, the departed year was consigned to its last long resting-place in the relentless tomb of Time.

Volume Two—Chapter Seven.

The Royal Slave Depôt.

No royal residence can be conceived more desolate and less princely than the palace at Debra Berhán, “the Hill of Glory.” Crumbling walls of loose uncemented stone, patched in their various breaches and dilapidations by splintered palisades, surround a vast assemblage of wattle and dab edifices, of various shapes and dimensions, which are clumped together in separate court-yards, without any regard to appearance. Six rude gateways on the southern side conduct through as many miry enclosures, lined with troops, and crowded with herds, flocks, and applicants for justice. A paddock, covered with bright green turf, extends in front of the chamber of audience. Hoary junipers stretch their moss-grown branches fantastically over the lawn; and at the further extremity of the enclosure rise the mouldering

remains of the palace of Zára Yácoob.

This monarch, who was the founder of Debra Berhán, is reputed to have been endowed with the wisdom of Solomon, his great ancestor: and the vestiges that remain of his abode, certainly exhibit an order of architecture far superior to that of the present degenerate day. It has been composed of large blocks of hewn, though unsculptured, stone; but, in common with every other boasted edifice erected in the height of Ethiopic splendour, it perished during the reign of Nebla Dengel, by the hand of the destroyer Graan. Hatzé Zára Yácoob first attached capital punishment to the continuance of idolatry. He instituted an inquisition, and persecuted every one who paid adoration to the cow and serpent. Amongst others who underwent execution were two of his own sons-in-law; and he finally issued a proclamation, confiscating the lands of those who should thenceforth neglect to carry on the right arm an amulet inscribed with the words, “I have renounced the Devil and all his works for Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Tradition asserts that “the Hill of Glory,” now barren of trees, was in days of yore thickly covered with forest, through which ran a single path. In the beginning of the fifteenth century the founder, who was also styled Constantine, fled into its depths before an invasion of the Adaïel, and becoming bewildered in the intricacies, hurried hither and thither, exclaiming in his dilemma, “*Ber eza, her eza*?” “Where is the road?” Suddenly there shone forth over the eminence a great halo of light from heaven, which served him as a beacon by which to escape out of the labyrinth. In some of the adjacent swamps are to be seen the ancient remains of decomposed timber, and a few venerable junipers

still survive within the palace enclosure; but beyond these monuments of antiquity the truth of the legend rests solely on the name of the river Beréza, a serpentine stream winding round the foot of the hill, and forming one of the principal sources of the Blue Nile.

Tegulet, “the city of the wolves,” the capital of all Abyssinia in her brighter days, and a spot untrodden by European foot since the visit of Father Alvarez, forms a conspicuous feature in the view presented from the village. Occupying a commanding promontory, round which flows the river Salácha, it is environed by singular bluffs; and one natural fissure, visible from a great distance, affords the only practicable ascent to the impregnable fortress, upon which the Galla, in the meridian of their power, were unable to make the slightest impression during reiterated attempts to carry it by storm. The Alaka of Tegulet is superior also of the celebrated shrine of Séna Márkos, a saint of the days of Tekla Haïmanót. The monastery, named after its founder, occupies a similar inaccessible fastness, overlooking a part of the valley of the Nile, and the whole of the north and west of Shoa, as far as the chain of lofty mountains which here form the bulwark of the Christian kingdom.

The view from the village of Etteghe, near Tegulet, is so extensive that it has given rise to a proverb, “From Etteghe is the Echegue or Grand Prior of the Monks, to be seen at Gondar.” Forty-four rivulets, corresponding in number with the churches of that city, are said to pay tribute through this district to the Adabai, which sends its waters down the Jumma to the Nile; their short course of little more than one hundred and fifty miles, involving so rapid a

declination to the westward, that nearly all have cataracts in some part, and are consequently destitute of finny inhabitants. The immediate environs of Tegulet are intersected by the beds of rapid torrents, having high precipitous banks, which afford few accessible roads, whether to man or beast—a fact to which this portion of Shoa may be concluded to have owed its security during the inpourings of heathen and Mohammadan hordes. Tegulet-wat, “the devouring depths,” a fathomless abyss yawning on the banks of one of these streams, and described as the habitation of demons, is believed by the superstitious to communicate with the “great water.” It proved the grave of numerous Christian warriors, who, during the bloody contest with the Adaïel, tumbled unexpectedly into its dark bosom, and were heard of no more.

It was at the close of the fifteenth century that Mafoodi, the bigoted king of Hurrur, unfurling the green banner of the Prophet, commenced those devastating inroads upon the frontiers of Shoa, which finally led to the dismemberment of the Ethiopic empire, and proved the greatest calamity that has ever befallen the country. Under a vow that he would annually spend the forty days of Lent among the Abyssinian infidels, he overran Efát and Fátigar when the people, weakened by rigorous fasting, were less capable of bearing arms—burned churches and monasteries, slew without mercy every male who fell in his way, and driving off the women and children, sold some into foreign slavery, and presented others to the Sheriffe of Mecca. Alexander, the then reigning emperor, was assassinated at Tegulet by Za Selássie, commander-in-chief of the royal body-guard, who had been bought over by Mafoodi. The

eyeballs of the regicide were seared with a red hot iron; his hands and feet were chopped off; and he was stoned to death amid the curses and execrations of the populace, after he had been paraded on an ass in this mutilated condition throughout Shoa and Amhára.

Debra Berhán is one of the principal depôts for the numerous royal slaves, the possession of whom casts the foulest blot on the character of the Christian monarch. A strange clatter, and a Babel-like mixture of tongues, greets the ear of the visitor, and the features of many races, and of many nations, are distinctly visible among the crowd that throngs the gate, although all are alike enveloped in the disguising costume of Abyssinia.

The huge black Shankela, with blubber lip and bloodshot eye, is resting for a moment against the broken wall, and stretching a brawny limb which might have supported the bully Hercules himself. Grinning from ear to ear as his burly neighbour sports some savage joke in licence unrestrained, he seizes with a three-horse power his bundle of split wood, which two Amhára could with difficulty raise, and poising it like a feather upon his woolly head, walks away in all the vigour of a young giant.

With his own approving eye the monarch has selected this specimen from a lot of powerful negroes captured beyond the Nile, and fifteen silver crowns must not be lightly squandered even by the great sovereign of Southern Abyssinia. Rations are well supplied to support his sinewy form, and unless on a cold raw day, when the soaking rain has penetrated every thread of his black blanket, and his shivering frame brings vividly to mind the difference of climate,

the enslaved pagan, in his present condition, as hewer in the royal forests, enjoys himself fully as well as if ranging in savage liberty over his own free country of the sun.

Not so the scowling Galla who follows in his rear. The spirit of roving independence is still unsubdued in his fiery eye; and the slender figure and the bent leg proclaim the wild rider of the grassy plain. Heavy and heartbroken he plods along under a burthen to which his strength is quite inadequate; and the groan escapes from his lips as the bitter thoughts enter his soul of the disgraceful lash of the task-master, that perhaps awaits his return, and he remembers the lost wife and little ones whom he has for ever left on the distant savannahs of the Háwash.

Issuing from the gateway under the authority of a bloated eunuch, a numerous flock of brown damsels take their way to the river. Heavy earthen jars are slung over their slender backs, and the light forms of the unfortunates are little concealed by their torn and scanty attire. These are newly purchased Christians from the last Guráguê caravan, and the language of the Amhára is still strange to their ear. Garlands of the yellow buttercup deck the plaited raven locks of each captive maid, and a plaintive song is chanted in soft mellow notes to beguile the hours of toil. But the lines of slavery have already found place among their youthful features, which possess beauty unknown to those of their oppressors. The low chorus swelling mournful and piteous from the band, has recalled thoughts of home and liberty to the joyless breast; and the sad tear is brushed from the long dark eye-lash at the recollection of happier hours spent in their own sweet land of spices.

Following close behind comes a group of favoured dames of a certain age, from whose minds time has effaced all remembrance of country and of kindred. Exalted to the post of mistresses of the royal brewery, and decked out like the first ladies of the land, in flowing garments resplendent with crimson stripes, they have little reason to wish for a change of condition. Bars and studs of solid silver load their perforated ears, and ponderous pewter bangles encircle each wrist and ankle. Their wigs, arranged according to the most becoming fashion, in minute rows of tiny curls, glisten under a coat of butter, and their fat cheeks, plastered with grease and red pigment, are calculated to strike respect into the heart of the most indifferent beholder. Their unceasing clack and clatter tell the tale of the wonted freedom of female tongue, but the small jar with the green branch protruding from the narrow neck, is strapped over the breast with the thong of slavery; and the attending eunuch, with his long thin wand—an emblem of his own withered person—proclaims the fact that the ladies cannot roam at pleasure over the verdant mead, but must restrict themselves in the beaten path according to the cracked voice of their driver.

Seated upon a gaily caparisoned mule, amidst the jingling of bells and brass ornaments, the general of the gun-men proceeds in state across the green parade. He is attired in the richest garments that the land can produce. A glaring cloth of red silk is wound about his brow, a silver sword decorates his right side, and fifty robed followers attend his every behest. But he too is a slave, as was his father before him, and as his son will be after him. All the bones and sinews of his attendants are the purchased

property of the monarch, and it is only by the imperial will and pleasure, which may be changed to-morrow, that he is now ambling in chintz and satin to dine at the royal board, instead of holding place in the foremost group, with a black blanket over his shoulder, and a load of wood upon his head for fuel in the royal kitchen.

Here comes a demure damsel from the harem, disfigured by all the foul garments and native filth which delight the inhabitant of Shoa. It is Wuletta Georgis, one of Her Majesty's confidential slaves, and she is revolving in her mind, how, in executing her mistress's commission, she can contrive to promote her own interests. Born and bred in the palace, the Abigail is ordinarily treated with kindness, unless the fracture of a brittle decanter, or the unbidden attack upon some savoury dish, involve a little wholesome correction. Unlike the philosophical maid in Rasselas, who had broken the porcelain cup, she needs pecuniary aid, and thus is her request sobbed out: "Only one dollar to replace the queen's looking-glass, and may God reward you!" But the sob is evidently assumed for the occasion, and a sly glance may be detected in the corner of her cunning eye, to observe the effect of her false appeal. The full price of the fractured mirror has already been received from three several individuals, and her mistress will assuredly confiscate the profits; but the tenure of property during even one short half hour possesses charms irresistible, and the poor girl falls prostrate on the ground as the silver is dropped into her unwashed fingers.

A last group is straggling through the gateway. The aged and the infirm, who can still perform a light task, have just received their daily dole from the royal

storehouse at the niggard hand of the pampered steward. The vigour of their youth has been expended in the service of the despot, and now, in the evening of life, their original scanty pittance is yet further reduced. A wistful glance is cast upon the handful of raw barley, which must content them for the day. Hunger and destitution are painfully portrayed in the deep furrows of each withered face, and the shrunken limb totters as the keen wind whistles through the wet folds of the tattered goat-skin girdle, which reaches barely to the knee. No fostering hand awaits their return to the cheerless hut, to minister in kindness to the necessities of age; and the last closing scene will drop a welcome curtain of repose over sinews ground by indigence and toil, during half a century of hopeless bondage.

Volume Two—Chapter Eight.

New Year's Day.

New Year's Day, which fell on the 10th of September, was, according to the Abyssinian calendar, the eighteen hundred and thirty-fourth since the nativity of Christ, and it was celebrated with much rejoicing and festivity. Betimes in the morning came a summons to the presence of the Negoos, who, seated in the portico of the audience chamber, was enjoying the genial warmth of the rising sun. The interior of the hall was strewed throughout with newly-plucked rushes, and under a large iron chafing-dish, with a cheerful wood-fire, basked a whole host of sleek cats in couples—a portion of the dower received with the fair daughter of the Galla

Queen of Moolo Fálada.

The king was particularly affable, and in the highest spirits. His hand having been extended to each of us in turn, with the usual inquiries relative to our “safe entrance,” the congratulations of the season were offered to His Majesty, according to the customary form: “As the departed year of Saint Matthew has closed happily upon your auspicious reign, so also may the coming year of Saint Mark! May God prolong your days, and continue the throne in the line of your ancestors unto your children’s children, to the end of time! May He extend the boundaries of your dominions, and cause your spear to prevail over the lance of the enemy! May He endow you with wisdom to judge your subjects aright, and move your heart unto clemency; and may He cause high and low alike to understand and to appreciate the equitable sway of the Father, whom Heaven has appointed to rule over them!”

Elaborate models of a domed palace, completely furnished, and an English saddle and bridle, were next presented, and received with every manifestation of delight, coupled with a prayer from the royal lips that “God might glorify the donor.” A long and minute scrutiny led to an infinity of questions, not easily answered, as to how the shield was to be slung to the pommel, and why the entire foot, instead of the great toe only, should be inserted in the stirrup? “The sun in different countries shines with more or less brilliancy,” exclaimed His Majesty, with truly royal eloquence, as he concluded the examination—“the birds and the beasts are different, and so are the plants. I am fond of new inventions, if it be only to look at them, and although they should prove on trial to be inferior to old ones.”

Abd el Yonag, the chief of the Hurrur slave-merchants, was seated, rosary in hand, during this conversation, and in his weather-beaten countenance were displayed all the cunning lineaments of the petty retailer in small wares, curiously contrasted with the sagacity of the extensive dealer in politics, who had succeeded in obtaining an accurate measure of the monarch's foot. The knave too protested to have seen the world, and gave out that with his own grey eyes he had beheld the glories of Britain's eastern possessions.

To support his widely circulated character for universal knowledge, the Moslem miscreant now seized between his bony fingers two handsome pieces of sprigged muslin, fresh from the looms of Manchester, which I had presented for Queen Besábesh, and throwing them contemptuously towards the corner of the throne, muttered betwixt his lips the word "Bombay."

"What's that, what do you say?" cried the king, in his usual abrupt manner.

"May it please your Majesty," returned the turbaned traveller, to our great diversion, "'tis the name of this cloth—it is called Bombay."

But an opportunity presently occurred of laughing at the beard of the irreverent pedlar, nor was it suffered to pass unheeded. The despot exhibited a silver sword scabbard, which had been curiously enamelled to represent one of the scaly inhabitants of the deep, and it was acknowledged *nemine contradicente* that the artist had succeeded in producing a highly creditable resemblance to a fish. "A fish," quoth the man of Hurrur, "what is that?" Even the monarch

smiled when the explanation was rendered. “Fishes live in the great sea between Abyssinia and Bombay, and he whose eyes have not suffered under Oubié’s searing irons, might behold numbers every day of the voyage.” “*Istigh-far-allah*,” “Heaven defend me,” growled the discomfited Wurj, as he slunk into a corner—“’tis passing strange that Abd el Yonag should have never seen the wild beast of the water.”

Attended by the dwarf father confessor, and holding deep consultation with several of the household priests, the king presently led the way through the secret door on the north-eastern side of the palace enclosure. Two umbrellas of crimson velvet, surmounted by silver globes and crosses—his never-failing attendants on all occasions of state—were supported by sturdy slaves, and twelve richly caparisoned steeds, representing the months of the year, were led by the royal grooms. A numerous and motley retinue of dismounted cavaliers followed, and on reaching the meadow, the brows both of monarch and subject were bound by the monks with green fillets of a wiry grass, styled “*enkotátach*” whence the festival takes its appellation.

Unlike the rugged mountains of Ankóber, which can alone be traversed by the sure-footed mule, the country around Debra Berhán is well adapted for the equestrian, and the bright azure of the sky, mottled by fleecy clouds, the fresh verdure of the turf, and the elasticity of the air, all lent their aid to the coming tournament. Armed with a slender staff, the king mounted his charger, and bounding over the green-sward, opened the sports of the day. Groups of wild savages were instantly to be seen scouring in every direction, engaged in the *gombéza*, or joust, but His Majesty in flaunting striped robes shone conspicuous.

Well mounted, a fearless horseman, and admirably skilled in the use of the spear, he had on no previous occasion been seen to so great advantage as during his participation in the warlike exercises of the new year—now pursuing, and now in turn pursued by the warrior whom he had honoured by selection as his antagonist in the tilt.

“Guebroo is sick,” quoth the monarch, the moment this display was over; “he has received a severe wound in the head during a skirmish with the rebel Galla, and I am desirous that you should now visit him, taking with you the medicine for putrid sores!”

Ayto Berkie, the governor of Bulga, volunteered his escort to Dalúti, the abode of his invalid brother. Crossing the serpentine Beréza, the road led through swampy meadows, and over little cultivated knolls destitute of either tree or shrub, towards Angollála, which, after a gallop of seven miles, opened in the distance. On the summit of a tabular eminence rose the king’s two-storied palace, above churches and conical houses; and five distinct knolls, forming an arc in the intermediate and otherwise level landscape, were severally crowned by the abodes of favourite courtiers—that on the extreme right, embowered in luxuriant trees, pertaining to Ayto Guebroo, governor of Mentshar.

Ascending the tumulus by a steep and stony path, and passing through a muddy court-yard, we reached to the abode of the great man. Surrounded by mournful attendants, he reclined on an *alga* before a fierce fire, his right eye screened by a shade of blue calico, and his comely partner sobbing violently at his feet. The Gillé and Loomi Galla, bordering on the ancient province of “Fátigar,” having revolted, the

warrior had taken the field with his contingent, and becoming opposed to a rebel in hand to hand combat, had received the first spear on his buckler, which was now ostentatiously displayed. The horse of his adversary fell under a well-directed lance, and the dismounted pagan sued for quarter; obtaining which, he treacherously launched his remaining shaft, which had cleft the forehead, and passed through the corner of the eye, although without destroying the vision.

The patient having pledged himself to submit to the prescribed treatment, which few in Abyssinia will do, an operation was successfully performed by Dr Kirk. Drying her tears, the hostess had meanwhile slaughtered a ram, and made extensive preparations for a repast. Piles of thin *teff* cakes, which loaded the low wicker table, were flanked by decanters of mawkish old honey wine; bowls of pepper porridge smoked at the place appointed for each guest, and lumps of raw meat were in profusion; nor was it without infinite surprise that the hospitable entertainers and their domestics beheld the chops submitted in the first instance to the influence of the hot embers. “Do all of your nation thus burn their meat?” inquired the lady, after long and attentive observation: “I was told that such was the case, and that you burnt the king’s bread too, but could never have believed it.”

No small difficulty was experienced by the despot in comprehending how an eye could be restored by the use of the knife; but His Majesty was at a still greater loss to understand by what means a subject had been cured, whilst himself remained in partial blindness. Ayto Kátama was present at this observation, and turning to one of the party, he

whispered, “You must not suppose that the Negoos is blind of that eye: may Sáhela Selássie die, he sees better with it than with the other!” Like -sop of old, who was once a bondsman, the general of the body-guard still retained the grovelling spirit of slavery, varnished with the address of the artful courtier; and he thus invariably followed the advice given to Solon by the hunchback author of the Fables, “that we should either not come near crowned heads at all, or speak those things only that will prove agreeable to them.”

Volume Two—Chapter Nine.

The Falls of the Beréza.

Hunting expeditions filled up the leisure hours of the busy monarch. Standing on the verge of the deep ravine by which the now deserted fastness of Tegulet is insulated from the plain of Debra Berhán, it was His Majesty’s diversion to project stone balls from his rifle at the hyenas basking upon huge fragments of fallen rock, which form caverns one thousand feet below, and choke the bed of the pathless chasm. Then the steps of the royal cavalcade would be directed to the valley of the Beréza, where “Satan’s horses,” in the shape of gigantic adjutants, were striding over the plain on their long stilt-like legs, with well-filled pouches dangling beneath their bills. Here, seated upon the green turf, the Negoos awaited the report of his scouts. Whilst turning the corner of the numerous abrupt eminences, his ears were ever saluted by loud cries of “*Abiet! Abiet*!” from the mouth of many a petitioner, and a very respectable body of

plaintiffs and defendants were continually in attendance.

Judgment was calmly delivered until the arrival of some breathless horseman with intelligence of the discovery of a colony of baboons, would arrest the proceedings of the sylvan court. “Sáhela Selássie ye moot?” inquired the sporting monarch on one of these occasions, adjuring the informant by his own illustrious life; “are they well surrounded?” “May Sáhela Selássie die if they be not,” responded the slave, as he bowed his head to the dust; “hundreds graze in yonder corn-field.” “Then by the death of Woosen Suggud they shall be slain,” was the rejoinder, as His Majesty galloped towards the spot, followed by a train of attendants carrying every rifle and fowling-piece of which the imperial armoury could boast.

On the verge of the deep valley we presently descried a countless pig-faced army, laying waste the rising crops. Lusty veterans, muffled in long flowing manes, strutted consequentially among the ladies; and others, squatted upon their hunkers, with many a ghastly grin displayed their white teeth whilst hunting down the vermin that infested their rough shaggy coats. Casting aside his chequered robe, the king, with all the ardour of a schoolboy, dashed into the middle of the amazed group, and under a running fire from himself and courtiers, the field was presently strewed with slain and wounded. Mangled wretches were now to be seen endeavouring to reach the precipitous chasm of the Beréza, whose white foaming waters were thundering below, whilst the grimacing survivors, far out of danger, whooped in echoes amid the bush-grown clefts, to reassemble the discomfited forces.

Return from this brilliant victory was celebrated by the war-chorus, until the appearance of an *erkoom* waddling over the ploughed land, again proved the signal for general pursuit. This gigantic and deformed bird is of the genus Hornbill, and an abrupt unmeaning excrescence above his huge jagged forceps, imparts a fancied resemblance to the slaves of the king, who carry water-jars upon their heads, which has dignified him with the title of “Abba Gumbo,” “the Father of the Pitcher.” It has blue wattles, which, when the bird is worried, become inflamed like those of the turkey-cock; and from the fact of its always constructing the door of its nest to the eastward, the Abyssinians assert that it will never build out of sight of a church.

The plumage throughout is to appearance of a sooty black; but the expansion of the wings displays an assemblage of snowy quills which form the pride of the warrior who has slain his enemy in battle. Mules were abandoned with one accord; and under the encouraging gaze of the despot, the courtiers, springing into their high-peaked saddles, scoured after the devoted quarry. Weary with its long flight, the heavy bird alighted a dozen times, but no rest was ever allowed. Again he was turned, and again he distanced his pursuers, until beleaguered on all sides, he was finally speared by the chief smith and body physician, who, as an equestrian, shone *facile princeps*. His skill rewarded the head of each hero engaged with the coveted white plume, which is the Amháric emblem of death.

“My children have never seen the ‘Devil’s sheep,’” gravely observed His Majesty, as he ascended towards the palace preceded by strains of martial music. “They live in holes in the rocks under the great

waterfall, and have long snouts. My people are afraid. Take guns in the morning, and the pages shall show you the road. Now you may eat."

Heavy dew covered the waving grass, as, accompanied by the promised escort, we proceeded at an early hour to gratify the royal curiosity by the destruction of the dreaded monster. It proved on realisation to be an inoffensive badger; and although the sport did not afford very much diversion, the cataract amply repaid the ride across the meadow. Leaving the terrace of table-land, the serpentine river, far hid from sight, winds through a succession of rounded hills towards a precipitous valley, down which the foaming torrent rushes over a descent of eight rocky basins. Hemmed in by fantastic pillars of basalt, composed of irregular disjointed polygons, the dark craggy surface, laid bare by the violence of ages, is at strange variance with the bright emerald turf which creeps luxuriantly to the very verge of the frowning abyss; whilst twelve hundred feet below, the sparry walls suddenly contract to the breadth of fifteen yards, and the accumulated waters of the cascades, discharging through this natural flood-gate, boil onwards in their wild career.

At some distance from this point are the royal iron mines, and near them a perpendicular crag, which rears its crumbling form from the very bottom of the vale to the level of the upper stream, marks the suddenness of the descent. The entire lace of the verdant hills that repose above the roaring cataract, were covered with thyme and other aromatic herbs, yielding up their fragrance at every step; and new and lovely flowers, sparkling under the morning dew, carpeted the slope. From the very brink of the dizzy torrent, lofty junipers raised their tall stems, and flung

their mossy arms to a vast height, though still appearing but as small twigs; and the white cloud of foam and spray which arose from the gloomy chasm, reflecting the prismatic colours of the rainbow, completed a picture of singular wildness and magnificence.

How different, indeed, is the fate awaiting the waters of one and the same shower discharged over the high ridge of the Abyssinian Alps! A drop, falling on the eastern slope of the shed, wends its short course by the nearest streamlet towards the muddy Háwash; and, if not absorbed by the thirsty plains of the Adaïel, adds its mite to the lagoon of Aussa—to filter, perhaps, through some subterranean channel into the Indian Ocean. But far distant is the pilgrimage that awaits the more ambitious cloud that sinks on the western side. Joining the Beréza, and taking the sudden leap over the dazzling cataract of Debra Berhán, it hurries down the Jumma on its impetuous course to the Bahr el Azreek—rolls through the golden sands of Damot—and, after visiting Meroë and Thebes, and all the stately pyramids, either adds its humble tribute to the blue waves of the Mediterranean, or is sacrificed to the fertility of the land of Egypt:

"Where with annual pomp,
Rich king of floods! o'erflows the swelling Nile."

Volume Two—Chapter Ten.

The Annual Review.

As the month rolled on, under a cold and pleasant sky, the governors of the adjacent districts flocked with their quotas to Debra Berhán, to be in readiness against the approaching anniversary of “Máskal.” On this festival, which is held in commemoration of the discovery of the Holy Cross by Saint Helena, the rabble militia composing the Amhára forces is marshalled in order of review, and the grassy slope in front of the palace became daily more and more thickly dotted with black booths and mules and neighing steeds. Honours, appointments, and rewards, are now conferred upon the brave and the deserving; and this being also the season of retribution, the forfeited property and the household chattels of delinquent officers add to the fair-like confusion. Herds of cattle, and long files of confiscated slaves, wooden tables, rickety bedsteads, and other paltry prizes of royal seizure, crowded the bustling parade; whilst groups of shivering camels, transferred by writ of execution to an uncongenial clime, took up their cold station on the bare ground, which was in a few days to receive their long scraggy bones.

On the eve of the anxiously expected day of jubilee, the din of the *nugáreet*, followed by the repeated discharge of heavily-loaded matchlocks, proclaimed the movement of the household troops towards the palace portals, in order to guard the imperial person from any sudden outbreak of the wild host encamped in the environs. Halting in front of the tents of the Embassy, they performed the war-dance in our honour by the light of numerous torches. Whilst the leaders solaced themselves with a cup of our curaçoa, their curvetting chargers, ridden by confidential henchmen, bore gallantly among the

dense mass; and the bright metal stars and studs of their appointments gleamed amid the dark ranks of the warriors, as they howled the Amhára death chorus. Bidding us good night, the Master of the Horse declared, amongst the affirmative whoops of his followers, that next to the royal safety, the lives of his much-esteemed foreign friends should be uppermost in his thoughts during the coming vigil.

Most unkingly was the appearance presented by the palace at break of day, for all was disorder and confusion among the court. Dirt and filth reigned paramount in every purlieu—mire to the ankle obstructed every gateway—and the rods of the wearied door-keepers were broken to splinters in their laudable endeavours to check the rush of the eager and greasy mob. The very houses themselves seemed more gloomy, and the time-worn mud plaster of the ancient walls more sombre and dilapidated than usual.

The despot was for some hours to be seen squatted in the porch of the banqueting hall, surrounded by all the concomitant litter of a forge, which, puffing away at the foot of his *alga*, under the personal supervision of the chief smith, blew a cloud of dust and ashes into the royal nostrils. Decorum seemed to be laid aside for the day. Chattering and noise resounded in every quarter. Restraint was removed from the tongues of all, and the uplifted voice of the monarch was at times scarcely audible, amid the clatter of surrounding courtiers, and the ringing of the crow upon the anvil.

Twenty sallow eunuchs, acting each at one and the same time as master of the ceremonies, introduced to the royal notice the crowds of lieges, who, arrayed

in most filthy garbs, came crushing together to the front. Priests, and monks, and petty governors, women, slaves, and cultivators, bore each some present to swell the imperial stores. Honey, butter, and beads, sticks, crutches, and censers, were alike received with complimentary speeches, saving in the instance of one burly knave, who had presumed to come before the king with a poor bundle of grass. Of him no notice whatever was taken. The very crowd seemed ashamed of so scurvy an offering, and an opening being spontaneously made, a few kicks and shoves sent the ill-provided vassal speedily out of sight, unrewarded by the customary “God give thee more!” from the lips of his puissant sovereign.

But a very different scene presented itself when, at a later hour, we were ushered through the grassy lawn to make our bows to His Majesty. Surrounded by the grandees of the court, in their holiday attire, the generals of the cavalry and body-guard, the household officers, and the alakas and high-priests of all the principal churches, he reclined on a moveable throne, tricked out for the occasion in velvet and satin. Rich *kimkhabs*, gay silken vests, and a profusion of silver swords and decorations for gallant conduct, sparkled on the persons of the courtiers; and the turmoil attending the early hours of business had given place to the unbending gravity of Abyssinian etiquette.

The artillery escort having, greatly to the admiration of the bystanders, gone through the manual and platoon exercises with blank cartridge, three hundred *Aferoch*, under the command of the purveyor-general, entered the arena, elevating high above their heads bundles of peeled wands, bound together with wisps of rushes, and decked with garlands of the

yellow “cross-flower.” The wild song of rejoicing at the return of spring, and of the season of blossoms, “when the fleas retire and the flies appear,” had been heard a considerable time, waxing louder and louder, as these lictors, with their fasces, approached the scene of exhibition. Shouting the war-chorus, they now moved forward with a mincing gait, and after the most abject prostration to the earth, with a yell, hurling their rods in a heap before the palace steps, the whole crouched in a semicircle. Their leader and his stewards, some on horseback, others on foot, clothed in the spoils of wild beasts, then displayed themselves individually in the dance, galloping or vaulting between the open ranks, encouraging the men to fight, and demean themselves as warriors in the day of battle—each ending his recitative by a terrific howl, in which he was joined by the whole band.

This exhibition terminated, we were marshalled to a gay Turkish pavilion, which had been purposely erected, below the royal inspection tower. A small, roofed building, resembling the judge’s stand on a country race-course, occupies a raised platform immediately within the palace enclosure. Gaudy cloth hangings enveloped this cage, and carpets and rugs of all colours covered the top of the rude wall for some distance on either side. The Negoos was already seated when we cantered past, and taking off our hats, received his condescending salutation. The usual paraphernalia of silver-embossed velvet floated at his feet. The chiefs of the churches, and the civil officers of state—a gorgeous band—were arranged along the platform, whilst a motley crowd of many thousand spectators stood closely packed over the plain below.

Dense masses of cavalry were in readiness at the further extremity of the parade, to perform the pageant of the day. At the distance of one hundred yards from the imperial stand, a stack of tall leafless willow staves had been erected on the bright green turf which extended far and wide in front. Around it were squatted files of warriors, ensconced under their round shields like the tortoise beneath his shell—the management of sundry huge culverins, of inordinate dimensions, being divided betwixt every three. The muzzle rested over the shoulder of one, a second worked the butt, and a third was prepared, with blazing brand, to fire on the signal given.

The review commenced by the advance of Ayto Kátama's body-guard, consisting entirely of fusiliers, three-fourths of whom were on this occasion equipped with the muskets that I had recently presented. Divided into four bodies, consisting each of about one hundred men, they moved slowly forward, shouting the usual war-chorus, in imitation of the voice of the lion, and were kept in line by the vigorous application of the rattan. Numerous bracelets, the reward of distinguished gallantry, glittered throughout the band, and the fixed bayonets, heretofore unknown in Southern Abyssinia, gleamed brightly in the sunshine. Gaining the prescribed distance, the warriors crouched on the ground as if to receive cavalry. A grey-headed but energetic veteran sprang to the front—danced during some time in a variety of uncouth capers—and uttering a howl such as might be conjectured to issue from the demon in the wolfs glen, discharged his piece. The signal was followed by a running fire along the entire line, when the remaining companies, advancing in succession in the same order, went through similar evolutions, and

all marched off dancing and singing to the outer ring.

The commander-in-chief of this doughty band had meanwhile formed a conspicuous, although rather a ludicrous figure in the performance. Adorned with a flowing garment of his favourite chintz, the flaring pattern of which the kaleidoscope itself must have found difficulty in devising, Ayto Kátama, a bondsman from his youth, exhibited himself in front of the phalanx of slaves, his head enveloped in a crimson harlequin cap. Tripping and mincing with the most unseemly capers and gestures, he brandished his crooked blade in a fashion which could alone have proved dangerous to himself. An inveterate chronic sore throat had rendered his voice husky; and his vapouring unmilitary motions, which reminded us of the strut of a crippled peacock, shed a broad light of caricature over this opening scene of the pantomime.

But the king's Master of the Horse next advanced with his glittering squadron of picked household cavalry—the flower of the Christian lances. Ayto Melkoo was arrayed in a parti-coloured vest, surmounted by a crimson Arab fleece, handsomely studded with silver jets. A gilt embossed gauntlet encircled his right arm from the wrist to the elbow. His targe and horse-trapping displayed a profusion of silver crosses and devices, and he looked a stately and martial warrior, curvetting at the head of his troop of well-appointed lancers.

Forming line at the distance of half a mile, and approaching the willow pile with a musical accompaniment from a mounted band of kettle-drums, the squadron halted, and the leader, couching his lance, advanced in front. Whilst putting his charger through all the evolutions of Abyssinian

manège, he vaunted his prowess in arms, recited the prodigies of valour performed in the service of his royal master, and proclaimed his continued good faith, and future bold intentions—his followers, at intervals, like the Romans of old, responding their assent by the loud clatter of lance against shield. The harangue concluded, his spears were dashed upon the ground, and the chieftain, drawing his broad two-edged falchion, brandished it in the air: "*Tockatoo, Loolá, Loolá, Gummoo, Sik, Oooooh*," he vociferated, as he dashed his heels into the flanks of his prancing steed. An instantaneous howl, and independent discharge of culverins, answered the signal, and the wild troop swept past at a gallop to the further extremity of the parade.

At the royal request, I caused a salute of twenty-one guns to be fired by the artillery escort, from the brass three-pounder, which had been dragged by oxen below the willow-stack. Great was the admiration of the wild Galla multitude as they gazed on the appointments and embroidered housings of the British officers now assembled on horseback in front of the watch-tower; and sufficiently diverting were the remarks they passed on our fluttering plumes of white and red feathers—their own emblems of bloody though not chivalrous deeds. When the cannonade opened upon ears that had never before listened to the thunder of ordnance, and a cloud of white smoke curled high above the heads of those who had hitherto beheld such volumes arise only from their own burning hamlets, a buzz of applause pealed from end to end of the extended fine. Each echoing report carried to the hearts of the disaffected a powerful argument for future loyalty, and it needed little discrimination to unravel the royal policy which had

dictated the display.

Thirteen governors, clothed in spoils stripped from the lion and the leopard, with other conspicuous trophies of the chase, next passed successively in order of review. Decked in emblems of blood—rings, feathers, bracelets, and gauntlets—tokens all of individual prowess in hand to hand combat with the king's foes—the leader of each glittering cohort indulged in a long rambling harangue, ere shouting the signal for the charge. Many there were who wore the *akodáma*—a massive transverse beam of silver projecting across the brows, and hung with a profusion of chains and pendants, the reward for the slaughter of an Adel, several of which respectable body, including the Ras el Káfilah and his fiery coadjutor, Ibrahim Shehém, were spectators of the martial manoeuvres of the Amhára troops.

An interesting, though perhaps not a very military sight, was witnessed as the hours drew on. The famished governors, judges, chiefs, nobles, courtiers, and dignitaries of the church, who occupied the elevated platform on either side of the royal box, unable longer to resist the calls of hunger, were suddenly to be perceived in the act of employing their crooked swords in reducing the dimensions of several sides and flaps of raw beef, which had been furnished by the king's munificence, and were ostentatiously displayed by as many menials—nor, under the well-directed and vigorous attacks of the assembly, were the reeking collops long in disappearing.

A few only of the detachments, whose leaders were not gifted with eloquence, charged past without a halt from the ground on which they had formed; and it is

not improbable that these, having made the circuit of the palace enclosure, had swelled the pageant by appearing a second time on the stage. Others, dismounting, performed various evolutions on foot—ancient heroes, with falchions of truly portentous dimensions, capering and striding before the line, until on a signal made by the culverins, they vaulted again into the saddles, and dashed onward over the green-sward, now fast fading under the tramp of hoofs.

Last of all came the tall martial figure of Abogáz Maretch, chief of all the tributary Galla in the south, at the head of his Abitchu legion, who closed the display of barbarian tactics. Three thousand in number, the sea of wild horsemen moved in advance to the music of the kettledrums, their arms and decorations flashing in the sun-beam, and their ample white robes and long braided hair streaming to the breeze. At the shrill whoop of their leader, with the rushing sound of a hurricane, the cohort clattered past the royal stand, and the moving forest of lances disappeared under a cloud of dust.

From eight to ten thousand cavalry were present in the field, and the spectacle, which lasted from nine in the morning until five in the afternoon, was exceedingly wild and impressive. Did the warriors who this day recounted their valorous achievements before the monarch only possess hearts of a measure with their good weapons and strong seats, they could not fail to prove the means of extensive power and conquest under the control of an aspiring chief; but such unfortunately is not the case, and the speed of their stout hardy steeds is too frequently exerted in the wrong direction.

As soon as it became dark, several rockets which we had brought with us were discharged from our tents by the king's express desire. With fire-arms the Abyssinians were previously acquainted, and the brass galloper which had echoed so recently, although viewed with wonderful respect, was still only the engine on a colossal scale, to which they were familiarised. But these were the first rockets of which His Majesty had viewed the flight, and the impression they produced upon his mind, as he gazed from his watch-tower, was scarcely less than that worked upon his assembled subjects. Night had thrown her mantle around, and the novel principle of ascent, with the grandeur of the brilliant rush into the skies, afforded matter of amazement to all spectators. When the projectile started with a loud roar from its bed, men, women, and children, fell flat upon their faces. Horses and mules broke loose from their tethers, and the warrior who had any heart remaining shouted aloud. The Galla tribes who witnessed the meteor-like explosion from the vicinity, ascribed the phenomenon to the use of potent medicines, and declared that since the Gyptzis could at pleasure produce comets in the sky, and rain fire from heaven, there was nought for them left, save abject submission to the king's commands.

The ceremony of burning the stack of willow staves on the parade commenced shortly after this exhibition, and, superintended by His Majesty in person, terminated the proceedings of the busy day. Shrouded from the gaze of the populace, the ladies of the royal harem danced and clapped their hands together, as their white ghostlike figures moved in circling procession around the pile so shortly to be committed to the flames. Then followed a rush of

torch-bearers from various quarters, mingled with the corps of Aferoch, and all reeling under the effects of strong old hydromel. Three hundred flower-decked fasces, displayed bright and fresh in the morning, but now withered and faded, were with savage shouts and yells cast simultaneously on the pyre, and a burst of lurid glare, which revealed all that was passing, at once proclaimed their ignition. Thousands crowding to the spot added their tribute, and joined in the din of voices. Black crosses to repel the devil were by many described on their foreheads with the charred wood, in the struggle to obtain which hard blows were dealt lustily about, and some of the competitors were even forced into the pile. The legend asserts, that on the discovery of the Holy Cross by the mother of Constantine the Great, she caused beacon fires to be lighted on all the high hills of Palestine, upon beholding which a general shout of joy was raised by the people of Constantinople. In imitation hereof, wild songs and yells of triumph from the inebriated Christians of Shoa, now completed the turmoil and confusion, and with the crackling red flames that curled up the tall dry staves, ascended high towards the starry vault of heaven in honour of Saint Helena.

Volume Two—Chapter Eleven.

The Galla Capital.

Angollála, on the Galla frontier, founded ten years since by the reigning monarch, is now the capital of the western portion of Shoa, and during the greater part of the year it forms His Majesty's favourite place of residence. Thither he proceeded on the morning following the festivities of Máskal. Upwards of three thousand horsemen composed the *cortège*, which was swelled every quarter of a mile by large detachments of cavalry. Led by their respective chiefs, each band dismounted at a considerable distance on the flank, and advancing on foot with shoulders bared, fell prostrate with one accord before the state umbrellas. The Negoos bestrode a richly caparisoned mule, with swallow-tailed housings of crimson and green, and massive silver collars; and he was closely followed by the corps of shield-bearers under the direction of the Master of the Horse, who, by vigorous sallies, and the judicious exercise of a long stick, kept the crowd from encroaching upon the royal person, during our eight-mile ride over the level plain.

From four to five hundred circular huts, consisting of loose stone walls very rudely thatched, cover the slopes of a group of tabular hills that enclose an extensive quadrangle. On the summit of the largest eminence, near the church of Kidána Meherát, stands the palace, defended by six rows of stout high palisades. A clumsy stone edifice of two stories, rising in the form of a dove-cot, occupies the centre.

It was erected by Demetrius, an Albanian visitor, and is considerably superior in point of architecture to all other domiciles in the realm, although somewhat tottering in appearance, and deserted from an apprehension of earthquake, which holds strong possession of the royal mind. “Earthquakes are bad things,” was His Majesty’s remark, “for they overthrow houses, and demolish my people.”

The rugged ascent up the steep hill-side was thronged with spectators, male and female, assembled to greet the arrival of their sovereign, and to stare at the foreigners. Paupers and mendicants crowded the first enclosure; and the approach from the second gate through four court-yards, to the King’s quarters, was lined with matchlock-men and fusiliers, who, as the Embassy passed between the ranks, made a laughable attempt to present arms in imitation of the artillery escort at the review. Kitchens, magazines, and breweries were scattered in all directions; and, with the long banqueting-hall, the chamber of audience, the apartments of the women, and the solitary cells, formed a curious, but far from imposing group of buildings.

The despot, in high good-humour, conducted us over the unswept premises, and up a rude ladder to the attic story, which commands a pleasant prospect over wide grassy meadows, intersected by serpentine streamlets, and covered with the royal herds. Upon a floor strewed with newly-cut grass, blazed a wood fire in an iron stove, with the never-failing cats luxuriating under its influence. A dirty couch graced the alcove, and a few guns and fowling-pieces the rudely white-washed walls, but otherwise the dreary chamber was unfurnished. “I have brought you here,” quoth His Majesty, “that you

may understand what I want. These rooms require to be ornamented; and I wish your artist to cover them with elephants and soldiers, and with representations of all the buildings and strange things in your country, which my eyes have not yet seen. At present my children may go."

Awnings had been pitched on the summit of Debra Máskal, (The Hill of the Cross) the southern eminence. The weather was now intensely cold, and a fire during the evening hours could not be dispensed with. As the embers died away, and the smoke cleared from the interior of the flimsy pall, our teeth chattered under the pinching exhalation from the ground. Rifles became rusty in a single night from the heavy white dew that saturated the cloth—watches stopped beneath the pillow—and heaps of blankets proved of small avail to warm our cramped and shivering limbs, which told full well of the hoar frost that was encrusting the verdure of the adjacent meadow.

In the filthy purlieus of the palace, and close to the outer gate, stands a mound of ashes and rubbish, mingled with the noisome lees that stream over the road from the adjacent royal breweries. Packs of half-wild dogs, the pest of Angollála, luxuriate hereon during the day, and at night set forth on their reckless foray, dispelling sleep, and destroying tents in their pilfering invasions. Long before the dawn, the shrill crowing of a thousand cocks first startles the slumberer from his uneasy repose. The wild whoop of the oppressed Galla, who demands redress, then mingles with the "*Abiet! Abiet*!" reiterated by the more civilised Amhára from every hill-top; and the memory of those who have ever witnessed the breaking of the glorious day amid nature's luxuriant forests of the

East, is forcibly carried back to the tangled thicket, where the *campanero* tolls her bell-like note from the branches of the spreading tamarind, and the wild ape fills up the interval with his deep voice of exultation, as he pounces upon the bitter apple of the wood.

Bands of mendicant monks next silently take post on the crest of a crumbling wall, within spear's length of the slumberer's pillow, and by a shrill recitative, followed by a chorus of independent voices, dispel the morning dream, whilst they scream with a pertinacity that bribery can alone quell. Psalms and hymns never fail to usher in the morn; and when the asperity of cracked and aged throats is somewhat mellowed by distance, the chant of Christian praise—now rambling wildly through all the varied shakes and intonations of a single voice—now swelling with the choral unison of many—is not altogether unpleasant. But greatly more melodious would it fall upon the mortal ear, if a lesson in music were taken from the larks, which rise in hundreds from the steaming meadows, to lift their matin song—at intervals warbling far and faint in the cool dewy air, and again approaching with one rich quaver of delicious harmony, as they fearlessly alight upon the awning.

To the cry of "*Abiet*!" which now resounded so unceasingly, the Abyssinians attach the opinion that, on the last day, Satan, taking up his post before the gates of heaven, will continue thus to vociferate until he gains admittance. On presenting himself before the judgment-seat, it will be asked "what he would have?" "The souls which have been wrested from me by the angels," is to be the reply; but on his acknowledging inability to specify the names of those who have robbed him, the Father of Evil will receive a command to be gone, and never to shew his face

again.

Importunity is an attribute which stands prominently forth in the character of a native of Southern Abyssinia. For hours together the numerous applicants for redress continue thus to call upon the "master" from every eminence around the palace, until at length the door-keepers appearing, beckon the petitioners to draw nigh. Well aware, however, of the existing understanding between these servitors and the very judges against whose decision they would appeal, they give no heed to the summons, but thrusting their fingers into their ears, do but lift up their voices the louder, until the king commands one of his pages to cause the whole to assemble in the court-yard, where, with shoulders bared to the waist, the parties fearlessly bring their complaint before the throne.

Opportunities were therefore daily afforded of witnessing the dispensation of justice in this singular and anomalous land, where an Ethiopic translation of the code of Justinian, adapted to the customs of the country, forms the basis of legal decisions. The Fétha Negést, or "Judgment of the Kings," as this volume is entitled, is said to have fallen from heaven during the reign of Constantine the Great; but its statutes, although liberally quoted on all convenient occasions, are not considered binding upon the monarch, unless found in perfect unison with his own despotic pleasure. Disputes are first adjusted by the governors of provinces, who, in the powers with which they are invested, resemble the feudal barons of the middle ages, and often perpetrate the grossest injustice. But the injured party can always seek redress in the court of the Four *Wamberoch*, or "the chairs," who are the judges civil and criminal. These dignitaries daily take

their seat in the verandah of a building allotted in one of the palace courts, where accuser and accused delivered their conflicting statements in an equally elevated tone of oratory, accompanied by much theatrical gesture. The decision lies again under appeal to the throne; and whensoever the king sees fit to reverse it, the severest censure is invariably passed upon the delinquent “chairs.” The lives and the lands of every subject of Shoa belong *de jure* to Sáhela Selássie, and of their persons and worldly substance he is absolute master. Whether at the demise of the king or of the subject, the estates of the latter are again at the disposal of the crown, and without the occurrence of either contingency, the mere will and pleasure of the despot is alone requisite to their resumption. Violent use, however, is not often made of this arbitrary power, and it is rarely resorted to except in cases of high treason or of offences against the state, which, in place of capital punishment, are visited by confiscation of property, with imprisonment for life. But if the criminal shall have taken timely sanctuary in the monastery of Affaf Woira, his person is held inviolate, even by the king, and the monks can generally mediate with success. Slavery, either limited to the offender, or extended to his whole family, and continued to his descendants, during one, two, or even seven generations, is a punishment from which no class is held exempt, but exile is usually substituted for offences committed by the clergy, the banished ecclesiastic being then commanded to “stay not by day, neither to tarry by night,” if he would avoid the penalty that awaits delay.

In accordance with the Mosaic dispensation, a life for a life is the sentence passed upon the murderer; but, obtaining the consent of the relatives of the

deceased, he is authorised by law to purchase his pardon, and to beg through the land until he shall have accumulated the stipulated ransom. His escape under any circumstances involves forfeiture of property by all his relatives who may be residing north of the river Airára, and unless he be produced, the attachment continues in full force during three generations. Robbery is usually investigated through the Lebáshi, or "thief-taker," who is indispensable to Abyssinian jurisprudence, and the unhappy wretch whom his imp selects, if unable to pay the fine adjudged, is visited by castigation either with a whip or cudgel. If a Christian, he is then confided to the care of a follower of the Prophet in some of the hot unwholesome Mohammadan districts—if an Islám, to that of a Christian—the party on whom the culprit is thus quartered, being in either case held responsible to the crown for his safe custody during his term of hard labour.

In all the courts of judicature, interest for money lent is recognised at the rate of one *ámole* per mensem upon each dollar. No note of hand is ever exchanged, but the security of a substantial house-keeper is taken, who is termed "*wás*." Debtors are generally manacled, and suffered to roam about, in order to beg the amount due among the charitably disposed; and it is a fact, that in the absence of a "*wás*" either the creditor or one of his retainers is chained to the defaulter, and the happy couple thus linked, wander through the country together, crying "By Mary! By Mary!" until the requisite sum shall have been contributed for the sake of the Holy Virgin.

At home and abroad, on excursions and on military expeditions, the loud cry of "*Abiet*!" salutes the royal ear from situations the most strange and unexpected,

and although the sceptre is despotic, appeals are almost always promptly attended to. The more boisterous petitioner, who will not remain content with the promise of a future consideration of his claim, is sometimes visited with the stick, but no available opportunity is neglected of listening to those who present themselves. The halting-stone and the green turf are frequently transferred into seats of justice; judgment is given whilst ambling over the fields and meadows; and during five days of every week, many hours are patiently devoted by the monarch to the unravelment of knotty points in litigation.

Volume Two—Chapter Twelve.

Chasm of the Chácha.

The King had oftentimes vaunted the extraordinary natural fortification of Angollála by the river Chácha, which for two days' journey to the north-westward rolls through a deep precipitous valley, opposing an impassable barrier; and being then joined by the Beréza and by numerous other streams, skirts the celebrated sanctuary of Sena Márkos, whence the combined waters, taking the title of Jumma, roll on into the Nile. Setting out one morning at sunrise through the "sirkosh ber," (i.e. The secret gate or wicket) he sent a page to conduct us to the junction of the tributary Fácha, which tumbles its torrent over a perpendicular wall seven hundred feet in height; and here His Majesty, surrounded by a crowd of noisy applicants for justice, already occupied his favourite seat on the brink of the giddy chasm.

A cloud had overcast the despot's brow, for "Boro Winkee," his favourite war-steed, had that morning fallen down dead whilst exercising in the meadow. Taken in battle from a potent Galla chieftain, whose name it inherited, the steed had long enjoyed a stall within the royal bedchamber, and strong fears indeed were entertained for the effeminate little page Kátama, who had been the luckless jockey. But no punishment followed the catastrophe. The boy was a court favourite, and Antonistye, his father, by far the most renowned warrior in Shoa, was mayor of the corporation of king's herdsmen, who take the field in independent bodies, and under the title of *Abelám* (derived from the Amháric word "*abélla*," "he may eat up") form a distinct class, mingling with no other portion of the population.

"What think you of my Galla ditch?" inquired the monarch. "Have you any such in your country?"

There could be but one opinion regarding the yawning gulf, which extends a full mile in breadth, and has been rent by some violent convulsion in the bowels of the earth. Fifteen hundred feet below the otherwise uninterrupted plain, the mingled waters flow on like a silver cord, fed at intervals by foaming cascades, which raise a shower of white spray in their headlong descent: whilst frowning basaltic cliffs cast a deep gloom over wild steppes and terraces, whose lone hamlets and cottages are scarcely to be distinguished from the fallen masses of rock. Vast colonies of pig-faced baboons, the principal inhabitants, sally forth morning and evening from their strong city, to devastate the surrounding crops, in defiance of incessant war waged against them by the peasantry, armed with sticks and stones; but outcasts, and criminals too, find a safe asylum

among the almost inaccessible crannies of the perpendicular scarps, where they hide amidst masses of foliage, unthought of, and unmolested.

Deep buried in the bosom of this stupendous chasm, and immediately below the roaring cataract, stands the little hamlet of Guréyo, the seat of the royal iron-works, and thither, after the sylvan court had closed, the king descended, leaning on the arm of the chief smith, great master of the Tabiban, or mechanics, and royal physician in ordinary. The process of smelting and refining pursued in Abyssinia has been common to almost every age and country from the earliest antiquity. Broken into small fragments and coarsely pulverised, the ore is mixed with a large proportion of charcoal, and placed in a clay furnace resembling the smith's hearth, but furnished with a sloping cavity considerably depressed below the level of the blast pipes. The non-metallic particles being brought to a state of fusion by the constant action of four pair of hand-worked bellows, the iron with the scoria sinks to the bottom. This is again broken, and re-fused, when the dross flowing off, the pure metal is discharged in pigs, which, by a repetition of heating and welding, are wrought into bars; but owing to the very rude and primitive apparatus employed, the unceasing toil of ten hours is indispensable to the realisation of two pounds' weight of very inferior iron, which after all, in private works, is liable to a heavy tax to the crown.

Embowered in a dark grove of junipers on the opposite brink of the Chácha rises the silent village of Chérkos, rendered famous a few years since through the massacre of one thousand of its Christian inhabitants by Medóko (his gazelle), a celebrated rebel. His proceedings occupy one of the most

conspicuous pages in the chronicles of Shoa. Exalted by rare military talents and undaunted intrepidity to the highest pinnacle of royal favour, he became elated by the distinctions conferred, and being suspected of aiming at even greater dominion, was suddenly hurled into the deepest disgrace, and bereft in the same moment of property and power. Burning with revenge, the warrior crossed the border to the subjugated, though disaffected Galla, whom he had so lately held in check, and who now with open arms received him as their leader in revolt.

At the head of a vast horde of wild cavalry, reinforced by a number of matchlock-men, who had deserted their allegiance, the rebel marched upon Angollála. But he was frustrated in his designs by finding the only assailable point fortified by staked pits and ditches—the deep rugged channel of the Chácha opposing, as he well knew, an insurmountable barrier in every other direction. Desertion soon spread among the undisciplined rabble, and after several skirmishes with the royal troops, the offender sought an asylum at Zalla Dingai. Through the powerful mediation of Zenama Work, the Queen-dowager, he was suffered to throw himself at the feet of his despotic master, and not only obtained pardon, but from motives of policy was eventually restored to all his former dignities.

Medóko's second rebellion and tragic death, embodied from the authentic details of eye-witnesses, will form the subject of the six succeeding chapters. They are designed to throw upon the character of the monarch, and upon the customs of his court, a light which could scarcely have been admitted through any other lattice. The standard of revolt long waved over the heathen frontier, and

when the storm which for months threatened the subversion of the empire had at length been quelled by the extinction of the fiery and turbulent spirit that had raised it, large offerings were made by His Majesty to all the churches and monasteries throughout the realm, in return for their prayers; and solemn processions and thanksgivings were attended by the exercise of every sort of work of charity and devotion.

Among the royal retinue this day seated before the village of Chérkos, was a young man of haughty and daring exterior, whose flowing black mantle covered a breast that must have been often agitated by strange emotions. It was Chára, the son of the rebel, one of the only two members of the disgraced family to whom Sáhela Selássie has become reconciled, and a youth who is said to resemble his sire, not less in appearance than in gallant bearing. Prior to the breaking out of the insurrection, he had urged the arrest of his father; but no attention being paid in the proper quarter, he subsequently enlisted under his banner, and carried arms against the crown until the fall of the traitor, when, from his previous well-timed, though disregarded disclosure, he received full pardon for the past.

Ayto Tunkaiye, a gigantic warrior, greatly distinguished for his valour, who enacted a prominent part in Medóko's execution, was also of the *cortège*; and beside him stood Hailoo, younger brother of the rebel noble, who purchased restoration to royal favour at the expense of a deed of the blackest treachery. This he recounted not only without a blush, but with extraordinary satisfaction at his fancied heroism. Apprehending a similar fate with him whose cause he had espoused, he fled across the border,

and found a safe asylum with Wodáge Girmee, a powerful Galla chieftain, long in open revolt, and one of the bitterest enemies of the monarch. Basely assassinating his benefactor, whilst seated unsuspectingly in the open field, he sprang upon his horse, and casting the head of his victim at the royal footstool in token of his villainy, was rewarded by advancement to the government of Mésar Médur, a post of high honour, which he enjoys to the present day, and which occupies the frontier of the Galla dependencies.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirteen.

Medóko the Rebel.

"Like whom to Shoan eyes,
None ere has risen and none ere shall rise."

Renowned for his great strength and dauntless heart, Medóko was of a more robust and brawny form than most of his countrymen. There was a bold bearing in his erect carriage—his gait was proud, and his speech haughty; and not less dexterous in the management of his steed, than powerful in wielding his weapons, he stood proclaimed the most valiant, although the most insolent, of the Amhára. His handsome features and his gallant deeds had gained for him the palm of favour among all the dames of the land. An aquiline nose stood prominent from his manly countenance, and a bright eye sparkled clear and daring under a bushy brow. The fairest daughters of Shoa loved to look upon the warrior, and rejoiced to add their beauty to his harem, or to

experience the gifts of his bountiful hand; and the shrill note of female welcome burst from every throat, as he curvetted through the streets upon his gallant charger shining in brass and steel, or careered at speed over the plain, with his white and crimson robe streaming behind his athletic frame.

Riches and honours and preferment had been again liberally showered upon his head by the monarch who had so frequently received the benefit of his assistance, and had been more than once indebted for his life to the strong arm of the chief. The memory of past crime seemed to have been obliterated and forgotten—"Had he not err'd, his glory had been less;" and he was now raised to the high post of governor of all the Galla, and Abogáz of the southern frontier of the kingdom.

But there was no lack of enemies to the imperious favourite; and among the most bitter of his opponents was one who, by the insidious tongue of malice, materially contributed to achieve the downfall and destruction of the bravest son of Shoa.

Well versed in all the petty arts of a mean and sycophantish court, Father Asrát had held during two successive reigns the snug office of confessor to the royal family. Sleek from good living, his hood fell without a wrinkle over his portly person; and bowing in devotion before his superiors, the words of flattery flowed in profusion from his honied tongue. The sins of the rich were easily forgiven; substitute was immediately produced for the slight penance decreed by his lip; and the effects of his indulgence might be clearly observed in the fine muslin which ever encircled his shaven head—in the glossy condition of his pampered mule—and in the gay ivory handle of

his polished crutch, which were ostentatiously displayed as he daily brushed through the court-yards of the palace.

On many occasions the audacity of Medóko had broken out into open mockery of the priestly rapacity; but although the dark feelings of revenge rankled in the breast of the monk, yet a scowling look of hatred was alone ventured in return to the jibes of the great governor and first favourite of the despot. On one fatal festival, however, when the fumes of the old hydromel had gained a complete ascendency over the party, a bitter jest was retorted by the exasperated priest, a fierce wrangle ensued, and the holy person of Father Asrát was violently spurned against the wall by the strong arm of the hot-blooded chief.

A reconciliation had been outwardly effected by mutual friends, but from that day the most wily insinuations were used to poison the breast of the king. The actions of the past were vividly brought to his recollection; words that had never been spoken, and expressions craftily distorted to serve a vile purpose, were daily poured into the royal ear; and although the demeanour of the monarch remained unchanged, suspicion was gradually being instilled into his mind, and the cloud required but a slight shock to discharge its contents.

According to the custom of the country, the royal princesses lived in total seclusion until it suited the despot's caprice or policy to open the door of their cage. "A daughter of the royal house will be led to the nuptial altar on the morrow," is the sole intimation afforded; and the happy bridegroom is not aware of the honour to be conferred, until the hand of "the

introducer" leads him from the group which encircles the throne, to the immediate performance of the rite. But the stout-hearted Medóko had contrived to behold the beauty of the far-famed princess "Golden Fruit," and intoxicated by a long succession of prosperity, and stirred up by the deceitful priest to believe that the king would refuse no request preferred by a chief whose services were held in such high esteem, he rashly resolved upon demanding the only remaining favour which the monarch had hitherto withheld.

On a bright morning in May before the commencement of the monsoon, a distinguished cavalcade entered the outer gates of the palace fortifications. The stately person of the leader was enveloped in a flowing robe bedizened with many crimson stripes, and a long white feather streamed high over his raven hair. A gauntlet and bracelet of silver decorated his sinewy arm, the token of many a hard conflict; and the massive silver sword was girded to his right side, the emblem of high authority and place. The bearer of his silver shield preserved a respectful space for the chief, and a dark war-steed, glittering in chains and studs of polished metal, followed at his side. A dense mass of wild Galla, armed with the serrated lance and tough black buckler, closed the procession, which, amidst the acclamations of the assembled mob, wound up the rocky path of the palace hill at Ankóber.

On gaining the last flight of steps, the great door was thrown open, and Medóko advanced to the audience of leave previous to his departure to the seat of his government. The small latticed gallery had been decked out in his honour, and the crimson velvet hangings of state depended in front, loaded with

massive silver ornaments. Rich carpets were spread below for the convenience of the more favoured nobles. The officers of the household, uncovered to the waist, stood in a double row in front; and the monarch reclined upon his seat of honour at the open window, gaily clad in a green silk vest bordered with gold, over which the folds of the usual white robe of Abyssinia hung gracefully around his recumbent figure.

Advancing to the prescribed limit, Medóko, according to the custom of ages, prostrated himself to the earth before the descendant of Solomon, and then, raising his haughty figure erect before the monarch, he boldly preferred the request of his heart. “Behold, I have brought a present to the king, that he may hear me in love, and dismiss his servant well pleased from his presence.”

Ten war steeds fully equipped, together with five hundred bullocks, twenty slaves, and two large bags of silver coin, were ushered into the court-yard. The eye of the avaricious king brightened with satisfaction at the liberal gift of his vassal, and the words were spoken more kindly than usual—“What is the desire of the Abogáz?” But the answer of daring rashness which followed fell like a thunderbolt upon the court —“The hand of the Princess Worka Ferri.”

The rod of green rushes dropped from the grasp of the astonished “introducer,” and chiefs and nobles half rose from their seats, as the mysteries of royal seclusion were thus boldly infringed before the multitude. But although the monarch was irritated to the last pitch by this unprecedented insolence, he restrained his feelings under the usual cold calm smile. “We will converse regarding this business at a

future period," he said; and the audience was closed with an invitation to the chief to pass his last evening in the private apartments of the palace—an honour conferred only upon a favoured few.

Warnings and advice were not wanting from many quarters; and recollection called to mind many dark scenes which had been transacted at the friendly board of the despot, who was well known to be in a dangerous mood when too many smiles lighted up his countenance, and who preferred the quiet capture of his enemy to forcible seizure in the open day. But the rash Medóko, confident in his own ascendency through service rendered, discarded every thought of evil. With a stout heart he entered the gloomy hall at the appointed hour, and under the guidance of an eunuch proceeded along the rough dark passages of the interior.

On gaining the inner apartment, he found Father Asrát and his assistant kneeling in the corner before their low desks, mumbling the lessons of the evening from the miracles of the Holy Virgin—divers flasks of potent spirits being as usual ranged on the wicker table for the entertainment of the select company. All were in the highest humour. The demeanour of the monarch was kind and conciliating; and amongst the honours and favours which were that night liberally bestowed, the priest received the high office of chief of the church of the Saviour in the romantic village of Chérkos. The customary topics were discussed—the usual quantity of strong liquor was swallowed—and at intervals the choristers chanted the Psalms of David. The evening passed in great hilarity, and the company at length rose to depart.

His heart bounding high with future hope, Medóko

stooped low to pay the salutation of the night, and was instantaneously pinioned from behind, whilst a rush from the front prevented every effort to lay hand upon his weapon. By his fierce struggles he once nearly regained an erect position, but numbers crowded through every passage, and he found himself stretched on the floor securely bound and hampered with many coils of rope.

“Fetters and a dungeon for the slave!” exclaimed the monarch as he quitted the scene of betrayed hospitality, and guards entered to obey the royal mandate. But ere the captive could be borne to his doom, a heavy foot pressed upon his prostrate neck. The smile of satisfied revenge played over the bloated features of the malicious monk, and it shot through the heart of the fallen warrior. A deadly vow was muttered betwixt his clenched teeth; and as he lay foaming with rage, the words were half audible through his suppressed breathing, “Let him guard his cowled head if he can: henceforth to the Devil with my allegiance!”

Volume Two—Chapter Fourteen.

Escape from Góncho.

Medóko had been hurried from the presence, and urged along the rough road with as much rapidity as possible; but people are seldom so unfortunate as they suppose themselves to be. His fate was not as yet accomplished, and a slight diversion had been already made in his favour. A faithful follower, alarmed at the protracted stay of his chief, had

silently stationed himself at the secret outlet of the palace, whence he witnessed the progress of his beloved master. A devoted band, having hastily collected, followed close on the footsteps of the guard; and as the prisoner passed through the thick forest of Aferbeine, the shrill note of the Galla henchman more than once fell on his attentive ear, to convey the welcome tidings that he was not altogether deserted in this his hour of distress.

As the party climbed the rocky steep, the moon was fast sinking behind the great mountains, and her pale beams fell cold over the isolated rock of Góncho, on the summit of which is perched the state prison of the kingdom. The lower extremity of this hill is rent and furrowed by many tangled ravines, and the bare craggy scarp frowns over the wide-spreading valleys which stretch on either side. Sharp palisades guard the approach, and strong gateways lead through well-defended courtyards to a cluster of edifices which form the residence of the frontier governor, and the entrance to the places of confinement.

Vanquished by fate, yet refusing to yield, a spasm of painful emotion covered with cold dew the brow of the haughty chief, as he passed the rocky threshold of the prison. But the thoughts of a free foot on the mountain-side, and the signal vengeance that would follow, banished from his stout heart the usual feelings of despair, and in ironical words he returned the salutations of his brother Abogáz, into whose keeping he was about to be consigned.

Wulásma Mohammad was a fat imperious personage, of most sinister expression of countenance, and much more feared than either loved or respected. The cool healthy air of his

mountain fortress, and a quiet life of inactivity, had filled his veins with a rich flow of blood, and he spent the greater portion of the day over a jar of potent hydromel. His body had become bloated and his mind bewildered by the fumes of the liquor; and dividing his time between dreaming and drinking, he left the charge of his bolts and avocations to his burly brother Jhalia, who, fortunately for the prisoner, was now engaged on the frontier in quelling a disturbance which had been induced by the stupidity of his superior.

The vulture eye of the Abogáz brightened up on the arrival of the illustrious Medóko; and being at the moment unable to comprehend whether he came as a prisoner or as a guest, an order for entertainment and wine rung through the apartment, instead of chains and fetters for the malefactor. Relieved from the ropes which had hitherto confined his movements, the chief was ushered with all ceremony into the great hall of the court; nor was it until after reiterated requests on the part of the guard, and a solemn adjuration by the life of the king, that the blinking gaoler, cheated out of his expected carouse, consented to take some measures of precaution.

Built on the only sloping face of the hill, the governor's houses stretch entirely across the outlet from scarp to scarp, and from his immediate bedchamber two trap-doors cover the passages to the inner recesses of the prison. A staircase descends from one into the vaults underground, where immured in chains are the state criminals, and the younger branches of the royal family; and a passage leads through the other to a series of small apartments erected upon the upper surface of the hill, but surrounded by strong palisades to the very verge

of the precipice. The scarp was of considerable height, and had never yet been attempted by those offenders whose lighter crimes had enforced a residence in these more agreeable locations; and the besotted Wulásma being in no mood to reflect on the strength and daring of his present charge, merely conducted him to one of these places of security, and barring the door on the outside, retired grumbling to the crown officials, after leaving an ample repast for the entertainment of his distinguished prisoner.

The rude wax taper was flaming and sinking at intervals over the untouched food, as one quarter of an hour was passed in attentive musing; but the peculiarities of the prisoner's situation were too striking not to be immediately taken advantage of, and he accordingly braced up his spirits for the enterprise. Having contrived with his host's knife to remove the thongs and sticks which composed the walls of his flimsy dungeon, he crept into an outer apartment, where the stars could be perceived twinkling brightly through an aperture. To wrench the iron bars from the window was the work of a moment; and leaping from a considerable height, Medóko stood unshackled in the cool air of heaven. There remained still many hours of the night, and the darkness favoured his undertaking, although otherwise little suited to the task to be performed; but palisade and paling gradually yielded to his strength, and after an anxious hour of exertion, he reached the dark precipice unnoticed and undiscovered.

Nought broke the stillness of the scene save the sound of the wind whistling over the bleak crags; and as the daring fugitive stood for a time in meditation before venturing the awful leap, an owl, brushing his cheek, soared away on noiseless pinion; its hoot

which re-echoed from below seeming as the voice of a spirit calling to follow without fear. Quickly recovering his confidence at the omen, and nerving himself for the perilous task, he slid down the face of the precipice, and recommending his soul to the Holy Virgin, quitted hold of the last tuft of grass which sustained him over the yawning gulf. Down, down dropped the chief, until his very senses reeled again; but his flowing cotton robe materially assisted the miraculous descent, by catching the sharp points, and restraining for a moment the rapidity of his flight. The strength of his long brawny arms served him well in this hour of need, as clutching the rocks he retained his hold for a second, in order to gain breath for the next dread plunge into the gloomy abyss. Then bounding again like the falling stone, he pursued his flight, till at length, bruised and bleeding, he reached the bottom of the rocky scarp, hitherto untraversed except by the sticky foot of the lizard.

The shrill note for assistance, well known to every Galla ear, was speedily answered by his watchful followers. Crowding round their beloved chief, they quickly bound up his wounds, and after a short rest the party recovered the beaten track. Placed once again on his own good steed, he raised his form in the stirrups, and shouted his battle-cry of defiance. Each bridle was laid loose upon the mane, and the wild riders plunged at speed down the flinty ravine, now partially illumined by the flash of matchlocks from the alarmed garrison. A brave spirit is not to be subdued by exile, for every soil forms his home and his country; and away to the free plains of the Galla the headlong course was bent, where Medóko was well assured of receiving every sympathy and protection.

Volume Two—Chapter Fifteen.

Insurrection of the Galla.

In the heart of the mountain range of Garra Gorphoo stood a large Galla hamlet—for it has been since visited in wrath by the monarch—situated in one of those sweet locations which the children of nature delight to select. The deep valley is thickly clothed with the most luxuriant cultivation, and its sides rise in a gentle slope, throwing out a succession of verdant terraces, teeming with herbs and wild flowers. On one of these stood the village of Mundeeda, the residence of Goma, the great chief of the Abitchu. A bright green sward extended far in front, and the steep mountain that rises behind afforded shelter from the bleak blast of winter. A sparkling brook, after dashing in tiny cascades down the craggy face, glides away in a quiet course over the enamelled meadow, until lost in the grove of dark junipers which rest on the side of a grassy knoll, where the sacrifice was performed in honour of the deities, and where the listless heathen was wont to dream away the hours of idleness.

The tenements, although low and rudely constructed of stakes and mud, were warm and commodious; and the numerous posts which rose from the clay floor to support the thatch, served as a resting-place for shields, and spears, and crooked swords, which now imparted to the interior the semblance of an extensive armoury. Every thing was in a state of utter confusion and uproar. Large droves of wild shaggy horses, and clusters of fiery savages were grouped on the plain outside. The ringing shout of the warrior mingled with the neigh of his war-steed, and the din

and the clatter of household avocations resounded from the interior of every hut. To add to the bustle, the Galla females were running from house to house, with their long raven tresses streaming over their bare shoulders; whilst their short leather petticoats, with embroidered flounces, displayed the well-shaped limbs and the graceful form, for which the tribe are so justly famed.

In every nook large earthen jars, and wicker baskets, filled with grain, were stored in readiness to supply the demands for food, as each tribe poured in to the general gathering of the clans. Black eyes peered wildly over the grinding-mill and the cauldron; and the merry laugh at the novel appearance of the motley throng, with the suppressed scream of delight from the timid maiden, arose frequently from the dark corners of the hovels. Preparations were making for hospitality on the most extensive scale. A successful foray had that very morning returned laden with spoil, and the king of the Amhára had for once amply supplied the table of his revolted lieges.

Crowded around the cheerful blaze of a fierce fire that was crackling in the centre of the largest building, sat a score of persons, who were beguiling the time until the entertainment should be ready, by discussing the daring escape of Medóko, and the success which would assuredly attend the movement of the morrow. The dress of the greater number of these men was the usual cotton cloth, black and soiled with the grease of years; but the accumulated massive ivory rings upon the arm, the ostrich-feather floating over matted locks, and the spoils of the lion and the leopard dangling over the back, proclaimed the presence of the chieftains of the land. Their gaunt frames and supple limbs betokened a life of activity

and endurance, and their restless eyes gleamed over the fire with all the quick suspicion of the savage.

The black bull-hide formed the only covering to the host of attendants that thronged behind their respective lords, and a few Amhára robes flaunted in white and crimson, amidst the sombre vestments of the Galla group. But Medóko and his sons, in stature above all their compeers, appeared in the full costume of the Christian warriors of Efát.

Decked in silver gauntlets and armlets, with the graceful *akodáma* hanging in glittering clusters over their manly brows, the master-spirits of the scene were easily to be distinguished. The usual robe of peace had been well replaced by the skin of the tawny lion, which nearly reached the ground. Fastened on one side around the sinewy throat, it allowed full freedom to the right arm, and only partially concealed the rich silk vest, and loose kilt-like trowsers, which hung barely to the knee.

The kindling fuel of insurrection had indeed been well fanned—ancient wrongs were fully brought to mind, and vengeance was liberally promised. Few were there present who had not suffered either in person or in property, from the midnight appearance of the Christian despot. Hereditary feud and quarrel had therefore been laid aside on the soul-inspiring words of the chief, and the weapons had been eagerly seized in a common cause, at the thoughts of the devastation which ever marked the bloody track of the Amhára host.

These Galla tribes dwell with their horses in boundless prairies, engaged, some in the cultivation of the fruitful soil, and others in the pasturage of their

numerous flocks, but all are ever ready on the moment to mount for the battle or the foray. Baggage and hospital are unknown to the wild array, and rations are found when required among the plundered herds of the enemy. A scrip of tobacco forms the only luxury in camp. A greasy cloth enfolds by day and night the body of each brawny savage. Lance, and sword, and shield, complete his equipment; and the hardy host, leader and partisan, sleep without cover on the cold bare ground.

The wild hordes from the boundless plains of the Háwash, under the gigantic Wodage Girmé, first poured in their warriors. The depths of the Moolo Fálada forests next swelled the numbers, and the heights of Entótto and Sequála had completed the rebel force, eager for spoil and for revenge, which was ready to cover the land with desolation on the morrow.

The sacrifice to the Great Spirit had been that afternoon performed by the priest with every favourable result, and the preparations for the feast of departure were now completed. Bullocks and sheep were slaughtered by the score on the green meadow, and beside each carcass an abundance of bread and beer were deposited for the impatient guests, who immediately grouped around the food, and with keen knives commenced the attack. A long wicker table had been placed in the centre of the largest apartment, and deep earthen vessels, filled with thick pepper soup, were ranged in double line down the middle, whilst cakes of every description thickly covered the surface. The chief took his station at the top, and the guests were squatted on their hams on either side. Slave boys, on their knees, supported huge jars of sour beer, and the females,

perched upon adjoining bedsteads, were ready to dole out the more potent liquor.

The steam of the bowls, containing a decoction of fowls, red pepper, onions, and grease, together with the more offensive effluvia from fifty rancid heads and as many unwashed persons, were endured with the most stoical indifference; and the feeble light of a few tapers that glimmered faintly through the smoke, was just sufficient to reveal the rows of eager faces in earnest preparation, and the gleam of the sharp teeth whetting for the entertainment.

The hum of voices in low conversation ceased on the moment, when the host, dipping a fragment of bread into one of the large bowls, dropped the savoury morsel into his elevated mouth. Every hand forthwith felt its way to the provender, and the loud smacking of satisfied lips succeeded the suppressed chatter of tongues. Servants, bending over the guests, amply supplied their wants, by tearing the bread with their hands, and after a plunge into the porridge, consigning the dripping morsel to the first empty fingers that were protruded. No fork or spoon graced the festive board. No conversation now enlivened the scene. All sat like silent wolves engaged in a plentiful repast, considering that one thing at a time was sufficient for man.

The delicate raw meat was next introduced, and the dismembered limbs of sheep and oxen were placed as a dessert upon the groaning board. The servants threw themselves upon the flesh, and drawing their long crooked knives from their girdles, cut and hacked the bloody joints into small squares, which were received from their fingers, and bolted with the greatest satisfaction, until nature cried enough. Then

commenced the deep carouse. Horn after horn was drained. The presiding deities over the liquor jars were unceasingly employed in serving out their contents, and as the brain reeled under the influence of strong old mead, the words of contempt burst from every lip. “Who is the King of Shoa, that he should trample upon men braver than himself? Here is our protector and avenger. Medóko is our leader, and he alone shall be our king!” But the uproar, which for a time rose wildly from the hut, gradually died away as the horn was carried with a more unsteady hand to the mouth. Warrior after warrior stretched himself to sleep beside the cleanly picked relics of his reeking feast; and chief after chief, staggering a few paces from the table, drew his garment over his head, and resigned himself to a heavy slumber.

Volume Two—Chapter Sixteen.

Massacre of the Christians at Chérkos.

The verdant meadows of the Shoan district of Dággee are strangely crossed and intersected by low chains of barren rock, with here and there an isolated hillock crowned by the abode of the Christian farmer; whilst between each little eminence rolls the lazy brook, winding sluggishly over the flowery plain, as if reserving its energies for the thundering leap into the great chasm of the Chácha.

Broken, craggy, and desolate, this mighty abyss sinks upwards of a thousand feet abruptly from the plain. Its giant sides are in part slightly fringed with moss or sweet-scented thyme; and a few small huts

dot the narrow ledges; but the wolf and the hyaena chiefly tenant the dark fissures, whilst the vulture screams her death note over the yawning gulf. Superstition has wrapped the beetling cliff and the gloomy ravine in her dark embrace, for here the captive toils in the bowels of the earth to procure the stubborn iron. The clang of the dreaded smith disturbs the stillness of day; and the chant of the hymn rises solemnly in the morning mist from the adjacent church of the Saviour, which stands embosomed in a dark grove of junipers. Far down in the bottom, the Chácha appears like the small murmuring mill-stream, although the accumulated waters of a broad plateau are there rolling on to swell the mighty Nile; and at frequent intervals the mountain torrents pour their tribute over the frowning scarp, which for miles forms the impregnable fortification of the land.

Near the commencement of this stupendous precipice, and barely a gunshot from its brink, stands Angollála, the Galla capital of the kingdom, commanding the upper pass into the Christian land. Three small hills which rise abruptly from the plain, and enclose a circular area, had been judiciously selected as a site by the wary founder, but the settlement was at this date in all the disorder of infancy. Only a few hundred hovels, composed of most flimsy materials, had been hastily erected on the sloping sides of two of the hillocks; but the smallest was distinguished by the more imposing edifice dedicated as a church to the Ark of the Holy Covenant, and its table summit was crowned with an ample residence for the Negoos.

A few trees raised their stunted heads above the thatch of the various kitchens and storehouses, which

were crowded thick over the crest, and the flowering *umbár* threw a broad zone of fragrant lilac blossoms around the royal buildings. Stones and rocks, strewed plentifully in every direction by the hand of nature, formed a considerable impediment to the rapid advance of horsemen; and stout heavy wooden palings, which descended in a double or treble row far down the slope, completely screened the inmates against any sudden surprise from the border foe.

A wide meadow stretches from the palace tumulus to the very brink of the abyss; and on the opposite height is situated the lovely village of Chérkos, which, from its beauty, had been formerly designated by the Galla “The Queen of the Hill.” Sheltered by a magnificent grove of evergreens, the hamlet overlooked the pleasant slope which extends to the verge of the precipice, gaily diversified with rich fields of cultivation and plots of green pasture land. It had been captured from the heathen by the last king of Shoa; and although colonised by favourite Christians of the court, the revenues were bestowed upon the church of the Saviour, which had been erected immediately below the village, in the dark depths of the Chácha ravine, and which was now under the direction and guidance of Father Asrát.

The hazy sun had sunk beyond the dark waters of the muddy Nile; the rivulets were trickling in discoloured streams from the surrounding hillocks, to form a temporary lake in the enclosed amphitheatre, and each reeking thatch sent up its tribute to the cloud of thick mist, which was fast settling over the low hills of Angollála. The meadow brooks were swollen to the brim, and the long plains, brilliant with verdure, presented a pleasing prospect to the eye, although a most treacherous surface to the

incautious foot. The monsoon was indeed raging in violence over the land; and according to custom, the monarch, thinly attended by his household officers and establishment, alone occupied the palace. All the governors and great men had taken leave and departed to their respective provinces, the capital was well nigh deserted, and as night closed in, the few remaining serf inhabitants were seeking a dry corner in their frail huts, to shiver through the weary hours of darkness.

As the moan of the wind is heard preceding the coming storm, so the hum of a confused multitude first struck upon the practised ear of the vigilant. The alarm was quickly spread by the fierce baying of the dogs. The chant of the singer suddenly ceased within the palace, and the king, followed by all his attendants, rushed to the southern palisade. Then was distinctly heard the clattering of hoofs over the opposite heights above the Chácha, as the pagan host surrounded the devoted hamlet of Chérkos. The glare of light and the faint wreath of smoke next succeeded, as the torch spread from hut to hut. The wind blew cold and gusty, and the flames wheeling in fearful eddies through the mist, revealed at intervals the cliff and the crag, and the peaceful church reposing amid the dark grove of junipers, hitherto unpolluted by the foot of the Gentile.

The wild shout of triumph, mingling with the shrill shriek of despair, now rolled in fitful notes across the intervening plain. The whole firmament was illumined by the flames of the burning village, and they were witnessed in terror by the assembled inmates of the palace; for the sacred precincts of the church itself had now been invaded, and a group of priests in their last extremity could be distinctly seen, surrounded by

a mass of the savage foe. But the next eddy of mist from the boiling cauldron that was interposed, shrouded the scene.

The priest Asrát shuddered at the thoughts of his narrow escape, for he had only that morning quitted the sacred shelter. But the eyeball was in vain strained to see what was passing. Darkness rendered its efforts abortive. By degrees the flame expired, and one horrid shout of exultation from ten thousand wild throats rose over hill and dale, in earnest that the work of slaughter had been well finished for that night, and that numbers were not wanting for the morrow.

Hurry and confusion reigned throughout the capital. The king was advised to avail himself of the protection of darkness, and retire to Ankóber; but his evening dream had been pleasant, and he was buoyed up by the words of the strong monk. “Shall I leave my children in the day of their distress,” he exclaimed, “and the seat of my fathers to be polluted by the accursed touch of the rebel? No; death is preferable to such disgrace.” The royal gates opened to receive the terrified inhabitants, who came flocking up the hill. Every matchlock was lowered from the walls of the great hall, and distributed amongst the young and able-bodied. Doors were barred and barricaded, and sufficient means of defence for a time seemed to have miraculously sprung from the untenanted location.

The pens of the scribes were now wielded with vigour; and as each tiny letter, or token, or entreaty, was handed for approval, the wild horseman mounted on the moment, and his long hair streamed in the night breeze, as, floundering through the

muddy outlet, he dashed at speed over the eastern plain.

The pressing call for aid flew quick through the land. The love and the fear of the king brought governor and vassal to the rescue; and as hatred of the rebel's insolence stimulated even the dullest to action, long before morning numerous bands from the immediate vicinity had formed, on the meadow, a living barrier between the beleaguered monarch and his stern foe.

Volume Two—Chapter Seventeen.

Battle of Angollála.

The day dawned, and there remained nothing of the late beautiful village of Chérkos. Death and desolation had spread to the very gates of the capital, and the rocky ridge was covered with a dark mass of the Galla host. But the plains were too miry to support the weight of man and horse; and after an ineffectual attempt from one or two small parties, the cloud of war settled again upon the scene of slaughter.

Frightful indeed was the sight which met the gaze of the Amhára, as they took their position in front of the plundered village on the frowning scarp of the ravine. The opposite crags were studded with the mangled bodies of their murdered compatriots. Men, women, and children, had been ruthlessly sacrificed, and the thousand favoured inhabitants of a pleasant abode now lay stark and weltering among the rocks, where the strength of the fierce pagan had hurled them. The

heaving of an arm here and there evinced that the spark of life still remained in some; but the chasm was impassable to the foot of man, and the wolf and hyaena lay undisturbed, gorged and glutted after their reeking festival.

The sun shone brightly for the few days following the appearance of the heathen host, and the surface of the muddy meadow had recovered its wonted consistency. Both parties were anxious for the combat which was to decide the question of supremacy, for both were equally hard-pressed for the means of subsistence. With their usual reckless indifference to the future, the Galla had wasted the country, and rioted in its destruction. The supplies brought to the royal camp were nearly exhausted; and the king, galled by the presence of the rebellious array within sight of his capital, having now succeeded in assembling a much superior force, resolved upon giving battle on the morrow.

Prayers and psalms had been recited the livelong night—vows were made at every shrine in the kingdom—and the ark of the cathedral of Saint Michael had been transported from Ankóber under a canopy of red cloth, to shed its holy influence over the Christian army. At an early hour the king, under the shade of the velvet umbrellas, surrounded by his chiefs, nobles, and high-priests, and preceded by kettle-drums and wind instruments, issued from the palace gateway, and with his band of matchlock-men, took up a position about a mile from the town.

During the night, detachments had been steadily moving from every direction to this fixed point. Column after column streamed through the valley, or poured down the sloping hill; and as the day broke,

the warriors of Amhára formed a deep line of horse and foot on either side of the monarch, one narrow plain and the river Chácha alone separating them from the enemy. Nor were the Galla in any way slow to take their station, bristling in a dark front along the opposite ridge, where the tall figure of the rebel was distinctly to be observed, marshalling his wild forces for the coming fray.

The battle commenced by repeated discharges from the king's gunmen; but the distance was too great for execution, and a shout of derision answered each impotent volley. The gigantic Tunkaiye first pressed forward to the close encounter, and the cavaliers of Shoa were not slow in following his example, for many fought under the eyes of their wives and children—all for the honour of the king, and the glory of true religion.

Down came the pagan host like the rushing blast, and the stones flew far under the clatter of their hoofs. But they were fiercely met by the long-bladed spears of the Amhára, and every inch of ground was for once stoutly contested. The roar of the foaming cataract, which thundered within fifty yards of the battle-field, was lost in the hoarse yells which rung through the air. The rocky bed proved for a time the scene of slaughter, and the turbid waters receiving numbers of dying and wounded wretches, hurried them to eternity. At length, each individual singling out his foe, the contest assumed the confused appearance of a chance medley. The sharp lance met with little opposition from the cotton robe; and deprived of other weapons. Christian and Galla, grappling stoutly together, fought with sword and knife, and in the fury of the moment, and in the excitement of the struggle, many rolled over the

frowning scarp, clinging tightly together in the last embrace of death.

Medóko and his gallant sons were everywhere in the thickest of the fight. His shout, rising high over the storm, animated the faint-hearted, and his presence roused to new life and exertion the successful partisan. Many of the Amhára bands were already reeling from the repeated shock of the wild riders of the Háwash, when suddenly, in the very heat of the action, a large body of warriors, clothed in black mantles, and armed with long heavy spears, rushed down the hill on foot, and, prostrating themselves as they passed the royal umbrellas, descended fresh into the arena. The fierce inhabitants of Mans had sped to the rescue from their hereditary estates, and their savage ferocity and reckless bravery was well known throughout the land. The relations and the household retainers of the rebel attempted to breast the storm, but they were scattered like autumnal leaves before the angry blast; and the chief arrived to the succour only to behold the spot strewed with the bodies of his stoutest partisans, and to witness his beloved son, the youthful Hailoo, sink before his eyes, transfixed by a dozen spear-blades. A panic seized the pagans; and, dismayed and broken-hearted, they fled tumultuously in every direction.

In vain Medóko performed the most incredible acts of valour—his voice had now lost its charm; and, crippled by a wound in his shoulder—his proud heart swelling with indignation—he at length perceived that the fortune of the day was not to be retrieved. Cutting his way single-handed through the squadrons of the enemy, he also gave the loose rein to his horse, and scoured over the hills.

The sun had reached the meridian when the hot pursuit commenced, and the arm of vengeance was not stayed until long after his sinking below the western horizon. Every Amhára spear was dripping in blood to the haft. The stain of gore was on every cheek, and as the weary warrior returned from the massacre, the chest of his jaded war-steed was ornamented with the cloth of the accursed Gentile, whose body he had left to the fangs of the wild beast.

After galloping for some miles with the few chiefs who had escaped from the fatal field, a short halt was allowed to refresh the horses, and Medóko proclaimed his intention of accompanying the party no further. Asylum and assistance were offered in vain; the stout heart of the rebel had been quelled by the late heavy loss he had sustained, and for a time at least he bowed to the power of the monarch of Shoa. Short was the moment allowed for the explanation, and after a hurried parting and a hope for better days, the band mounted and pressed on.

Medóko and his surviving son Chára, now commenced the more difficult undertaking of threading their path back again among the advancing Amhára; but a perfect knowledge of the localities enabled them to take advantage of every hill and hollow. After many weary hours of anxiety they passed the capital undiscovered, and urging their horses to speed, took the road to Ankóber. The Beréza was swollen and unfordable, but their gallant steeds successfully breasted the rushing waters. The king's watchmen had left their cold posts, in order to take shelter from the cutting blast, before the riders swept down the rocky defile of the Chaka, towards the wooded sides of Mamrat; and long ere the voice of the brotherhood had risen in the matin chant, the

rebels had been formally admitted to sanctuary, and were safely reposing in the sacred monastery of Affaf Woira.

Volume Two—Chapter Eighteen.

Tragic End of Medóko.

In an open glade, at the foot of the great mountain range, stands the church of Affaf Woira, and the tenement of Abba Salama, its superior, enclosed by a rough stone wall. Numerous huts are scattered in clusters over a wooded eminence, which rises on the steep side of the river, and here the indolent brothers,

> "Beneath the shade of melancholy boughs.
> Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time."

An air of the most perfect repose usually pervades the scene. The inmates are alike indifferent to the blast of winter and to the cares of life. Majestic trees tower high overhead, yielding undisturbed protection to the vulture and the white ibis. The "monk of the wood," the Guréza ape, there displays his variegated coat floating in peace amongst the mossy branches; and whilst every breath from beneath wafts up the perfumed air, the lazy monk of the monastery, during the entire day, basks in the sun amidst the bright flowers of nature's growth, gazing in apathy on the sparkling stream which steals through the forest, half hid in a fringe of the willow and the bamboo.

But bustle and confusion for once disturbed this dreamy repose. The priests had been engaged in

noisy choir, and the sacred drum had resounded since dawn of day. At length the portals of the hallowed edifice were thrown open, and the holy procession, under the thundering chorus of an Abyssinian psalm, moved over the bright greensward. The gay umbrellas of the church, rich in satin and silver, led the van, and the corpulent Superior, in his white cotton robes, followed the insignia, bestriding a sleek mule decked in metal chains and tinkling bells. At his side marched the bearers of the straight falchions, sheathed in scabbards of polished silver. A band of priests followed, with their heads swathed in folds of white cotton, and their persons wrapped in black woollen cloaks, profusely studded with blood-red crosses and other emblems of Christianity; and closing the procession strode two hundred stout dirty monks, clothed in the skin of the wild antelope, with their shaven heads enveloped in dark greasy cloths, each carrying in his hand a small iron cross, and joining the tribute of his lusty throat to the deafening chant. Dell and dingle rung again as the psalm increased in violence, and the cavalcade, threading the intricacies of the wood, proceeded on its mission of mercy, to implore pardon for the rebel who had thrown himself on the protection of the monastery.

The conference with the monarch was long and stormy. The royal vengeance, though far from being appeased, was curbed by a fear of the Church, and more particularly so at the present juncture, when religious disputes regarding the two natures of Christ were beginning to excite an unusual ferment in many parts of the kingdom. An unwilling pardon was at length extorted, and the triumphant monks returned amidst the joyful acclamations of the female

inhabitants of Shoa, whose shrill voices are raised on every possible occasion, and whose feelings were in the present instance enlisted in the behalf of their old favourite. The trip also would appear to have been profitable to the holy fathers, for it was currently reported that one half of the remaining wealth of Medóko was the stipulated price to be paid for this monastic intercession.

The nature of Abyssinian custom impels the humbled grandee to tempt again the slippery ladder of power; and disgraced for a time, the courtier, bending his neck to the misfortune, dances attendance on his capricious master until fickle fortune smiles upon his fallen condition. Unless enjoying the favour of the monarch, and basking in the sunshine of the court, he is held of no account whatever; and the quiet retirement of country life is despised and detested by a race who are ignorant of its pleasures, and possess neither amusements nor intellectual resources.

The property and estates of Medóko had not been confiscated, and months rolled quietly along as day after day he took his station among the courtiers in waiting; but the eye of the monarch was turned in cold indifference upon his former favourite, and there were not wanting counsellors to whisper deeds of blood into his ear. Besides the father confessor, the haughty chief had other enemies who were chafed at the sight of the numerous band of well-equipped followers that Medóko still entertained upon his ample means. Many also had lost relations during the rebellion, and misfortune had not abated one atom of the imperious demeanour which ever characterised the chief.

The feast of Máskal was now approaching, and it

being rumoured that honours and government were to be again bestowed upon “the murderer of the Amhára,” as the rebel was denominated among the conspiring band, measures were taken to counteract the royal intention, if such had really been entertained. The most odious calumnies were industriously circulated; fresh accusations of disloyalty were daily carried to the palace; and the monarch, hourly assailed on every side, at length resolved to test the feelings of his vassal, by the offer of an inferior post in the unhealthy country of Giddem.

For the last time the gallant chief at the head of his followers swept up the palace hill of Angollála, and leaving, according to the etiquette, his son Chára, together with his retainers, in the middle court-yard, where shields and spears must be deposited, Medóko crossed the enclosure, and alone and unattended entered the inner wicket.

On the several faces of the inner square are the entrances to the principal buildings of the palace. The great hall of entertainment on one side faces the king’s stables on the other, and the artificers’ workshops stand opposite the balcony of justice; but all are connected by stone walls and stout palisades, through which private wickets lead to the interior apartments. His Majesty had not yet taken his seat in public, but the usual throng of people were lounging about the yard, or seated on the rough bedsteads which line one corner, for the convenience of the great.

Medóko had hardly taken his solitary seat, when wreathed in smiles the father confessor approached his victim. Whispering in his ear the intentions of the

king, he strongly advised him to reject the proposal with scorn; and no sooner had he ended than the four conspiring chiefs advanced from the interior, bearing the royal preferment to the country which was so thoroughly detested, and which had been hitherto offered only to men of low degree.

The royal presentation, although received with the impatient curl of the lip, and an indignant breathing from the distended nostril, was declined in courteous terms—“The slave of the king desires only to be near the person of his master.” But far different was the insolent answer carried back to the monarch, whose superstitious feelings were further irritated by the previous discourse and forebodings of the monk; for a black bullock had been discovered lying dead at the threshold of the gateway, portending that on that day an untimely fate awaited some one within the royal precincts.

For a time no word escaped the moody lip of the monarch. His features remained fixed and still; but a withering glance from his solitary eye shot over the band as he dismissed them from his presence with the cutting remark, “That they were all traitors alike, and lazy cravens to boot.”

The hint was sufficient to Guffa Woosen, the *Dedj Agafári*, a man who stickled at no atrocity to gratify his master and to serve his own ends. After a hurried and mysterious consultation with six others equally unprincipled as himself, they proceeded together into the outer court-yard. Approaching by degrees, the band surrounded the bed of the chief, who was lulled into fatal security by a message that the king was about to appear to receive in person the refusal of office in Giddem, and whilst bandying a joke about

the frail tenure of the dungeons of Góncho, five long-bladed knives were suddenly sheathed to the hilt in his brawny back.

Undaunted to the death, Medóko reared himself with difficulty from his couch, and his good sword flashed instantaneously from the scabbard. He had been unwarily caught in the toils; but, like the wounded lion, he stood fiercely at bay, and some of the hunters paid dearly for their treacherous sport. In the hour of battle his sword had seldom required a second blow, and as the trenchant blade now fiercely descended into the neck of the chief conspirator, the head of Guffa Woosen for a moment drooped upon the shoulder, and in the next his lifeless trunk fell heavily to the ground. Again the ruddy steel gleamed overhead, but the energy was fast fleeting from the stout sinew, and Selúnko, although marked for life with a desperate slash over the face, succeeded with the remnant of his cowardly ruffians in basely escaping from the scene. A general rush and scramble now ensued for the tops of walls and houses; and from these elevated places of security, savage yells proclaimed the perpetration of the dastardly deed. The king seized a double-barrelled gun from the wall, lest the mighty warrior should attempt to storm the harem; and a high tribute was paid to the single arm which had thus cleared the court.

Desperately wounded, the chief now staggered across the yard, fainting and falling more than once ere he reached the gateway. No doorkeeper remained to dispute the egress, and as yet none dared to cross the path of the stricken brave. One little enclosure alone separated him from his devoted followers, but his strength was fast sinking with the

welling blood, and after swaying for a time from side to side, utterly exhausted, he fell, with a groan, upon his knee in the last pangs of death.

Tunkaiye, the great bulwark of the throne, was the first who recovered from the panic, and cautiously advancing with the chosen of the Amhára chivalry, he beheld through the wicket the situation of the chief. Rushing through the door, he dealt a blow from behind on the neck of the recumbent figure, and the head sunk to rise no more. One faint struggle of the right arm was alone to be distinguished, and one word was indistinctly murmured amidst the gurgling of the flowing blood; for the long knives of the assassins had penetrated into a brave heart, and the victory over the king's enemy had been already achieved.

Crowds now rushed to the spot, and the limbs were hacked to pieces by the miserable poltroons amidst the coarsest ribaldry and mirth. One wretch, as he thrust his crooked knife into the late brilliant eye, exclaimed, "How is it that my father now bears the bite without power to brush away the gnat?" and another, after succeeding with difficulty in hewing through the iron muscles of the stout arm, declared, with a laugh, that "the skin of an elephant was composed of less tough material."

Deprived of their weapons, and of the countenance of the mighty fallen, Medóko's son and followers surrendered on the first summons; and a dog, carrying off his father's hand, brushed past young Chára as he entered the murderous court-yard. Stones and sticks were still being expended on the remains of mortality which were strewed in every direction. All human resemblance had already been

entirely effaced, and a deep pool of blood remained to mark the dire tragedy.

To this hour the stain is settled upon the spot; and it is daily before the eyes of the perpetrators of the outrage. The stern warrior is never mentioned within the precincts of the palace, and rich offerings are continually made to all the churches in the land, to dissipate the unpleasant dreams which too frequently haunt the royal couch. But although the name is now used amongst the Amhára only to still the unruly child, the gallant Medóko is the darling theme of the roving Galla. The heathen female draws the long tress across her flashing eye at the recollection of his fate; and the chief yet thinks with respect of the brave spirit who could quell the feud and the intestine quarrel, and who had led the wild host with success, to spoil the dominions of the Christian despot.

Volume Two—Chapter Nineteen.

The Galla Borders—Proclamation of War.

Shortly after our departure from Ankóber, a robbery was committed in the residency; and the delinquents having been duly traced out by the Lebáshi, were sent in chains to Angollála, and incarcerated in one of the palace court-yards. The principal party proved to be a slave of the king, aided and abetted by a scribe, who had been for some time employed in copying manuscripts for Dr Roth; and the greater portion of the stolen property was shortly returned by the hands of the chief smith, who succeeded the disgraced page in the office of *báldoraba*. “Strangers have

visited me from a far country," was the message wherewith he was charged, "and whilst residing under my protection they have been plundered by my subjects. My name has become tarnished. I have beaten the culprits with sticks, and shall cut off the ears of the slave Wooseni, and sell him to the merchants of Hurrur."

Intercession, backed by presents, was successfully made with the king and queen, in behalf of the offender, a lad of ten years of age, and he was liberated after severe castigation. "God must be angry with me," sobbed the juvenile thief, who had once before been detected beneath a bed with a pair of scissors in his possession—"God *must* be angry with me, for I have only twice attempted to rob, and on both occasions have I been punished."

Among the articles stolen, which consisted chiefly of beads, were sovereigns of William the Fourth and of Queen Victoria, and suspicions arising in the royal mind that these were not of gold, as asserted by Lieutenant Barker, His Majesty proposed testing the metal by the ordeal of fire. A coin of the former reign was accordingly thrust into the forge, and having then been immersed in water, was broken with a chisel by the conclave of smiths. "Call you this English gold?" exclaimed the Negoos: "here then is a piece of Abyssinian gold for you,"—and throwing upon the ground the brass foil of a sword scabbard, he laughed immoderately. A fourpenny piece was then exhibited, as a somewhat more portable and commodious medium of exchange than blocks of fossil salt, and the figure on the obverse immediately elicited the inquiry whether the queens of England went forth with their armies to battle, since Britannia was equipped with spear and shield, and was about

to set a *saréti* in her crown like the warrior king of the Amhára.

(The *saréti* is a sprig of wild asparagus worn in Shoa as a token of victory, as will be seen presently.)

A quarrel of long standing between Ayto Melkoo and the commander-in-chief of the gun-men, who ranked among the foremost of the court sycophants, had been this day brought for adjustment before the royal tribunal. The award being found in favour of the appellant, the Master of the Horse, although a great favourite, was handcuffed, and imprisoned in the brewery, but after a few hours' durance he was set at large, and his punishment commuted to a fine of seven hundred and fifty pieces of salt. "It is of no consequence," he remarked somewhat unwisely, "I shall carry a *mamalacha* to the 'commander,' Captain Harris, and he will pay the amount for me."

This boast had given occasion to malicious insinuations on the part of his enemies, and after dark a confidential message was brought to me from the palace, to the effect that Ayto Melkoo stood suspected of concealing certain "pleasing things" understood to have been received from my hands. But this imputation, which, if confirmed, must have involved disgrace and confiscation of property, proved, fortunately for the accused, to have no foundation.

A better instance could scarcely have been adduced to illustrate the fleeting and precarious nature of the despot's smiles. The mother of this tottering favourite, a native of Ambásel in the province of Lasta, was for many years the mistress of Hatzé Yasoo, then Emperor of Gondar, on whose demise she became

an inmate of the seraglio of Asfa Woosen. Ayto Wadi, the distinguished Galla governor of Angollála, being thrown into prison by the latter monarch, contrived to solace himself with the presence of the lady, and the Master of the Horse was the result of the intrigue. No disgrace whatever attaching to his illegitimate origin, he was regarded in the light of a member of the royal family; and, being brought up in the palace, has succeeded during three several reigns in maintaining a position at court, which might now have been sacrificed by the clandestine possession of a dozen ells of English broad-cloth. The *amende* was, nevertheless, made to him in the course of a few days, by the addition of another village to his landed possessions at Dóba.

Such paltry proofs of espionage were invariably followed by some especial token of the royal goodwill, ushered in by a goat, or a jar of honey, as a peace-offering. In this instance, after the despot had been fully satisfied of the groundless nature of his surmises, I received a special invitation to accompany him the next day on a shooting excursion, a Galla ram, the size of a well-grown calf, having first been thrust into the tent by the bearer of the message—the dirty page Besábeh—who, as usual, composed himself to sleep in a corner after the due performance of his errand.

Saturday, being the Jewish Sabbath, brings rest from all labour, and is invariably devoted by the king to excursions abroad. Starting on horseback at an early hour, a gallop of several miles led us across the Chácha, and over the border of the Galla dependencies, to an extensive, but narrow sheet of water, where an otter had lately been seen. “It has hands, and nails, and fingers like a man,” observed

the monarch gravely, “and a head like a black dog, and a skin like velvet; and it builds its house at the bottom of the river, and plucks grass, and washes it in the water; and all my people thought it was the devil, and would destroy them with strong medicine. Now is this animal found in your country, and how do they call its name?”

We amused ourselves by killing snipe, much to the entertainment of the monarch, who displayed little talent for shooting birds on the wing, and made no secret of many very unsportsmanlike ideas. Numerous ducks and geese soon arrested his attention. Drawing up with his retinue, and resting his weapon over the shoulder of an attendant to insure steady aim, he kept up a murderous fire with ball, shot, and slugs, during a full half hour. The weather was passing cold, and ever and anon His Majesty blew his nose betwixt his thumb and fore-finger, and wiped them on the mantle of the governor of Bulga, who eagerly proffered it for acceptance. A serious diminution in the numerical strength of the feathered fools resulted in no attempt to take flight or even to shift position. Incredible though it may appear, the living still paddled among the floating carcasses of their slaughtered comrades, as if nothing had happened, until the destroyer, weary of persecuting the “unclean birds,” which were not even taken out of the water, remounted and crossed the country at speed to a wide meadow, traversed by the serpentine Chácha.

Bald coots were here playing at hide-and-seek, whilst red-headed divers peeped warily forth for an instant, as the noisy cavalcade advanced. The spoonbill, and the leather-necked ibis of Egyptian veneration, displayed their white plumage along the sedge-grown

borders. The heron, the snakebird, and the redshank, waded through the shallow drifts; and geese, widgeon, teal, and mallard, rose whirring in the air at every step. But amidst all this inviting variety, the snowy egret was the object of the king's ambition; and although, after many unsuccessful attempts, he failed in adorning his head with her unsullied plumes, he retired perfectly satisfied with his skill as a rifleman, after a long stray shot had perforated the eye of an "*alata furda*." This is a gigantic slate-coloured crane, with eccentric red wattles; and several pairs that were marching over the mead had previously elicited most notable displays of gunmanship on the part of Ayto Berkie and others of the royal favourites.

Abogáz Maretch, with his feudal train of Abitchu, joined the *cortège* as it passed Wona-badéra, his seat of government. The treeless expanse passed over—a type of the entire Galla territory north of Moolo-Fálada, where forest land commences—consists of wide valleys clothed with a verdant carpet of grass, clover, and trefoil, which, from their redundant luxuriance, almost impede progress. Every little intersecting eminence is completely covered with flourishing fields of barley and wheat, and crowned with villages fortified with strong stockades; and one ancient *woira* excepted, whose venerable boughs formed in days gone by a trysting-place to the hostile pagans, not a single bush or tree was visible during the long ride.

An extensive barrier of loose stones hastily thrown up during the rebellion of Medóko, fortifies the south-eastern environs of Angollála; and although confessedly inferior to the great wall of China, it is calculated to offer temporary opposition to horsemen

who are no Nimrods. Some of the lower parts were cleared by Captain Graham and myself without the slightest difficulty, and much to His Majesty's amazement; but every attempt on the part of the Amhára to follow our example proved a complete failure. On our return we passed through a palisaded wicket in this breastwork, which is dignified with the title of "the King's Gate," and forms the scene of the few public executions that take place. Chiefs and governors were also accorded the privilege of squeezing through with the crowned head, but followers and people of low degree were compelled by the stick of the doorkeeper to adopt a circuitous route over a belt of stony hills adjoining, which form a continuation of the defences.

The ascent to the palace was accomplished under a wild choral chant, laudatory of the monarch, which invariably announces his return from an excursion abroad. The road was lined with pilgrims clothed in yellow garments, and having each a cross of blue clay upon his forehead. They had been to perform their vows, or redeem their pledges left, at the sanctuary of Debra Libanos (Mount Lebanon), chief seat of learning in Shoa, and the renowned scene of the miracles of Tekla Haïmanót, its founder. Hard pressed by his enemies, the patron and lawgiver of Ethiopia is said to have leapt through the trunk of a venerable tree, a seam in which yet vouches for the truth of the legend that it spontaneously clave asunder at his holy bidding, but closed to foil the sacrilegious assailants who sought his life. Being athirst, he prayed unto God, whereupon the archangel Michael, who was his mediator, caused a fountain to rise at his feet, supplied by the stream of the river Jordan. A cross which he carried in his hand

had been swept away during the passage of a neighbouring torrent, but no sooner did he curse the waters, than they were dried up, and have never since flowed above the channel!

The remains of the saint still cast a halo over the spot in which they he interred, and the pool which he blessed, retains to this day the property of cleansing the leper, and healing every disease on either of the three days annually devoted to the commemoration of his birth, death, and ascension. Famous as the most holy of shrines throughout Southern Abyssinia, men of every rank, from the monarch to the meanest peasant, if unable to repair thither in person, delegate their substitute with offerings according to their wealth. Having on his way bathed in the “Segga Wadúm,” or “river of flesh and blood”—a tributary to the Nile, formed by the confluence of the Sána Robi and the Sána Boka—the pilgrim quaffs the waters of the mineral well, describes upon his forehead the sacred emblem of Christianity, and after kissing, at the adjacent church of Saint Mary, a cross which is asserted by the priesthood to have fallen from heaven, he is secure against sickness and witchcraft. The very earth from Debra Libanos is carried away as an antidote to maladies, and all who meet the returning pilgrim, fall prostrate upon the ground, and kiss the dust from off his feet.

No sooner had His Majesty entered the palace-gate, than the sound of the imperial kettle-drum announced the presence of the herald, and crowds collected to listen to the royal edict. Standing upon the hill-side beneath the shadow of a solitary stunted tree, which, had it a tongue, could unfold many a tale of woe and oppression, he thus proclaimed in a loud voice to the multitude assembled; “Hear, oh, hear! Thus saith the

King. Behold, we have foes, and would trample upon their necks. Prepare ye every one for war. On the approaching festival of Abba Kinos, whoso faileth to present himself at Yeolo as a good and loyal subject, mounted, armed, and carrying provisions for twenty-one days, shall be held as a traitor, and shall forfeit his property during seven years."

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty.

A Lecture on Physic.

The skill of the medical officers attached to the Embassy had already produced its effect upon a nation so ignorant of the healing art. Woizoro Indanch Yellum, aunt to His Majesty, arriving from Achun-Kurra on a visit to the court, was made the bearer of compliments on the part of Zenama Work, the Queen-dowager, (i.e. rain of gold) "respecting the pardon of the delinquent slave." But they were accompanied by a request for medicine, and an admonition that the British guests of her son would do well not to squander all their drugs amongst those who knew not how to appreciate them. "We have seen wondrous things achieved in the time of Sáhela Selássie," concluded this message from "the golden shower,"—"and the prophecies respecting the red men have indeed fully come to pass."

The fame, too, of the operation performed with such singular success upon the governor of Mentshar had spread far and wide, and applications for surgical aid became daily more numerous—the patient, in lieu of tendering a fee, invariably insisting, when cured,

upon the receipt of some reward. Priests, renowned for the sanctity of their lives, applied in the same breath for a white head-dress, and for a remedy against disorders superinduced “by eating the flesh of partridges.” Even nuns did not disdain assistance, and many a hapless victim to Galla barbarity sought a cure for his irreparable misfortunes.

An exceedingly ill-favoured fellow, striding into the tent, exhibited a node upon the forehead, which he desired might be instantly removed. “The knife, the knife,” he exclaimed; “off with it; my face is spoiled, and has become like that of a cow.” A ruffian who, in a domestic brawl, had contrived to break the arm of his wife, entreated that it might be “mended;” and a wretched youth, whose leg had been fractured twelve months previously, was brought in a state of appalling emaciation, with the splinters protruding horribly. Amputation was proposed as the only resource, but the Master of the Horse was loud in his opposition. “Take my advice,” he remonstrated, “and leave this business alone. If the boy dies, all will declare that the ‘proprietor of the medicines’ killed him—and furthermore, should he survive, it will be said the Almighty cured him.”

In Shoa, the practice of surgery directs the removal of a carious tooth with the hammer, punch, and pincers of the blacksmith. Should venesection be required, a stick placed in the patient’s mouth is tightened by means of a thong passed round his neck, and the distended veins of the forehead are then opened with a razor. Cupping, performed by means of a horn exhausted by suction, is also extremely fashionable; and actual cautery, which is believed to strengthen the muscles of the spear arm, is applied by means either of a pile of lighted cotton, or a stick heated by

rapid friction. Fractured bones that have united badly are said to be violently rebroken to admit of their being properly set; and upon the authority of Ayto Habti, the chief physician in ordinary, it may also be stated, that splinters coming away are successfully supplied by portions of the skull of a newly-slain sheep or goat!

But amulets and enchantments are by all classes held far more efficacious than the drugs of the Abyssinian "possessor of remedies," (*Bala medánit*, "the master of the medicines," is the term applied to every physician) which of a truth must be acknowledged to form but a feeble *materia medica*. Insanity, epilepsy, delirium, hysteria, Saint Vitus's dance, and in fact all obstinate disorders for which no specific is known, are invariably ascribed to the influence of demons or sorcerers, and the patient is either declared to be possessed of a devil, or to labour under the disastrous consequences of inumbration by the shadow of an enemy. Shreds of blue paper are held to be preservatives against headache, and the seeds of certain herbs are worn as charms against hydrophobia and disasters on a journey; but of these, some must be plucked with the left hand, and others with a finger on which there is a silver ring, and all under a fortunate horoscope, or they can avail nothing.

Small-pox frequently devastates the land, and a free boy of pure blood is then selected from among the number of the infected, and carefully secluded until the pustules are ripe. Many hundred persons assemble, and a layman, chosen for the rectitude of his life, having mixed the lymph with honey, proceeds to inoculate with a razor. Death is often the consequence of the clumsy operation, of the origin of

which no tradition exists; neither has any charm been yet discovered to avert the scourge.

Whilst invalids of all classes daily flocked to my camp for medical assistance, applications were not wanting from the palace, in proof of the reputation that we had acquired. One of the princesses royal, who had been lodged with the illustrious guest from Achun-Kurra, in the crimson pavilion presented by the British Government, found herself in need of advice; and on being visited, lay concealed beneath the basket pedestal of a wicker dining-table, whence her sprained foot was thrust forth for inspection. Divers respectable duennas of the royal kitchen, who had been severely scalded by the bursting of a pottage cauldron, were also treated with success when they had been given over by the body physician, at whose merciless hands the sobbing patients had been plastered over with honey and soot. A mutton bone was next extracted from the throat of a page, where it had been firmly wedged for three days. But the cure which elicited the most unqualified and universal amazement was that of a favourite Baalomaal (Officer of the royal household) who, labouring under a fit of apoplexy, which had deprived him of animation, was suddenly revived by venesection, after fumigation with *ashkóko goomun* (Hyrax's cabbage) had been tried without the smallest avail, and preparations were already commencing for his interment.

Medicine, in fact, now engrossed the royal attention. Phials and drugs without number were sent to the tent, with a request that they might be so labelled as to admit of the proper dose being administered to patients labouring under complaints, for the removal of which they were respectively adapted. Two or

more invalids, who objected to be seen, were certain to arrive at the palace within every four and twenty hours; and no subterfuge that ingenuity could devise was left untried, by which to augment the already ample stock of pills on hand. “You will take care not to give the whole of the remedies to my people, or there will be none left for myself, should I fall sick,” was an almost daily message from the selfish despot. But prescriptions designed for his own use were invariably tried first upon a subject; and the much-dreaded goulard-wash having been once more prepared, directions were given to apply it constantly to a boy who had been found labouring under ophthalmia, in order to ascertain whether he died or survived.

The most particular inquiries were instituted relative to the mode of counteracting the influence of the evil eye, and much disappointment was expressed at the unavoidable intimation that Dr Kirk’s dispensary contained neither “the horn of a serpent,” which is believed to afford an invaluable antidote against witchcraft, no preservative against wounds received in the battle-field, nor any nostrum for “those who go mad from looking at a black dog.”

“We princes also fear the small-pox,” said His Majesty, “and therefore never tarry long in the same place. Nagási, my illustrious ancestor, suffered martyrdom from this scourge. Have you no medicine to drive it from myself?”

Vaccine lymph there was in abundance, but neither Christian, Moslem, nor Pagan had yet consented to make trial of its virtues. Glasses, hermetically sealed, betwixt which the perishable fluid had been deposited, were exhibited, and its use expounded.

"No, no!" quoth the king, as he delivered the acquisition to his master of the horse, with a strict injunction to have it carefully stitched in leather—"this is *talakh medánit*, very potent medicine indeed; and henceforth I must wear it as a talisman against the evil that beset my forefathers."

"You must now give me the medicine which draws the vicious waters from the leg," resumed His Majesty, "and which is better than the earth from Mount Lebanon;—the medicine which disarms venomous snakes, and that which turns the grey hairs black;—the medicine to destroy the worm in the ear of the queen, which is ever burrowing deeper;—and, above all, the medicine of the seven colours, which so sharpens the intellects, as to enable him who swallows enough of it, to acquire every sort of knowledge without the slightest trouble. Furthermore, you will be careful to give my people *none of this*."

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty One.

The Campaign.

In common with all other African potentates, Sáhela Selássie never engages in war, induced either by public principles, or by national glory, and, least of all, by a love of his people. Whilst the fear of rebellion and disturbance at home deters him from attempting on a grand scale to resume the lost possessions of his ancestors, to wield the sceptre as they did, three hundred miles south of his present limits, and to re-unite the scattered remnants of Christian population who once acknowledged their supremacy—revenge,

the almost invariable success attending his arms, and the insatiable love of plunder inherent in the breast of every savage, impel him thrice a year to gather his undisciplined militia, in order to undertake sudden and sweeping inroads, either for the purpose of chastising insurrection among the subjugated usurpers of portions of the ancient empire of Ethiopia, or of asserting his unstable authority over some neighbouring tribe that may heretofore have succeeded in maintaining its independence.

The wilds of Abyssinia are not easily explored by the solitary traveller, and I therefore gladly embraced the opportunity of acquiring important information relative to the mode of Amhára warfare, as well as of visiting regions almost unknown. Superstition, policy, and fear, alike influenced the wily monarch in his expressed desire to be accompanied by his British guests. The presence of the stranger being considered to shed a blessing over the army, is invariably enforced by royal mandate, which extends indiscriminately to all residing within the kingdom; and whilst His Majesty, distrusting the sojourn in his undefended capital of so large a body of foreigners, sought the augmentation of his consequence in the eyes both of enemies and subjects, I indulged in the hope that the cause of humanity might be promoted by the check which the presence of the European invariably enforces upon the excited savage, during the revolting and sanguinary scenes of exulting victory. From the fact of the army having provided rations for no more than twenty days, it was clearly impossible that operations should be directed against Lake Zooai, in Guráguê, distant from Angollála one hundred and fifty miles; and this circumstance fully explained the before incomprehensible indifference

displayed by the Negoos to every preparation which might facilitate the advance of his troops. Keeping the secret of his real intentions fast locked in his own despotic breast, it is the invariable practice of His Majesty to publish a manifesto of the approaching campaign, calculated to mislead his enemies; and he not unfrequently carries the deception so far, as to make three or four marches in a direction quite opposite to that in which he had inwardly resolved to strike the blow. None have the slightest idea in what quarter the thunderbolt is to fall, and as the fatal season draws nigh when the state revenues are to be levied, anxiously must throb the conscious bosom of that vassal who has fallen under the royal displeasure.

Beyond the removal of muskets and matchlocks from their pegs, to be oiled and exposed to the sun before the porch of the great audience hall, few signs of preparation were observable for the approaching foray. Angollála was indeed somewhat more populous than usual, and beggars more numerous and importunate. Wild Galla chieftains, too, were in attendance with propitiatory offerings and outstanding arrears of tribute, and the interior of the palace presented a scene of increased bustle and confusion. His Majesty was to be seen absorbed in the inspection of venerable pots, pans, and pipkins, which would have been esteemed invaluable contributions to the British Museum. Tailors, silks, tinsel, and satin, were in equal requisition towards the decoration of the imperial person, and the fat Master of the Horse, assisted by the *élite* of the household warriors, sat cobbling old leather with laudable assiduity for the edification of a whole host of eunuchs. But in the arsenal there was no busy note

of preparation such as is wont to precede European warfare; no crowding of light ordnance and heavy batteries; no commissariat, waggon-train, or sick carriage; and no interminable files of camels loading for the approaching march.

> “The steed,
> The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,”

had no place on the parade: the complicated and expensive equipment, and the munitions of the siege, were alike wanting; and although a few detachments were bivouacked on the adjacent meadow, and the black pall of a governor was here and there to be seen, it was still difficult even to conjecture whence the army of the despot was to spring.

Abject slaves to superstition, the Amhára never fail to consult the omens before setting out on a military expedition. Priests and monks are referred to by the monarch, and the accidental fall of the targe from a saddle bow, the alighting of a hooded crow in the path of a warrior, or the appearance of a white falcon with the tail towards him, are believed to augur unfavourably to success; whilst the flight of a pair of ravens in any direction, or the descent of a falcon with her head towards the army, are on the other hand esteemed certain prognostications of victory. For a full week prior to the opening of the projected campaign, the nocturnal howling of dogs had boded an inauspicious termination. One cur bayed at the moon as she rose; a second and a third took up the vile note, and a doleful concert of hundreds gave birth in the mind of the Christian soldier to presage of coming evil. Queen Besábesh was to await the issue of the foray at Angollála, and the command of the town meanwhile devolved upon the eunuch Wolda

Mariam, with a garrison sufficient to deter visits on the part of the Galla, who have more than once attempted to burn the palace during such incursions into their territories. On the morning of the day appointed, a flourish of trumpets from the royal band proclaimed the exit of the Negoos from the palace, and shortly after sunrise the imperial crimson velvet umbrellas issued through the outer gateway at the head of a numerous procession. Crossing the meadow, His Majesty, resplendent in cloth of gold, took the road to the south by the wicket in the Galla wall, on which a strong advance picquet had already taken post. Every house in Angollála swelled the passing cavalcade; and each valley and hamlet in the environs marshalling its quota of mounted warriors, the nucleus of the incipient army, before advancing many miles, had become thick and dense. Abogáz Maretch with the Abitchu legion streamed from the stockaded hill of Wona-badéra, and a band of veterans occupying the summit of an adjacent rock meanwhile chanted the prowess of the royal warrior, who halted a few seconds in acknowledgment of their flattering eulogium.

Little order or arrangement is attempted during the first march, which invariably terminates at or near Yeolo, in order to afford time to stragglers to rejoin, or to admit of the return of those who may from any circumstance prove incapable of toil, or unprepared for the campaign. Immediately in advance of the army, screened beneath a canopy of scarlet broad-cloth, were borne on an ambling mule the Holy Scriptures and the ark of the cathedral of Saint Michael, the miraculous virtues of which sacred emblem, throwing into shade those of the Palladium of Troy, are believed to ensure victory to the Christian

host. Supported by the crimson *débaboch*, the king rode next upon a richly-caparisoned mule, a small space around the royal person being kept clear by the corps of shield-bearers, who were flanked on the right by fusiliers and matchlock-men of the body-guard, and on the left by the band of kettle-drums on donkeys, with trumpets and wind instruments. Numerous governors, judges, monks, priests, and singers followed, and behind them rode a curious accompaniment to a martial expedition. Forty dames and damsels, professing the culinary art, with elaborately-crisped bee-hive wigs, greased faces bedaubed with ochre, and arched blue eyebrows, were muffled in crimson-striped robes of cotton—a demure assemblage rigorously guarded on all sides by austere eunuchs armed with long white wands. Beyond, far as the eye could penetrate the canopy of dust which hung over the horizon, every hill and valley swarmed with masses of equestrians and pedestrians, warriors, henchmen, and camp-followers, sumpter horses, asses, and mules, laden with tents, horns of old mead, and bags of provisions —throngs of women carrying pitchers of beer and hydromel at their backs, and lads with glittering sheaves of spears upon their shoulders, leading gaily-caparisoned war-steeds—all mixed and crowded together in the most picturesque disorder and confusion.

After crossing the Chácha, the country to the south-west is no longer safe for a single traveller; and owing to the determined hostility of the various wild Galla tribes by which it is inhabited, small Amhára detachments would even find difficulty in passing. The road lay through an amphitheatre of low broken hills, rising amid rich meadows and fields, and

clothed in parts with juniper or camel thorn, through dark groves of which peeped numerous tiny Galla hamlets—the distant landscape being bounded by the great blue mountain ranges of Bulga, Garra Gorphoo, and Sallála Moogher, collectively forming a crescent, but towering independently in isolated grandeur.

At the termination of the fifteenth mile, the ladies and their eunuchs, having hovered about for some time in uncertainty, finally settled down, like a flight of flamingoes, in a pretty secluded valley, through which winds the deep muddy Baróga. Their halt, and the selection made of a site for the royal kitchen, proclaimed the encamping ground under a naturally scarped table-hill styled Gimbee Bayéllo, which imparts its name to the spot. A fierce scramble for places ensued, and the several detachments bivouacking *sub divo* around the dingy palls of their respective leaders, which arose on the next minute, soon spread far and wide over every dell and meadow.

The centre of the straggling camp, which could not have measured less than five miles in diameter, was occupied by the royal suite of tents, consisting of a gay parti-coloured marquee of Turkish manufacture, surrounded by twelve ample awnings of black serge, over which floated five crimson pennons, surmounted by silver globes. Until these had been erected, and duly enclosed by an outer screen of cotton cloths, the Negoos, according to his wont, ascending an adjacent eminence, with all the principal chieftains, and an escort of several hundred picked warriors, remained seated on a cushioned *alga*; and under the crimson canopy of the state umbrellas, watched the progress making towards his accommodation.

Horses abound in the kingdom of Shoa, as well as throughout the adjacent champaign country of the Galla; but save during the foray, they are rarely mounted by the indolent Amhára, the sure-footed mule being better adapted to his taste, and to the rugged hills that compose the greater portion of the frontier. The note of war, however, had so materially increased the value of the steed, that even the few horses we required had been obtained with difficulty. Every old, unsound, and vicious Rozinante in the realm was speciously presented, and in turn rejected, when Abogáz Maretch at length advertised his stud. Two hundred pieces of salt were the price fixed upon the first purchase; and as this *small change* was not procurable within thirty miles, and moreover would have formed the load of two jackasses, ten Austrian convention dollars were forwarded in lieu thereof, each valued at ten amoles, and exhibiting all the requisite jewels in the star and coronet of Maria Theresa. “I have kept your silver,” was the chief’s reply, “because you have sent it; but in future when I sell you a horse, I shall expect you to pay me in salt.”

In a country where even the hire of a porter is dependent upon the arbitrary caprice of the despotic sovereign, and where the inferiors of the court, entertaining one and all the most thorough contempt for truth, are lavish of promises without the smallest intention of performing them, no little difficulty had also been experienced in obtaining transport at so busy a season. Our preparations were therefore of an extremely limited nature, no member carrying aught save the scantiest bedding, whilst the general commissariat was restricted to a small bag of flour with the jerked flesh of two oxen that had been provided on the occasion from the royal herds. But

orders for the supply of porters, who were not to be hired, had only been issued at the very last moment, when the purveyor-general, with his customary liberality, reducing the kingly grant by one half, those finally furnished—three in number—proved barely sufficient for the carriage of rocket staves, medical stores, and surgical instruments required for the state service; the flimsy cotton awnings and scanty baggage of both officers and escort being reluctantly transported by a few hired domestics, or lashed with sharp leathern thongs upon the galled backs of feeble old pack-horses, purchased on emergency at the adjacent market of Bool Worki.

When contrasted with disciplined forces, the camp equipage of the rabble Amhára was small and portable indeed. A commissariat is unknown, every soldier and follower transporting his own provisions, which are limited to parched grain, or sun-dried flesh; and as, owing to the rapidity of the march, and the usual absence of opposition, the campaign is rarely protracted beyond a fortnight, this system has been found to answer. Governors and leaders alone occupy tents, whilst every component member of their respective quotas, in defiance of cold and rain, bivouacks upon the bare ground, with his head upon the shield, and no screen betwixt himself and the vault of heaven, save the clothes upon his back.

Strange was the sight presented as night closed over the first encampment of the chivalry of Shoa. Rockets were to be fired by the royal request to instil terror into the breasts of the Galla hordes; and we had selected the peak which rose near the head-quarters, as being the most centrical site for the display. Ascending from below, the hum of the mighty host arose in the still clear atmosphere, and the gleam of

the bright embers which ran through the depths of the valley, and danced over the intervening heights, until lost in the far distance, presented the appearance of a city of ancient days, whereof the great arteries being alone lit up during the nocturnal hours, full scope was allowed to the imagination to populate at pleasure the intervening gloom.

The appearance at Angollála of the muskets presented to His Majesty by the British Government had already caused no inconsiderable consternation, it being the generally received belief that the bayonet, hitherto a stranger in the land, formed a great receptacle for poisonous spells. The roar of each flight of “fire-rainers” now produced a panic from end to end of the scattered camp. A buzz and a clamour of voices followed each luminous ascent, to burst forth into a loud peal of wonder when the brilliant shower of meteors fell after the explosion. Confusion ensued; horses and mules, breaking from their pickets, scoured away in terror, pursued by henchman and warrior, their figures, flitting in dim perspective among the countless bale-fires, like shades called into existence by some magic agency; and the scene doubtless proved to the gazing monarch that the political object in contemplation had been well and fully accomplished.

Habitual suspicion on the part of the despot inducing him to apprehend desertion to the enemy, the arms of the fusiliers of the body-guard were piled according to long-established usage, in one of the royal tents, and strongly guarded. The chiefs and nobles then sate down to a repast in the pavilion, where hydromel and beer and raw flesh were in regal profusion. As the horn circulated briskly, and the spirits of the guests mounted in proportion, it was curious to listen

to the vaunts of coming prowess that arose from the board. No limit was placed upon the victims who were to be gathered to their fathers, and loyalty and devotion knew no bounds. “You are the adorners,” stammered one, as the party broke up, who had been decorated by his English friends; “you gave me scarlet broadcloth, and behold I have reserved the gift for the present occasion. This garment will bring me signal success; for the pagan who espies a crimson cloak over the shoulder of the Amhára, believing him to be a warrior of distinguished valour, takes like an ass to his heels, and is speared without the slightest danger.”

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Two.

The Enemy’s Country.

Rome is said to have subdued the world under the direction of a hen and chickens, but the legions of Shoa and Efát are aroused to victory by the shrill crowing of a cock, which is invariably carried with the army, in one of the wicker baskets forming the pedestal of the banqueting table. One hundred and fifty-six choristers, termed *asmároch*, are entertained at the expense of the crown, upon extensive grants of land, to chant psalms and hymns each livelong night of the entire year. Twelve are brought on duty every month, and their vigils, which are invariably kept standing, are observed with more than usual strictness during the continuance of a military expedition. Throughout the hours of darkness their loud chorus arose from the pavilion without a moment’s intermission, and their vocal labours

around the holy ark ceased only with the approach of dawn.

Many detachments being still in the rear, a halt was proclaimed with a view to admit of their joining the head quarters, and the king, escorted by two thousand cavalry, made an excursion to a knoll at some distance from the encampment, whence on a range stretching to the south-eastward, the hill of Dalófa was conspicuous. Hereon His Majesty has recently erected a palace, which he rarely visits except for the purpose of controlling by his presence the disaffected and turbulent Galla, whose continual outbreaks render it a far from agreeable place of residence. Gazing for hours over the extensive tract of rich meadow land which lay stretched like a map at his feet, the mind of the contemplative monarch, occasionally occupied by the administration of justice, appeared to be chiefly engrossed with the coming chapter of events, and to be abstractedly scanning the direction in which to pounce upon the surrounding foe.

The favourite dancing girl meanwhile attuning her shrill throat to song laudatory of her own vocal powers, and of her happy state of independence, in wild though far from pleasing notes carolled ever and anon as the spirit of the nightingale entered into her soul.

> “Care have I none, no flock to keep,
> Nor corn to grind, nor field to reap;
> ’Tis mine alone through the livelong day
> To charm the king with my roundelay.
>
> “Task have I none, no toil to share,
> Nor wood to fetch, nor load to bear;

’Tis mine alone but to dance and sing,
And drink to the health of my lord the king.”

“Pity is it,” remarked one of our party, “since the damsel has so little to do, that she does not that little better.”

“What fault have you to find with her performance?” growled the chief smith from beneath the ample folds of his lion skin cloak, enveloped in which he had composed himself to rest under the shadow of an adjacent bush;—“what fault have you to find with the king’s *asmári*? She sings according to the fashion of her own country, and that is surely sufficient.”

Early the ensuing morning the royal drums beat to saddle, and in half an hour the army, which had swelled meanwhile to about fifteen thousand fighting men, was in motion over a country especially favourable to its advance. Some military precautions were now observed. Large brigades of horse served as flanking parties, and the heights to the right and left were severally occupied, as the state umbrellas advanced over the level green sward, at the rate of three miles an hour. The king, with a few favourite chiefs, preceded by Ayto Berri, the quarter-master-general, and by the corps of guides escorting the holy ark and Book of the law, led the host, which, extending for miles and miles to the rear, came pouring over the hills, and down the valleys, like a swollen river bursting its banks, and overflowing the entire country.

The military system of Shoa being entirely feudal, each governor in the realm is required to furnish his contingent of militia in proportion to his landed tenure —the peasantry being at all times ready for the foray,

and expected to purvey horse, arms, and provisions, without payment from the state. Four hundred fusiliers, bondsmen of the king, alone receive pay—eight pieces of salt, value twenty pence sterling, being disbursed annually to each, in addition to the food and raiment granted to every royal slave. Little discipline exists in the army thus composed, but considerable tact is evinced in its organisation and distribution—small confidence being reposed in that portion which is not drawn from ancient possessions.

Of three grand divisions, the centre, commanded by His Majesty in person, consisted of the *Luguamioch*, under Ayto Melkoo, Master of the Horse; the *Gásha Shákri*, or shield-bearers, and the detachment of the collector of newly-levied tribute. Immediately on the left flank were the fusiliers of Ayto Kátama, commander-in-chief of the bodyguard, behind whom came the *Wotzbietoch*, or females of the royal kitchen;—then the legion of Ayto Guebroo, governor of Mentshar; and, lastly, the detachments of Shoa-Meda, of Morát, and Morabïetie.

The van, consisting of skirmishers, is invariably led by the great governor of the subjugated Galla, under the title of *Worári*. With Abogáz Maretch, who now filled this important post, were the tried governors of Bulga, Kembibít, Góla, and Ootuba, whose respective detachments are Christians, and who are all drawn from the neighbourhood, where intercourse with the Galla is most frequent. The third division, or rear-guard, is commanded by the general styled *Wobo*, who is arbitrarily chosen from the seats of seven governments in the north, viz. Giddem, Géshe, Antzochia, Mans, Káa, Gabriel, and Efrata—the same individual being never selected on two consecutive expeditions. By the continual exercise of

his staff, the Master of the Horse, assisted by the shield-bearers, contrived to preserve the proper distance between the van of the army and the royal person, but confusion reigned elsewhere. Warriors were huddled together without order or arrangement, and every trooper selecting his own position in the detachment to which he belonged, diverted himself by devising the death of the numerous hares that scampered through the army, and, strange to say, often threaded the maze of hoofs in safety.

During the early part of the march, herds of cattle grazing quietly in the pastures around various hamlets, proclaimed a subjugated tribe; and clans of tributary Galla, each led by its respective chief in some fantastic costume formerly received at the royal hands, met His Majesty at intervals, in order to present tribute either in horses or kine—the whole greasy band dismounting at a respectful distance on the flank, hurrying before the despot's path, and with bosoms bared, prostrating themselves simultaneously upon the earth. Little respect, however, was paid to the standing crops—afield after field of ripening corn being trampled level with the ground, in spite of the remonstrance of the disconsolate husbandmen, who, with heavy stones upon their heads, threw themselves at the feet of the king with loud and reiterated appeals.

The course was generally south-west, and conjecture was on the rack as to the scene of active operations and the ultimate destination of the army. But the secret still remaining with its royal leader, any new speculation on the subject did but elicit the old remark, "The belly of the master is not known." Choristers continued to beguile the tedious march with their rambling stanzas, and to pour out shrill

strains of melody like the notes of the wild bird. The rough riders galloped before the van of the host to exhibit the paces of steeds received in tribute; and His Majesty, alighting ever and anon from his mule, reposed for a few minutes upon the cushioned *alga* which was carried in his train.

Nothing could be more tame and monotonous than the country passed over. Wide grassy undulations, interspersed with extensive cultivation, rose unrelieved by a single tree or other redeeming feature, save the many European flowers that wantoned beneath the joyous sunshine on the far-stretching prairie. The Karinza, the Fincha, the Chatti, and the Rufa rivers, all tributary to the Nile, were crossed in succession. Deep, narrow, muddy channels intersecting verdant meadows, these presented the general character of all Galla streams, cutting silently through the rich dark soil, and leaving swampy quagmires on the waving downs. At long intervals the Negoos, dismounting to change mules, proceeded some distance on foot—an example followed by all. On the first of these occasions His Majesty went through the comedy of thrusting his feet into slippers, selected from a bag carried by a slave, which contained numerous pairs manufactured of various coloured morocco. Many were tried in succession, but the royal heels being invariably chafed and blistered, the experiment was finally abandoned in despair; and sacrificing dignity to comfort, the despot, like his liege subjects, advanced unshod.

For several hours not a horned head had been visible around the deserted hamlets; and late in the afternoon, when the van of the flagging army arrived in the extensive plain of Abai Deggar, completely

environed by hills, the order was given to encamp, destroy, and plunder. Instantly ensued a rush from all quarters at full gallop. Flourishing fields of wheat, barley, and beans, the produce of the toil of a rebellious tribe, were ravaged and overrun by the locust hordes; and in the course of half an hour, the soil being stripped of every acre of cultivation, there commenced a general scramble for the rafters and ribs of houses, of which the skeletons were presently consigned to the flames.

The women of the royal kitchen had, as before, been the first to select a centrical and advantageous spot on which to pursue their important avocations; but some arbitrary change having been directed by His Majesty, who occupied his usual elevated position, the camp was thrown into confusion. Quarrels and scuffles might now be witnessed in every quarter. Those who had taken possession of a luxuriant pasture or the vicinage of water, stoutly defended the treasure against invading comrades, and recourse being had to weapons, sword cuts and broken heads were quite in fashion. Although now in an enemy's country, neither picket, vidette, nor sentry was mounted, and not the slightest precaution against nocturnal surprise was adopted towards the security of the camp.

But no advantage was taken of the Amhára neglect, and another and similar forced march over a country equally devoid of interest with the tract already crossed, led to the long narrow valley of Karábarek, at the foot of the Garra Gorphoo mountains. The bright spear-blades glittered through the cloud of stifling dust that marked the course of myriads over ploughed land. Green fields and smiling meadows quickly lost their bloom under the tramp of the steed;

for no cultivation was now spared, and ruin and desolation were the order of the day. Straggling parties of the Sertie Galla had been seen crowning the heights that skirted the line of march, and near the peaked hill of Wyfun they were assembled in numbers; but none ventured within half a mile of a host, twenty thousand in number, all thirsting alike for the blood of their enemies. Far and wide the country was laid waste, and every vestige of human habitation destroyed under the torch, the flames racing among the riper barley with the speed of a galloping horse; but the wretched inhabitants, aware of the approach of the spoiler, had abandoned their dwellings before the storm burst over them, and one aged man only had yet fallen into the merciless clutches of the invaders.

This prize had stained the hand of a follower of Ayto Gádel, governor of Chercha, a functionary far from being notorious for courageous bearing. On the occasion of Medóko's last advance, his was the mansion first beleaguered by the insurgents, but he fled in dismay, leaving his fair partner to defend the premises. Joining after the first day's march, he had put the most diverting questions relative to the English, with whose appearance he was greatly perplexed.

"Are these people pagans?" inquired the hero with owlish features, but too strongly indicative of his vacant mind.

"No."

"Are they Islams?"

"No."

“Then what are they?”

“Christians.”

“Christians! Impossible. They observe no fast, and wear no *máteb* as a badge of their religion Is there any grass in their country?”

(*Máteb*, i.e. Mark or token. The blue silk cord worn around the neck by the Christians of Shoa.)

“Why not?”

“How did I know? Have they cattle?”

“Abundance.”

“And sheep and goats?”

“Certainly.”

“And their Negoos, does he carry *debaboch* (Umbrellas of state), and make great *zumachas* (Military expeditions) with warriors like these?”—turning his oyster eyes, lighted with something like martial fire, towards the countless rabble in the rear. But the party thus interrogated could keep his temper no longer; and as the little hunch-backed father confessor rode jauntily up with a dirty page perched on the crupper of his mule, to volunteer a lesson in the noble art of equitation, he galloped off, exclaiming with a sneer—

“Like these, forsooth! One of Her Britannic Majesty’s regiments would in a single hour sweep from off the face of the earth the whole undisciplined mob that swells the train of the boasted descendant of King Solomon.”

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Three.

The Foray.

Thus far the greatest irregularity and confusion had prevailed among the Amhára troops, alike during the march and the encampment. A council of war was daily convened, when each leader made his report and received verbal instructions for his guidance; but no order of any sort was promulgated until the moment before it was to be carried into effect, and all depended rather upon the whim and caprice of the monarch than upon the exigencies of the service. The first intimation of intended march was conveyed by the royal drums sounding suddenly to saddle a quarter of an hour before the advance, which, as the state pavilion went down, was announced by a flourish of horns.

But notwithstanding that the strictest silence had been observed on the subject by the Negoos, as well as by all who might have been unavoidably admitted to his confidence, strong surmises were entertained that a foray from Karábarek was to be the order of the following day; and about two hours after midnight, the sudden and unusual cessation of the psalm singing, followed by the heavy tramp past our tents of Ayto Shishigo's detachment of Shoa-Meda horse, confirming the opinion, the hum of the surrounding body, like that of a disturbed hive of bees, continued until dawn. No sooner was it light than His Majesty rode silently forth from his enclosure without beat of the *nugáreet*, and thousands instantly flocked towards the royal person. The state umbrellas were encased in white bags, and the usual cumbrous Abyssinian robe, which effectually impedes all rapid

movement, was on this occasion cast aside. Short wide trousers of various hues hung loosely to the knee. A thick white cloth girded up the loins. The skins of wild beasts, the lion, the panther, and the ocelot, alone hung over the brawny shoulder of the warrior; and, with exception of about two hundred musqueteers with bayonets fixed, every man-at-arms was equipped with spear, sword, and buckler, a mounted henchman behind many leading a spare charger.

At first starting the crush and confusion was truly terrific. Horses and mules rearing, kicking, and plunging, with lances bristling, and shields thumping in every direction, threatened instant destruction to each component member of the dense mass, which, crowded and locked fast together, streamed at a rapid trot after the king without the slightest order or regularity, save such as was preserved by the exertions of the shield-bearers who rode immediately behind. The occasional passage of ploughed land, producing a suffocating cloud of dust, served still more to increase the confusion, which had reached its climax when a rivulet intersected the line of march. Steep perpendicular banks and treacherous channels opposing the extended front of the legion, and checking advance, a simultaneous exertion was made to gain the only practicable fords, which were in an instant filled to choking. The fiercest struggle for extrication ensued. Numbers floundering in the soft mud, or borne out of their saddles by the pressure of the crowd, were trampled under foot, whilst those who bestrode the stoutest steeds, clearing the way before them by sheer strength, forced their weaker neighbours to incline to the right and to the left, like frail reeds before the rush of the mountain deer.

The morning was bitterly cold. The hoar-frost lay thick and white upon the meadows; and as the rabble host trampled over the crisp grass towards the high range of Garra Gorphoo, which, at the distance of a few miles, rose to the height of twelve or fifteen hundred feet, the breath arose heavy from the nostril of man and beast, like a cloud of smoke, mixing with the dark columns of dust which followed the clattering hoofs of neighing war-steeds. During the first hour's advance up the valley, reports were continually being brought in, and messenger after messenger galloping off in every direction; and as the foot of the mountain was gained, Ayto Berkie, with a large detachment of the men of Bulga, leaving the main body, moved upon the left, whilst the king struck up the steep face of the range in the centre of an extended line of men, who scoured every hill and hollow, and beat every nook and corner at a rapid pace.

Stretching thirty miles in length by about twelve or fifteen in breadth, the mountains of Garra Gorphoo, covered throughout with one sheet of rich cultivation, form the water-shed between the Nile and the Háwash. The various rivulets that on either side wind down towards the parent streams, intersect it into hundreds of verdant valleys, on the swelling slopes of which the white-roofed houses of secluded Galla hamlets peep forth among dark green groves of juniper and acacia, that add beauty to the fair prospect. These tropical highlands are inhabited by the Sertie tribe, who, long in a state of open rebellion, had rendered themselves doubly obnoxious to the despot, by attacking a detachment of Amhára the preceding year, of whom, whilst entangled in a morass near the foot of the range, eight hundred men were slain. The day of retribution had at length

arrived. The object of the expedition, hitherto so carefully concealed, was now fully developed; and the military dispositions for sweeping destruction appeared to be right skilfully made.

Hurrying onward with ominous rapidity, slaughtering all who fell in their path, and with their weapons goading forward the herds of sleek cattle which teemed in every valley, the wild host now poured like an overwhelming torrent down the flowery slopes—now breasted the steep sunny acclivity like flames driven before the wind—and now wound in Indian file along the edges of cliffs affording scanty footing for a wild cat, where the loose soil, crumbling at every step, left the naked precipitous rock as the only available passage. Far and wide the crops were laid prostrate, as if beaten down under the violence of the hurricane; and before ten o'clock, the highest pinnacle of the green range having been crowned, a wide prospect burst upon the eye. A succession of richly cultivated plains dotted over with clusters of conical white houses, in parts surrounded by clumps of tall junipers, stretched away from the foot, the very picture of peace and plenty. Embosomed between the isolated peaks of Yerrur, Sequala, and the far-famed Entótto, lay the wide plain of Germáma, thickly peopled by the Ekka and Finfinni Galla, upon whose doomed heads the thunderbolt was next to fall; and full in its centre two placid silver lakes, like great mirrors, reflected back the rays of the morning sun across sheets of luxuriant cultivation, extending for miles, nearly ready for the sickle. Far beyond, the long wooded line of the Háwash, rolling its troubled waters towards the plain of the Adaïel, loomed indistinctly through the haze; and in the extreme distance, the lofty blue range of the Aroosi and Ittoo

Galla, skirting the mysterious regions of Guráguê, bounded the almost interminable prospect.

The morning mist, loaded with dust raised by the tramp of the Amhára steeds over acres of ploughed land, hung heavy on the slopes, and partially screening the approach of the locust army, conspired to enhance its success. Twenty thousand brawny warriors, in three divisions, covering many miles of country, and linked by detachments in every direction, pressed on towards the inviting goal—their hearts burning with the implacable hatred of hostile barbarians, and panting to consummate their bloody revenge. Taken entirely by surprise, their devoted victims lay helplessly before them, indulging in fatal dreams of happiness and security, alas! too speedily to be dispelled. Hundreds of cattle grazed in tempting herds over the flowery meads. Unconscious of danger, the unarmed husbandman pursued his peaceful occupation in the field; his wife and children carolled blithely over their ordinary household avocations; and the ascending sun shone bright on smiling valleys, which, long before his going down, were left tenanted only by the wolf and the vulture.

Preceded by the holy ark of Saint Michael, veiled under its scarlet canopy, the king still led the van, closely attended by the father confessor, and by a band of priests, with whom having briefly conferred, he turned towards the expectant army, and pronounced the ominous words which were the well-known signal for carrying fire and sword through the land—“May the God who is the God of my forefathers strengthen and absolve!” Rolling on like the waves of the mighty ocean, down poured the Amhára host among the rich glades and rural hamlets, at the heels of the flying inhabitants—trampling under foot the

fields of ripening corn, in parts half reaped, and sweeping before them the vast herds of cattle which grazed untended in every direction. In the extreme distance their destructive progress was still marked by the red flames that burst forth in turn from the thatched roofs of each invaded village; and the havoc committed many miles to the right by the division of Abogáz Maretch, who was advancing parallel to the main body, and had been reinforced by the detachment under Ayto Shishigo, became equally manifest in numerous columns of white smoke, towering upwards to the azure firmament in rapid succession.

We followed close in the train of the Negoos, who halted for a few minutes on the eastern face of the range; and the eye of the despot gleamed bright with inward satisfaction, whilst watching through a telescope the progress of the flanking detachments, as they poured impetuously down the steep side of the mountain, and swept across the level plain with the fury of the blast of the Sirocco. A rapid détour to the westward in an hour disclosed the beautifully secluded valley of Finfinni, which, in addition to the artificial advantage of high cultivation, and snug hamlets, boasted a large share of natural beauty. Meadows of the richest green turf, sparkling clear rivulets leaping down in sequestered cascades, with shady groves of the most magnificent juniper lining the slopes, and waving their moss-grown branches above cheerful groups of circular wigwams, surrounded by implements of agriculture, proclaimed a district which had long escaped the hand of wrath. This had been selected as the spot for the royal plunder and spoliation; and the troops, animated by the presence of the monarch, now performed their

bloody work with a sharp and unsparing knife—firing village after village, until the air was dark with smoke, mingled with the dust raised by the impetuous rush of man and horse.

The luckless inhabitants, taken quite by surprise, had barely time to abandon their property, and fly for their lives to the fastness of Entótto, which reared its protecting form at the distance of a few miles. The spear of the warrior searched every bush for the hunted foe. Women and girls were torn from their hiding places to be hurried into hopeless captivity- Old men and young were indiscriminately slain among the fields and groves; flocks and herds were driven off in triumph, and house after house was sacked and consigned to the flames. Each grim Amhára warrior vied with his comrade in the work of retributive destruction amongst the execrated Galla. Whole groups and families were surrounded and speared within the walled courtyards, which were soon strewed with the bodies of the slain. Wretches who betook themselves to the open plain, were pursued and hunted down like wild beasts; and children of three and four years of age, who had been placed in the trees with a hope that they might escape observation, were included in the inexorable massacre, and pitilessly shot among the branches. In the course of two hours the division left the desolated valley laden with spoil, and carrying with them numbers of wailing females and orphan children, together with the barbarous trophies that had been stripped from the mangled bodies of their victims.

The hoarse scream of the vulture as she wheeled in funereal circles over this appalling scene of carnage and devastation, and the crackling of falling roofs and rafters from the consuming houses, alone disturbed

the grave-like silence of the dreary and devoted spot, so lately resounding to the fiendish shouts and war-whoops of the excited warriors, and to the unpitied groans of their helpless captives. And as the exulting barbarians, followed by the curses of many homeless fugitives in Entótto, crossed the last range, gloomy columns of smoke, rising thick and dense to the darkened heavens, for miles in every direction, proclaimed that this recently so flourishing and beautiful location had, in a few brief hours, been utterly ruined, pillaged, and despoiled, as far as the means of ruthless man could effect its destruction.

The royal division crossed the deep vale of Finfinni by a most dangerous and difficult defile, leading over the bed of the principal torrent, which winds through an extensive belt of dark juniper forest, of truly magnificent growth. Lofty pine-like trees, hoary with the moss of centuries, towered above banks that rose some hundred feet almost perpendicularly, and were clothed throughout with tangled undergrowth. A huge fragment of porphyry, nearly choking the straitened descent, afforded barely sufficient room for the passage of a single horseman, whilst a succession of slippery rocks and treacherous pools filled up the channel to the opposite bank, steep, abrupt, and wooded.

Loud shouts drowned the pleasing murmur of a splashing waterfall; and so great was the confusion caused by the crush of men, horses, and mules, mingled with frightened droves of oxen and sheep, all struggling tumultuously towards the only outlet, that many accidents occurred. Horses and riders were forced over the precipice—others were trampled under foot by the overwhelming rush from behind, and a handful of resolute men might with ease have

kept at bay the whole rabble army of the invader. But the Abyssinian system of warfare consists in surprise and murder, not in battle or fair conflict. The king continued to advance rapidly without the smallest check, and being escorted only by a few fusiliers of the body-guard, carrying each two rounds of ammunition, was necessarily much exposed; but confident in the terror with which his meteor-like descent would inspire his unwary foes, no dispositions were made for the security of his person, in the event of resistance or surprise.

Emerging from the forest which extended two miles beyond the Finfinni defile, the scattered forces began to rendezvous around the state umbrellas, now unfurled, to which they were directed by the incessant beating of kettle-drums. Whilst the work of destruction still continued to rage on all sides, herd after herd of lowing beeves came pouring towards the royal standard, and each new foraging party brought with it fresh groups of captive women and girls. Some of the more braggart warriors affecting inability to return their blood-stained blades to the scabbard, pompously carried them in the hand unsheathed; and even the boyish arms of some of the most effeminate of the royal pages had proved victorious over a defenceless victim. The slaughter had been immense. Every desolated court-yard was crowded with the bodies of the slain—childhood and decrepit age had fared alike; and the murderers, unconscious of the disgrace attaching to unmanly deeds, unblushingly heralded their shame.

Detailing their deeds of cruelty, they basked in the smiles of their savage and approving monarch, whose only eye became at times frightfully wild with excitement, although his demeanour throughout the

long day of horrors was cool and self-possessed, from the experience that he had acquired during eighty-four similar forays.

After a brief halt, the march was resumed through the country of the Ekka Galla, which was clean swept with the besom of destruction; and the distinguishing green sprig of asparagus in the woolly heads of successful cavaliers became more and more numerous as the eventful day drew on to its close. The sun at length disappeared behind the western mountains, towards which the course of the army was directed; and night, casting her mantle over the dismal scene, stayed the arm of the warrior. During fourteen hours passed in the saddle, above fifty miles of country had been passed over; and the weary forces finally halted in the Ekka valley, without possessing the smallest idea of the position of the rear division, with the tents and baggage, to the leader of which no clue had been afforded as to the royal intentions.

Horses and mules were now turned loose among the standing beans; and several thousand head of cattle, tired to death with the distance they had been driven from their wonted pastures, were, with infinite difficulty, collected in a hollow, girdled on three sides by a deep ravine. It was closed on the fourth by a steep acclivity, on the summit of which the king, surrounded by his chieftains, took up his position for the night. His Majesty, although fasting throughout the day, sent his only loaf to be eaten by “his children;” and looking forth upon the fruits of his masterly foray, seemed, in the contemplation of the amassed herds, to be insensible alike to the cold wintry blast, and to the long calls of hunger. 4 A wilder scene can scarcely be imagined than that

presented by the nocturnal bivouac of the locust-like army of the Amhára, flushed by its recent success. Loud whoops and yells, arising from every quarter of the wide valley, mingled with the incessant lowing of kine, the bleating of sheep, the shrill neighing of the war-steed, and the occasional wailing of some captive maid. Groups of grim warriors, their hands embrued in the innocent blood of infancy, and their stern features lighted by the fitful flame, chuckling over the barbarous spoils they had won, vaunted their inhuman exploits, as they feasted greedily on raw and reeking carcasses. Spears and bucklers gleamed brightly around hundreds of bale-fires, composed of rafters stripped from the surrounding houses; and the whole distant landscape, red from the lurid glare reflected by scores of crackling hamlets, completed a picture worthy the pencil of the artist who delights in the delineation of brutal revelry. No sentry paced the environs of the straggling encampment—no watchword challenged the tramp of the man-at-arms. The deep hum of thousands gradually waned and died away, and each composed himself to slumber on the spot where his carousal had been held. A pall constructed with spears supporting a cotton robe, screened the person of the Negoos; and so long as the biting cold would permit, we slept at broken intervals upon the bare ground, amid the gorged and weary warriors, the saddle of each serving for a pillow—

“The earth our bed, our canopy the sky.”

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Four.

The Royal Achievement.

Welcome to all was the first grey light that illumined the eastern sky, and summoned the warrior from his uneasy slumbers. So uncomfortably had the night been passed, that it was in truth rest to rise. The despot was among the first to abandon his cold couch; and a bulletin of success having been penned by the royal hand, for the information of Queen Besábesh, the main body of the division, convoying the interminable droves of cattle, was in motion across the Ekka valley. Escorted by five thousand cavalry. His Majesty then proceeded to a knoll at some distance within the scene of yesterday's carnage, upon the summit of which he tarried, whilst parties went out in search of the body of his grand-nephew, the youthful son of Ayto Besuehnech, who, with several others of the Christian host, had fallen in the running conflict.

It was a cool and lovely morning, and the mountain breeze played freshly down each opening glade. The ascending sunbeam danced over the steep rugged sides and ruined stone edifices of the fastness of Entótto, anciently the proud seat of Ethiopic splendour, and still believed to conceal much of the wealth lost to the empire at the period of Graan's invasion, when Nebla Dengel was driven into Tigré. The great volcanic cone of Sequala, rivalling the lowland Aiúlloo, was again visible in the distance, its once active crater converted by the revolutions of ages into an extensive lagoon, on the banks of which

stands the celebrated shrine of Guebra Manfas Kedoos, a saint renowned for the destruction, by his prayers, of live hundred genies. On the one hand frowned the dark wooded slave mart of Roqué, in the Yerrur hill, where millions of Christians have been bought and sold; and on the other rose the mountain Dalácha, sacred to the Wato sorcerers, whose tempting demesnes have escaped pillage and conflagration, in consequence of their blessing having been followed by the birth of Sáhela Selássie. Far in the distance a low belt of vegetation screened the sleepy Háwash, and over the intervening tract numerous tributaries to the Casam, absorbed eventually in the parched plain of the Adaïel, conveyed the eastern drainage of Garra Gorphoo through the ravaged valley of Germáma.

Over this wide expanse not a living inhabitant was now to be seen. In every direction the bloodstained ground was strewed with the slaughtered foe, around whose disfigured corses groups of surfeited vultures flapped their foul wings, and screamed the death note. The embers of deserted villages smouldered over the scorched and blackened plain. Ripe crops, which the morning before had gladdened the heart of the cultivator—now no more—were level with the ground. Flocks of sheep, untended by the shepherd, strayed over the lone meadow; and bands of howling dogs wandered up and down in fruitless quest of their lost masters. A single day had reduced to a wilderness the rich and flourishing vale of Germáma, including the dark forests of Finfinni, which for years had slept in peace; and their late numerous and unsuspecting population had in a few hours been swept from off the face of the earth by the devastating irruption of the barbarian Amhára hordes.

The remains of the fallen chief having, after much search, been recovered from the ashes of a still smoking village, were shrouded with a white cloth, and borne upon a bier from the scene of desolation. Glutted with booty, the despot now left his locusts to pursue their own course up the Ekka valley, where flames and plunder again marked their straggling return towards the mountains of Garra Gorphoo. Each hamlet was ravaged in succession; and cats, the sole remaining tenants of the deserted huts, were dislodged by the torch of the Wóbo.

For miles and miles the road was lined with dusty and wayworn warriors laden with spoil: flocks and herds, donkeys, mules, and horses, honeycombs, poultry, household utensils and farming gear, with captive women and children, indiscriminately mingled with the men-at-arms. Whilst some of these latter, wounded and mutilated, were lashed upon the backs of their palfreys, others, dismounted, were dragging behind them their lame and exhausted steeds; sheep and goats, unable through fatigue to proceed, being cut limb from limb while still alive, and the bleeding trunks left quivering in the path by the wanton butchers.

Re-entering the mountains, across which the sun now cast the long dark shadows of evening, the camp was sought in vain; but the rear division, with tents and baggage, was at length descried pouring down the opposite height under a vast canopy of dust to the encamping ground at Boora Roofa. A long march the preceding day had brought it to Sululta near to Moolo Fálada, where it met and destroyed those who had fled from the immediate scene of the king's inroad, made numerous female captives, and, with the loss of the sumpter horses laden with horns

of hydromel, acquired considerable booty; information casually received of the main division having thence led it back through the mountains to the present halting-ground, after all had made up their minds to another cold bivouac in the open air. During its more recent progress, this division had carried fire and sword through the country of the Sertie Galla, where it yet remained unplundered; and, as the day again closed, the vault of heaven was re-illumined by volumes of lurid smoke from the surrounding hamlets. Such is the appalling retribution with which Sáhela Selássie is wont to visit those rebel tribes who withhold the moderate tribute imposed upon them. The relinquishment to the crown of three or four hundred of the many thousand head of cattle captured during this and the preceding day, would, with some twenty or thirty horses, have averted this awful chastisement, the fearful consequence of taxation refused. The revolt of tribes inhabiting remote portions of His Majesty's dominions arises too frequently from the oppression of Galla governors, over whose proceedings he can exercise very inadequate control; but it is caused in a principal degree by the absence of outpost or fortification to hold his wild subjects in check. Could he be prevailed upon to abandon his present weak mode of securing the Galla dependencies, to strengthen them by those military arrangements for which the country is so peculiarly adapted, and to place a better limit upon the exactions of frontier governors, what bloodshed and misery might not be averted!

The army halted at Boora Roofa to enable straggling detachments to rejoin; and small parties went out in various directions to complete the work of demolition among the deserted hamlets of the Sertie tribe, some

of which, embosomed deep among the mountain glens, had hitherto escaped attention: hives of ungathered honey, heaps of unwinnowed corn, and the half-flayed carcass abandoned within the filthy habitation, bearing ample testimony to the precipitate flight of the hunted inmates, around many of whose bodies gaunt vultures already held their carnival.

Early during the forenoon, horsemen rode in to the royal pavilion with important intelligence, that Ayto Hierát, a favourite governor, had, at the distance of a few miles, surprised and surrounded a Galla in a tree, among the branches of which the caitiff awaited the arrival of the king. Impatient to wreathe his brow with new laurels, the monarch lost not a moment in sallying forth to destroy the unfortunate wretch, taking a most formidable array of single and double-barrelled guns and rifles of every calibre, together with an escort of five thousand cavalry.

Receiving a long shot through the thigh at the royal hands, whilst imperfectly ensconced among the foliage, the victim, abandoning all hope of escape, wisely cast away his weapons, and cried loudly for quarter; being admitted to which, he kissed the feet of His Majesty, and thus escaped his otherwise inevitable fate. To take the life of a Galla, and to secure a prisoner of either sex, are, in Amhára warfare, accounted one and the same thing; and although, where adult males are concerned, the more merciful alternative is rarely adopted, the despot, whose dreams often conjure up his past deeds of blood in judgment against him, has become more lenient than of yore. Yet the valuable presents to which the destruction of a helpless foe entitles him from every governor in the realm, the increased respect acquired in the eyes of his subjects and

warriors, and the additional lustre shed over his already chivalrous reputation by each new murder, however foul, induce him still to seek occasions such as this to embrue his hands in gore.

Messenger after messenger now galloped into camp at full speed, with the joyful tidings of the king's achievement, each new announcement eliciting yet louder and louder songs and shouts from the *wotzbeitoch*, eunuchs, and parasites at the royal quarters. In another hour the cavalcade returned in triumph, the wounded captive riding on a mule behind the exulting monarch, who, by virtue of his bold exploit, wore in the hair a large green branch of wild asparagus, whilst the greasy garment of his bleeding prisoner graced the proud neck of his war-steed. Repeated volleys of musketry, with the blasts of horns, and the din of kettle-drums, proclaimed the signal prowess of His Christian Majesty. Priests and women flocked to receive him with a clamour of acclamation, and he alighted amid the most stunning uproar.

Through the Master of the Horse I presently received a message to the effect that the attendance of every member of the Embassy had been looked for, the Galla having been entrapped purposely that his destruction might be accomplished by the hand of the King's British visitors, in view to the exaltation of the national name. "Why tarried ye in the tent? I desired that my children might slay the heathen in the tree; but, when they came not, I myself performed the deed."

I informed the puissant monarch in reply, "that, independently of its being the Sabbath, and none of the party possessing the smallest inclination to

destroy a defenceless human being under any circumstances, no public body was authorised by the law of nations to draw a sword offensively in any country not in open hostility with its own. That in Shoa an elephant was esteemed equivalent to forty armed Galla, and a wild buffalo to five; and of these much-dreaded animals we were ready to destroy any number that he might think proper to permit."

Great was the triumph and the quaffing of mead, and the feasting on raw beef, during the residue of the day and the early hours of the night, for, lo! the king of kings in single combat had prevailed over his Galla foe. Essential assistance had been afforded by the medical officers of the Embassy to the sick and wounded; amongst the latter, to a brother of the Queen; yet many reproaches were now abroad, in that its members had eaten the royal bread, and destroyed none of the enemies of the state. The example of other foreigners, who were represented to have shot Galla out of trees, was contrasted somewhat unfavourably to British courage; and a private of the artillery escort was roundly taxed with cowardice for permitting the escape of an unarmed peasant, who lay concealed in a bush by the way-side, and could have offered no resistance. The defenceless wretch was subsequently pursued by thirty Amhára horsemen, but escaped unscathed on foot into the forest, under a shower of their Christian lances.

In all countries where a martial spirit is fostered by continual forays, and where the exertions of a single day are sufficient to maintain the successful marauder for six months to come, the daily unceasing labour of the cultivator is forsaken for the shield and spear. But in Abyssinia, where the principal booty is

monopolised by the monarch, the case is widely different, since, although military expeditions are of frequent occurrence, the sword of the plunderer is as often turned again into the ploughshare—whilst the despoiled husbandman, again tilling his devastated lands, and occupying the brief intervals of peace and repose in agricultural and pastoral pursuits, the fair provinces of the Galla, flowing with milk and honey, are speedily reclothed in one sheet of luxuriant cultivation.

The Abyssinians have been represented as a bold, martial, and chivalrous race—but in Shoa the "champions of the Cross" are impelled by none of that knightly valour which warmed the breast of the crusader of old. The white feather, that emblem of cowardice in other lands, forms the boast of their murderous exploits; and the system of the noble art of war would seem to consist in the merciless destruction of the enemy by sudden inroad and surprise. Harrying the invaded country with overwhelming masses of undisciplined cavalry, the only opposition to be encountered is an occasional skirmish during the night with an outlying detachment, or by day during the passage of a weak body through morasses or intricate defiles. The appearance of a foe invariably proves the signal for increased disorder, all who are so disposed sallying forth to the assault, when those who harbour animosity against a comrade not unfrequently avail themselves of the opportunity to assassinate him in the *mêlée*.

Cruelties emanating from the hereditary detestation of the heathen, which, with the barbarous spoils earned during the foray, is handed down as an heir-loom from generation to generation, are unfortunately

countenanced by the monarch, who has too often personally set the disgraceful example of mutilation; whilst the bigotry and superstition of the savage Amhára induces him to regard every pagan in the light of a dog, as doth the fanatic Moslem the Christian. The revolting barbarities practised in the hour of victory, which from time immemorial have had existence in Ethiopia, and unfortunately also over the greater portion of unhappy Africa to which discovery has yet extended, are perpetuated by the commission of similar enormities on the part of the Galla usurpers of the fairest portions of the land, who butcher children and old men without distinction, mutilate all who fall into their hands, and enslave females upon every opportunity.

The rapid muster of the Amhára under their respective chieftains, the disorderly march, the rude, but for the purpose sufficient tactics, with the slaughter and devastation consequent upon success, forcibly bring to mind the wars of feudal Europe. The stimulus afforded by individual interest in the murders committed during the foray stands at present in the place of discipline, since without one or the other no army could be brought into the field. Triumph attends the return of the Christian warrior from battle in proportion to the number of lives he bears upon his arm, and for each enemy slain he is entitled to some conspicuous personal badge, which forms his greatest pride. A ring, a gauntlet, or a bracelet, gained at the expense of acts the most dastardly, raises him accordingly in the estimation of relatives and companions in arms, and signal success almost invariably paves the way to royal preferment.

Discipline alone can check the prevailing barbarity, by superseding desultory hand to hand combat, and

keeping every soldier in such comparative ignorance of the number that fall to his individual prowess, as to preclude the vaunting of exploits. To those especially who have been eye-witnesses of such a foray, it must afford matter for deep regret that feud and contest should hitherto so effectually have debarred access to the interior, and should have checked the advance of Christianity and civilisation, which, as in happier lands, must bring with them the means of providing for redundant population, and could not fail to ameliorate the horrors attendant upon the existing system of Abyssinian warfare.

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Five.

Liberation of the Prisoners of War.

During the more than usually successful campaign of the Amhára host, an opportunity was afforded us of laying down, as scientifically as very limited time would permit, an extensive and most interesting tract of country hitherto scarcely known—not to be explored by the adventurous but single traveller, and only to be visited under the peculiar advantages afforded to the British Embassy by the despotic Negoos. We were all much disappointed that this acquaintance should not have extended to the Lake Zooai, as anticipated from the manifesto originally promulgated at Machal-wans; but Ayto Bérri, many years Quarter-master-general of the royal troops, who, in his *quondam* capacity of Mohammadan rover, had often visited that famous expanse of water, strongly discountenanced the contemplated measure of molesting the inoffensive inhabitants of its five

islands—mixed Christians and pagans living in profound peace with each other, and with every surrounding neighbour. To his advice may in some measure be ascribed the alteration in the king's intentions; but the argument which had probably more weight with His Majesty than the harmless attributes of the population, was based on the dense and difficult character of the extensive forests, swarming with Galla and with wild beasts, through which the army must pass, after crossing the pillaged valley of Germáma.

The Christian camp at Boora Roofa was crowded with disconsolate groups of heathen captives, many with infants at their backs, and nearly all in a state of nudity, with long raven tresses streaming wildly over their shoulders. Hopeless slavery was theirs; but influenced by my earnest remonstrance, aided by the active and reverend missionary. Dr Krapf, whom philanthropic feelings had enabled to endure the uncongenial atmosphere of ignorance and unbelief—whom the purest and most praiseworthy motives had induced to obey the royal summons to the field, and who, from his long experience, knew when to touch the latent spark of mercy,—the king wiped out the foul stain of the preceding day by consenting to liberate the whole. Ere the *nugáreet* sounded the return of the troops, a proclamation went forth commanding the immediate release of every prisoner of war; and as the dissatisfied army turned its back upon the valley, long files of widowed dames and fatherless girls were to be seen hurrying in freedom across the hills towards their desolate hearths, overjoyed at the sudden and unexpected restoration of their liberty through the white man's intercession—the ruthless soldiery, disappointed at the loss of their

booty, having previously stripped the last covering from all, and sent them forth naked as they came into the world.

It would be superfluous to dwell upon the satisfaction which filled the breast of every member of the Embassy, at this signal victory over savage ferocity; and heartfelt were the congratulations on all sides, that Providence had permitted us to be thus instrumental in ameliorating the condition of so large a number of our fellow-creatures.

A long march brought us the same day to the river Alelta, a tributary to the Nile, and forming near the encampment Lake Sertie, a full mile in diameter, bounded by low hills of trachyte and porphyry. A web of deep miry ravines, shut in by high crumbling banks, presented a wet and slippery footing, and many were the disasters that befel the demure dames of the royal kitchen. Wicker parasols might be seen floating down the current as the luckless proprietors struggled in the black slimy mud among mules and war-steeds, or emerged in truly pitiable condition to be censured by the austere guardians, who, horror-stricken, had witnessed from above the absence of all order and decorum.

Each moment rendered the treacherous passage more and more impracticable; and it was not difficult to understand how, in the month of June the preceding year, the spot should have proved the grave of eight hundred of the Amhára cavalry. At that season the country, flooded for many miles around, becomes one great quagmire, which is not to be crossed without extreme caution. Before the king had passed with the main body of the victorious troops escorting immense plunder, the Sertie Galla, taking

advantage of superior knowledge of the locality, completely cut off the van of the army, consisting of the Mentshar and Bulga detachments. They had become entangled in the mazy labyrinth, and were massacred to a man ere assistance could be rendered by the matchlock-men of the bodyguard, who did not reach the ground until the enemy were in full retreat.

His Majesty's object in now revisiting the scene of this catastrophe was sufficiently obvious. No sooner had the imperial cavalcade halted among the bleached skeletons of the fallen warriors, than champions, whose steeds were distinguished by greasy garments stripped from the bodies of Galla victims, caracoled proudly in front of the state umbrellas, brandishing their bright weapons aloft—exhibiting the human fragments that had been won during the recent bloody foray—and after a detail of their individual exploits, shouting defiance to the humbled Sertie. The wild triumphal exhibition concluding after half an hour, a band of music advanced, and continued to play until the pavilion had been prepared for the royal reception.

Early the ensuing morning the king sent confidentially to my tent, to inquire if none of his guests could divine whether the day were propitious to the advance of the army—a point upon which he felt somewhat dubious. Our confession of lamentable want of skill in augury was succeeded by a march of sixteen miles to Ellulee Jidda over a monotonous landscape of swelling downs and shallow valleys, intersected by streamlets that had scooped deep channels in the loose black soil. The stately relict of a deceased Galla chieftain rode through the ranks with her tribute in horses and kine, and experienced a

most gallant reception at the hands of the monarch. She might have sat for the portrait of La Belle Sauvage, but the grease wherein the person of the handsome dame was embedded, tended unfortunately to destroy the romance inseparable from her Amazonian appearance and feudal condition.

Various triumphant detachments also met the royal cortege *en route*, the chiefs and victorious warriors careering in succession before the van of the army, with green sprigs of asparagus waving above their dishevelled and newly-dressed locks. Prisoners were seated behind the cruppers of some of the more merciful, and the flank of each grey steed was dyed with clotted human gore. A short rambling recitative, expressive of loyalty and devotion in the field, was followed by savage yells and whoops, twice or thrice re-echoed by their marshalled band of followers, when they vaulted lightly from the saddle, prostrated themselves on the ground, and galloped off, each in his turn, to make way for some new squadron, whose war chorus came pealing over the hills—

> “The combat’s past, the fight is won,
> Then triumph o’er the prostrate foe;
> The heathen blood has freely run,
> Raise high the chaunt, Wokó, Wokó.
>
> “Let hill and dale return the note,
> Wokó, Wokó, ayah Wokó;
> Loud ring from every Christian throat
> The shout of death, Wokó, Wokó.”

Whilst the army was encamping, the legion of Ayto Shishigo, rejoining the royal division with three thousand head of oxen, in like manner reported their

successful exploits to the king, who, as usual, occupied the summit of an adjacent eminence. Tribute was still in a course of diligent collection, and Galla chieftains, with their hair plaited after the model of the lotus-flower, were flocking with their dues from all directions. One refractory village only, of the Jidda tribe, withholding its impost of a single horse, paid the penalty of its folly. The inhabitants fled, but their deserted houses were sacked and consigned to the flames, the stakes and palisades by which, in common with every hamlet in this direction, it was strongly fortified, affording fuel for the royal kitchen, and subsequently a scramble to one half of the army.

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Six.

The Triumph.

A long march across the Sana Robi next brought the troops to Belát, in the neighbourhood of Yeolo. His Majesty, seated upon his cushioned *alga*, halted frequently in the wide undulating meadows to witness warlike rehearsals on a still more splendid scale; on the termination of which, many of the quotas having received their dismissal, dispersed to their respective districts, although not until after one Amhára soldier had been treacherously murdered by a rival comrade, and another had been desperately wounded in a trifling dispute.

Before sunrise the ensuing morning the victorious troops, reduced by one third, marched upon Angollála, driving exultingly before them upwards of thirty thousand head of cattle, the entire of which

were, *par excellence*, the property of the king. Arrived within sight of the capital, strains of martial music burst from the centre division, when every throat throughout the vast army joined in one deafening chorus. Half a mile to the south of the Galla wall a tent had been erected, to which His Majesty retiring for a few minutes, arrayed himself preparatory to the triumphal entry; and the various leaders, at the head of their respective squadrons, meanwhile took up the position allotted in the coming pageant.

As the state umbrellas, preceded by the ark of Saint Michael, passed through the Ankóber gate of the defences, the assembled chiefs and warriors who had been most distinguished during the successful foray, arrayed in the glittering badges of former achievements in arms, placed themselves in advance. One hundred gore-stained steeds, resplendent with trappings and brass ornaments, and fancifully caparisoned in gay cloths and chintz housings, bounded and pranced gallantly under this chosen band of proud cavaliers, who, with lances couched, and party coloured robes flaunting in the wind, slowly curvetted over the verdant carpet of turf. Their glossy black hair, loaded with feathers and green branches in token of recent triumph, and their variously emblazoned shields, glancing brightly in the sun-beams, they rent the air with shrill whoops and yells, responded at frequent intervals by loud shouts of welcome from the palace, and from all parts of the town; whilst the dense phalanx of warriors in the rear —their forest of lances partially obscured under a thick canopy of dust—pressing tumultuously forward, and pouring the wildest war-songs from ten thousand throats, completed one of the most brilliant and savage exhibitions that can be conceived.

The king was enrobed in the ample spoils of a noble Hon, richly ornamented, and half concealing beneath their tawny folds an embroidered green mantle of Indian manufacture. On his right shoulder he wore three chains of gold as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, and the fresh-plucked bough of asparagus, which denoted his recent exploit, rose from the centre of an embossed coronet of silver. His dappled war-steed, bedizened with housings of blue and yellow, was led prancing beside him, and immediately in advance bounded the champion, on a coal-black charger, bearing the imperial shield of massive silver, with the sacred emblem of Christianity in high relief, whilst his long plaited raven locks floated wildly behind, over the spotted hide of a panther, by which his broad shoulders were graced. Abogáz Maretch and Ayto Berkie rode on either side of the crimson *debáboch*, and a marshalled line of shield-bearers, under the Master of the Horse, preserved a clear space around the royal person until the cavalcade had gained the stockaded knoll, upon the summit of which the palace is erected.

Here a deputation of priests, clad in snow-white garments, received the victorious monarch with a blessing, and under a volley of musketry. His Majesty proceeded to ascend. The outer court was crowded with female slaves, beggars, and menials, who, on the first appearance of the umbrellas within the gate, greeted the royal return with the shrillest clamour, and cast themselves prostrate in the dust. Fusiliers and matchlock-men of the imperial body-guard lined the second palisaded enclosure, and under a *feu-de-joie*, their leader, performing the war-dance before the holy ark, led the procession to the last enclosure, where the king being met by the eunuchs of the royal

household, entered the palace by a private door, and surrounded by pages and attendants, presently took seat in a high latticed balcony fronting the inner quadrangle.

Full in the centre stood a gigantic drum, whereat twelve old hags thumped unceasingly with crossed hands, keeping time energetically with their feet, whilst, under the most frightful contortions and gesticulations, they cursed and screamed defiance to the enemies of the state. Sixty concubines, their faces besmeared with red ochre and grease, and their frizzled locks white under a coat of lard, sang and danced with increasing vehemence their shrill melody, regulated by the drum, now dwindling into recitative, now bursting forth into a deafening chorus. Around this strange group, the dismounted cavaliers formed fifteen deep, and filling the entire court, poised each his trophy of blood aloft upon the glittering point of his lance; and as the whole danced, and whooped, and howled like wild beasts, warrior after warrior, springing with a fiendish yell into the centre of the ring, cast his prize contemptuously upon the ground, and kissing the dust, did abject homage at the feet of the triumphant despot.

“Behold in me the king’s great warrior,” now resounded from every quarter. “I it was who slew his enemy in the open field, or speared him in the burning hut. May victory ever attend his armies in the battle! May Sáhela Selássie reign for ever!” A general shout and clashing of shields, with the sudden cessation of the wild music, announced the close of this savage pageant. The curtain dropped before the monarch, and, as the actors dispersed rapidly to the right and to the left, the discharge of an old dismounted iron gun, which, vertically elevated

against a stone, was revealed at the further extremity of the court, announced to the public that the tragedy of “the Royal Robber” had been performed with the most brilliant success, and would be repeated again during the season.

Rumours of the destruction of the entire Christian host had flown to Angollála in consequence of the Negoos having, for the first time in his life, passed the night apart from his baggage; and the grief and consternation which prevailed during six days, had only been dispelled by the unexpected and triumphant return of the victorious army. Evil omens had, indeed, resounded through the departing camp, but destiny had been satisfied with a youthful scion of the royal stock; and although the weapons of a lost descendant of the house of Solomon adorned the rude walls of the pagan Galla, still fire and sword had ravaged their fair country; and the rich booty with which the adjacent meadows were profusely dotted, proclaimed a harvest which, during thirty years, and eighty-four successive expeditions, had not been eclipsed in the annals of Amhára bloodshed and rapine.

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Seven.

Nuptials in High Life.

Ayto Hïerat’s crime brought its own punishment. The prominent part he had taken in the event at Boora Roofa, which had so recently covered his royal master with glory, could hardly be suffered to pass unrequited, and three days after the return of the

expedition to Angollála, he was accordingly honoured with the hand of Woizoro Belete Shatchau (Anglice, “Superior to all,”) a shrew possessing the most diabolical of tempers, whom two husbands had already divorced, although a princess of the blood royal.

On the morning appointed for the nuptials, we received an early summons to the palace, in order to witness the ceremony. The throne was tricked out with unusual gaiety for the occasion, and the king, covering his mouth with a fold of his striped mantle according to undeviating wont, was still in the hands of the barber, who, having curled the last lock, was adjusting the green *saréti*. The court-yard was already crowded with spectators, and a numerous train of female slaves, who had entered by a side door, were arranging themselves in front. The quaint, loose chemises of blue and red, with broad white borders, which formed the attire of all, imparted a most grotesque appearance, and each carried on her woolly head a large wicker basket, ornamented with bead draperies arranged in every variety of fanciful vandyke. These antique figures and their burdens constituted the dower of the bride, whose wedding garments we had supplied, and who presently entered, riding upon a white mule, gaily tricked out in forked housings, chains, and brass bells. The Princess Worka Ferri (i.e. Golden Fruit), her sister, followed upon a second, similarly caparisoned; and both ladies were distinguished by large *áftabgirs* of crimson silk, as well as by a cowl of silver network which covered the hair, and terminated in a tiara of pendants and globules falling over the forehead. A crimson-striped robe formed the costume of each, and their naturally plain faces were rendered hideous

by a coat of red ochre with blue-stained arches in the place of eyebrows, which it is the fashion of Shoa to pluck out.

Next in order came the royal band of music, with numerous mounted female attendants clad in pea-green vests. A dance and vocal chorus was continued during a quarter of an hour, to the dissonant thunder of the war drum; and as the umbrellas filed slowly across the court through the opposite wicket, the happy bridegroom approached the throne, and did homage to the sovereign who had thus rewarded his services by alliance. The presence of the priest is so far from being held indispensable, that a wedded pair forms a rare phenomenon in Abyssinia. No marriage rites whatever solemnised this union; and the shrew, in full procession, proceeded straightway to spend the honeymoon at the abode of her third husband, who, following at a respectful distance, exhibited in his features small anticipation of conjugal felicity.

Descending through the great gate, a train of dirty cook-boys led the van, bearing on their heads pots, pans, and culinary utensils. One hundred female slaves followed, carrying baskets of bread, vessels of hydromel, bedding, wearing apparel, and other baggage required on the journey. Next came the band of flutes in full play, and immediately behind, the amiable bride herself, most aptly styled “superior to all.” Two maids of honour, bearing decorated barillas of choice wine from the royal cellars, rode on either side of their mistress. Numerous mounted Amazons—musty-looking Ethiopic figures in blue and white smocks, and party-coloured bead helmets—kept the inquisitive crowd at a distance with their long white wands; whilst an escort of three hundred

chosen spearmen, flanked by nobles, eunuchs, and pages on horseback, brought up the rear, amid the thumping of *nugáreet* from the hill top, and the shrill acclamations of the entire female population of the town, which rung from every eminence in honour of the nuptials of Princess Belete Shatchau.

“My Galla subjects revolted,” exclaimed the despot tauntingly, as soon as the wedding was over—“My Galla tributaries revolted: I have played them one trick, and I will shortly play them another.”

The customary congratulations after a victory were offered in the words, “God has aided your arms.”

“Yes,” replied the monarch; “the God of my fathers has assisted me—I have slain four thousand six hundred of mine enemies, and have captured thirty-seven thousand and forty-two head of cattle.”

When complimenting the king on the clemency extended towards the prisoners of war, who had on this occasion been released for the first time during his reign, I did not lose the opportunity of commenting upon the destruction of innocent and helpless children, as being a most inhuman practice, and one quite unworthy of the Christian warrior. The despot smiled, as if half ashamed; and looking down, replied, “I am aware that it is bad, but in all countries we must conform to the customs that prevail. The Galla destroy the Amhára without discrimination, and we do but retaliate. You must all accompany me on my next campaign in January. I shall build a fortified house at Karábarek, and you must there tarry with me. Whenever you are present I will release the captives.”

During the absence of the army at Garra Gorphoo, one of the Mohammadan inhabitants of Argóbba had been waylaid and wantonly murdered by the Adaïel, who are in constant feud with the frontier population of Efát. The relations and clansmen of the deceased surprised the village to which the assassins belonged, and, in revenge, slew sixteen persons. Wulásma Mohammad succeeded, after much difficulty, in apparently pacifying the lowland tribe, who had in their turn sworn upon the Korán to take bloody vengeance; but no sooner had he returned from the border, than thirteen Moslem females, proceeding from the town of Channoo to draw water in the wady, were barbarously butchered at the well.

This tragedy being followed by an application for troops to chastise the delinquents, now induced the remark, that "if the Adaïel could see one fourth of the Amhára host, they would cease to trouble the frontier."

"No," replied His Majesty, "it will not do. My grandfather tried his arms with the people below, but he was surprised, and lost four thousand men and six thousand oxen in the bed of a dry ravine. The water of the *kwálla* (i.e. Low valleys) is putrid, and the air hot and unwholesome. Noxious vapours arise during the night, and the people die from fever. We fear their sultry climate and their dense forests, and their mode of warfare. They leave open only one avenue; and when the Christians enter the thicket, breaking short their lances, they rush in and fight at close quarters. No one can stand against them. Our muskets avail nothing, by reason of the trees and bushes. Furthermore, the Adaïel are subtle in strong medicines. They poison the wells with drugs, and corrupt the water with magic spells and

enchantments. It is their wont to mix together the flesh of a black dog, a cat, and a certain forest bird. This they strew craftily about the ground, and whoso eateth thereof, becomes instantly insane and dies."

According to the etiquette of the court, I now placed at the foot of the throne the presents which custom enforces after a victory. "My son," resumed the king, "I am your father. I am rich. You have already given me too much, and I desire not your property. I wish only for your love, and for that of your nation. I am fully aware of the objects of your residence in my kingdom. I have seen your character, and know that you will slay elephants, and buffalos, and wild beasts. You must not go away, but accompany me on many more expeditions. You have now seen much people. You must go with me to Guráguê, where you will behold other tribes, and a far more extensive country. I shall build a wall. My father subdued all the population of Shoa, and I fear no enemy to the south, in Guráguê, Enárea, or Zingero. None can stand before me. The Adaïel and the people of Geshe (a province on the northern frontier of Shoa) alone contend with me. In Geshe they have large shields, and fight hand to hand. The country of the Adel is difficult of access, and unfortunate for the Amhára. It is an old dependency of the empire of my ancestors; but the men are brave, and stand firm in battle. They will not run away."

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Eight.

Chronicle of the Invasion of Mohammad Graan.

In connection with the foregoing remarks respecting the inhabitants of the lowlands, it is now desirable to sketch, for the reader's information, some of those early hostilities between the Mohammadans and Christians, which find a record in the meagre annals of Abyssinia. They led, in the sixteenth century, to an event so often alluded to in these pages,—the invasion of Graan, "the Left-handed," whose irruptions proved the greatest calamity that ever befel the country.

The allegiance claimed from the Adaïel by the emperors of Ethiopia is known to have been evaded at a very remote period. Ages ago gold was returned for gold, apparel for apparel; and the intractable Moslems were studiously kept in good humour whensoever they thought proper to visit the Christian court. Their revenues arose chiefly from the supply of camels for the transport of merchandise to various parts of Africa, and from the importation of fossil salt, which then, as now, passed instead of silver currency, and for which they purchased slaves, together with the rich staples of the interior. Thus the interests of Adel and of Abyssinia have always been so intimately linked, that the declaration of war was certain to prove disastrous alike to the victor and to the vanquished, since it must have interfered equally with the commerce by which both were enriched. Nevertheless, upon all suitable opportunities, the fanatic lowlanders, urged by religious hate, plundered the Christian churches, and massacred or tortured the priests, until they at length drew upon themselves a war of extermination.

The Abyssinian chroniclers state that Amda Zion, who died at Tegulet about the middle of the fourteenth century, first made a retributive inroad, in

consequence of his rebellious vassals having, amongst many other derogatory expressions, taunted him as “an eunuch, fit only to take care of women.” But the Emperor was never beaten. He overran and laid waste the plains from the mountains to the borders of the ocean, and swept off to the highlands a prodigious amount of cattle. Every species of enormity appears to have been practised in retaliation by the Amhára, who were commanded to “leave nothing alive that drew the breath of life.” This behest was obeyed with all the rage and cruelty that revenge and a difference of religion could inspire; and before the termination of the campaign, the dauntless young King of Wypoo had been slain, together with Sáleh, the King of Mára, who boasted descent in a direct line from the Apostle.

Constant commercial intercourse had long been maintained between Cairo and Abyssinia, both across the desert and by way of the Red Sea. Great caravans, composed formerly of Pagans, but now of Mohammadans, passed in without molestation, and dispersed Indian manufactures through the heart of Africa. Friars, priests, nuns, and pious laymen, in vast numbers, also set out annually on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, whither, with drums beating before the holy cross, they proceeded by the route of Suakem, making long halts for the performance of divine service. But with the power of the Mamelukes, all communication across the desert, whether for commercial or religious purposes, was closed to the Christians. After the conquest of Egypt and Arabia by Selim the First, caravans were invariably attacked, the old were butchered, and the young swept into slavery; for the Emperor of the Ottomans, fully imbued with the merciless bigotry of his creed, held it

a sacred duty to convert by the sword the subjects of a monarch whose ancestor had been honoured with the correspondence of the great founder of the Saracen empire. Many Arabian merchants, flying about the same period from the violence and injustice of the Turkish tyrants, had sought an asylum in the opposite African states, whereupon the Ottomans took possession, from Aden, of the seaport of Zeyla, and not only laid the Indian trade under heavy contributions, by means of their galleys cruising in the narrow straits of Bab el Mandeb, but threatened the conquest both of Adel and Abyssinia.

Betwixt these countries there subsisted peace from the death of Amda Zion to the middle of the fifteenth century. Towards the close of the reign of Zára Yácoob, who founded Debra Berhán, the flame of discord was again fanned by a certain queen of Zeyla, who is said to have aspired to the hand of the Emperor; but the Christian arms were still in the ascendant. Baeda Mariam, the next occupant of the throne, passed his life in a constant struggle to assert supremacy over the low country; and, on his death-bed, he caused himself to be so turned that his face might be towards the sandy deserts of the Adaïel, to whose subjugation his whole energies had for ten years been devoted.

Mafoodi's inroads, it has been seen, commenced during the reign of Alexander. They continued, with increasing horrors, throughout that of his successor Naod. Nebla Dengel being only eleven years of age when called to the throne, Helena, his mother, ruled during his minority. Albuquerque was at that period viceroy of India, and to him the queen-dowager sent to implore assistance for troubled Abyssinia. Arriving at Goa, the ambassador announced himself to be the

bearer of “a fragment of wood belonging to the true Cross on which Christ died, which relic had been sent, as a token of friendship to her brother Emmanuel, by the Empress over Ethiopia;” and this overture was in due time followed by the arrival at Massowah of an embassy from the King of Portugal.

Father Alvarez has recorded the unfavourable reception experienced in Shoa at the hands of the young emperor, who could never be brought to recognise his mother’s proceedings, which had led to this influx of foreigners. At the age of sixteen, having adopted the title of *Wánag Suggud*, signifying “feared among the lions,” he had taken the field in person against Mafoodi, who, backed by the rebellious King of Adel, still continued his wasting inroads on the Christian frontier. At the opening of the campaign, this fanatic, who had resolved either to conquer or to die a martyr to his religion, threw the gauntlet of defiance to the Christian chivalry, and it was instantly accepted. The infidel was slain in single combat by the monk Gabriel, a soldier of tried valour, who had assumed the monastic cap during the preceding reign in consequence of having been deprived of the tip of his tongue for treasonable freedom of speech. Cutting off the head of this vanquished antagonist, he now threw it at the feet of his royal master, and exclaimed, “Behold, sire, the Goliath of the Infidels!” The green standard of the Prophet and of the faith was taken, twelve thousand of the Moslem were slain, and the youthful emperor, in defiance, struck his lance through the door of the King of Adel. The monk who had thus delivered Abyssinia from her worst scourge, was welcomed with the applause of the whole nation. Maidens pressed forward to strew flowers in his path, and matrons celebrating his

achievements with songs, placed garlands on his head, and held out their babes to gaze at the warrior as he passed.

It was shortly after the departure of the Portuguese embassy that Graan, “the Left-handed”—then King of Adel—made his first appearance on the Ethiopian stage, where he was long the principal actor. In league with the Turkish Bashaw on the coast of Arabia, this mighty warrior sent his Abyssinian prisoners to Mecca, and in return was furnished with a large body of Janissaries, at the head of whom he burst into Efát and Fátigar, drove off the population, and laid waste the country with fire. In 1528 he took possession of Shoa, overran Amhára, burnt all the churches, and swept off immense booty. In his next campaign the invader wintered in Begemeder, and the following year hunted the emperor like a wild beast through Tigré to the borders of Sennaar, gave battle to the royal troops on the banks of the Nile, with his own hand slew the monk Gabriel, who had vanquished Mafoodi in single combat, cut the army to pieces, practised every species of atrocity, and set fire to half the churches in Abyssinia.

Famine and plague now raged, and carried off those whom the sword had spared. The princes of the blood were all destroyed; Axum was burnt, and the monarch himself, after being compelled to take refuge in the wilderness, was finally slain. With him died also the boasted splendour of the Abyssinian court, for he was the last monarch of Ethiopia who displayed the magnificence of a “king of kings.”

Markos, the aged Archbishop, had, on his deathbed, appointed as his successor John Bermudez, a Portuguese who had been detained in the country,

and at the request of Claudius, who succeeded to the empire, he now proceeded to Europe to obtain assistance. Don Christopher de Gama, with five hundred soldiers, obtained possession of Massowah, slew the governor, and sent his head to Gondar, where, as an early pledge of future victory, it was received with raptures by the queen. The general was shortly confronted by Graan in person. Artillery and muskets were for the first time opposed in Abyssinia; and the Portuguese leader being wounded, took refuge in a cave. Deaf to persuasion, he refused to seek safety in flight; and a Turkish lady of extraordinary beauty, whom he had made prisoner, and who had affected conversion to Christianity, shortly betrayed him to the enemy. He was carried before Graan, who, with his left hand cut off his head, and sent it to Constantinople, his body being quartered, and sent in portions to Arabia.

But the Portuguese were far from being disheartened by this grievous misfortune, and the armies were shortly in a position again to try their strength. Before the engagement had well commenced, Peter Lyon, a marksman of low stature, but passing valiant withal, who had been valet to Don Christopher, having stolen unperceived along the dry channel of a ravine, shot Graan through the body. He fell from his horse some distance in advance of the troops, and the soldier, cutting off one of the infidel's ears, put it into his pocket. This success was followed by the total rout of the Mohammadans; and an Abyssinian officer of rank finding the body of the redoubted chief, took possession of his mutilated head, which he laid at the feet of the Emperor in proof of his claim to the merit of the achievement. Having witnessed in silence the impudence of his rival, the valet produced the trophy

from his pocket, with the observation that His Majesty doubtless knew Graan sufficiently well to be quite certain, “that he would suffer no one to cut off his ear that possessed not the power to take his head also.”

Delivered from his enemy, Claudius now sought to repair the ravages which had been committed in his country. A total eclipse of the sun shortly afterwards threw both army and court into consternation—every ignorant monk who practised divination declaring the phenomenon to portend another invasion from the lowlanders. But in spite of this prophecy an interchange of prisoners took place. Del Wumbarea, the widow of Graan, had thrown herself into the wilds of Atbára, and her son Ali Jeraad, who was made prisoner after his father fell, being now set at liberty, Prince Menas, only brother to the emperor, was released from his captivity in the sultry deserts of Adel, whither he had been carried during the reign of Nebla Dengel. I Noor, the Ameer of Hurrur, who was deeply enamoured of Del Wumbarea, had proved the means of her escape from the fatal field whereon her husband died. The heroine now pledged her hand in marriage to him who should lay the head of Claudius at her feet; and Noor instantly sent a message of defiance to the emperor, who was engaged in rebuilding the celebrated church of Debra-work, “the mountain of gold,” which had been burnt by the infidels. Claudius, who had almost by a miracle rescued Abyssinia from the Mohammadans, marched instantly to accept the challenge. Many prophecies were current amongst the soldiery that the campaign was to prove unfortunate, and the hot-headed monarch to lose his life; but he laughed at these monkish predictions, declaring an honourable death to be infinitely preferable to the longest and most

prosperous reign.

The rival armies were on the point of engaging, in the year 1559, when the high priest of Debra Libanos rushed before the emperor to declare a vision, in which the angel Gabriel had warned him not to suffer the king of the church of Ethiopia to expose himself in a needless fight. Thus discouraged, the cowardly Abyssinians instantly fled, leaving Claudius supported only by a handful of Portuguese soldiers, who were soon slain around his person, and he immediately afterwards fell, covered with wounds. His head was cut off, and laid by Noor at the feet of Del Wumbarea, who, in observance of her pledge, became his wife, and with truly savage ferocity commanded the trophy to be suspended by the hair to the branches of a tree before her door, in order that her eyes might continually be gladdened by the sight. It hung in this position during three years, ere it was purchased by an Armenian merchant, who caused it to be interred in the holy sepulchre of Saint Claudius at Antioch; and the name of the hero who had been victorious in every action save that in which he died, has since been enrolled in the voluminous catalogue of Abyssinian saints, where it now occupies a conspicuous place, as the destroyer of Mohammad, surnamed “the Left-handed.”

To the present day the most preposterous legends are believed with reference to the personal prowess of this fierce invader, his gigantic stature, and the colossal size of his steed. He is said to have wielded a brand twenty feet in length; and although it is matter of notoriety that he fell in the manner above narrated, by the hand of a Portuguese soldier, he is represented to have received no fewer than four thousand musket bullets before yielding up the ghost.

The supernatural achievements of Graan are handed down to posterity in an extant Amháric volume; and his inroads gave birth in the mind of the people of Shoa to a superstitious dread of the Adaïel, such as was long entertained of the Turks in Northern Europe, and which it has been seen extends even to the warlike monarch.

Volume Two—Chapter Twenty Nine.

Proceedings at Angollála.

Certain Abyssinian potentates of old are recorded by their biographers to have bestowed in religious charity all their worldly substance, saving the crown upon their heads. But such will never be said of Sáhela Selássie, whose endowments, although frequent, are invariably regulated by prudence. Avarice stigmatises his every gift, and even adulterates the incense of his sacrifice. The countless droves of sturdy beeves which now ranged over the royal meadows were daily inspected with evident signs of satisfaction; but whilst the sleekest were distributed over the various pasture-lands, the leanest kine were despatched to the several churches and monasteries, as offerings after the successful campaign.

At this season of rejoicing and festivity, the host of loathsome objects that habitually infest the outer court, or crawl in quest of alms around the precincts of the palace, had increased to a surprising extent, in order to share the royal bounty. Swarms of itinerant paupers, who bivouacked under the old Galla wall,

sang psalms and hymns in the streets during the entire night; and long before dawn the clamour commenced around the tents of a throng of mendicants, resembling the inmates of a lazar-house, who, with insolent importunity, reiterated their adjurations for relief by Georgis, Miriam, Michael, and every other saint in the Abyssinian calendar. Many petty pilferings were of course committed by this ragged congregation; and a deputation of the inhabitants of Angollála soon presented a petition to the throne, praying for the dismissal of the vagrants, who had become an intolerable public nuisance.

On the festival of Tekla Haïmanót we received an invitation to witness the distribution of royal alms, which was to be followed by a beggars' feast. The wonted inmates of the palisaded enclosure were no longer there, but their place was occupied by a shoal of even more wretched beings, just imported with a caravan from Guráguê. Upwards of six hundred slaves, of every age, from childhood to maturity, and most of them in a state of perfect nudity, who had been snatched by the hand of avarice from the fair land of their birth, were here huddled together under the eye of the rover for inspection by the officers of the crown, preparatory to being driven to market; and the forlorn and destitute appearance both of old and young, stamped them objects but too well fitted for participation in the charity of a Christian monarch.

Immediately on our arrival within the court-yard of the palace, we were conducted by the king to the royal bedchamber—a gloomy apartment, lighted chiefly by the blaze of an iron chafing-dish, and shared not only by a Moolo Fálada cat, with a large family of kittens, but by three favourite war-steeds, whose mangers were in close proximity to the well-screened couch.

Cleanliness did not characterise the warm curtains; and although cotton cloth had been pasted round the mud walls for the better exclusion of the wind, an air of peculiar discomfort was present. A rickety *alga* in one corner, a few hassocks covered with black leather, an Ethiopic version of the Psalms of David, and a carpet consisting of withered rushes, were the only furniture; and the dismal aspect of the room was further heightened by the massive doors and treble palisades which protect the slumbers of the suspicious despot. The mystery of our introduction into the precincts of the harem, was presently explained by the appearance of one of the young princes of the blood royal, who had arrived in the course of the morning, and, with eyes veiled, was now led in by a withered eunuch, in order that he might receive medical assistance.

Saifa Selássie, “the sword of the Trinity,” is an extremely aristocratic and fine-looking youth, about twelve years of age, possessing the noble features of his sire, with the advantage of a very fair instead of a swarthy complexion. Beneath a red chintz vest of Arabian manufacture, he wore a striped cotton robe, which fell in graceful folds from the girdle, and from the crown of the head a tassel of minutely-braided locks streamed to the middle of his back. “This is the light of mine eyes, and dearer to me than life itself,” exclaimed the king, withdrawing the bandage, and caressing the boy with the utmost fondness—“Give him the medicine that removes ophthalmia, or he, too, will be blind like his father.”

I assured His Majesty that no alarm need be entertained; and that although the cause was to be regretted, the day which had brought us the honour of an interview with the young prince could not but be

deemed one of the highest good fortune. Much affected by this intimation, he laid his hand upon my arm, and replied, “We do not yet know each other as we ought, but we shall daily become better and better acquainted.”

“Whence comes this *máskal*?” resumed the inquisitive monarch, raising a Catholic cross devoutly to his lips, as the royal scion was reconducted by the shrivelled attendant towards the apartments of the queen—“to what nation does it belong?”

“It is the emblem of those who, in their attempts to propagate the Romish religion in Ethiopia, caused rivers of blood to flow,” was the reply. “No matter,” exclaimed His Majesty, in rebuke to the Mohammadan dragoman who would fain have assisted in the restoration of the paper envelope—“How dost thou dare to profane the holy cross? These are Christians, and may touch it, but thou art an unbeliever.”

The votaries of Saint Giles had, meanwhile, been ushered through a private wicket, and in the adjacent enclosure offered a most revolting spectacle. The palsied, the leprous, the scrofulous, and those in the most inveterate stages of dropsy and elephantiasis, were mingled with mutilated wretches who had been bereft of hands, feet, eyes, and tongue, by the sanguinary tyrants of Northern Abyssinia, and who bore with them the severed portions, in order that their bodies might be perfect at the Day of Resurrection. The old, the halt, the deaf, the noseless, and the dumb, the living dead in every shape and form, were still streaming through the narrow door; limbless trunks were borne onwards upon the spectres of mules, asses, and horses, and

the blind, in long Indian file, rolling their ghastly eyeballs, and touching each the shoulder of his sightless neighbour, groped their way towards the hum of voices, to add new horrors to the appalling picture.

An annual muster-roll being kept as a check, all who were ascertained to have been participators in the distribution of the preceding year were unceremoniously ejected by the myrmidons of the purveyor-general, who has ever the interests of the state revenues warmly at heart. The mendicants were next classed in squads according to their diseases, and the dwarf father confessor, by no means the least frightful object in the assembly, proceeded, in capacity of king's almoner, to dispense the royal bounty. Sheep, clothes, and money, were distributed with a judicious hand, each donation made being carefully registered by the scribes in attendance; and half-baked bread, raw beef, and sour beer, in quantities sufficient to satisfy every monk and beggar in the realm, having been heaped outside the palace gate, all ate their fill, and dispersed. Next to the merciful disposition of Sáhela Selássie, his munificence to the indigent may be ranked among his most prominent virtues. Whilst the needy never retire empty-handed from his door, no criminal ever suffers under the barbarous mutilation, so many distressing monuments of which had this day shared his liberality. Blood flowing from the veins of a subject finds no pleasure in the eyes of the ruler of Shoa. Under his sway the use of the searing iron has become obsolete, and the sickening sentence is unknown which in the northern states condemns the culprit to the wrenching off of hands and feet, whereof the teguments have previously been severed

with a razor at the wrist and ankle. But widely opposed are the views of humanity entertained in different climes; and the scene that awaited our return from the banquet, although in strict accordance with retributive justice, was in appalling contrast with the more merciful fiat of civilised jurisprudence.

A warrior had been convicted upon undeniable evidence of the murder of his comrade in arms, with whom he had lived for years on terms of the closest intimacy. During the recent campaign, he had gone with this companion into the wood, and taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by hostilities with the Galla, had felled the unsuspecting man to the earth with a blow of his sword. Fame, such as is only to be acquired by the slaughter of the foe, prompted the dastardly outrage; and the treacherous assassin who had embrued his hands in the blood of his dearest friend, now placed the green trophy of valour triumphantly on his guilty head. “Where is thy brother?” was the question that awaited his return to the camp; but, like Cain of old, he denied all knowledge of what had befallen the absentee; and it was not until the body had been discovered, that suspicion fell heavily upon himself.

Mourning relatives threw themselves in sackcloth at the imperial footstool, and cried aloud for the blood of the prisoner. Arraigned before the monarch, the investigation had been patiently conducted during the beggars feast, and the “Fétha Negést” having been duly consulted, the sentence proceeded from the royal lips—“Take him hence, and deal with him as you will.”

The last sun that was to shine upon the malefactor was sinking fast towards the western horizon, when,

with hands bound behind his back, he was hurried from the presence for instant execution. Its rising rays had seen him seated at the door of the hut, whilst his young wife adorned his locks with the newly-plucked branch of asparagus, that was the record of his infamy, but the meridian beam had witnessed his arrest. The relatives of the murdered, and a band of the king's headsmen, each armed with shield and broad-headed spear, now formed a close phalanx round him as he proceeded with the stoicism of the savage to meet his well-merited doom; and an infuriated mob followed, to heap taunts and ignominy upon his numbered moments.

Impatient of delay, the friends of the deceased were about to immolate their victim on the meadow close to the encampment of the Embassy; but adjured by the life of the monarch, they urged the culprit over the rocky mound adjoining the Galla wall, which was already crowded with a vast concourse of spectators, burning for the consummation of the last sentence of the law. Scarcely had the unresisting criminal passed the summit, than an eager hand stripped the garment from his shoulder, and twenty bright spears being poised at the moment, he turned his head to the one side, to receive a deep stab on the other. Whilst still reeling, a dozen blades were sheathed in his heart, and a hundred more transfixed the prostrate body. Swords flashed from the crooked scabbard—the quivering corse was mutilated in an instant, and on the next the exulting executioners took their way from the gore-stained ground, bearing the trophy aloft, as they howled with truly savage satisfaction the Christian chorus of death!

Mother, sisters, and wives, now flocked around the lifeless clay, rending the air with their piercing

shrieks.—“Alas! the brave have fallen, the spirit of the bold has fled.”

“*Waiye, waiye*—woe unto us, we have lost the son of our declining years”—“our brother and our husband is gone for ever!” Bared breasts were beaten and scarified, and temples were torn with the nails until the evening closed, and it was dark when the mourners ceased their shrill lamentation. But the turbaned priest was not there; no absolution had been given, nor had the last sacrament been partaken; and the unhallowed remains of the murderer would have found a tomb in the maw of the hyena and the vulture, had not a charitable hand enclosed them under a cairn of stones by the highway side, where many a grass-grown mound marks the fate of the cowardly assassin, who had destroyed his brother in the wood, and whose memory is coupled with dishonour.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty.

Triumphal Entry to the Capital.

“Reculer pour mieux sauter,” is a maxim strictly in accordance with His Majesty’s notions of strategy. Twenty days had elapsed since the return of the expedition, when the arrival before the palace of six thousand head of cattle proclaimed the success of a second sweeping foray directed against the Ekka and Finfinni Galla. A Mohammadan merchant residing at Roqué, the market town and great slave-mart of Yerrur, was suspected of having with his own hand slain the son of Ayto Besuehnech, grand-nephew to

the king—this youth having pressed on far in advance of his comrades in pursuit of the retreating pagans. To avenge his untimely death, a detachment, consisting of five thousand horse, was despatched under the command of Aytos Berkie, Chilo, and Dogmo, the government of which latter chief had previously been extended in acknowledgment of his recent services. They made a forced march through Bulga, and although foiled in their principal object by the precipitate flight of the rover whose life they sought, the whole of his family and followers were massacred, his effects plundered, and his house burnt to the ground.

The survivors of the Ekka and Finfinni tribes, believing the fatal storm to be expended, had already returned with the residue of their flocks and herds, and were actively engaged in restoring their dilapidated habitations, when the Amhára hordes again burst over their fair valley, slew six hundred souls, and captured all the remaining cattle, thus completing the chastisement of these devoted clans, who, notwithstanding the generous restoration of their enslaved families, had failed to make submission—and redeeming the royal pledge “to play the rebels another trick.”

The king had not honoured Ankóber with his presence since the arrival in Shoa of the British Embassy, but His Majesty now announced his intention of entering the capital in triumph. Thinly attended, and unscreened by the state umbrellas, he issued at sunrise on horseback through the *sirkosh ber*, the only addition to his usual costume being a plume of nine feathers stripped from the *Rása*, or egret, which were worn in the hair in token of his recent prowess at Boora Roofa. Putting his horse into

a gallop, he never drew bridle until stopped by the Beréza, many parties under governors of the adjacent districts joining the royal *cortège* from various quarters, and swelling the retinue to two thousand equestrians, who continued at a furious pace to clatter over the stony ground.

Mosábeit, a village standing on a peninsula formed by the junction of the Toro Mesk water with the Beréza, imparts its name to this, the most direct road from Angollála to Ankóber. The river forded, the king mounted his mule, and diverging to the right, passed through a valley studded with hamlets, the inhabitants of which, male and female, came forth with many prostrations to the earth, whilst the women raised their voices together in the usual ringing *heléltee*.

On all occasions of rejoicing and ceremony, whether on the successful return of the monarch or of the warrior, or on the sight of a passing procession, the ladies of Abyssinia, with their characteristic love of noise, thus burst forth into a thrilling clamour of welcome, moving the tongue with more than ordinary volubility against the palate, and producing a continuous succession of tremulous notes. One watchful dame on the outskirts perceives the approach of the cavalcade, and forthwith gives out her wild screech of warning. In a moment the mountain side is covered with every female within hearing; the *Hil! lil! lil*! progresses fast and furious as they bend nearly double to assist in upraising the yelling chorus; tears stream from their eyes in the violence of the exertion, and far and near the hills resound with the gathered volume of their shrill throats.

The king halted for a moment at a pile of stones by the way-side, covered with rags, feathers, and flowers, to which every devout Christian adds his tribute whilst saluting it with his lips. It points to the white-roofed church of Saint Michael the Archangel, peeping through a dark clump of junipers at some distance from the road, and many were the fervent kisses of adoration bestowed by the triumphant warriors. A little beyond, a large black cross on the summit of a tumulus directs attention to the residence of Ayto Berri, quarter-master-general of the Amhára forces. Here His Majesty again diverged, in order to lead the cavalcade through the most thickly populated tract; and after resting for half an hour in the Ungua-mesk, one of the many royal meadows, now black with the Galla herds, he turned suddenly off to the Motátit road, according to his invariable custom, when proceeding to the capital after a successful foray.

The Arsiamba, styled at its point of intersection with the route usually pursued, *Ya Wurjoch Madéria*, the "resting-place of merchants," is a singular cataract rolling over columnar basalt, of which the ribbed cliffs on either side are thronged by bees. But by far the most interesting object is a certain white pillar, overgrown with nettles, standing at the foot of the hills which bound the Ungua-mesk. It is designated "Graan's stone," and is famous from an existing tradition that the Moslem invader tied his war-horse to it on the occasion of his leading the Adaïel to the destruction of Debra Berhán.

Abundantly cultivated, and rich in grazing land, the tract we had passed over is throughout so destitute of trees and even of bushes, that the inhabitants employ no other fuel than dried manure. Arrived at the

summit of the Chaka mountain, where straggling *cossos* break the monotony of the landscape, many hundred females, assembled from the numerous villages in the vicinity, lining the surrounding heights, again kept up one continued cry. It was drowned at intervals by discharges of musketry which echoed among the broken glens as the despot descended; and, preceded by a war-dance, wherein all the warriors joined, he finally took up his quarters for the night in a house separated by a deep valley from the capital.

Early the ensuing morning we rode out to the Cháffa meadow at the foot of the palace, to meet and welcome His Majesty, who, after arraying himself within a marquee erected for his accommodation, shortly appeared through a gorge in a low range of hills, which was crowned on either side by matchlock-men of the imperial body-guard. These kept up an incessant fire as the royal *cortège* advanced over the grassy plain, preceded by a band of mounted warriors, who, as on the occasion of the triumphant entry to Angollála, careered in intersecting circles. The king bestrode a richly caparisoned mule, and wore a green scarf mantle of Delhi embroidery. A golden collar encircled his neck, and a massive silver akódama extended on either side a considerable distance beyond the temples. The ends of the beam were hung with a profusion of silver chains a yard in length, whilst a row of spangled pendants across the brow half obscured the eyes, and imparted a peculiarly savage aspect, which was enhanced by a large branch of wild asparagus floating above the curly locks, and by a white and crimson robe drawn across the lower portion of the face.

As the cavalcade advanced, the braves continued to

caracole until reaching the extremity of the meadow, where the assembled priests and monks of Ankóber, as well as of the neighbouring churches and monasteries, were drawn up to receive their sovereign. The holy arks were each screened under the canopy of a large embroidered umbrella; and that of Saint Michael, the senior, which had accompanied the army into the field, was carried beneath a *debáb* of solid embossed silver, decorated with chain pendants and fretwork. Psalms having been chanted by the turbaned body, who danced vehemently to their own chorus, the *Alaka* of the cathedral advancing, laid his hands on the head of the victorious monarch, and gave his blessing, when the procession moved slowly forward towards the foot of the hill, singing the death knell of the pagan,—

> "Moolohóy Mooló? Hai hai!
> Wokáo? Selála dábito!"

The warriors, preceded by the royal band of kettle-drums and wind instruments, took the lead up the long steep and narrow path, which winds along the verge of a precipitous ascent to the palace, perched on the very pinnacle of the cone. A proclamation, through the herald, having commanded the presence of all the inhabitants of the capital and of the villages adjacent, every roof, bank, and cliff, was crowded with women and girls. As the king passed on, they kept up an unceasing clamour, and it increased to a deafening din as he approached the gate of the outer enclosure, where a dense mass of curled heads extended across the entire open area in front of the palisades.

The British escort, drawn up before the lower defences, presented arms as the monarch passed,

and within the stockade stood the high priests of the five churches, robed and mitred. The clamour, the music, and the echo of musketry, continued during the tedious ascent of the steep and difficult path, which, broken into steps, winds betwixt lofty palisades, through nine gateways and lodges, to the inner enclosure. Here His Majesty took his seat in a raised alcove, the throne, and the usual trappings of royalty, being on this occasion new throughout, and more than wonted cleanliness pervading every quarter of the palace.

Once more the large drum in the middle of the court gave forth its deep notes. Three hundred concubines, seated in a circle around, again screamed and clapped their stained hands in deafening concert. A dancing girl, flanked by two wild braves, whirled in front of the throne, and in a series of eulogistic rhymes, composed by herself, chanted a rehearsal of the recent heroic deeds of the puissant monarch, “who, although invariably triumphant over his heathen foes, had never decorated his royal brow with a branch greener than that by which it was now surmounted.” Each time she turned towards the crowd, a shrill clamour of united voices rang forth the chorus to her verse. The skin-clad warriors leapt and howled;—akodámas, coronets, and silver swords, glistened in the morning sun; and as the chiefs, governors, and nobles, formed in a semicircle on either side of the latticed balcony, stamped and clapped their hands in savage triumph—the populace, crowding the carpeted yard, and lining every wall, capered, yelled, and shouted with the wildest enthusiasm. A general war-dance followed the cessation of the shrill notes of the songstress, and the pageant concluded with a royal salute, fired

by the artillery detachment over the British flag, which, in honour of His Majesty's arrival, floated far below in the centre of the capital of Shoa.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty One.

The Palace at Ankóber.

The entire slope of the palace eminence is studded with thatched magazines and out-houses; and these, shame to the Christian monarch, form the scene of the daily labours of three thousand slaves. In one quarter are to be seen groups of busy females, engaged in the manufacture of beer and hydromel. Flat cakes of teff and wheat are preparing by the hundred under the next roof, and from the dark recesses of the building arises the plaintive ditty of those who grind the corn by the sweat of their brow. Here cauldrons of red pepper soup yield up their potent steam; and in the adjacent compartment, long twisted strips of old cotton rag are being dipped in bees' wax. Throughout the female establishment the bloated and cross-grained eunuch presides; and his unsparing rod admonishes his giggling charges that they are not there to gaze at the passing stranger.

In the sunny verandah of the wardrobe, tailors and curriers are achieving all manner of curious amulets and devices—the offspring of a savage brain. Blacksmiths are banging away at the anvil under the eaves of the banqueting hall. Turbaned priests, seated in the porch, armed with a party-coloured cow's tail, indolently drive away the flies from volumes which are elevated on a rack before their

ancient eyes, and detail the miracles of the saints. Under one shed, notaries are diligently committing to parchment elaborate inventories of tribute received. Sacred books are being bound in a second. In a crowded corner painters are perpetrating on the illuminated page atrocious daubs of our first father carrying spear and buckler in the Garden of Eden; and in the long shadow thrown by the slaughterhouse, whence a stream of blood is ever flowing across the road, carpenters are destroying bad wood in a clumsy attempt to fashion a gun stock with a farrier's rasp, for the reception of an old honeycombed barrel which promises to burst upon the very first discharge.

Governors and nobles, with shields and silver swords, are seated above. Clamourous paupers, itinerant monks, and applicants for justice, fill the lower courts. The open *Aráda* before the great-gate is choked with idlers, gossips, and immoveable beggars, who, from the rising up to the going down of the sun, maintain one incessant howl of importunity. Oxen and asses, goats and sheep, have established their head-quarters in every filthy avenue. Newly-picked bones and bullocks' skulls strew the rugged descent; and on the last terrace, surrounded by stagnant mire, behold Ayto Wolda Hana himself, seated in magisterial dignity, arranging the affairs of the nation. Hundreds tremble at his uncompromising nod; and appellant and respondent, accuser and accused, alike bared to the girdle, bend in cringing submission, as in a cracked and querulous voice the despotic legislator delivers his arbitrary fiat.

During the absence of the Negoos on military expeditions, the most inquisitorial espionage is exercised over the actions of every foreigner, and the

strictest police established, to insure the safety of the almost deserted capital. Every avenue is vigilantly guarded, and no stranger allowed to enter the town without permission of the viceroy. Children only are suffered to leave the houses after dark; and watchmen, patrolling in all directions, apprehend every adult who may be found abroad during the night.

But Ankóber was now thronged to overflowing. Brawls disturbed the streets, and, during the early hours of each evening, drunken parties were to be seen streaming home from the royal banquet, shouting the war chorus, and not unfrequently preceded by one of the court buffoons, engaged in the performance of the most absurd follies, antics, and grimaces. Day and night the invocations of a host of mendicants arose from every lane and alley, and the importunity to which we were exposed on the part of the wealthy had attained the point beyond which it was scarcely possible to advance. Each ruffian who had destroyed an infant considered that he possessed an undeniable right to be “decorated from head to foot, and completely ornamented.” Villains, streaming with rancid butter, entered the Residency, and desired that the “Gyptzis’s bead shop might be opened, as they had brought salt to purchase a necklace;” whilst the king’s three fiddlers, who had each slain a foe during the foray, appearing with the vaunting green *saréti*, attuned their voices and their squeaking instruments to the detail of their prowess, and demanded the merited reward. “The gun is the medicine for the cowardly Pagan who ascends a tree,” was the maxim of many who aspired to the possession of one of these weapons; and for hours together men stood before the door with cocks

and hens and loaves of bread, to establish their claim to the possession of “pleasing things.”

With the design of aiding his fast-swelling collection of natural history. Dr Roth had offered rewards to all who chose to contribute, and the king’s pages were kept well supplied with ammunition for the destruction of birds; but the unconquerable love of sticking a feather in the hair almost invariably spoiled the specimen. A bat, firmly wedged between the prongs of a split cane, was one day brought by a boy, who extended the prize at arm’s length: “I’ve caught him at last,” he exclaimed with exultation—“It is the Devil, who had got into the monastery of Aferbeine; I’ve caught the rascal; *min abát*?” “what is his father?”

After this strong invective, which is indiscriminately applied also as occasion demands, to man, beast, and every inanimate thing, the youth was not a little surprised to perceive the naturalist quietly extricate the much-dreaded animal with his fingers. A party of females, who carried pitchers of water at their backs, had halted in the road, and looking over the hedge, were silent spectators of the proceeding. “*Erág, erág*,” they exclaimed with one accord, placing their hands before their months as they ran horror-stricken from the spot—“*O wai Gypt*,” “Alas, Egyptians! far be such things from us!”

On the festival of Michael the Archangel, whose church immediately adjoins the palace, the monarch received the holy sacrament in the middle of the night, and returned thanks for his victory, a chair having previously been obtained from the Residency to obviate the fatigue stated to have resulted from former orisons. The holy ark, which had brought success to his arms, was again placed under the

silver canopy, and thrice carried in solemn procession around the sacred edifice, under a salute of musketry and ordnance. Large offerings were as usual made to it, alms distributed among the poor, a new cloth given to each of the king's slaves, and a feast prepared for every inhabitant of Ankóber. Rejoicings, which had continued throughout the city since the triumphal entry, were this day renewed with increased energy, even girls and young children whooping war-songs in celebration of the safe return of the warriors from battle.

But the voice of lamentation succeeded to the strains of joy. An eclipse had suddenly inumbrated the moon, and as the black shadow was perceived stealing rapidly onwards, and casting a mysterious gloom over the face of nature, late so bright, the exulting Christians were seized with the direst consternation. The sound of the drum was hushed, and the wild chorus was heard no more. Believing the orb to be dead, and that her demise prognosticated war, pestilence, and famine, the entire town and suburbs became a scene of panic, tumult, and uproar, whilst women and men, priests and laity, collecting together in the streets and in the churches, cried aloud upon the "Saviour of the world to take pity on them—to screen them from the wrath of God—and to cover them with a veil of mercy, for the sake of Mary, the mother of our Lord."

The pagan Galla, of whom there are many in Ankóber, lifting up their voices, joined in the general petition, and, from not comprehending the Amháric tongue, placed upon it the most absurd construction. During the whole period of the moon's obscuration, the wailing continued without intermission; and when the planet, emerging, sailed again through the

firmament in all her wonted brilliancy, a universal shout of joy burst from the lips of the savages, in the firm belief that the prayers and sobs of the multitude had prevailed, and awakened her from the sleep of death.

His Majesty had been previously apprised of the precise hour and minute at which the obscuration was to commence and terminate, and his incredulity in the first instance was followed by equally unfeigned surprise at the powers of divination displayed. “Eclipses are bad omens,” said the king, when their causes had been explained. “Was Subagádis not slain on the appearance of one, and did another not bring defeat to Ras Ali?” The chief smith was, nevertheless, instructed to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the use of logarithmic tables, and of “the instruments that read the heavens;” and the royal attention was temporarily diverted from the study of medicine to the contemplation of the celestial bodies.

In Shoa, the silver sword is the emblem of rank and authority, and it is girded on the loins of none but those who enjoy an exalted place in the sovereign’s favour. The forfeiture of government and the loss of the cumbrous badge go hand in hand, and many are the weary hours of attendance indispensable towards the restoration of either. On no foreigner who had yet visited the Christian land had this mark of distinction been conferred, but the despot now suddenly resolved that the fluted tulip scabbard should adorn his English guests. “You bring the stars upon earth, and foretell coming events,” said His Majesty, as he presented these tokens of favour and confidence —“you are my children; you possess strong medicine. You must wear these swords in assurance

of my permanent love, that your name may be great in the eyes of all my people."

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Two.

The Forest of Mamrat.

Excursions abroad continued as usual to occupy the royal leisure; and even when rats and horned owls formed the ignominious quarry, the king's Gyptzis were invariably summoned. But the dark forests which clothe the foot of Mamrat proved the favourite scene of these rambles, and thither the steps of the monarch were usually directed. Large colonies of the *guréza*, which inhabit the noblest trees, offered an irresistible attraction; and although, from their retired habits no less than from their appearance, these inoffensive apes are regarded in the light of monks, their holy character did not exempt them from frequent and severe punishment. A shower of iron and stone balls tumbled one after the other from his perch on the topmost branches of some venerable moss-grown *woira*, where, notwithstanding many cunning artifices, the white cowl and the long snowy cloak upon the otherwise sable body, betrayed the place of concealment; and numbers being soon prostrate upon the ground, the survivors, amazed at the murderous intrusion, were to be seen swinging from bough to bough like a slack-rope dancer, and leaping from tree to tree as they sought more secure quarters in the, to man, inaccessible sides of the hail-capped mountain.

Occupying manifold caves and subterranean

crannies in this the most elevated pinnacle within the range of vision, the idolised riches of Sáhela Selássie are covered with massive iron plates, barred, and secured by large heaps of stone. A strong guard of matchlock-men occupies the only practicable ascent to the treasury; and the keys of its well-crammed coffers, which are never opened unless for the purpose of being still further stuffed, are strictly confided to Ayto Habti, the master Cyclops of the realm. At the extremity of a forest vista, the huge wooded cone presents a grand and imposing object, avenues of tall trees screening its dark defiles, whilst the fleecy vapour that steals across the hoary summit, discloses glimpses of the many smiling hamlets which crest the Abyssinian Alps.

A Mohammadan legend asserts, that in time of yore, "the Mother of Grace" towered even to the skies, and so remained until the first invasion of Graan. Ameer Noor, his brother, the ruler of Hurrur in its golden days, having formed his camp upon a rising ground above Alio Amba, despatched his chieftains in all directions to slay, burn, and plunder. Upon their return, laden with rich booty, obtained without having encountered a single Amhára, the disappointed Ameer exclaimed, in his religious zeal, "'tis the mountain Mamrat that hides the dastardly infidels. May Allah, the only one God, who rules over the universe, grant that it be overthrown, and my foes revealed!" Scarcely had the pious prayer escaped his lips, than the pile reeled to and fro like a drunken man, and sank to its present level.

"The country of the Adaïel," adds the same veracious authority, "through which the Ameer led the followers of the true Prophet, was in those days a trackless desert, totally destitute of springs; but on his

stamping his foot upon the thirsty soil at the termination of each day's march, there gushed forth a fountain of living water, which has continued to flow until the present time." During the struggle that followed the arrival of the Moslem invaders, the Christians are said to have been in danger of perishing from lack of provisions, until the inhabitants of Argóbba, who are styled Shooggur, from the name of their ancestor, supplied the army, by rolling over the mountain side skins filled with grain. In a battle fought shortly after the arrival of this seasonable supply, Ali Muggan, the governor of Zeyla, was slain on the terrace betwixt Mamrat and Alio Amba, and his body left to the wild beasts; whereupon Noor, his brother, cursing the race who, professing the faith of Islám, had been the agents of so dire a calamity, doomed their necks to be chafed for ever by the galling yoke of vassalage to unbelievers.

Far hid in the rugged bosom of the "Mother of Grace," is a spacious cell, often visited by the king. During one half of the fourteenth century, it formed the abode of an anchorite, renowned far and wide for the austerity of his life, who invariably slept upon a bed of sharp thorns, and whose food was restricted to roots and wild honey. Hatzé Amda Zion was then engaged in his disastrous war with Adel; and the ascetic, seizing his white staff, abandoned his rigorous solitude for the first time, and fired by religious zeal, rushed into the presence of the Emperor, who was encamped on the banks of the Háwash. Displaying the holy cross to the dispirited soldiery, he exhorted them to be of good heart, and not to let the standard of Christ droop before the profane ensign of the infidels; for that it was written in the book of the Revelation of Saint John, that Islamism was that year

to be crushed and trodden under foot throughout the world. At his bidding, three merchants of Hurrur, who, under the guise of suttlers, performed the office of spies, were hung without trial, and their heads being transmitted to the King of Adel, proved the forerunners of a bloody defeat, which he shortly afterwards sustained.

To the latest occupant of the cave of Mamrat is attached the legend embodied in the two ensuing chapters. It is fully illustrative of the grovelling superstition that enthrals the Amhára, of whom none ever allude to the dread sorcerer Thavánan, without an invocation to the Deity. He was an exiled noble of Northern Abyssinia, high in the favour of Asfa Woosen, fifth monarch of Shoa, who took forcible possession of his sister, and after degrading the courtier for opposing this despotic measure, sentenced him to the loss of an eye, which was put out with a hot iron. Resolved to have his revenge, the outcast became a worshipper of the eighty-eight invisible spirits, termed *Sároch*, believed to be the emissaries for evil of Wárobal Máma, the King of the Genies, whose court is held at the bottom of Lake Alobár, in Mans, whence his drum is heard pealing over the water whenever war, famine, or pestilence are about to visit the land.

Having purchased supernatural powers at the price of his hope of salvation, Thavánan tormented the king day and night—spirited away his seraglio, and, having thus recovered his sister, deprived her oppressor of sight by means of magic spells. Taking the name of Abba Zowald, he then became a stern ascetic; and his bones now lie interred in the cell beneath a pile of rough stones, which, during a long period of mortification, served him for a couch, whilst

roots and wild fruits formed his only fare. Angels are said to have ministered unto him; his voice was the voice of an oracle; and none recognising the sorcerer in a holy Christian anchorite, who had despised the world and its vanities during a period of fifty years, he lived universally regarded in Abyssinia as a second Peter.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Three.

The Necromancer, a Legend of Shoa.

In the lone recesses of a rocky cave reclined the youth Thavánan, lost in gloomy meditation. The hues of care and study were indelibly stamped upon his lofty forehead; and although the bent brow and the quivering lip betokened a stern mental conflict, still courage and high daring shone bright through the shroud of revenge which had settled over his dark features. The white robe of Abyssinia lay uneasy on his shoulder; and the blue silk cord which encircled his neck, the badge of Christianity, nearly burst in twain as the swollen sinews started from the throat, in this his hour of agony.

A fearful storm raged without. Thunder rolled in continued peals, crumbling in pieces the sparry roof over-head, and the hot lightning illumined every nook and corner of the retreat, whilst the waters of the broad lake, now raised in wrath, came dashing and foaming to its very mouth with all the violence of a winter sea. But the war of the elements was unheeded by the sufferer, and ever and anon, starting from his recumbent position, he paced in

desperation the uneven floor of the slippery cavern.

“Years have rolled away since that withering moment,” he exclaimed; “but the wound is yet green in the mind, and the feeling is still fresh as when writhing under the searing iron of the tyrant. The star Medáboot proclaims the hour of the requisite sacrifice. I acknowledge thy power, great Genius of the Water. Wárobal Mama, I call for thy aid.”

Stripping the robe from his person, and tearing the bandage from his sightless eye, he roused a sleeping goat from the corner of the cave. A garland of yellow flowers was wreathed in fantastic folds among the long sharp horns, and a white collar twined its mystic threads around the throat. The animal had been a favourite of former days whilst browsing on the green meadows of Shoa, and knowing the voice of its master, it quietly followed his footsteps into the centre of the grotto.

The bright eyes were turned upwards in confiding innocence as it licked the hand which had so often fed and caressed it; but all pity and compassion were effaced in one fiery feeling of revenge. The words of the dread spell to the spirit of the deep were poured forth on the midnight blast; and the sharp knife gleaming for a moment in the air, was plunged into the heart of the unresisting victim.

Shrieks filled the cavern, and unearthly echoes were flung back from every side of the broken vault, whilst the life-stream gurgled on to mingle with the waters of the lake; and as the last faint groan was rendered from the expiring animal, the badge and symbol of Christianity was dipped in the crimson tide which had flowed to the honour of the genius and his satellites.

(The cord of blue silk styled “máteb,” which in Abyssinia is worn around the neck of the Christian to denote his faith, has usually a small silver cross appended.)

A sulphur-coloured fowl was next subjected to the necessary preparations for the sacrifice. One eye was deliberately scooped out amidst blasphemy and execration, and the bright blue cord which had hitherto graced the neck of the Christian, now gory with unhallowed blood, was bound in a mysterious knot on this the second victim to the powers of darkness. The holy cross was suspended to the desecrated thread; and having raised the flickering embers with sweet woods and subtle essences, Thavánan crushed the head of the fowl under his heel until the brains flowed, and then dashed the body into the fire.

The flame shot aloft in one fierce spire of light, blazing like the arrow of the infernal host, and, again, satiate with the pungent offering, sank amid a stifling cloud of fetid smoke. Casting himself upon the rocky floor in an attitude of prostration, the youth listened in awe to the moans of the wind which had succeeded to the hurricane. But his courage was firm as the foundations of Mamrat; and it was well for him that his heart quailed not during that hour of perilous endurance.

The effects of his diabolical incantation were soon manifest. Foul spirits mowed and chattered in his ear, and the cold rushing of pinions flapping lazily through the air wetted him with slimy spray. But revenge and desperation had steeled his nerves; and after a period of intense misery, which appeared without limit to the sufferer, the melancholy sound of a drum came

faintly booming over the face of the waters—the welcome token that the hour of trial was past, and that the sacrifice had been accepted. Waxing louder and louder, the pealing of the music shook the rocks with its continuous reverberations. Unearthly voices, ceasing to torment, faded altogether away; and the renegade, casting one look on the ashes of things holy and once prized, stepped forth from the mouth of the cavern.

Wild and fearful was the scene which met his gaze. The moon was for the moment unobscured, but huge masses of pale cloud, like armed hosts, sped fiercely across the skies, whilst thunder and lightning seemed to warn the astounded beholder that spirits of another world were engaged in their unholy revels.

Unruffled by the breeze, the great lake spread like a sheet of molten silver at his feet; whilst every cliff and crag, revealed boldly to view, was fearfully lit up by the reflected glare of an unearthly lurid flame, which at short intervals spouted in jets from the centre of the expanse, amid streams of wild melancholy music and the clash of the magic drum.

Roused to daring deeds in this moment of frantic excitement, with one short prayer to the spirit he had invoked, Thavánan plunged headlong into the cold deep waters, which gurgled and bubbled over his descending form; but baffled in his design to reach the glittering white sand—now the only haven of his hope—he rose once more to the surface.

All was dark, dismal, and lonely. A thick fog covered the water, the earth, and the sky, whilst the voice of his better angel alone came moaning through the mist, bewailing the lost soul of a son of Adam. Again

and again he struggled to reach the glowing bed of the lake, but mortal strength and energy were unavailing to pierce the fathomless abyss. The clear searching element rushed unresisted into his mouth and ears—the faintness of death spread over his exhausted limbs—and his senseless form, tossed to and fro, became the sport of the heaving billow.

But the sound of the spell had swept along the blast, and the savour of the sacrifice had penetrated into the halls of magic. A long sinewy arm raised the body high over the water. The drum again pealed through the boundless space; the bright fire threw one last triumphant stream above the surface, and a heavy plunge beneath the waves was succeeded by the utter silence of solitude.

The soft tinkling sound of harps first stole upon the slumbers of the neophyte. Bright, happy visions flitted over his awakening senses, and the sweet melody of voices ushered him again into existence. Starting from his trance, the bewildered Thavánan found ample scope for the indulgence of his wonder and astonishment. Far as the eye could scan, innumerable arcades stretched in endless vistas on every side, with alternating domes of the purest pearl. Pillars of variously coloured amber and crystal rose to sustain the glowing fabric, and cloths, such as emperors alone can boast, strewed the floors in unbounded profusion.

In the centre of each gallery stood an altar of virgin silver, from which a never-failing arrow of flame diffused a mellow light over the glittering pillars of the hall. Around their more searching sister, jets of sweet-scented water played high in the air; and dancing on the apex of each fountain, a sparkling

emerald, the ransom of a monarch, gently regulated the rush of the stream, in token that the elements were here held under control.

Superb paintings, illuminated in transparency, shed a dreamy languor over the scene, and music lent her exhaustless charms to captivate the sense. Sweet strains of triumph, ringing in full chorus among the lofty domes, died gently away into the softness of repose; and at times the low murmur of the waves fell pleasingly upon the ear, as the lake poured forth her springs in homage to the master spirit, and imprinted the kiss of obedience on the magic abode of Wárobal Mama.

Colossal statues of Famine, War, and Pestilence, frowned from their lofty pedestals in all the sternness of brass above the glories of this rich and varied scene. Each giant arm grasped a knotted mace, whose awful blow on the iron drum of misfortune was well known to the dismayed inhabitants of the upper regions of earth as the sure harbinger of woe.

Arts and sciences had each their separate niche in the spacious apartment; and favoured votaries were deeply engaged in scanning subtle essences, or preparing potent spells. The hum of confused voices was borne on the fragrant atmosphere, whilst at intervals strange emblems and tokens were delivered by the elders to the attending pupils, who each sprang aloft upon gaudy pinions to execute the behest of his superior. But the smiling face of fair woman was wanting to complete the scene; for love was unknown to the dread spirit of the lake.

In the immediate vicinity of the wondering mortal, an elevated throne stood the most conspicuous object.

Spiral steps of gold led to the shrine of power. Precious stones sparkling in rich wreaths of enamel, hung a brilliant balustrade in front—and forming the seat of high honour and place, a white ivory shell rested amid the shining leaves of the ever-flowering lotus. The sea-snake rose in glittering green folds to receive in his soft embrace the recumbent occupant; and ministering spirits of strange form, bearing harp and censer, were ranged in silence around.

Thundering peals of music, and a sudden prostration, proclaimed the presence of the genius of the place; and, amid the clash of lute and timbrel, a cloud of incense floating high over head, disclosed a dwarf crouching on the shell. His aspect was mild and beneficent, and a flowing white beard entirely covered his minute person; but the essence of ethereal intelligence shot from his piercing black eye, and a pale fire played among his long yellow locks. Again the harps rung out the silver notes of welcome, and a vocal chorus was wafted to the delighted ear of the intruder:—

> “Ask for riches, ask for wealth,
> For kingdom, strength, or iron sway,
> Paramount in lady’s bower,
> Revenge for wrongs, or length of day.”

Borne forward by an irresistible impulse, Thavánan found himself among the kneeling crowd in front of the throne, and a soft still voice proceeded from the high place:—“Mortal, what would’st thou with us? Answer without fear.”

“Revenge,” replied the petitioner, “revenge for injury unprovoked—a house rifled and burnt, a fair sister carried to the lawless harem, and the eyeball blasted

for ever, of one who had heretofore looked upon the great monarch of Shoa as a perfect Deity upon earth."

"Let the child of clay take the oath of allegiance, and be instructed to obtain his wish," responded the being in whose tiny form was concentrated such power and grandeur; and as the words proceeded from his lips, the floor sank under the foot of the proselyte, and Thavánan stood with an attending spirit in the centre of a gloomy grotto.

A blood-red cross, which flashed amid the darkness, revealed sights horrible to behold, and conjured before the imagination thoughts upon which it was then madness to dwell. But daring to the last, the apostate, in presence of the symbol of Christianity, abjured all the high hopes of Heaven. Revenge upon earth filled his soul for the moment; and although the touch of that blessed sign struck through his young heart like the sharp stab of the searing-iron, the fearful oath was firmly and distinctly repeated.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Four.

Thavánan the Tormentor.

Months had passed away since the disappearance of the gay Thavánan, once the favourite of the potent monarch of Shoa. Fallen in a single day from his high estate, and deprived of an eye before the scoffing multitude, the innocent victim to intrigue had departed alone and on foot through the gateway of the palace. A thousand cavaliers had that morning obeyed his

least command, but not one attended him in the hour of adversity; and shunned as a thing accursed by the brutal mob, he wended his way in moody silence to his home in the green meadow of the Chaka. But the myrmidons of tyranny had outstripped his heavy footstep. Ashes alone proclaimed the site of his late flourishing abode, and a solitary goat, bleating amid the ruins, was all that remained of his once numerous possessions.

The king's *áferoch* had been busy since early morn, and every thing had been swept with the besom of destruction. The flocks and the herds of the disgraced noble were now in the royal pastures, and his family and relatives, his serfs and drudges, in the household of the despotic monarch. Stunned by the fatal intelligence, Thavánan, followed only by the goat, withdrew unnoticed from the scene of desolation, and his very name was for a time forgotten in the land.

Towards the close of the year strange reports were circulated from the palace. Unseen hands abstracted the choicest viands—the clearest hydromel was drained ere it reached the expectant lip—and a thousand vagaries were played in the great hall of entertainment. The replenished horn was dashed untasted to the ground, and the delicate morsel transferred from the gaping mouth to the rushes which strewed the floor. The monarch himself was not exempt from the foul plague. His palate was daily cheated of some accustomed dainty; and once, to the horror of the assembled courtiers, a bloody tail was inserted as the royal jaws opened to essay a dish prepared in the seraglio—a loud laugh ringing meanwhile among the rafters of the banqueting-room, which struck upon the ear of the discomfited

despot like the merry tones of his exiled favourite.

Priests were called in to the rescue—holy books were read, and consecrated water profusely sprinkled upon the walls, but all without the slightest effect. Doors were closed and double-locked, and guards were planted over every aperture, yet still the pest continued without any abatement. The palace was in a state of terror and confusion, and the life of the king became weary and burdensome.

Awful voices now sounded at night through the lone apartments, and apparitions haunted the imperial slumbers. The band of nocturnal singers was trebled, but the stout lungs of thirty hale priests, who surrounded the royal bed-chamber, and elevated their voices in psalm to a more frantic key than had ever before been heard in Shoa, failed to intimidate the goblin. Tossing on his couch, the restless monarch sunk weary to sleep, only to be jaded by spectres and evil dreams, in which the wronged Thavánan invariably appeared as the chief tormentor.

The nuisance continued without intermission, until, on the high festival of Easter, harassed and exhausted, the Negoos took his customary seat in the great hall of his ancestors. The groaning table was once again well filled. The holy feast had induced chiefs and nobles in some degree to overcome the fears which had latterly estranged them entirely from the banquet; but there was no joy in the depressed eye, no mirth or hilarity on the tongue of any guest, and a low whisper hardly disturbed the silence which reigned among the dismayed assembly.

The usual infernal sallies were on this day practised exclusively at the royal board, before which the

uneasy monarch, occupying a high alcove, and surrounded by pages and men at arms, reclined in his wonted grandeur. Suddenly, another figure appeared at the table, resting one hand in a curiously wrought earthen vase, and extending the other high, in defiance towards the throne.

"The lost Thavánan!" shouted the crowd: "he has pawned his soul to the fiend"—and swords flashed from the scabbard, as men's hearts were strengthened at the sight of danger in a tangible form. But high over the storm rose the voice of the despot: —"Back, minions, back! we will ourselves deal with the ingrate. Death—but a lingering death—shall be the portion of him who trifles with the pleasure of kings!"

It was indeed Thavánan who confronted the frown of majesty; but how changed from the mild and handsome favourite of former days! White as the feather of the *Rása*, his dishevelled hair floated over the bent shoulder, and stern revenge was graven in the deep furrows of his pallid cheek. His solitary eye gleamed with infernal expression, and bright with the cabalistic figures of magic lore, a golden fillet screened the mutilated orb. Retaining his disdainful position, he cast first a withering glance over the crowd, and then addressed the prince in words of scorn:—

"False monarch, repent in time, for the serpent will turn upon its destroyer. Proud descendant of the race of Solomon, the wit of thy illustrious ancestor is dull in comparison with the wisdom of the meanest disciple of Wárobal. I defy thy myrmidons and thyself!"

And uttering these words, Thavánan instantaneously

disappeared from before the gaze of the astounded and crest-fallen court.

The waters of the mystic vase hissed and bubbled for a moment. A dark cloud of stifling steam shot aloft, and a thick crust of red ashes, which strewed the board, remained the sole memento of the unwelcome intrusion. Again the hearts of the vassals fell within them; and whilst a gloomy silence pervaded the hall, the triumphant song of the tormentor came ringing among the notes of wild music.

> “Far down in the depths of the azure blue,
> Away from the mists of the cold dull sky,
> Concealed from detested mortal view,
> Thavánan lives in liberty.”

The courage of the tyrant quailed before the dread powers which were in array against him, and resolved upon an act of tardy justice. Freedom was restored to the degraded and enslaved family, and the confiscated lands were returned threefold to the impoverished race. But the door of the royal harem was closed on the fair daughter of the house of Thavánan, and the wail of the captive maid still cried aloud for redress. Persecution, nevertheless, ceased for a time; and men breathed more freely as their hopes gained ground that the spirit of the avenger was appeased.

On the proclamation of the annual military expedition, the chiefs and nobles of Shoa thronged once more to the capital. Swarming around the black tents of their warrior leaders, multitudes were spread over hill and dale, and the Amhára host, in all its savage magnificence, had mustered on the highest mountains of Anko. But evil omens and portentous

signs were witnessed continually. Dogs howled unceasingly during the livelong night. Throughout the hours of day, the shrike croaked from every bush; and the merlin, turning her back on the passing cavalier, arranged her sober plumage on the stone, without bestowing, in earnest of victory and success, one glimpse of her snow-white breast.

No heed was given by the stern monarch to these portents of coming evil; and on the eve of the intended march the halls of the palace were crowded with all the chivalry of Efát. Boisterous mirth presided at the banquet; but as the last horn of old hydromel was drained to the downfall of the Galla, there arose a fearful cry from the interior enclosure, and bands of eunuchs, with horror depicted upon their withered countenances, burst into the chamber from every direction. Falling prostrate at the footstool of the throne, they proclaimed the disaster which had descended like a thunderbolt on the heretofore unsullied honour of the nation. “He has left the old and the ugly,” sobbed the trembling guardians; “but alas for the fair and beautiful ones of the harem, they are all gone on the wings of the evening wind!”

King and nobles rushed into the court-yard, and every hut which crowned the pinnacle of the capital poured forth its inmates to gaze at the wondrous spectacle. High over the up-reared peak of the mountain soared a rich rosy cloud, lit by the last glorious rays of the setting sun, and charged with a freight more prized than the fine gold of Kordofán. Amhára’s fairest daughters were revealed to the unhallowed view of the gaping multitude, and no envious vest shrouded their amazing charms. All had been caught up by the whirlwind in the simple dress of ordinary avocation; and as their light laughing

voices came tinkling from above, they carried the bitter truth to the exasperated monarch, that the captives enjoyed their present thraldom as a happy release from the bolt of the harem gate, and the rod of the testy old eunuch.

Dishonoured in the eyes of his subjects, and smarting under the loss of objects which still held a place in his heart, the despot stamped and raged in uncontrollable fury. The beat of the nugáreet and the voice of the herald forthwith proclaimed the abandonment of the projected expedition; and, plunged in the deepest mortification, Asfa Woosen retired to brood in solitude over his unprecedented misfortune.

Morn witnessed the dispersion to their respective quarters of governors and their levies; and before the shades of another evening had closed over the deep valley of the Airára, a breathless courier galloped through the palace-gates with the unlooked-for but welcome tidings, that the ladies of the royal harem had been discovered reposing unattended among the high fern and heather of the adjacent mountain side.

Again were the parchment faces of the wrinkled eunuchs radiant in sallow lustre. Three hundred mules were instantly dispatched for the conveyance of the truant flock to their fold; and at midnight the muffled damsels were consigned, amid the cracked exultations of attendants, to their wonted cages in the palace.

But the fair sister of Thavánan was not of the number, neither could any clue be obtained to her fate or condition. A small scroll had indeed been discovered on the turf, sealed and bearing the

address of the ruler of Shoa—a gigantic glow-worm, attached by a single yellow hair to the envelope, having particularly attracted attention to that which it was conjectured might contain the desired information.

The curiosity of the king finally overcame the cautious scruples of the priesthood, who advised the immediate destruction of the missive. As the wax crumbled between his fingers, a roar of thunder shook the palace to its foundations, whilst a stream of black dust, pouring from the parchment to the table, gradually assumed the semblance of a pillar of sand agitated by the fierce whirl of the storm. A pungent odour impregnated the apartment, and the crackling sound of the devouring element was followed by the presence of the dread tormentor.

“I have come once again, monarch of the hard heart, to repay the debt which is still due, and, blasted like the much-injured Thavánan, thy soul may henceforward entertain some feeling of pity for thy fellow-men. Listen to thy doom. No mercy was shown unto me, and none shall be extended to thee. Thy son, after a short reign of terror, shall fall by the hand of a slave, and die cursing the author of his existence; and thy son’s son shall bear upon his disfigured countenance the searing mark of his ancestor’s cruelty. My face thou shalt see no more—Spirit of the flame, perform thy task.” A bright flash shot from the centre of the dark threatening column, and curled towards the king, a sickening sulphuric fume filling the presence chamber, and the necromancer vanished in the thick smoke.

Plunged for hours in a death-like stupor, Asfa Woosen was only aroused from his lethargy to bewail

the loss of the left eye, which had been scorched in the socket by the contact of the fierce flame. The calamity greatly softened and influenced the actions of his after-life; and torture and mutilation grew gradually out of custom in the kingdom of Shoa.

During the reign of his grandson, the one-eyed Sáhela Selássie, there dwelt in a mossy cavern, among the recesses of the forest of Manték, a hermit of renowned sanctity. Father Peter was universally feared and beloved, but none knew from whence he derived food or nourishment. The skin of the agazin formed his humble garb, and a rude leathern girdle encircled his loins. His charms and amulets were never known to fail, and his language was not as that of other men. Crowds daily gathered round his cave in the rock to receive on their knees the benediction of the recluse; but no one had ever entered the cell, and few cared to pass it after nightfall. Moans and cries of agony then mingled with the midnight blast; and the sound of the scourge was often heard amid prayers for deliverance from the evil one.

On a fresh morning of May, when the roses and jessamine were scenting the dewy air, the wild flowers springing over the face of the green meadow, and birds warbled pleasantly amid the rich foliage, the peasants came as usual to listen to the words of other days, and to receive the blessing of the austere anchorite. But the accustomed seat was vacant, and no answer being returned to the voice of inquiry, the boldest entered the retreat. Curiously emblazoned scrolls and relics were strewed among the nooks and mouldy recesses of the damp grotto; the body of the venerable hermit was stretched in eternal slumber upon a bed of sharp stones; and the tale soon spread through the land that the holy Father Peter—now no

more—was indeed the dread necromancer Thavánan, who had thus, by the continued penance of half a century, expiated his fierce act of apostasy.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Five.

The Reign of Superstition.

Not a monk is there in any of the lone monasteries of Shoa, not a hermit of the many in her cold mountains, not a dwarf nor a decrepit priest who has renounced the society of his fellow-men, but enjoys the reputation of being fully competent to blast the harvest at pleasure, to poison the fountain, and to render the able-bodied incapable. The thoughts of all classes move in a dense atmosphere of superstition. Talismans, written in mystic characters, if mixed with the seeds and leaves of potent witch plants, gathered by the hand of the forest recluse, afford a feeling of security which is not to be extracted from the pages of the Gospel; nor does any one ever venture to mount his mule without a preservative against the spear of the bandit, or the sharp knife of the heathen.

Savage man, obtaining only through the medium of his own wishes and imagination a glimmering idea of the invisible and supreme Power, seeks some tangible object of veneration, and some ostensible source of protection. Thus the Abyssinian, whose vague religious ideas afford him but small consolation in the hour of tribulation, and but little reliance of security or deliverance in the day of danger and distress, reposes implicit faith in the doctrine of amulets, which present a substance stamped with a

mystic and supernatural character, and one capable of being attached individually to himself. The arms and neck are therefore clothed in a perfect panoply of charms against the influence of every misfortune and disease, whether experienced or anticipated; and the *tulsim*, which is a worked zone studded with minute leathern pockets, containing sacred spells enveloped in double and treble wrappers, encircles the waist of every man, woman, and child, throughout the Christian dominions of Sáhela Selássie, who himself reposes firm faith in their efficacy.

The influence of the evil eye exercises a strong control over the minds of all. Bad spirits are believed to roam about the earth and the waters, and to occupy houses after dark, whence the Amhára never ventures to throw fluid on the ground, lest the dignity of some unseen elf should be violated. The *Beza*, or sacrifice for the sick, is considered lawful and efficacious, and is frequently resorted to. The bullock, as the type of the invalid, after being driven round his couch amid singing and clamour, is slaughtered outside the threshold; or an egg is turned thrice towards the head of the patient, and then broken beside him. Saint Michael is, by many of the more ignorant, supposed to be the Almighty. The Virgin Mary is considered the creatress of the world; and *Sunday* is understood to have been a saint of surpassing sanctity, greatly superior both to Saint George and to Saint Michael, on which account he claims one day out of the seven, whereas other saints enjoy their festival only once during the month.

No Amhára will venture to destroy a serpent save on Saturday or Sunday, when the sight of one of these reptiles is deemed a favourable omen. In common with the heathen Galla, the Christians of Shoa make

annual votive sacrifices in June to *Sár*, the evil spirit —notwithstanding its strict prohibition by royal proclamation. Three men and a woman, who understand how to deal with the Evil One, having assembled at the place appointed, proceed to perform the ceremony in a house newly swept. A ginger-coloured hen, a red she-goat, or a male Adel goat with a white collar, is sacrificed; and the blood of the victim, having been mixed with grease and butter, is secretly placed during the night in a narrow alley, when all who step therein are supposed to receive the malady of the invalid, who is thus restored to perfect health. During a visit some years ago to Motátit, the king perceived evidences of this pagan ceremony in the streets; and tracing the rite to a wealthy individual, who had caused it to be performed in order to free himself of disease, the honour of true religion was speedily vindicated by the transfer to the royal coffers of all the worldly substance of the delinquent.

Under cover of the night, a thread of cotton yarn is often stretched by the hired sorcerer completely round some devoted tenement; and the extremities having been connected by means of an iron link, well imbued in blood, the walls and doorposts are freely sprinkled and bedaubed with gore. Day dawns upon the incantation, which is believed to be the work of the Devil himself; and among all the assembled multitude, who consider that some heavy calamity, if not instant death, would follow the act, there is not to be found one individual sufficiently bold to remove the spell, and thus deliver the inmates from its withering influence. Since the king’s arrival in the capital, the appearance of the bloody finger on the wall had thrown the inhabitants into the deepest

consternation; and to the astonishment of every by-stander, a missionary of the Church of England tore away the charm without any evil consequences following his rashness. That very night, however, the defeated necromancer planned an attack to rob the clergyman's premises, and it was only defeated by the extra vigilance preserved in consequence of the exposure of the impostor.

The drum of the water kelpie is heard by the credulous native in the echo of every roaring cataract, and the wretch drowning in the swollen torrent is believed to be dragged under the overwhelming wave as the favourite food of the malicious spirit of the deep. Divers plants and herbs possess properties and qualities the most baneful; and a bunch of the *Fegain* grass, if skilfully cast upon the person of an obnoxious enemy, produces dire disease and speedy death. Sorcerers and necromancers attaining the respectable age of four and five hundred years exist in numbers in many parts of the land, flitting through the air, and riding upon the wings of the wind; and unbidden and invisible guests, such as Thavánan the Tormentor, enter the banqueting hall, to rob the festive board of its choicest viands.

Hid from mortal gaze, and realising upon earth all the delights of paradise, the magic village of Dooka Stephános forms the never-failing topic of all wonder-loving souls, and the poetic fancy of Abyssinia has been fairly exhausted in descriptions of this rare scene of blissful enjoyment. "Its sleep-inviting groves and grassy lawns are situated on the overflowing Nile; and there, released from the shackles of wedlock, beautiful females abound. Potent liquors pour on in never-drying streams, and the earth yields

her spontaneous fruits without care or labour. But shrouded in magic mist, these Elysian fields open their portals only to those mortals of commanding form and handsome features, on whom the glance of favour has been cast by the bewitching inmates of the enchanted garden. Human endeavour is ineffectual to unriddle the mystery in which it is enveloped; and the dread art of the sorcerer and his most potent talismans, prove alike unavailing to loosen the spell for the advantage of those on whom Dame Nature has bestowed a crooked figure, or even an ill-starred visage."

As in the dark ages, dwarfs are nevertheless treated with considerable respect, and regarded with the utmost fear. Many of the most learned and praiseworthy in the land are to be found among those who have been created during nature's freaks. The monarch's father confessor, a perfect Asmodeus in appearance, is of extremely diminutive stature, but he is possessed of singular good feeling, and forms a gratifying contrast to the majority of his countrymen. The chiefs and nobles often select their secretaries and household priests with reference to their bodily imperfections; and the most erudite sage in the capital, whose charms and talismans are esteemed all-powerful, and who knoweth every plant from the "cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," sustains his character for wisdom and for lore, as much by the deformity of his appearance as by the brilliancy of his understanding.

Sickness and misfortune are usually ascribed to the influence of the evil eye of the *Booda*, or sorcerer. Long consultations are held to discover from whose sinister glace the calamity has emanated; and when suspicion has gradually settled into conviction, the

most implacable hatred is conceived towards the delinquent; and although concealed under that garb of indifference which the savage can so successfully assume, yet the opportunity of revenge is never suffered to pass unheeded in after-life. Hailoo, the father of Oubié, the Nero-like Dedjasmach of Tigré, added much to his previous notoriety by the extermination of all the *Boodas* who fell within his murderous reach. Superstition exulted in reeking hecatombs of human victims; and the love and veneration of his subjects knew no bounds on his last summary act of collecting together and roasting to death thirteen hundred miserable wretches, who were suspected to possess, and to have exerted with success, the influence of “the evil eye.”

By the credulous Abyssinian, every blacksmith and worker in iron is held to be endowed with supernatural powers, and to be able to transform himself at pleasure into the likeness of a wolf or a hyena. It is a common practice amongst this class of handicrafts to fasten a metal collar about the neck of the whelps of those animals, and turn them loose; when the badge being retained through life, and occasionally seen, the fabulous stories in circulation are strengthened in the eyes of the uninitiated.

The presence of any Christian emblem, or portion of Holy Writ, is supposed sufficient to neutralise the labours of the Vulcan. No metal can be welded within sight of the cross; and should any scrap of the Bible be worn on the person of the by-standers, the desired figure can never be imparted. Of this belief an instance was afforded shortly after our return from Angollála, when a bar of iron was to be transformed into a tire for the wheel of a gun-carriage. The small draft of air created by a pair of primitive native

bellows proving of none avail, the smiths declared aloud that the phenomenon arose from some holy charm. Badges and emblems, spells and amulets, were cast aside by all; but the labour was renewed without any better effect, and the artisans stood aghast. A pair of British forge bellows were now produced, and the assembly were requested to don their paper armour, and to stand round the anvil. The potent blast poured from the nozzle, and under the brawny arm of one of the European soldiers, the sparks flew far and wide. In five minutes the work was completed, to the dismay of the Abyssinian magicians, who came privately to request of me that no further public exhibition of the sort might thenceforth be made, lest their name and their glory should be extinguished throughout the land.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Six.

Excursion along the North-Western Frontier of Efát.

The disparaging reflections cast by the chivalrous people of Shoa, in consequence of our refusal to slaughter defenceless pagans during the murderous expedition to Entótto, rendered it imperative that some decided step should be taken by which to wipe out the stain, and restore the tarnished lustre of the British name. The destruction of an adult elephant, which is reckoned equivalent to that of forty Galla, is an achievement that had not been accomplished within the memory of the present age, although mentioned in traditions connected with the exploits of the most renowned Ethiopic warriors. I accordingly

solicited permission to visit the distant wilderness of Giddem, on the northern frontier of Efát, in the dense forests of which the giant of the mammalia was reported to reside—a pretext which further afforded plausible grounds for exploring a portion of the country reputed to be amongst the most fertile and productive in Abyssinia.

The king opened his eyes wider than usual at this unprecedented application. “My children,” he returned deliberately, “how can this be? Elephants are not to be slain with rifle balls. They will demolish you; and what answer am I then to give? The gun is the medicine for the Galla in the tree, but it has no effect upon the *zihoon*.” (Elephant.)

Finding me resolved, however. His Majesty’s most gracious permission was finally accorded to depart forthwith, and orders were issued to a royal messenger who was appointed to accompany us, commanding the governors of provinces through which the route lay, to afford every assistance in their power to “the strong strangers of the Negoos.” But all assertions relative to the possibility of destroying the monarch of the forest were still received with an incredulous shake of the head; and whilst not the smallest expectations were entertained at court of the success of the Gyptzis, the greatest ridicule attended an undertaking which, by all classes at the capital, was considered certain to prove alike foolhardy, dangerous, and futile.

Instructions had been issued that the king’s guests were to be conducted by the royal road over the Gorabéla mountain, a singular mark of condescension, partaken but by few in the realm. This permission enabled us to enjoy a most extensive

panorama from the heather-grown heights. Mamrat reared her stupendous head perpendicularly from the dark-wooded bosom of the valley, and seemed half buried in the clouds. The palisaded buildings of the palace covering the slope of its isolated hill frowned in pride over the numberless circular houses of the straggling eastern metropolis. Clumps of the sombre juniper, and spreading cossos hung with red garlands of mast, formed vistas on every side. On the one hand rose the lofty blue range of Bulga, and on the other the eye ranged uncontrolled over the boundless plains of the savage Adaïel, spread out below like a great chart, and embracing a prospect of many hundred square miles. In the centre soared the stern crater of Abida—the beacon which, in days long gone, marked the dominions of the proud emperors of Ethiopia, when, according to the traditionary couplet, “their sceptre swayed from Azulo to the Bashilo, and from Errur to Gondar.”

The porters at the royal lodge were on the alert, and adjurations by the king’s life were not wanting to deter our advance to the Airára. “*Bu Negoos*,” “*Bu Sáhela Selássie amlak*,” were talismanic words energetically vociferated, and a heavy staff was thumped across the path in earnest of its being closed to plebeian transit. But where is the Abyssinian who is proof against bribery and corruption? Beads will force a passage when the mandate of the throne is received with incredulity, and the dollars of Maria Theresa, if possessing all the requisite marks, will insure participation even in a crown monopoly.

An exceedingly steep path conducts to the summit of the Chaka; but it is here paved throughout with boulders, so supported at intervals by transverse

beams, as to form a succession of clumsy steps, constituting the only made road in the kingdom of Shoa. The heather ceases with the Gorabéla mountain; and from the summit of the now bare range the route we were to follow strikes off near the residence of a petty governor, who bears the singular name of "*Mout bai nore legne*."

"Oh, that there were no death for me!" is the interpretation thereof; but judging from the appearance of the lord of the manor, who numbers some threescore years, he is not likely long to find his wish realised. Engaged in earnest conversation with the old man, was Ayto Guebroo, who, in consequence of inability to check the repeated rebellions of the Loomi, by whom he so recently was wounded, had at last been deprived of his government and of his silver sword, and was on his way to the presence of the despot in deep disgrace.

The Abyssinian verdure is singularly evanescent, a month without a shower being sufficient to dry up the rich herbage, and to darken the hue of the foliage; but the "rain of Bounty," which usually falls in February, giving a fresh impulse to vegetation, the hills and valleys again teem with abundance. November was fast drawing to a close, and the aspect of the country generally was brown and withered. The best pastures were covered with the sleek beeves swept off from Finfinni, and the cornfields were yellow with the royal crops now under the sickle, whilst in the numerous threshing-floors muzzled oxen were already treading out the grain.

Our route led across Motátit and the Toro Mesk, through dales and over hills abutting upon the face of the bluff frontier of Shoa, in which are the sources of

many of the more distant tributaries to the blue Nile. Never was there a tract more destitute of birds or wild animals, a few plovers and larks, with some of the more common species of *Rodentia*, being the only objects of natural history observed during a march of twelve miles, which led to the halting ground in the centre of the little village of Asóphee, opposite to the frowning mountain Koorománia.

Under our flimsy cotton awnings, the night proved intensely cold; and on resuming the journey at an early hour the ensuing morning, over a swelling country thickly dotted with Christian hamlets, we found the more sheltered pools by the road-side covered with a thin coating of ice, the first witnessed since our arrival in Abyssinia. At the village of Amaráguê, hospitable entertainment had been prepared by Ayto Egázoo, whose name signifies, “May they buy.” This notable warrior had, prior to the late foray, introduced himself to me, somewhat k-propos of his title, by an ingenious but abortive attempt to sell an unsound horse. Dismounting on the right side from the identical straw-coloured steed, he now placed himself, with shoulders bared, in the middle of the road, and by the life of the king adjured us to enter his abode, in order to partake of a sheep that had been expressly slaughtered.

Wulleta Selássie, his comely partner, daughter to Shishigo, the governor of Shoa-meda, had kindled in the dark hall the fiercest of fires, and immediately on the termination of complimentary inquiries, an ox-hide being spread, the heavy door was barred to exclude the evil eye. Raw collops having been steadily rejected, bones, singed in a somewhat cannibal-like fashion, were rapidly circulated by the attentive host. “Take the eye,” he repeated, coaxingly, to each in

turn, presenting at the same time betwixt his finger and thumb the extracted orb of the deceased mutton —"do, the eye is the daintiest part. No!—well you *must* eat this marrow," crushing the uncooked shank with a grinding-stone handed by a slave girl, and extending the splintered fragments to be sucked. Overflowing bumpers of sour beer having been filled in a gloomy corner at a huge earthen jar, each horn was tasted by the cup-bearer from the hollow of his palm, in demonstration of the absence of poison. The surplus repast, fluid as well as solid, quickly disappeared under the united efforts of the retinue; and a bead necklace having been hung about the neck of the lady's hopeful son and heir, we finally effected our escape from the ovenlike apartment, with the aid of divers promises made to both master and mistress, and sundry pieces of silver disbursed to silence a host of importunate menials.

Ayto Egázoo rode forth, in accordance with etiquette, "to see the party off." From the courtyard of his snug but dirty domicile, Tegulet, and the blue hills of Argobba and of the Wollo Galla, bounded the extensive prospect. Regaining the road, we crossed in succession the Tekroos-Bádo, Moosh, and Goodawurud rivers, all remote sources of the blue Nile. On the banks of the latter stands the monastery of Saint George, famous as having been left unmolested when the district was in the hands of the Galla, many of whom are even said to have been converted to Christianity. Goodawurud was the title of a potent chieftain, who, with Merkurri, Amadich, and Logo, held the country after Graan's desolating visit, until expelled by Asfa Woosen; and a considerable portion of the revenues are now applied to the maintenance of the monastery of Medák, whose

superior, the Alaka Amda Zion, has charge of the heir presumptive.

Nothing could exceed the beauty of the position selected by the cowled fraternity of Saint George; large bands of whom, lounging away their hours of idleness beneath the funereal junipers in which the retreat is deeply embosomed, were for once aroused from listless apathy by the passing cavalcade of white strangers. The land swarms with friars, monks, and anchorites, who are habited in yellow dresses, as the badge of poverty, or in the prepared skin of the antelope. Usually licentious in their manners, they roam through the country a perfect pest and plague to society. Men become monks at any period of life. Those who are afflicted with grievous sickness, vow that in event of recovery they will abandon the world, and transfer all their moveables to the church. The rich often deliver over their property to their children, who are bound to support them until death. The poor subsist upon the bounty of the king and of the community; and many never enter the cells of the monastery at all, but with their wives reside at ease in their own homes, having assumed the counterfeit piety of the order solely for the sake of defrauding their creditors—since, however deeply involved, all former scores may be cleared off with the ease and rapidity of the most indulgent court of insolvency, by the simple process of “putting on angels’ clothing.”

The skin of the Agazin is usually adopted as the garb of humiliation; and this emblem, together with the unwashed person, is intended to commemorate the legend of their great founder Eustathius, who boasted of having performed no ablution during a long term of existence, and who miraculously crossed the river Jordan, floating securely upon his greasy cloak. The

prophet Samuel is also sometimes referred to as affording another notable example of the advantage extended by the mantle of hide, in the asserted fact of his having sailed seven days across a great sea, borne in safety, with his disciples, upon his leathern robe.

Throughout Shoa, lakes are believed to form the great rendezvous of evil spirits; and in one called Nugáreet-fer, at the foot of the hills, the drum of the water kelpie is frequently heard, to the no small terror of the superstitious auditors. Shortly after crossing the stony bed of the Daimadamash, a road branches off to Angollála and Debra Berhán, past the monastery of Máskalie Ghedam, a title signifying “My cross is a convent.” Beyond the Dewásha, a second strikes northward to Gondar, past the seat of government of Zenama Work, the Queen-dowager, which occupies a beautifully rounded tumulus styled Zalla Dingai, “The rolling stone.”

“Bad people,” saith the tradition attached to this spot, “were one day seated upon a rock that formerly occupied the summit of the hill. They were telling lies, and busied in contriving tricks by which to circumvent their neighbours. Suddenly the mass gave way, and all who sat thereon, being precipitated into the deep torrent that rolls beneath to join the river Mofa, were crushed to atoms for their evil doings.”

After fording the Goor river, and ascending a high ridge, the Queen’s white palace forms a striking object in the landscape; and beyond it is a square eminence, where, under the eye of the erudite Alaka Woldáb, the reigning monarch passed his earlier years, until the assassination of his sire opened to him the accession. From this point we obtained an

extensive view over Geshe and Efrata, with the Great Sáka mountains stretching towards the Nile. A little further on the heather-grown range suddenly terminates in an abrupt descent of full three thousand feet, at the foot of which lies the rugged province of Efát, blending into the blue plains of the Adaïel. The great beacon Azulo, with the wide crater of Abida, hazy and hot, were visible in the east. Afrubba, and the high hills of the Ittoo Galla, rose in the distance, and a perfect chaos of rude disjointed mountains lay piled towards Ankóber, seeming as though they had been gathered from many countries, and pitched together by giant handfuls, to fill up the deep intervening chasm.

Hitherto the road had been rough and stony—the eminences steep and bare; and after passing the sombre groves of Saint George, the only redeeming feature was the church dedicated to “Our Lady,” reposing quietly amid the rich foliage of the “cosso,” and other large-leafed forest trees. In many respects the face of the country now resembled the sides of the great Indian Ghauts—masses of light brown, chequered with pale yellow; but stubble or standing corn in every accessible nook and corner usurped the place of the wild grass, with which nature so prodigally clothes the mountain scenery of the East. Numerous parties, consisting of twenty or thirty peasants, carrying on their heads bales of coarse cotton cloth as tribute to the king, passed us at intervals—the sword by their side and the spear in their hand, indicating that the frontier along which they journeyed was in a far from settled state.

This tract of high land, which forms the watershed between the Nile and the Háwash, is richly cultivated and abundantly irrigated—a fresh stream, on its

course to the former river, intersecting the western side of the range, and forming a deep valley every second or third mile. After leaving the Goor, however, the face of the country, becoming more sterile, is covered with heather, and for the last few miles to the top of the Turmáber pass, neither village nor cultivation is to be seen.

During the descent, which passes through a gap in the precipitous trap rocks, and is steeper and even worse than that of the Chaka, the bleak and lofty peaks of Arámba, Gaifaiyétto, Wóti, Mamrat, Kondie, and Wofásha, are severally revealed to view; these forming a continuation of the great mountain range which fortifies the whole eastern frontier of Shoa, from Bulga to Worra Káloo, and extends thence through Ambásel, Yedjow, and Lasta, to Simien, the highest point of Abyssinia. From the foot of this pass the road leads across the Telúnko, close to Debra Sena, a small eminence covered as with an inverted bowl, by a dense, cabbage-shaped clump of junipers, concealing Saint George's church—a celebrated shrine for the performance of vows and orisons, which is visited from great distances. Hence the route winds to the bottom of a deep wooded dell, rich in botanical specimens, where the clear stream of the Telúnko is again crossed, to the face of a steep acclivity leading to Dokáket, the ancient capital of Emmaha Yasoos, third monarch of Shoa.

The sun was dipping below the opposite range as a halt was proclaimed by the King's guide at the house of Ayto Abaiyo Gurwa, the governor of the district, whose hospitality proved unbounded. For a full hour he continued shouting and scolding, ordering and countermanding; and whilst he expressed the greatest mortification at my declining to appropriate

two fat oxen, in addition to liberal supplies of sheep, bread, mead, and beer, he was with difficulty prevailed upon to accept a present that I had prepared in acknowledgment; a piece of self-denial rarely experienced at the hands of a native of Southern Abyssinia.

"But," he added, "henceforth you may know me as your friend; therefore send to me frequently, and I will tell you when I have any concern. Wolda Mariam, my henchman, who is here, is in my confidence. Furthermore, he will visit you on my part. Appoint now a *báldoroba*, who may introduce him, that access be not impeded." The party nominated as the medium of communication stepped to the front, and the two, baring their shoulders, and bowing the one to the other, fell back into their respective places.

Ankóber is the capital of the eastern division of the kingdom of Shoa, in which are comprised the provinces of Basso, Dabdábo, Karába, Kawt, Mans, Giddem, Abómesa, Mahhfood, and Dokáket. The last-named especially forms the scene of constant inroads from the savage Adaïel, whose country lies little more than a cannon shot below; the Amhára, who on the Fárri boundary are severely punished by the politic monarch for taking a life, even in retribution, flocking hither to entitle themselves to wear the decoration of the "akodáma," the *ne plus ultra* of their ambition. And such is the bitter hatred subsisting between the two nations so closely bordering upon each other, that but for the lofty hills and cold climate of Ankóber, the Moslems, who are the far braver race, would doubtless have paid its Christian population a hostile visit long ere now. On the adjacent northern frontier, the intricate labyrinth of broken ravines, over which our view had ranged in

the morning, forms a strong natural barrier against the Wollo Galla, whose incursions are nevertheless frequent; whilst the Túlema, residing in the Sáka range, entertain as decided a disinclination to descend from their own bleak hills, as do the Amhára to visit the hot valleys and forests of the Adaïel, which stretch beyond the borders of Efát.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Seven.

The Shrew of Mahhfood.

Bidding adieu to the hospitable host, we continued our journey along the eastern side of the Turmáber range, through a country considerably improved in point of beauty. There was a warmth of appearance about the numerous hamlets, quite in unison with the increased temperature of this lower tract. Gayer flowers bloomed by the way-side; more brilliant birds fluttered among the thick corinda hedges, through which peeped the eglantine, the honeysuckle, and the blackberry; and the entire prospect, although exceedingly broken, was covered with the most luxuriant grass, in every spot where the hand of the cultivator had not been busy. The slope of each hill and abrupt eminence was wooded with junipers and other fantastic evergreens; fields of yellow safflower glowed in golden tints; and teff, growing in the depths of the valleys, resembled greatly the waving rice-fields of Asia.

Dame Twotit, one of the king's choristers, who accompanied the army to Garra Gorphoo, and was now making a professional tour of the provinces, joined us *en route*, carrying a small wicker parasol; and as she ambled along upon her mule, with the butter pouring in streams over her shoulders, through the influence of the solar rays, the good lady was pleased to chant extemporaneous couplets in honour of the war about to be waged against the beasts of the forest. "The Gyptzis will slay the elephant, whereof all the warriors of Amhára are afraid"—whilst

it formed the burden of her song, conveyed an opinion diametrically opposed to that entertained by the public; and the followers, inspired by the words of a woman, took up the sentiment, and made the valleys re-echo to their martial chorus, which attracted to the roadside the inhabitants of every hamlet in the vicinity.

Mahhfood, a village hemmed in by high kolquál hedges, formed the termination of the march. Its natural fortifications having uniformly proved insurmountable, this district has never been conquered either by the Galla or Mohammadans. The residence of the governor, who has been honoured with the hand of Woïzoro Birkenich, daughter of Queen Besábesh by her former marriage, stands on the apex of the loftiest of the many isolated hills; and in accordance with the precaution invariably taken to prevent surprise on these disturbed frontiers, it is surrounded by a formidable fence. Our camp was pitched at the foot; and the thermometer having stood in the morning at 32 degrees on the summit of Dokáket, the difference in temperature was considerably felt during the afternoon, when the mercury mounted to 90° under the flimsy palls which formed our only screen.

Having been specially recommended to Ayto Gádeloo, whose acquaintance I had formed during the late foray, we paid him a visit of ceremony in the cool of the evening, and were received and entertained according to the perfection of Abyssinian etiquette. The whole of the dirty domestics and household slaves were mustered on the occasion, to witness the presentation of gifts brought for the “Emabiet,” (i.e. “The mother of the house”—a title of honour employed in speaking of the queen, the

princesses royal, the mistress of a family, and the holy Virgin, who is usually styled “Our Lady.”) who, like the rest of the princesses royal, displayed unequivocal signs of being sole and undisputed mistress of the establishment. Fat, fair, and forty, she was seated in a gloomy recess, upon an “alga,” and partially screened from view by the intervention of a lusty handmaiden. The good man, who occupied a corner of the throne, presented in his owlish features the very personification of a well-trained, hen-pecked husband, for years accustomed to the iron rule of the shrew—and so complete was her monopoly, that he could be said to boast of little beyond the empty title of governor of Mahhfood.

The lady put a few preliminary questions touching the number of wives we each possessed, and appeared highly to approve of the matrimonial code that limited the number to one. But throughout the dingy mansion there was a miserable assumption of regal dignity which considerably retarded conversation, by imparting to the whole ceremony an air of unbending stiffness. The host, who was either unable or unwilling to answer any interrogatories respecting his own country, subjected us to a tiresome catechism; and like the Arab Bedouin, who formed his estimate of the poverty of Europe by the fact of its producing neither dates nor camels, Ayto Gádeloo conceived a passing indifferent idea of Great Britain, from the discovery that it boasted of no mules.

“Have you máshela, and dáboo, and túllah in your country?” (Anglice, “maize, bread, and beer”) he inquired, whilst his fair partner feasted her eyes upon the “pleasing things” presented, in none of which it was evident the lord of the creation was destined to participate—“Oh, you have all these; well, and have

you oxen and sheep, and horses and mules?"—"How, no mules?" he shouted in derision, while the slaves tittered and hid their black faces, and their mistress laughed outright—"Why, what a miserable country yours must be!"

Shortly after daybreak we resumed our journey through very thriving crops, descending to the valley of the Robi, where the eye was greeted by a perfect scene of Eastern cultivation. Juwarree, fifteen feet high, teff, chilies, onions, oil-plant, and cotton, in many parts artificially irrigated, flourished with the utmost luxuriance on a rich-black soil, under a climate resembling that of the more favoured spots in Western India. The scenery of this richly-wooded and well-watered valley was not a little enhanced by the beauty of the surrounding mountains, of which the numerous peaks were tufted with trees, and crowned by populous hamlets, whilst the redundance of vegetation, and the growth and quality of the cotton, with a soil adapted for the production of sugar, coffee, and rice, proclaimed the locality to possess the very highest natural advantages as an emigrating settlement.

In the broad shallow channel of the Robi, upwards of two hundred yards across, which pours into the Háwash between a belt of verdant acacias two sparkling streams of the clearest water, are found an inexhaustible supply of round pebbles of every size, which being assorted, are used by the Amhára fusiliers in lieu of the usual iron bullets. They are even employed as slugs and shot, and form a large item in the tribute paid by this district, wherein alone they are obtained. Crossing the river, the road entered a thick jungle; and we were warned to be on our guard, as it had long been infested by banditti

called Gowezza, composed principally of Christian outcasts, who absconded either from fear of their creditors, or of church censure. During the great famine in the year of Saint Luke, their numbers were augmented by from five to six hundred Christian, Mohammadan, and Galla vagabonds, who formed themselves into a lawless band, and renouncing all forms of religion, took up their permanent abode in the greenwood, where, favoured by the nature of the ground, they could plunder and kidnap with impunity.

To the notes of an Abyssinian war chorus, which still proclaimed our hostile designs on the lordly elephant, the plain was crossed without any demonstrations on the part of the outlaws; and leaving the high peaks of Chureecha and Sangóta on the right, with Mungut and Sallaïsh on the left, the road ascended the Gozi mountain by a narrow pass, leading under a peak on which stands a house belonging to Wulásma Mohammad. Abomésa, forming the termination of the range towards the Adaïel frontier, limits his power in this direction, his rights as Abogáz extending westward to Bulga. The district of Gozi is entirely peopled by Mohammadans styled Arablet, whose progenitors are said by tradition to have been left there prior to the reign of Nagási, first king of Shoa. Hoossain, Wahabit, and Abdool Kurreem, generals probably detached from the victorious army of Graan, are represented to have come from Mecca, and to have taken possession of the country—the legend assigning to the first of these warriors as his capital the populous village of Medina, which is conspicuous on a cone among the mountains shortly after entering the valley of the Robi.

Having descended the Gozi range, the road led across an extensive flat, styled “the wilderness of

Giddem," which forms the neutral ground betwixt the Amhára and the Adaïel. But less than four years have elapsed since the great chief of the Gibdósa, at the head of his whole clan, made a sudden inroad, and swept off all the cattle in this district. The Christians pursuing the invaders, slew great numbers in an engagement fought near Rása, and recovered a portion of the spoil; but on their march back, they were in turn overtaken by Anbássa Ali, who destroyed upwards of one thousand.

The valley of Giddem is watered by four fine rivers, which we crossed in succession—the Sower, "mystery," the Ashmák, "man who deals in sorcery," the Gásha Bakindee, "shield on my arm," and the Jow-wahá, "stupid water"—the whole of which, uniting after their escape from the mountains, join the Háwash not far from Mount Azulo. The Gásha Bakindee, the banks of which are precipitous and thickly wooded, is represented to have been the scene of numberless murders on the part of the Wollo Galla, who are here in the constant habit of way-laying travellers through the wilderness. To the eastward of the valley, therefore, the hand of the cultivator has been stayed, and the forest, standing in large gloomy patches, choked with reeds and wild canes, is tenanted by troops of guinea-fowl, by the boar, the lion, and the elephant; but to the westward, on either side of the road, the cultivation is magnificent—the soil, the climate, and the abundant supply of water, with the shelter afforded by the surrounding hills, proving especially favourable to the labours of the agriculturist. Traces of the huge tenants of the shades so worthy of their bulk, were however visible among the adjacent crops, and the dread entertained of their visits was well evinced by

numerous elevated platforms, constructed upon the highest trees that bordered the rich plantations of cotton and red pepper.

On the sedge-grown banks of the Sower, beneath the spreading branches of a venerable tamarind, we found Ayto Abaiyo, with a numerous retinue, reposing during the noontide heat, on his way to assume the district of Mungust, to the south-southwest, the late governor having been summarily removed on charges of oppression. In the principal town, Mosábiet, is held one of the chief markets in the kingdom, the high road to Manchettee, the Wollo, and the Yedjow Galla passing through it. The numerous mounted retinue of the haughty functionary had conjured up misgivings in the mind of our guide, who, since leaving Mahhfood, had never ceased allusions to the “Gowezza;” nor was it without much persuasion and remonstrance that he was finally induced to cross the river with us, and to hail from a respectful distance the suspicious band of his own countrymen.

Leaving the valley of Giddem, seven miles in length, the route led over a very broken and stony rise into a third vale, also richly cultivated, whence commenced the ascent of the Kokfári range. We halted for the night at the village of Zumbo, pleasantly situated on a pretty green terrace on the mountain side between Manya and Dai Mariam, and I despatched the King’s messenger in advance to apprise Ayto Tsánna, the governor, of our arrival within his jurisdiction. Supplies poured in from all directions; but although now far beyond the reach of the much-dreaded freebooters, it was not destined that our hours should be passed in peace. Attracted by the smell of honey, a legion of huge black ants swarmed into the tent;

and invading every bed, caused one slumberer after the other to start in madness to his feet. In vain we obtained a light, and massacred thousands upon thousands—a fresh army streamed upon the track of the annihilated troops; and so unremitting were their persecutions, that we ultimately found it necessary to strike the camp, and remove to a remote stubble field, where, although fairly beaten from the field, pursuit was fortunately baffled, and their proximity speedily forgotten.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Eight.

Hospitality at Kokfári.

“May the guests of the Negoos come quickly!—all is prepared for their reception,” was the message received early the ensuing morning from the old governor, to whom our party stood specially consigned by the king, and who was, moreover, an acquaintance made in the late expedition, where he had appeared in capacity of “wobo,” or general commanding the rear guard. After ascending the steep face of the mountain, and gradually turning the shoulder of the range, we reached his residence, occupying the summit of a steep hill, well fortified with palisades and wicker-work. A deep grove of tall trees on the opposite eminence concealed the monastery of Kasaiyát, famous as the depository of the chronicles of Saint Eustathius, and beyond, a wild tract of forest land, intersected by serpentine rivers, stretched away to the blue hills of Efrata and Worra Káloo.

Approaching the residence of Ayto Tsánna, I caused a salute to be fired in his honour by our escort; and being forthwith ushered into his presence, we found the kind-hearted and hospitable veteran seated in the inner porch of his spacious house, where skins had been spread for our accommodation. Nothing could surpass the munificence of our reception. Bread, honey, butter, hydromel, beer, poultry, and eggs, were supplied in princely abundance, whilst oxen and sheep were slaughtered for the use of the followers, and corn and grass supplied to the numerous train of horses and mules. A spacious domicile was provided, in which, after a fire had been lighted to dislodge evil spirits, our repast was spread; and during the greater portion of the afternoon the liberal and intelligent host continued to witness the drill of the artillery escort, performed at his special request, and to converse with evident satisfaction on the manufactures of Europe, specimens of some of which he had most unwillingly accepted.

Messengers were in the mean time despatched to five subordinate governors, with orders to assemble their quotas on the morrow for the purpose of hunting. The *tooltoola* resounded through the neighbouring districts to summon young and old; and in imitation of the royal proclamations, the mandate went forth by the herald, “that all who should fail to repair to the wilderness on the day appointed would be held to have forfeited their property during seven years.” The son of the host, a tall handsome youth, wearing gay necklaces of beads and a streaming white feather in token of his achievements performed during the recent foray, had been specially charged with the entertainment of our followers; and the strength of the potent old hydromel, no less than the

liberality with which it had been dispensed, were but too evident upon the majority ere the night fell. Loquacity increased with each additional *gumbo* that was drained, and loud and boisterous were the praises of the good cheer within the chieftain's hall.

Amongst the visitors who flocked to behold the white strangers, was a monk from the adjacent monastery, who proved deeply versed in traditionary lore. It was diverting to listen to the arguments adduced by the holy father against the projected hostilities, and one anecdote considerably staggered the faith reposed by the governor in their success. "In ancient days," quoth the recluse, "one of the most powerful monarchs of Ethiopia, whose name I have forgotten, made war against the elephants with his whole army. The king of the elephants being sore pressed, took unto himself a mouse to wife, and herein he displayed his wisdom and sagacity. The mice espousing the quarrel of their noble kin, entered the imperial storehouses in a countless body—devoured all the shields, harness, accoutrements, and leather, in a single night, and thus utterly defeated the project of the king of kings."

The Amhára possess a most indifferent idea of woodcraft, and never venture to attack a wild beast unless on horseback, in bodies consisting of several hundred warriors, armed with every available weapon, when, according to the approved system of Abyssinian bullying, the animal is sometimes worried to death. But these expeditions are generally undertaken with little success, and seldom terminate without many fatal accidents. He who hurls the first successful spear is entitled to an honorary reward from the king, and to a triumph in the capital, which is attended with ceremonies and rejoicings similar to

those that celebrate the return of the murderous foray against the heathen Galla. Owing to the excess of cultivation on the highlands, Shoa generally presents a peculiar deficiency of objects worthy of the chase; baboons and monkeys, it has been seen, are royal game; badgers are believed to be the “Devil’s flock,” and are therefore studiously shunned; and hyenas, although occasionally destroyed, are in many parts of the country suffered to multiply to an alarming extent, from the existing superstition that Jewish sorcerers descend from the mountains during the night, and transform themselves into the likeness of these animals, whence there could be no good result from their destruction.

Neither journey or hunting is ever undertaken without propitious omens, and should these be wanting, the Amhára will retrace his steps on any pretext, and patiently await the welcome sign. The sight of the unclean hare is sufficient to shake the stoutest nerves. An antelope bounding across the path augurs favourably to success in any undertaking. A fox barking on the left hand destroys all hope of a happy result, but on the right hand a prosperous issue may with confidence be anticipated. The appearance of a white buzzard prognosticates good or evil according to the position of the tail, and chief of all the numerous birds of ill omen is the “Goorameila.” (Lanius humeralis. Lath.) Death or the most dire disaster, is certain to follow his portentous croak; and there is no inhabitant throughout the realm who has not some tale to record in confirmation of the fatal character of this ominous shrike. That foolhardy wight who giveth no heed to the warning note of coming misfortune has never yet been known to escape. He is either balked in the object of his journey, pillaged,

maltreated, or murdered. The omens must in this instance have proved favourable. Under the personal guidance of the host, whose hospitality increased rather than abated, we repaired, on the afternoon of the second day's festivities, to Manya—a village occupying the high promontory of table-land immediately opposite to our former encampment at Zumbo. It overlooked the wide extent of wilderness which was to form the scene of operations on the morrow, but among which it was deemed unsafe to sojourn, as well on account of the wild beasts, as of the constant hostile inroads of the Galla and Adaïel. The route wound by a gradual descent over the Kokfári mountain, so named from the numerous red-legged partridges, the size of a guinea-fowl, with which the coverts swarm—thick copses of brushwood and heather, interlaced with dog-roses, eglantine, and bramble, affording the most alluring shelter in the vicinity of abundant grain and water.

Beneath the moss-grown branches of a silvery "woira," which leaned its venerable form over the hill-side fronting the church dedicated to Emanuel, stood a miniature imitation of the sacred edifice, erected according to wont upon a pile of stones. Bread, grain, rags, and feathers, were industriously heaped upon this idol by every passer by, and the kiss was imprinted with fervent devotion upon the rough stem of the tree around which the old governor, dismounting from his mule, fastened a strip of cloth as a votive offering. On reaching our destination, which by certain of the followers who had sacrificed too liberally to the jolly god was accomplished with no ordinary difficulty, several muskets and matchlocks were discharged from the verge of the cliff, to give notice of our arrival to the Gillé and Soopa, two

tributary clans, occupying the low country, who, in obedience to the summons of the preceding day, were already assembled on the confines of the hunting ground.

From the Rása hills, the residence of the formidable Anbássa Ali, whose domains bound the wilderness of Giddem, Mount Azulo did not appear to be more than one day's journey; and the Háwash, which is said to flow round its base, could be distinctly traced in its course through the hot Adel plains, by the dark line of trees that fringe the banks. The mountain itself, although far beyond the dominions of Shoa, is renowned as the most sacred seat of monkery. Continually emitting volumes of dark smoke, its only inhabitants are Christian friars, who, despising the world and its vanities, retire thither, unmolested by Galla or Mohammadan, to spend their days in blissful peace and seclusion. Universally looked upon as sorcerers, they are believed to live on the most social terms with the lions and wild goats which share the retreat, and the tale assigns to the holy fathers an exclusive subsistence upon fruits, and herbs, and roots, which, together with a pair of wings, are freely furnished them from Heaven; but it is certain that none who have yet returned from the pilgrimage have brought back their feathered appendages,—whilst their lank figure and their sunken eye have betokened rather the toil of the weary wayfarer than the high enjoyment of Elysian feasts.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirty Nine.

The Wilderness of Giddem.

Before daylight of the following morning, Ayto Tsánna gave the word to saddle, and the tedious descent of the south-eastern face of the steep Manya hill having been accomplished on foot, we gained the border of the wilderness as the sun rose, and took post on a small eminence to await the report of the scouts who were out in every direction among the tangled grass. The valley, environed by mountains, and extending eight or ten miles in one uninterrupted flat, was intersected throughout its extreme breadth by the four streams already named, their thickly-wooded banks harbouring antelope, and a great variety of birds of the most brilliant plumage. These detached jungles, in many points uniting, formed a continuous belt of dark foliage, and in others receding as the miry swamps became niggard of the requisite moisture, afforded limited vistas to the eye, although still accessible with difficulty either to man or horse.

A speedy summons arrived from the governor, who, with a large party of retainers, and two matchlock-men forming his body-guard, was seated on the banks of Jow-wahá. An elephant had been descried at the distance of some miles, and an uproar had in consequence commenced, sufficient to alarm the most fearless and sedate quarry in existence. After a protracted and tumultuous consultation, the hunt was commenced according to the Abyssinian method—equestrians and pedestrians without number shouting and hallooing to each other as they threaded the paths trampled by the huge quadrupeds through a tangled swamp of canes, so locked and interlaced that no human eye could penetrate one foot on either side, whilst crowds of Galla horsemen galloped on either flank, to complete the impossibility of success.

This turmoil continued under a burning sun until past

two o'clock, when, having reached the extremity of the waste which divides the country of the Gibdósa Adaïel, the appearance of several horsemen hovering in the distance induced the governor to decamp with precipitation to the centre of the wilderness, without having seen aught save a few recent tracks imprinted on the burnt grass, and a charred log of wood which was long maintained to be an elephant. Here the tributary Gillé and Soopa, who had been called out under their respective chiefs, Abbo and Boroo (Boroo signifies "my yellow horse"), came pouring in from all directions—a wild and savage race, whom the Christians declared to be the most hardened, cruel, and insubordinate wretches in the whole world, men who would take a life for the possession of the veriest trifle. More than trebling the numerical strength of the Amhára, their appearance so alarmed the veteran "Wobo," that he forthwith placed himself under the protection of his guests; and apprehending a termination to the day similar to the issue of Chevy Chase, requested that rifles might be discharged for the purpose of intimidation, whilst he ordered his immediate attendants to raise the shrill war-cry to collect his scattered retainers. The Moslems meanwhile contented themselves with gazing at the unwonted appearance of the white strangers, and clumps of Christian spears soon restored the chief to his self-possession, and relieved the forebodings of his dismayed followers, whose extraordinary politeness to the auxiliaries was beyond all things diverting; the most tender inquiries relative to health and wellbeing only eliciting a scowling glance, accompanied by a surly dogged reply.

It being in the interim reported that a man had been destroyed by a female elephant, at whose calf he had

ventured to hurl his spear, Ayto Tsánna took the opportunity of freeing himself of his unpleasant Galla vassals, by directing them to hem the skirts of the forest, whilst he requested us “to enter the thicket, and destroy the enraged beast, whom no one else would approach.” Although well convinced of the impossibility of accomplishing this absurd request, a desire to efface former evil imputations induced a ready compliance, and a body of Amhára spearmen were selected to point out the scene of the alleged accident. Crouching in a compact group at intervals of every few hundred yards as they advanced, they lowered their shields, bristled their spears, and in “the language of the chase,” offered up a prayer for Divine assistance, coupled with abuse and defiance to the much-dreaded object of their quest.

The story of the catastrophe proved on investigation to be utterly false, the man having been merely lacerated by a splinter in a fall from a tree, instead of killed outright by an elephant, as averred by his comrades. A search of two miles through the shady recesses of a magnificent forest, where some of the venerable trees measured upwards of forty feet in circumference, and where the lemon grew wild in the utmost luxuriance and profusion, led us again to the open plain, without aught being seen but a few of that rare species of ape styled the “monk of the wood.” Here a message from the governor was delivered, to the effect that the elephants were surrounded at the further extremity of the waste, and unless immediately attacked would make their escape. Rejoining him with all expedition, it was ascertained that want of method had again frustrated every design, and that the clamour of the unruly multitude had rendered futile this last chance of retrieving the

fortunes of the day.

Evening was now fast closing around, and many miles were to be retraced to the camp, across bogs and quagmires, rendered almost impassable by the tramp of six hundred horsemen. But before finally leaving the ground, the Galla chieftains and their wild host were assembled; and the governor, taking his seat in the midst, in a set speech informed them that their lord the king had sent them “a strong stranger” as a guest. That their country of Giddem had been chosen in preference to Bulga, Mentshar, or the banks of the Robi, and that elephants *must* be found on the morrow, or shame would be the portion of all in the eyes of their royal master. Bowing their heads, in token of implicit obedience to the high behest, the chiefs pledged themselves to spare no exertions, and to appear early the following day with double the number of their respective tribes; which assurance given, the opportunity was embraced of urging an old dispute relative to the loss of certain Galla steeds, stated by Boroo, surnamed Amba Bukazia, to have been stolen by the Amhára borderers.

“Yellow Horse” rose to speak in favour of his countrymen. His portly figure betokened high command and perfect self-possession. The fines of his dark face had settled down into features expressive of the most imperturbable coolness, and his whole appearance was that of the haughty savage chieftain. Standing erect before his feudal superior, his attitude and demeanour were strikingly bold and dignified. His mantle, surmounted by a shaggy black skin, fell gracefully over his brawny shoulders; and his words flowed on, pleasing and mellifluous, in a smooth stream of native eloquence, which the soft language of the Galla admitted of his

modulating into a masterly succession of measured rhymes. The interpreter sat opposite, with his eyes riveted on the orator, and sentence after sentence being rendered into Amháric with ease and volubility, he conveyed to the governor through every marked intonation a close verbal interpretation, without disturbing for a moment the graceful flow of the impassioned harangue. But Ayto Tsánna having already decided the question, and mentally resolved not to listen to the appeal, gladly availed himself of my departure for camp to mount his own horse, and thus abruptly to terminate the unpleasant discussion.

Volume Two—Chapter Forty.

Downfall of the Elephant.

Ere the sun had risen the ensuing morning, we were again in the wilderness, where nearly double the number of Galla had been assembled by the chiefs Boroo and Abbo, to whom, before commencing the labours of the day, suitable trinkets were presented. The swamps on the southern side of the waste having been drawn unsuccessfully, columns of dust which arose from the opposite quarter high above the trees were pronounced to indicate the presence of a troop of elephants; and thither we all hurried. But the performance of the beaters was even inferior to that of the preceding day. Half the number, visibly shaking with fear, ascended the tallest trees, whilst those who had again induced us to precede them through the ocean of tangled flags, where to kill or even to see a wild beast was perfectly out of the question, used their utmost endeavours, by talking and shouting, to

give warning of our approach.

But we were resolved to prove that the Gyptzis would not place others in a position which they scrupled themselves to occupy, and the hunt was continued for some hours with those of the Amhára who possessed sufficient courage to accompany us. The sun was oppressively hot, and our side arms, which were insisted upon as a measure of precaution against the treachery of the allies who had been summoned to assist, proved peculiarly cumbersome and distressing; but swamp after swamp was beaten unsuccessfully, and forest after forest traversed without one glimpse being obtained of the desired quarry.

At length, about two in the afternoon, I was summoned to the presence of the governor, who, being much fatigued, was seated below a spreading tree, and about to propose a return to the tents. In a long studied speech he set forth “that his followers had done *their* utmost also for that day, and had driven the elephants, which were countless as the forest leaves, from place to place, as though they had been village kine, but that the Europeans—” Here his harangue was cut short by the appearance of a Galla scout, who galloped furiously up, exclaiming, “They drink, they drink, in the *Jowwahá*!” The council instantly dissolved. Inspired by a new ray of hope, we leaped again into the saddle, and, carrying our rifles across our shoulders, made at full speed for the river.

A gallop of three miles through a dense covert, consisting of strong elastic wands, interlaced with prickly weeds and coarse spear grass, left the crowd far behind us; and, arriving at the spot where the animals had been in view, “Yellow Horse,” with half a

score of his wild riders, was alone present. At the water's edge numerous deep holes in the wet sand were still bubbling from below, and after following the fresh foot-marks a few hundred yards, I ascended a tall tree, from the summit of which, with the aid of my pocket telescope, I presently identified the broad backs of a herd standing at the distance of half a mile. Unconscious of the presence of any foe, they were quietly grouped under a solitary acacia, and but for the flapping of their huge ears, might have been mistaken for masses of rock. Descending as soon as I had thoroughly reconnoitred the land-marks, I made very light of what I had seen, and affecting to doubt the evidence of my eyes, carelessly proposed that the native allies should tarry where they were, whilst Douglas Graham and myself proceeded into the jungle on foot, before the governor with his noisy train should arrive from the rear.

After much fruitless opposition on the part of old Boroo, who saw through the plot, and vowed that his despotic master would hold him responsible for the accident which he considered our rash intention to be certain to involve, my arrangement was finally carried. Armed with two rifles each, we stealthily advanced against the wind, under the cover afforded by the dry copse wood, which yielded up a cloud of impalpable dust, and rendered the inclination to sneeze incessant. I had marked a scrubby thorn-bush, which served as a beacon, and on climbing silently to the top, we commanded a view of a small open area that had been trampled completely bare. High cane-like wands and withered grass environed it on all sides, and in the centre, beneath the shade of a venerable camel-thorn, whose stem had been well polished by continual rubbing, stood a gigantic bull

elephant, surrounded by four of his seraglio.

Thus far we were undiscovered, and British credit being now completely at stake, we paused to take breath, and examine our weapons. Measures having been concerted in a whisper, we then crept upon our hands and knees to the extreme verge of the covert, carefully avoiding the thickest patches, and keeping the tree still always to windward, until, through a beaten track which led towards it, the dark figure of the patriarch of the herd was at last revealed at the distance of only fifteen yards. His trunk was curled around one of his long white tusks; his ears and his under jaw moved at long intervals; and as he swung lazily from side to side to throw his weight on alternate legs, his head was soon turned in the exact position to ensure success. Having first looked at my companion for an assenting nod, I laid my heavy rifle over a forked wooden rest, set the hair-trigger, and planted a two-ounce ball in the only small fatal spot behind the ear which was presented by the monstrous target.

A heavy fall announced the effect of the shot, and confusion instantly followed. One of the females whose front had been towards our ambush, rushed forward, and received a volley of hard bullets in her broad forehead, which turned the attack, and brought her also to the ground, after a flight with her companions of fifty yards. She, however, rose after some minutes, and rushing past the cavalcade collected on the outskirts, escaped into the thick forest to die, attention being meanwhile entirely engrossed by the tusker, the nobler quarry, who, although prostrate on his side like a fallen tower, manifested in his dying moments, by sundry portentous noises and uncouth struggles, an

inclination to resume an erect position. His destruction was speedily completed; but it was still impossible to leave the spot, from a conviction that the braggart Amhára rabble would not fail to claim the honour and the credit of having slain the prize with their powerless spears, should any perchance find the carcass during the absence of the lawful proprietors—a surmise which was fully confirmed by the appropriation of the tail as a trophy, by the very first man who made his appearance.

The death of this lordly monster, to which so little importance would have been attached in those parts of the African continent where the event is one of diurnal occurrence, here created in the mind of every beholder a sensation of astonishment and admiration hardly to be described. The fame of the exploit, carried by express couriers, spread from corner to corner of the empire; and although far from universally credited, it produced even more than the good effect anticipated. Those who, when the storming party first entered the covert, had sought safety in trees, could with difficulty be prevailed upon to descend, in order to approach the mountain of flesh from which life was said to have departed; and finally mustering courage to do so, in the frenzy of excitement, launched their spears and discharged their matchlocks, to the imminent peril of the bystanders and of each other. On the first intimation of the animals having, after two days' diligent search, been actually discovered, three-fourths of the whole party had incontinently disappeared. The Galla horsemen, who had previously boasted the destruction of elephants with their spears, did not venture to approach for a full hour after their ears had been saluted by the reports of our rifles; and even the

warrior who vaunted himself the “hereditary chieftain of all the Braves of the Amhára nation,” long clung pertinaciously to his secure seat among the topmost branches.

As the fact of the downfall of the noble beast became more widely credited, and the scattered forces gradually rallied round it, chief after chief offered his hand in congratulation of the, in his eyes, daring exploit, expressing his wonder and amazement that a small rifle-ball had been able to accomplish the annihilation of the bulk and life of seventy seasons, and extolling the prowess of the king’s European visitors in the encounter with so formidable a monster, whose colossal strength could have carried him trampling through a whole array of their own host, dealing death and destruction wheresoever his will impelled him. Whilst dancing and howling around the carcass, they affirmed the deed to be the work of genii, and complimented us as the “bravest of the brave,” under the titles of “Figa” and “Gobez;” declaring that “the mould whereof the Gyptzis were fashioned must be of a rare quality; and that if all the subjects of Shoa were but composed of the same material, the dominions of Sáhela Selássie would know no limit.”

Boroo, the brave chief of the Soopa, who, before our shots were heard, had with extreme difficulty been restrained from galloping into the jungle at the head of his gathered retainers, and thus alarming the quarry by the noise and confusion of many hundred horsemen, was more particularly earnest and vehement in his congratulations on our victory. He had himself anticipated none but the most fatal results from what he termed so rash an attack upon the hitherto unsubdued monarch of the wilderness,

and had trembled for the royal vengeance which any accident to the party would infallibly have drawn upon his devoted head. “The world was made for you alone,” concluded the old warrior in a perfect ecstasy of delight, “and no one else has any business in it.”

The trunk and ear of the beast so much dreaded throughout the district having been hewn from the carcass, upon the iron folds of which neither the swords nor the lances of the assembled Galla and Amhára could make the smallest impression, were finally borne off in triumph; and as we returned to the encampment on the hill-top, the same honours were paid us which are exacted by the despot on his triumphal entry after a successful expedition against the heathen. Horsemen galloped in every direction, shouting the prowess of the Gyptzis, and announcing that “those who had gone forth to slay the mighty elephant had successfully performed the quest.” Groups of women and girls lined the hill-side, and as the hunting-party crowned the steep, raised their shrill voices in praise and welcome. The tents were entered amid the deafening chorus of a war song. Bullocks were instantly slaughtered for all the followers. Double the daily liberal supplies of every description were poured in. Sprigs of green asparagus were presented by the sons of the delighted governor, to ornament our hair in earnest of victory. Dame Twotit composed a new extemporaneous sonnet upon the occasion, which she rehearsed during half the night; and until the cock crew, every quarter of the village of Manya resounded with wild dancing, martial music, and war songs, in celebration of an achievement, now for the first time witnessed by the Christian population of Shoa.

Volume Two—Chapter Forty One.

The Northern Galla.

Giddem was conquered by Asfa Woosen, grandsire to Sáhela Selássie, from Latta, the ruler of the first Mohammadan settlers. A succession of deep valleys, stretching eastward to the very confines of the Adaïel, are occupied by the tributary Galla tribes of Gillé and Soopa, who have become converts to Islamism—the Allála river intersecting the country of the former, of which the principal village is Esgieyé, and the Negéso that of the latter, whose chief resides at Allaiyo. Further to the north, where a continuation of the wild tract of forest land is visible, the Adaïe threads the district inhabited by that portion of the Wollo who own allegiance to Shoa under the government of Efrata, and by the Doogoogra Galla, who were also dependent, but have long been in a state of open rebellion. Large quantities of excellent coffee are cultivated in Manchéttee and Efrata, and with the salt pieces or “amoles,” which it has been seen are imported from Tigré by the Wollo and Worra Káloo, are brought to Shoa by the Moslem merchants. In Giddem itself, however, coffee is not cultivated, owing to the prejudice entertained respecting its use by the Christian population generally. Westward of Giddem, and interposed betwixt it and Morabietie, is the province of Mans, largest of all the districts of Shoa, but subdivided into Lálo, Máma, and Ghéra, each of which forms a distinct government. Abiyé, third king of Efát, defeated and subjugated Golé, the then independent ruler, whose daughter Wolensa, was the mother of Zenama Work, the Queen-dowager. This lady, therefore, looks upon Mans as her hereditary

possession, and she is much beloved by the people, although, as regards their allegiance to the crown, they still retain a large share of their ancient independence. Haughty, brave, obstinate, and quarrelsome, they openly avow to have little knowledge of Sáhela Selássie—never swear by his name, as is the usage of His Majesty's more dutiful and loyal subjects—often depose the governors whom he appoints to rule over them—and refuse to take part in the annual forays over the southern border, upon the grounds that they have quite sufficient occupation in the adjustment of intestine feuds and boundary disputes. These latter are points not always satisfactorily adjusted in Europe—nor is it extraordinary that they should be attended with some difficulty in Africa.

During the rebellion of Medóko, the king, in his distress, sent an urgent message to the people of Mans, saying, "My brothers, my relations, hasten to help me!" and pouring in at the summons, the wild hordes arrived in time to decide the issue of the dubious day. But so well aware is the despot of his precarious footing, that he relies entirely upon the tact displayed by his mother, avowing her northern subjects to be his own flesh and blood, upon whom he could not impose a heavy taxation. The only tribute paid, therefore, is in *sekdát*, a coarse black cloth, manufactured of the fleece of the sheep of the country, and invariably employed in the manufacture of the royal tents.

This fabric also furnishes a costume indispensable in so rigorous a climate, where the bleak unsheltered hills, swept by a cutting easterly wind, rank among the coldest portions of Abyssinia. The soil is chiefly a rich black earth, producing abundant crops, but

perfectly destitute of timber. Salt is the only circulating medium; and a man's wealth is estimated by the number of his ploughshares, which are carefully buried until wanted. The swarthy complexion of the inhabitants, and their sombre habiliments, distinguish them amongst all the other subjects of Shoa—wearers of the white cotton robe—than whom they are even more superstitious, bigoted, and ignorant; the most enlightened amongst them being esteemed right cunning sorcerers, and as such, dreaded wheresoever they wander.

Mans has already been mentioned as a province famous for the lake Alobár, the reputed residence of the King of the Genii, through which the river Shai flows to join the Nile. Of yore, when the spot now inundated was *terra firma*, the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared in the house of the wealthiest cultivator residing in the many flourishing villages that then existed, and to have addressed herself to the mistress, saying, "I am hungry, and have nothing to eat. Give me corn, and I will grind for wages." A vast heap of grain was pointed out, sufficient for a week's labour, but no sooner had the Virgin touched it than it was miraculously converted into meal. The inhospitable master now refused the pittance claimed; nor would the "Four Chairs," before whom the complaint was carried, give redress, until a poor shepherd had become mediator. As a mark of the displeasure of Heaven, the scene of this offence against the mother of Christ was forthwith converted into a lake, which has since formed the abode of the lord of all the gins and evil spirits in the land; and from that period large quantities of *dabo*, or wheaten cakes, composed of the whitest flour, have been supplied by general contribution to the shepherds on

the festival of Debra Tabor, and on the anniversary of "our blessed Lady."

Immediately north of Giddem, betwixt the frontiers of Shoa and Argobba, is the district of Dibbie, under Abba Munsoor, a Wollo Galla of consequence, formerly governor of Wofagábel, in the territories of Birroo Lubo, and notorious for his personal valour. Having with a chosen band of followers rebelled some years since against the Prince of Argobba, he fortified himself at Arikkee, a high table-topped mountain on the Wollo border, where he steadily rejected the terms that were offered for his capitulation. A strong force of spearmen, supported by a thousand musketeers and matchlock-men, was at length sent to reduce the insurgents; but no sooner had the besiegers opened fire from a deep defile that environs the stronghold, than five hundred of their number were laid dead by a storm of stones from above; the residue, as usual on such occasions, retreating in the utmost disorder. The entire scarp of the precipitous hill had been lined with beams and rafters balancing huge masses of rock; and the leathern thongs by which they were lashed being simultaneously cut away by the garrison, destruction was carried along the whole extent of the crowded ravine. After this signal victory, Abba Munsoor abandoned his citadel, and tendering faith to Sáhela Selássie, was placed on the frontier of his former liege, where his valour and trusty services have gained him the highest place in the royal favour.

The dread entertained by the Christians of the independent Moslem denizens of the low country, has been clearly portrayed by the personal confessions of their monarch. The destruction of a single individual of the hostile tribes, by the most

treacherous means, is estimated a feat of the greatest valour, and one that entitles the hero to the highest distinctions. His Majesty's recent allusions to his highland neighbours, the men of Geshe, "who carry broad shields, and fight hand to hand," had reference to the receipt of tidings of the defeat of Ayto Amito, one of his principal frontier governors, by Abogáz Gobassie, a brave chieftain in the service of Birroo Lubo, who, with a large detachment, had attacked and routed the Amhára with great slaughter. This disastrous news had been followed by the arrival of Ayto Kalassie from Kaa, on the west of Antzochia, with intelligence that, being unable any longer to stem the inroads of the Wollo, he had been compelled to take flight, leaving the enemy in possession of a fine district across the river Wonchit, pertaining to the principality of Zenama Work.

These events caused considerable consternation in the kingdom of Shoa; and it being apprehended that the Mohammadans would follow up their success in the direction of Giddem, all the Wollo gunmen in the royal service were discharged, and Christians or converted Galla slaves enlisted in their room. A large detachment of the body-guard was then ordered to the north for the defence of the frontier; but under the conviction that, as on all former occasions, the Amhára cavalry would leave them to dispute the field alone with their brave foes, they proceeded on the service with the greatest possible reluctance, although placed under the immediate command of Chára, the son of Medóko, who is scarcely less renowned for valour than was his rebel father.

Birroo Lubo, the Prince of Argóbba, is descended from Lubo the son of Watsooba, who is said to have been a weaver, and who espoused the daughter of

Endries, governor of Gôf. Amade, the last ruler of Worra Himano, educated Birroo, the fruit of this union, and created him governor of Gôf, whereupon he diligently occupied himself in the extension of his dominions, dividing his residence between that town and Ain Amba. His elder son, Ali Birroo, met an untimely death in one of the many border struggles with the troops of Sáhela Selássie; and the only surviving brother, Amade, who is to succeed his now aged father, has already obtained a great reputation for personal valour in the field. The term Argóbba is applied by the Adaïel to the whole of the border country in which cotton is cultivated. Caravans constantly come from Aussa to Dowwé, on the frontier, the road being far more secure than that between Tajúra and Shoa; and with a view still further to facilitate the communication, the Prince, who is extremely advanced in years, has given one of his daughters in marriage to the chieftain of the united tribes Hurruk Bodaïto.

The next most influential personage on this frontier is Adara Billé, surnamed, from the title of his favourite war-steed, “Abba Daghet,” “the Father of Height.” This chieftain resides at Gatira, (The Cypress tree) in the district of Changiet, and presides over the Wollo tribe Gora. As a bribe to secure protection to messengers proceeding to the northern states, he has received a number of villages from Sáhela Selássie. Birroo Lubo has given him his daughter in marriage, with territory in his own dominions, and affords military aid in time of need as a check upon the western Galla; and Imám Libán, of the powerful Worra tribe, has likewise made considerable grants of land with a similar object. Thus possessed of extensive power, and courted on all sides, the

treacherous chief avails himself of his position to shift the cloak according to the wind; and, although wedded to Birroo's daughter, has never yet assisted that ruler in his hostilities against Shoa.

Although not nominally tributary to Gondar, both Birroo and Adara Billé afford military aid whenever called upon, and the Wollo soldiery form the stoutest bulwark of the decayed empire. Were all these fanatic tribes of one accord, they could not fail to endanger the safety of Christian Abyssinia; but they are fortunately divided throughout by the same feuds and private animosities which sever the southern Pagans. Hating Christian and heathen with all the dire inveteracy enjoined by their creed, and slaying both without mercy on every opportunity, the Wollo preserve all the superstitions of the latter, below whom they are in many respects debased by Mohammadan bigotry; thus affording a melancholy proof of what the whole Galla nation must become, should it ever unfortunately happen that Abyssinia terminated her intestine struggles by falling under the grasp of a Moslem ruler. Intercourse with the northern states has imparted to the Wollo a higher degree of cultivation than is possessed by their countrymen in the south; and passing nearly the whole of their time in the repetition of prayers, a proverb and general belief prevails, that their country can never be conquered by those who are not followers of the Prophet. This superstition is embraced even by the Christians of Shoa, in consequence of Ras Ali being last year defeated by the Wollo cavalry at Korkora, on his march to invade Efát. The vernacular language of all this border is Galla, adulterated with Amháric and with the Arabic of the Korán; which two latter may be expected in the

course of a few generations entirely to obliterate the aboriginal tongue.

Ali Marie, the independent Mohammadan prince of Tehooláderee, wherein is the lake Haik, has long been in firm alliance with the King of Shoa, and twice ably assisted him against the Wollo, an important piece of service, for which His Majesty remunerated him handsomely. It is now two years since he was defeated by Birroo Lubo, and driven to seek refuge at the Christian court, until, having mustered sufficient reinforcements, he contrived, after several severely-contested battles, to reinstate himself in his government; and it is said of this warrior, that on the occasion of his struggle for empire, “he slew so many of the foe with his own hand, that the clotted gore could not be effaced from his spear blade.”

Again deposed by Birroo, he was now a fugitive in Mofa, a strong fortress to the west of lake Haik. The victor, whose pretext for the war was Ali Marie’s refusal to acknowledge allegiance to Ras Ah, has thus, by the subjugation of the Tehooláderee Galla, obtained possession of the entire line of road from the frontiers of Shoa to Tigré, and has, moreover, deprived his enemy the Negoos of his staunchest and most powerful ally. It is not a little singular, that Sáhela Selássie, who is on outward terms of friendship with Ras Ali, should have been suffered to afford an asylum to Ali Marie, without being called to account. On the occasion in question, the haughty but humbled fugitive bared his shoulders to the Christian monarch, according to the Abyssinian mode of evincing respect, remarking, as he did so, “that he gave this token of deference for the first time during his life.”

The Túlema Galla are the last to be mentioned on the northern frontier of Shoa, and at their hands the most serious disasters and reverses have uniformly been experienced. A former emperor of Ethiopia is said to have married a female slave, by whom he had three children, Metcha, Karaiyo, and Túlema. These youths were charged with the royal herds, and being in the wilderness, and brave young men, they soon drew around them a number of discontented vagabonds, who embraced their language and manners, which were those of their mother, a native of the very centre of Africa. Concerting an attack upon the southern provinces of the empire beyond the Háwash, they defeated the imperial army on the banks of the river Gala in Guráguê, which runs south towards Zingero; but of numerous clans and houses into which the rebels became subsequently divided, the twelve tribes of Metcha, the Karaiyo, and the Túlema, have alone retained their aboriginal appellation.

Attempting to invade the territory of the Abitchu and Ghelán, the Túlema were defeated and driven to the north-west, where they established themselves on the bleakest and most lofty highlands, and to the present day have maintained their independence. One portion have become converts to the Mohammadan faith, but the occupants of the mountain Dera adhere to idolatry. Woosen Suggud succeeded in subjugating some few of these tribes; but on the accession of Sáhela Selássie, they cast off the yoke, and being joined by a member of the blood-royal of Shoa, became formidable enemies. Force after force has been sent against Kalála, the capital, on the borders of Morabeitie, and always with the same result. Birroo-Bukiza, and his successor, the brave Abba Damto, have invariably repulsed the

"soldiers of the cross," with fearful slaughter, and many governors have been put to a cruel death. In the mind of the superstitious Amhára, fear has gradually given birth to a belief of the existence in these cold mountains of a race of fabulous beings called *Arita*, to whom their reverses are attributed. The lower portion of the body is described to be that of an ass or a black dog, whilst the head and shoulders assume the human form, and with the gait, costume, and language of mankind, complete a disguise which enables the monsters to roam undetected over the border districts of Shoa, in prosecution of their bloody career of cannibalism.

Volume Two—Chapter Forty Two.

Thermal Wells at Feelámba.

The day following our victory over the monarch of the forest was passed in the laborious operation of hewing out the ponderous tusks, each of which formed the load of a donkey, and was valued at one hundred German crowns. A strong force was in attendance to keep the peace; and owing to the inferiority of the tools at command, and the existing necessity of cutting completely through the head to the root of the lower tusk, which was half-buried in the soil with the violence of the fall, the trophies were not borne off until the sun had set. The wounded man had meanwhile been conveyed to the camp for surgical aid. The edges of the laceration in his thigh had been by an amateur practitioner neatly brought together with acacia thorns fastened by threads of wiry grass; and a handful of silver easily reconciled

the patient to a few weeks of confinement to his bed.

An Armenian, acting in capacity of dragoman to the Embassy, had been the Esculapius—a man who, without the smallest pretensions, gratuitously set up also to be a first-rate Nimrod; and the merriment made throughout this day at his expense had covered him with confusion. When setting out from Ankóber with a borrowed musket, he had rubbed his hands and feigned the highest spirits at the prospect of resuming his “old sport,” for he had slain elephants by the dozen in Northern Abyssinia; and their tails, he contended, “like the tails of all elephants, were not tufted at the extremity, as I asserted, but covered with long hair, after the fashion of the horse!” A mouse wandering from an adjacent granary at Dokáket, and unwisely scampering over his bed, fell a sacrifice to the well-aimed staff of the hero, who, by virtue of this brilliant exploit, stuck a white feather in his hair, and whooped the war-song during half the ensuing march.

Nevertheless, in the course of the first day’s unsuccessful hunting, he had been seen to hide himself in a manner far from creditable to his nerves; he had been heard to exert his voice in earnest supplications for assistance at the rumoured approach of the animal for whose life he had previously affected to thirst; and when at last actually confronted with the defunct monster, he was fain to confess that he had only once beheld a live elephant “from the summit of a very high tree, when he discharged his matchlock as the beast retreated, and the people declared that it would die.”

This curious confession on the part of the impostor, whose statements had heretofore been credited, led

to further disclosures. He had been addicted to shooting at hyenas by night in the suburbs of Adowa; and having once been so fortunate as to overturn the object at which he fired, he flew enraptured to the spot, and was somewhat disagreeably surprised to find a Christian man weltering in blood, which flowed from a perforation through the heart. For this untoward murder he was sentenced to pay two hundred pieces of salt, by Oubié the usurper, who, however fond of putting his own subjects to death, permitted no one else to do so with impunity; and being unable to raise the amount of this fine among his numerous friends, he wisely adopted the alternative of flight.

In Shoa he set up as a physician, and practised medicine, until so many patients died under his hands, that the king was compelled to issue an interdiction. It formed the veteran's boast, that although well stricken in years, he could still bolt ten pounds of raw beef at one sitting, whereas, if subjected to a culinary process, three were more than he could contrive with comfort. Notwithstanding all his exaggerations, he had witnessed strange sights, which are but too well corroborated. He had seen the monster Oubié, when his conscience was stained by fewer foul crimes than it now is, put out the eyes of his elder brother, who, as the searing-iron hissed over the unflinching orbs, thanked God that he had so long been spared the use of them; and he had seen Ras Subagádis, under whom he once held a petty government in Tigré, executed by the hands of a pagan Galla, who undertook the task for some bread and a barille of hydromel, after numerous Amhára had refused to become headsman to so humane a prince.

Every object in visiting Giddem having been fully and satisfactorily accomplished, we bade adieu to the hospitable old governor, whose parting request was, that he might be favourably mentioned to his royal master. This I unhesitatingly promised; and Ayto Elbeshár was deputed to lead the way to the celebrated thermal springs of Feelámba, situated within his government, and which I had determined to visit as we returned to Ankóber. Descending by an extremely steep footpath to a deep dell below the Aito hill, the road wound above a mile along the sunken channel of the narrow river, through which meandered a rippling brook of crystal water, varied at intervals by miniature cascades, and shaded throughout its tortuous course by trees and flowering creepers of luxuriant beauty. In an angle formed by a sudden bend are the hot wells, five in number, rising at some distance from each other—the remnants of old volcanic action, which has long entirely disappeared in other parts of its theatre, but has left behind it, in this secluded and highly picturesque spot, a salubrious fountain of life.

Aragáwi, the most celebrated of these springs, derives its name from one of the nine missionaries of the Greek church, who, at the close of the fifth century, completed the conversion of Abyssinia during the reign of Alámeda. He is styled also Za Michael; and is said to have been conveyed on the tail of a huge serpent to the summit of the lofty and then inaccessible rock on Debra Dámo, where he founded a convent, of which he is the tutelar saint, and which is still one of the most renowned in Ethiopia. It is recorded of Aragáwi that he raised the dead, and caused the blind to see; and among the manifold notable miracles ascribed to him, the not

least remarkable is the conversion to Christianity of the Devil himself, whom he persuaded to take the monastic cap for forty years!

Selássie, the Holy Trinity, is another open pool or basin situated close to Aragáwi, and like it rising in bubbles from the sandy bank and bed of the stream. In both the temperature stood at 118 degrees of Fahrenheit. Mariam, the blessed Virgin, at 115 degrees, issues from a cave, provided with a rude door, and partitioned by a bar of wood into two cells for new and old complaints, and in these patients were in the act of immersion. Abbo, at 120 degrees, percolates from the centre of a steep bank of soft red sandstone, covering basaltic wacke, through an artificial spout inserted for the convenience of drinking the waters. Numbers of dreadfully diseased wretches, the lame, the halt, and the blind, who were here assembled, with victims who had suffered under the Galla knife, formed a horrible spectacle, which called vividly to mind the scriptural account of the pool of Bethesda.

The superintendence of the numerous patients who thus flock hither to undergo the discipline of the baths, is limited to the collection of one piece of salt, value two-pence halfpenny sterling, for the use of the wells, which are believed to possess the highest sanative virtues in a great variety of disorders. The waters possess a slight taste and smell of sulphuretted hydrogen; but they may be drunk hot from the spring without creating nausea. There is no precipitate whatever; and not five yards from their source they mingle with a strong current of cold pure mountain water, to which no perceptible alteration is imparted in colour, temperature, or taste.

Here we obtained many rare and beautiful birds; amongst others, the Adagoota, a superb black-crested falcon, which had been first seen in the wilderness of Giddem. Following the course of the Feelámba to its junction with the Jow-wahá, whereof it forms the principal source, the main road was gained at no great distance from the ford, and the steep Gozi range again surmounted to the village of Telim Amba. It is situated on a height divided by a deep valley from the opposite residence of the governor of Mahhfood, whose lady presently sent me, through a slave girl, the expression of her regret, that “the king’s guests” should have chosen to halt at so great a distance; and although it exceeded four miles, she finally insisted upon supplying us with a huge pepper pie, and other ready-cooked provisions. “You might eat these,” was the message delivered by the Abigail: “they were prepared for you, but you have taken another road.”

On the banks of the Robi we had again met Ayto Abaiyo, superintending operations at one of the royal threshing-floors, where all the inhabitants of the district were assembled; and self-interested motives induced him very uncivilly to oppose a day’s hunting on that river, upon the score of alleged hostilities with Anbássa Ali. In order to free himself from any further importunity, he clandestinely instructed our guide to lead us by the most direct route, and hence arose the offence which I had committed against the “*Emabiet*.”

Volume Two—Chapter Forty Three.

Return to Ankóber.

An extremely steep and infamous road, intersected by numerous mountain torrents, brought us the following day to Arámba. After crossing the district of Arraba Amba, which pays tribute to the crown in agates, whereof numbers of the form adapted for gun-flints are picked up on the face of the soil, the path wound above three miles along the channel of the river Shonkorghie, or “Sugar-sides,” which takes its source in the Turmáber range, and during the rains becomes quite impassable. On its borders the blackberry and the corinda abounded, both in full fruit. The scenery was especially beautiful; and in a romantic glen, partially secluded by a grove of tall trees, among which the green and crimson “zoreet” displayed its gorgeous plumage, stood the picturesque church and monastery of “Our Lady.”

Arámba was taken from the Areeo Galla by Abiyé, third monarch of Shoa; and now containing a large portion of the treasures amassed by Sáhela Selássie and his ancestors, is garrisoned by a strong detachment of gunmen, and entrusted to the custody of a governor, and of a Shálaka, or captain of a thousand. No stranger is permitted to enter the village without first giving the personal security of one of the inhabitants; and access is not under any circumstances allowed to the stronghold, which occupies the apex of a rocky ridge, possessing great natural strength. Here, in a succession of long barn-like buildings, are consigned to mould and cobwebs, and jealously guarded, every civilised invention received by the despot, which could in any way tend to the advancement or improvement of his people.

Our camp was formed on a small level terrace, of which the precipitous brink overlooked a deep dark valley containing the sources of the Arámba water,

each flowing through a narrow rocky ravine. Extensively cultivated, and echoing to the shrill voice of the partridge, it is studded with cottages, above the white roofs of which the wreaths of curling smoke rose in agreeable relief against the sombre side of the wood-clothed mountain that bounded the prospect. Wóti, towering amid dense forests of timber, and appearing to bear on its venerable summit the crumbling ruins of a giant castle, shut in the view on one side, whilst on the other, far beyond a remarkable pyramidical hill called Koka, could be traced the jungly banks of the Awádee, gradually fading into the blue perspective of the Adel desert.

We experienced every civility at the hands of the governor and Shálaka; the latter of whom insisted on mounting guard over our tents in a small temporary bower erected as a defence against the nocturnal cold. Supplies of every description were furnished in regal profusion; and the voracity of the Abyssinian followers, to whom the excursion had proved one continued feast, was most severely put to the test. The king's orders, which, in consequence of the excessive cheapness of all the necessaries of life, entail small burden upon the host, threw open the doors at every stage, and afforded the most lavish commissariat; and although the donors in most instances refused our money, they yet accepted presents of tenfold value in their estimation, which amply remunerated them for the tax imposed by the despotic Negoos.

But different indeed would be the reception afforded to the man who should venture to wander through the country without the royal assistance. A well-stocked purse, or a well-filled portmanteau, would not invariably produce a salutary effect, since the savage

has always some plan in contrivance, by which to obtain possession of any curious article exposed to his admiring gaze, without imparting aught of value in return; and in Shoa a display of force is frequently requisite to extort that for which the most liberal payment has previously been tendered. Coupled with the desire to obtain property, there ever exists an innate disinclination to part with the most trifling commodity; and even among the higher classes, a stick or a spear is sometimes peremptorily refused to parties who have previously loaded the ingrate with the richest imaginable presents.

Our last march lay over the mountain mass of which Mamrat forms the main feature. The ascent in many parts is extremely tedious; and deep dells, intersecting the road, are traversed each by a clear streamlet, leaping from rock to rock in its downward course to vales far concealed from view. A singular bird's-eye view of Góncho, the state prison, was obtained from a natural terrace on which, environed by dark juniper trees, stands the church of Kidána Meherát, "the Covenant of Mercy." This very common title is due to an opinion entertained by the Abyssinian fathers, that God appeared to the Virgin Mary in Paradise, and formed a covenant with her for the redemption of mankind.

The voice of the mourners was soon after heard at the house of Ayto Manór, late governor of the district, who, to the great concern of the king, had recently departed this life. In boyhood a playfellow of Sáhela Selássie, the young prince had sworn that, on his accession to the throne, he would not forget him, and throughout his long reign he had proved true to his word. Although the deceased had, by his disputes with the merchants of Hurrur, forfeited the

government of Alio Amba, the most lucrative in the realm, he was immediately invested with another. Year after year, too, honours and wealth had been heaped upon him from the throne, in gratitude for which he willed to his liberal master the entire of his accumulated property, without making any provision for his own children, who, in the ordinary course of things, are permitted to reside twelve months on the father's estate before it reverts to the crown.

A great portion of the latter part of the road lay through the mighty forests of Mamrat, of which the scenery was rendered singularly beautiful by the admixture of vernal and autumnal tints, produced at this season by the great proportion of evergreens. The shadowy and sombre juniper, fashioned like the tall cedars of Lebanon, and the fresh and lively "zigba," "So massy, vast, yet green in her old age," wave stage above stage from the gloomy depths of the valley, to the very pinnacle of the mountain, amid the moss-grown forms of the silver-haired "woira." The imperial purple lory, with myriads of brilliant birds, darted through the cool recesses; the bell voice of the campanero tolled with monotonous regularity, and many a clear and sparkling rivulet bounded over its broken channel.

Deep-seated in this retirement lies the monastery of Mántek, said to have been founded a thousand years. It is inhabited solely by *Tabeeban*—men strongly suspected of being Jews in disguise—cunning workers in iron, wood, and clay, who are regarded as sorcerers, and -shunned accordingly by all save the king, to whom they are endeared. The austerities practised by this fraternity, "in order to obtain righteousness before God," are perhaps as severe as any recorded in monkish annals. An oath is

taken, under a curse, never to look at a female, nor to hear her voice, nor to eat a morsel of bread which has been prepared by woman's hands, and excommunication for twenty years is the penalty attached to the infringement of the vow. No fire is kindled either on Saturday or on the Sabbath; the most meagre diet is observed throughout the residue of the week; many sit up to their necks in water for days together: at appointed periods all lash their naked bodies with rods of sharp thorns; and whilst every brother sleeps in a sitting posture upon a hard clay bench, with his loins girt about by a tough cord, the *Alaka*, their superior, does penance continually in a massive iron chain.

A tree, which points to the monastery of Aferbeine, was adorned by the followers as they passed with the variegated feathers of the *zoreet*, and with fragments detached from their soiled cotton garments. The portals of this convent are guarded by a blind dwarf, two feet four inches in stature, who never moves from his post save on men's shoulders. Among the unwashed tenants of the cloister, there was one who did not disdain to stroll forth, that he might greet the triumphant Gyptzis. Father Stephános was perhaps the least bigoted of his profession, but he possessed his full share of ignorance and superstition. Leviathan he believed to be a monstrous serpent, carrying the world on its back. None possessed firmer faith in the winged chariot of Ethiopia, in which the celestial ark of the covenant is recorded to have been brought from the Holy Temple; and he further laboured under the happy delusion, that a fire kindled above his secluded convent, must, *par excellence*, be fully as conspicuous at Jerusalem, as the beacons in Palestine by which Saint Helena announced at

Constantinople her discovery of the Cross!

Old Osmán, too, with the aid of his ivory-headed crutch, limped forth from his cell in the outskirts of Ankóber, to inquire how his white friends “from beyond the world of waters had entered and passed their time?”—A rover in Guráguê, he had dealt largely in human flesh, and seen much of the unexplored interior, but finally followed the example of Habakkuk, the Arabian merchant, who, in the days of Tekla Haïmanót the ecclesiastic, and during the reign of King Naod, was brought to embrace Christianity, and became *Etcheguê*, or Superior of all the monasteries. A proselyte to the religion of Ethiopia, Osmán had renounced the false prophet, and put away every Mohammadan abomination, coffee only excepted. Without the sober berry, he averred life to be a very burden; and the clergy were fain to close their eyes upon the malpractices of one, whose geographical information, united with great abilities as a spy, had exalted him to the highest place in the royal favour.

A frequent visitor at the residency, the garrulous monk had opposed strenuous arguments to my projected war against the elephants, herds of which he represented to be so numerous around the lake Zooai, that caravans are afraid to traverse the dense forest unless provided with a number of young goats, to whose bleat the colossus entertains an unconquerable antipathy. “Take my kid with you,” he advised: “on no account omit this, or the monsters will assuredly trample you.” He had been reminded that “the battle is not always to the strong,” but he invariably shook his head; and even now that the chorus of victory was ringing in his ears, and the tail of the fallen actually in his hand, he continued at intervals to ejaculate, with upturned eyes, “No; I like it

not."—"By Mary! it doth not please me."

In the environs of the capital a vast concourse of people had assembled to welcome our safe return from the hunting-field; and as the ivory trophies of the chase were borne through the crowd upon the shoulders of six men, great were the demonstrations of astonishment and commendation evinced at the successful issue of an expedition so universally ridiculed at its departure. Women and girls shouted in the market-place. Visits of congratulation were forthwith paid by all our friends and well-wishers; whilst the few who had spread disparaging reports, and who still continued to dislike the presence of the British in Abyssinia, evinced by their silence the envy and jealousy to which the unprecedented exploit had given birth in their breasts. Amongst those who felt more particularly annoyed and chagrined was Sertie Wold, the Purveyor General, who had not long before hunted the wilderness of Giddem for two successive months, with a retinue of more than three thousand spearmen and many fusiliers, and who had during that period enjoyed very superior opportunities to ourselves, without however being able to achieve the object of his highest ambition—the death of an elephant.

Volume Two—Chapter Forty Four.

Honorary Distinctions.

The court had meanwhile removed to Angollála; but a paternal letter from the royal pen awaited the return of the Embassy to the capital. "Are my children well?

—have they entered in safety? I have heard with joy of your success. Horsemen were dispatched, and they brought me the glad tidings that you had killed. Hasten hither, that I may confer upon you the reward due unto those who have slain forty Galla in the battle."

No time was lost in accepting this invitation, and a guard of honour met us on the road. Together with sheep and oxen from the king, and barilles of hydromel from the queen, visits of congratulation were received from all the principal courtiers present. Amongst others, came Ayto Egázoo, whose hospitality had been extended to us on our way to Giddem; and Ayto Zowdoo (i.e. My crown) formerly governor of the important province of Geshe on the northern frontier, who was dismissed for bravely fighting against the Worra Káloo, on the occasion when the son of Birroo Lubo fell—an event which, although highly gratifying to His Majesty, policy had induced him to punish by the imprisonment and disgrace of all the principal Amhára engaged. Both of these visitors had, with sorrowful hearts, taken leave of us on our departure; and they now repeated the inward conviction entertained, that the animals against which rash war was to be waged, would have "consumed the assailants"—a persuasion which had led them to cherish not the smallest hope of seeing any one of us again. But greater than all was the delight of the chief smith, when he gave his assurance, after a careful admeasurement, that the circumference of the ivory trophies then lying in the tent for presentation to his royal master, yielded two full spans in excess of any tusk in the royal magazines. A band of fusiliers were at dawn the ensuing morning directed to escort us to the

presence; and whilst ascending the hill through the various courtyards, they chanted the war chorus of death before the spoils of the vanquished elephant. A successful expedition against the Loomi Galla having recently returned, the walls of the reception-hall were decorated with numerous trophies hanging above scrolls of parchment closely written with blessings from the priesthood. But the whole court was in deep mourning, in consequence of the demise of Ayto Baimoot, the chief eunuch, who was nurse to the king in infancy, and had been through after-life his principal adviser. Heads were close shaven, temples scarified; and those immediately about the royal person were clothed in sackcloth and ashes.

“Your joy is my joy,” exclaimed His Majesty, so soon as the usual salutations had been concluded, “and I am delighted when my children are happy. I feared that the elephants would destroy you; but you have achieved a triumph which none other have accomplished during the reign of Sáhela Selássie.”

The ivory was now laid at the feet of the king, who listened with great interest and seeming astonishment to the detail of our proceedings, and to the assurance that the monarch of the forest might always be vanquished by a single bullet, if properly directed. A long confession of the personal dread entertained of the elephant by His Majesty was followed by an anecdote formerly touched upon at Machal-wans, of his own discomfiture, and that of his entire host, by a herd encountered during a foray against the Metcha Galla, when, being firmly convinced that the army would be destroyed, he had deemed it prudent to retreat with all expedition. “I ran,” he repeated several times with emphasis—“I ran, and every one of my followers did the same. You

evidently understand the mode of dealing with these monsters; but if ten thousand of my people ventured to oppose a troop, the elephants would consume them all."

After this candid avowal on the part of the despot, I took the opportunity of intimating that a strong desire had been entertained to bring from Giddem the spoils also of a wild buffalo, but that Ayto Tsánna declared to me that His Majesty, during an expedition made some years previously, had fairly exterminated the species.

"*Oonut now*," "that is true," he replied, "and you must not attempt to kill the 'Gosh,' for it is a most ferocious and dangerous beast. What answer should I give if my children were to be demolished by buffaloes in the kingdom of Shoa? They consume men and horses. When I slew a buffalo in Giddem, there were ten men and ten horses destroyed. They reside in the thickets where they cannot be seen; and putting their heads to the ground, annihilate all who approach their lair. As soon as they have killed a horse, we close round them in vast numbers, and overwhelm them with spears and guns; but you are few, and cannot attempt this."

As this paternal remonstrance might be traced to a desire on the part of the monarch to place his own exploit in a superior point of view, I changed the subject by an assurance of the uniform kindness and hospitality that we had experienced on the road, at the hands of Ayto Tsánna, and at those of the Emabiet in Mahhfood more especially; and each pause was followed by an ejaculation from the royal lips: "Did I not command him? Is not Birkenich my daughter?"

Certain rewards and immunities are in Shoa attached to the destruction of enemies of the state, and of formidable wild beasts, which are regulated according to a fixed scale, and never withheld. These His Majesty now signified his intention of conferring; and one of the ministers of the crown entering the hall, accordingly proceeded, by the royal command, to invest the victors with the decorations due to the downfall of an elephant.

“You have each slain forty Galla,” repeated the king, “and are henceforth entitled to wear upon the right arm this *bitówa*, or silver gauntlet, surmounted by this *choofa*, or silver bracelet; and on the left shoulder the spoils of a he lion, in token of your prowess, that it may be manifest unto all men.”

His Majesty then with his own hand presented newly-plucked sprigs of wild asparagus, to be worn in the hair during forty days, and to be replaced at the expiration of that period by the *erkoom* feather. Thus honoured, we took our way down through the court-yards of the palace, a band of warriors again preceding, who discharged their muskets at intervals, whilst they chanted the Amhára war chorus, and danced the death triumph.

The rebellion of the Loomi, which had now with infinite difficulty been quelled, affords an excellent commentary upon the nature of Sáhela Selássie’s Galla tenures. A portion of this tribe had failed to pay their tribute to the now disgraced governor of Mentshar, who was wounded in the attempt to levy it, and the royal forces took the field against them. Bótha, who presided over a portion of the Yerrur district, was also a defaulter, though not in open revolt; but at the entreaty of his brother Dogmo, a

faithful vassal of the king, he came in with his arrears as the army drew nigh; and having been mildly reproached for the delay, was dismissed with pardon. No sooner, however, had he left the camp, than he went over to the Galla on the plain of the Háwash, and aided the Loomi in a projected attack upon the Amhára. Upon this defection, Shambo, his elder brother, became apprehensive of consequences; for he conceived it by no means improbable that he might be held responsible for an offence in which he had no participation, as in the case of Súmmad Negoos, late governor of Geshe, who is to this day a state prisoner in consequence of his brother Negooso going over to the ruler of Argobba. He therefore determined to renounce his allegiance, but deferred the execution of his design until after joining Ayto Shishigo, who commanded the troops acting against the Loomi; and it being then proposed to burn a village on the summit of an adjacent hill, belonging to the tribe of Bótha, he immediately took part with the enemy, and heading an onset in person, slew a vast number of the Christians.

One half of the Loomi hamlets were already in flames, but the work of destruction was now discontinued; and the royal forces retreating in disorder, were again attacked by the rebel brothers, and defeated with great loss within sight of the camp at Cholie. Perceiving his warriors flying in all directions, the king seized spear and shield, and commanded his steed to be saddled, to the end that he might take the field in person. But a wily monk, believing that His Majesty felt no real anxiety to place himself in a position of such imminent peril, threatened him with excommunication if he stirred, and thus the day was irretrievably lost.

Háwash Oosha (i.e. “The dog of the Háwash”), who governs the subjugated sections of the Aroosi, Soddo, Liban, and Jillé tribes, having meanwhile joined the insurgents, the whole Galla border was in arms. This powerful chieftain, who was for many years the open enemy of the despot, had been finally gained over to the royal interest by large presents, and by the espousal of his daughter; since which period he has held, in nominal subjection to the crown, an important portion of the plain of the Háwash. He soon repented him of the part he had taken in the present insurrection; and the usual dissensions arising among the rebels, a deputation, assured of personal safety, fell on the ground before the footstool of the throne with overtures of future fealty. But the country was rich in flocks and herds; and under the peculiar circumstances of aggravation attending the revolt, the delegates were commanded to arise, and to return whence they came, with an assurance to the contrite rebel that his fair plains were shortly to be the scene of pillage and desolation.

Two successful inroads followed close upon this threat, and ample vengeance was taken. The wealth of the Pagans was transferred to the royal meadows. Women wrung their hands in captivity, and a black and burning monument attested the lava-like course of the chastising hordes. The season of retribution again drew nigh, and Shambo and Bótha trembled at the fate that awaited them. The powerful intercession of the church was sought with bribes, and obtained. A hooded monk from the cloisters of Affaf Woira stood before the throne with a peace-offering from those who supplicated pardon, and clemency was graciously extended. As the Embassy entered the

palace-court at the royal invitation, the traitors were perceived prostrate on their faces, heaping dust upon their heads in token of abject humiliation. The fear of the heavy fetters of Góncho was before their eyes; and the half inebriated state gaoler scowled at them like a basilisk from the ladder of the balcony. But for once he was cheated of his prey. Five hundred head of choice black cattle, which the caitiffs had treacherously swept from those whose cause they so lately espoused, were accepted as the price of pardon; and with an eloquent harangue from the throne, setting forth the duties of a liege subject, Shambo and Bótha were dismissed in peace.

Volume Two—Chapter Forty Five.

Conclusion of a Treaty of Commerce.

Angollála continued bitterly cold throughout the month of December; and fires, although not quite indispensable, were always found pleasant enough. A dry cutting wind from the eastward blew throughout the day; but the clouds, which often gathered over the surrounding mountains, occasionally disturbed the serenity of the afternoon with a squall of hail. Snipe abounded among the serpentine streams which intersected the environs of the palace-hill; and the hero who possessed courage to cast off the blankets before the sun rose, invariably saw the hoar-frost lying white over the faded meadows. Dogs continued to howl in packs, and mendicants to importune as of yore. Dirty pages and troublesome idlers still infested my tent; and the approaches were choked by numerous bands of Yedjow Galla, who

were begging their way to the country of Dedjasmach Paris. Day and night their monotonous voices arose from every quarter of the town, and Christian adjurations by “Miriam” and “Kedoos Michael” were often nearly drowned by the choral hymn uplifted to Allah and the false prophet.

A new invoice of beads, cutlery, trinkets, *ghemdjia*, and other “pleasing things,” had been received from the coast; and visits were therefore unusually frequent on the part of all who loved to be decorated. Abba Mooálle, surnamed “the Great Beggar in the West,” with his adopted brother, appeared to hold the lease of the tent in perpetuity; and in return for amber necklaces and gay chintz vestments, hourly volunteered some promise, simply, it would seem, that they might afterwards enjoy the pleasure of forfeiting a gratuitous oath. If solemn asseverations by highly respectable saints and martyrs, were to be received with credit, messengers were almost daily despatched, and on fleet horses too, for the purpose of bringing from the Galla dependencies on the Nile, amongst other treasures, the spoils of the *gássela*, a black leopard, elsewhere not procurable, and “worn only by the governors of provinces.” But by some unaccountable fatality, not one of these fleet couriers ever found his way back to the English camp at Angollála; and the cry meanwhile continued, without intermission,—“Show me pleasing things; give me delighting things; adorn me from head to foot.”

Nor were there wanting other standing dishes of an equally rapacious and insatiable character, and scarcely more addicted to veracity. Gádeloo, “the hen-pecked,” was punctual in his attendance, by order of the Emabiet of Mahhfood, who had always a new want to be supplied. “May they buy,” with an

unsound steed for sale at an unconscionable price, brought daily an urgent request of some sort from his spouse. Neither did any morning pass without a protracted visit from Shunkoor, “Sugar,” own brother to the queen, escorted by Ayto Dedjen, “Doors,” his shadow and boon companion, and grand-nephew to the monarch himself. But the attachment subsisting between these inseparable allies was one day suddenly dissolved over a decanter of unusually potent hydromel, and a sabre-cut on the head of either, demonstrated, alas! the fleeting and unstable nature of all sublunary friendship.

As each evening closed, the nobility were to be seen streaming towards our tents from the royal banquet, supported upon their ambling mules by a host of armed and not very sober retainers; and a tribe of ragged pages bringing messages from the palace, accidentally entered at the same time to report the substance of the conversation, although many of the illustrious visitors were absolutely inarticulate. Lances were hurled at a target to the imminent peril of all spectators; and the neck of the vanquished having been duly trampled under foot, according to the ancient Oriental form of military triumph, all who anticipated any difficulty in reaching their own abodes, staggered back to the Gyptzis to laugh at the mad pranks of Dághie, the obsequious court buffoon, and the flower of Abyssinian minstrelsy.

Decked by the favour of the monarch in a shining silver sword, this Merry Andrew, fiddle in hand, came scraping and chanting his way homeward, with eyes sufficiently inflamed to indicate where he had been dining. Kissing the earth as he took his seat in the tent, amid many antics, grimaces, and inquiries, he proceeded to elicit from his instrument imitations of

the human voice under various intonations of joy, surprise, and sorrow; and a host of retainers, crowding round the doors with shoulders bared, next shouted their approval to some travestie of the wild Adel slogan, or joined their voices in full chorus to swell the Amhára death triumph, or this, the pibroch of the Nile:—

> “The sword is burning for the fight,
> And gleams like rays of living light;
> Let thoughts of fear inthral the slave
> —
> Rouse to the strife, ye Gojam brave.
>
> “Clustering they come, the Turkish rout
> Ring back on high the Amhára shout;
> For honour, home, or glorious grave
> —
> Rouse to the strife, ye Gojam brave.
>
> “The sword of Confu leads the war.
> And dastard spirits quail afar;
> None here to pity, none to save—
> Rouse to the strife, ye Gojam brave.
>
> “Our swords in tint shall soon outvie
> Yon scabbard of the crimson dye.
> And overhead shall ruddy wave—
> Rouse to the strife, ye Gojam brave.
>
> “Red as their belts their blood shall flow,
> Deep as the hue of sunset glow;
> Mercy to none who mercy crave—
> Rouse to the strife, ye Gojam brave.”

Pages and abigails were hourly in attendance, on the part of their royal master or mistress, with some

rubbish from the palace, which was carefully removed from its red and yellow basket of Guráguê grass, divested of all its numerous wrappers, and confidentially exhibited with an inquiry, *sotto voce*, "whether more of the same description was not to be obtained?" The outcry raised for detonating caps was wearisome and incessant; for although it was notorious that the royal magazines boasted a hoard sufficient to answer the utmost demand of at least three generations, the king was ever apprehensive of bankruptcy, in event of a quarrel with the Adaïel, "because his own people knew not the road beyond the world of waters." Thus it happened that Kidána Wold, "the long gunman," who had charge of the royal armoury, received private instructions to look in at the Residency at least twice a week, with a *mamálacha* for fifty or a hundred *tezábs*, and regularly once a month averred that he had been so unfortunate as to drop from his girdle another box of His Majesty's patent anticorrosives—a loss which, unless timely repaired, must inevitably result in the forfeiture of his liberty. "The *Gaita* has discovered my carelessness," he would add, with tears in his eyes; "and, by Mary, if you don't help me immediately, I shall be sent to Góncho." Treble strong canister gunpowder was also in high demand, its superiority over the manufacture of Shoa being admitted even by the maker. But the sulphur monopoly remained as heretofore most jealously guarded. The ill-starred individual who had charge of the mines on the frontier, in an evil hour accepted silver for a lump of the purified commodity, which was required for the cure of applicants having the beggar's disease; and spies reporting the peculation, the delinquent was condemned to perpetual labour in the hot valleys of Giddem.

This convict was accompanied in his exile by a shrewd lad, who had been detected at the Bool Worki market in giving circulation to two counterfeit dollars. Weeks of incessant toil had enabled him to produce out of a lump of pewter, very creditable imitations of the coinage of Maria Theresa. Every spot and letter had been most closely represented with a punch and file; and the ingenious artist, naturally enough, seemed vastly mortified at the untoward consequences of his labour. “Tell me,” inquired the king, as the culprit was being removed, “how is that machine made which in your country pours out the silver crowns like a shower of rain?”

Architecture now occupied a full share of the royal brain. The hand corn-mills presented by the British Government had been erected within the palace walls, and slaves were turning the wheels with unceasing diligence. “Demetrius the Armenian made a machine to grind corn,” exclaimed His Majesty, in a transport of delight, as the flour streamed upon the floor; “and although it cost my people a year of hard labour to construct, it was useless when finished, because the priests declared it to be the Devil’s work, and cursed the bread. But may Sáhela Selássie die! These engines are the invention of clever heads. Now I will build a bridge over the Beréza, and you shall give me your advice.”

Early the ensuing morning the chief smith was accordingly in attendance with hammer and tongs; and “when the sun said hot,” the pious monarch, having first paid his orisons in the church of the Trinity, proceeded, with all suitable cunning, to plan the projected edifice beneath a fortunate horoscope. Twelve waterways were traced with stones under his skilful superintendence on a site selected after infinite

discussion; and in five minutes a train of slaves from the establishment at Debra Berhán were heaping together piles of loose boulders to serve as piers. Splinters of wood connected the roadway, and in three days the structure was complete, its appearance giving promise of what actually happened—demolition within as many short hours, on the very first violent fresh to which the river is subject during the annual rains.

But our predictions of this impending catastrophe were received with an incredulous shake of the head; and my advice that orders should be issued to the Governors on the Nile to keep a vigilant lookout for the upper timbers on their voyage down to Egypt, was followed by a good-humoured laugh and a playful tap on the shoulder of the audacious foreigner, who, to the horror and amazement of the obsequious courtiers, had thus ventured to speak his mind to the despot. In vain was it that I proposed to construct a bridge upon arches which might defy the impetuosity of the torrent. “All my subjects are asses,” retorted His Majesty: “they are idle and lazy, and devoid of understanding. There is not one that will consent to labour, no, not one; and if through your means they should be compelled to perform the task, they would weep, and invoke curses on the name of the Gyptzis. Your corn mills are approved, because they save the women trouble, but by the shades of my ancestors!—a bridge—” Here all sense of the decorum due to the sceptre was forgotten for the moment, and the monarch whistled aloud.

And the king was right. Weaving excepted, which in so cold a climate is an art indispensable to existence, the people of Shoa can hardly be said to practise any manufacture. The raw cotton, which is as cheap as it

is excellent and abundant, is, by him who would be clad, handed over with a number of *ámoles* proportioned to the size of the cloth required. A common bow is used to spread the wool; and the spinning jenny being unknown, the thread is twisted by means of the ancient spindle, to which motion is imparted by a rapid pressure betwixt the left palm and the denuded thigh, whilst the right hand is simultaneously carried upwards for the purpose of "roving." Time is here held of no account; and female labour having supplied the want of machinery in these preliminary operations, the twist is transferred to a rude locomotive loom, and a warm durable mantle is produced with the aid only of a simple shuttle.

British commerce has not only forced its way, but created markets and customers in many a wilder and more inaccessible portion of the globe than highland Abyssinia, and its operation promises to open the only means of improvement and civilisation. Even in the absence of water carriage, the experience of many years has proved that the living ship of the desert is a machine of transport adequate to the most important traffic; and, if once established, that traffic would in a few years doubtless bind both people and ruler in the strongest chains of personal interest. It would rapidly change the pursuits of the people—convert the rude hut into a comfortable dwelling—limit, if not extinguish, the slave trade with Arabia, and if not reform, at least enlighten, the clouded Christianity of Ethiopia.

A commercial convention betwixt Great Britain and Shoa was a subject that had been frequently adverted to; and His Majesty had shaken his head when first assured that five hundred pair of hands

efficiently employed at the loom would bring into his country more permanent wealth than ten thousand warriors bearing spear and shield. But he had gradually begun to comprehend how commerce, equitably conducted, might prove a truer source of wealth than forays into the territories of the heathen. This conviction resulted in the expression of his desire that certain articles agreed upon might be drawn up on parchment, and presented for signature, which had accordingly been done; and the day fixed for the return of the embassy to Ankóber was appointed for the public ratification of the document by the annexure thereto of the royal hand and seal.

Nobles and captains thronged the court-yard of the palace at Angollála, and the king reclined on the throne in the attic chamber. A highly illuminated sheet, surmounted on the one side by the Holy Trinity —the device invariably employed as the arms of Shoa—and on the other by the Royal Achievement of England, was formally presented, and the sixteen articles of the convention in Amháric and English, read, commented upon, and fully approved. They involved the sacrifice of arbitrary appropriation by the crown of the property of foreigners dying in the country, the abrogation of the despotic interdiction which had from time immemorial precluded the purchase or display of costly goods by the subject, and the removal of penal restrictions upon voluntary movement within and beyond the kingdom, which formed a modification of the obsolete national maxim, “never to permit the stranger who had once entered, to depart from Abyssinia.” All these evils His Majesty unhesitatingly declared his determination to annul for the good of his people.

Tekla Mariam, the royal notary, kneeling, held the

upper part of the unrolled scroll upon the state cushion, and the king, taking the proffered pen, inscribed after the words “Done and concluded at Angollála, the Galla capital of Shoa, in token whereof we have hereunto set our hand and seal,”—“Sáhela Selássie, who is the Negoos of Shoa, Efát, and the Galla.” The imperial signet, a cross encircled by the word “Jesus,” was then attached by the scribe in presence of the chief of the church, the Dedj Agafári, the Governor of Morát, and three other functionaries who were summoned into the alcove for the purpose.

“You have loaded me with costly presents,” exclaimed the monarch as he returned the deed: “the raiment that I wear, the throne whereon I sit, the various curiosities in my storehouses, and the muskets which hang around the great hall, are all from your country. What have I to give in return for such wealth? My kingdom is as nothing.”

Volume Two—Chapter Forty Six.

Appendix.

Remarks on the Geology, Botany, and Zoology of the Highlands of Southern Abyssinia.

Geology.

When the portion of North-eastern Africa that is to form the province of inquiry received its present configuration, the fountains of the deep may be supposed to have opened at once upon a surface, of which the prior quality and condition has become so

shut out from human observation, that analogies, drawn from other countries under similar circumstances, must supply this deficiency.

Porphyry forms the general basis of all the different volcanic formations discernible. From the pinnacle of Jebel Goodah, on the Gulf of Arabia, it may be traced, though indistinctly, in the minor outrunners of the Abyssinian Alps, to the province of Efát, where it passes under red sandstone. The principal Shoan range, and the high westerly plateau towards the valley of the Nile, present solely secondary formations, but the porphyry again emerges on the southerly borders in the ranges of Garra Gorphoo and Bulga; whilst the left; bank of the Háwash valley is distinctly of primitive crystalline formation.

The overlying rocks, which seem to have been poured from the centre of this tract, consist of masses of trachyte and columnar basalt, of pyramids of wacke, and beds of lava and tufwacke, with strata of conglomerates and sandstones. The former of these, the trachyte and basalt, belong to the lofty mountains of Abyssinia; whereas wacke, lava, tuffo, and scoria, cover the surface, and form the hills of the desert below; and many districts present volcanoes which, not half a century ago, were in violent activity.

The hills of Mentshar, Efát, and Giddem, are detached ranges, running nearly parallel to the Shoan alps. Disclosing in some few spots the nature of their interior, it appears that immediately over the porphyry lies a red sand-stone, embedding vast quantities of coal, and presenting a true stratification. It consists of minute but quite perfect hexagon dodecaëders of quartz in a white cement, is very soft,

and cleaves sometimes in regular squares. Its depth was not observed to be very great, nor did the overlying formations, a marl and conglomerates, seem to form obstacles to the miner.

The Shoan mountains, of alpine height, exhibit a structure of basalt, wacke, and trachyte; the latter, in all its varieties, surrounds a nucleus of basalt, basaltic wacke, and dolerite. The conglomerates and tuffos at their feet, and partly on their terraces and tops, are of trachytic nature, and sometimes pierced through by small dikes of basalt. Veins of ochre and clay, holes filled with scoria, with intrusions of larger or smaller fragments of various rocks and minerals, and a kind of stratification, are the principal features of this trachytic formation.

When the action began, craters or clefts were formed in the then existing crust of trap-rocks, which in their turn were covered with masses of trachytic lava; a little later, the tuffos and conglomerates were deposited, which prove the importance of augite in their formation by numerous crystals of pyroxen embedded in them. Subsequently new basaltic eruptions either raised these deposits to their present height, or pierced them through in their original sites, both cases occurring on the same locality.

The basalt composing the hills about Ankóber presents no vestige of olivin, nor does it influence the magnetic needle; but a distinction between basalt and greenstone in their finer-grained varieties is difficult; and to determine in words the affinity which they bear to each other in the present instance, the rock might be styled basaltic greenstone. Columns, pentagonal or heptagonal, crown the tops of hills, and seem rather a composition of hornblende than of

augite and feldspar. Scoriaceous varieties are found on the outsides of the later protruded masses.

The trachyte is generally a compact mass of grey feldstein, which contains crystals of glassy feldspar, irregularly embedded, and in different quantities. Some varieties are porous, some full of small holes, others black from grains of obsidian; and a few, especially near the dikes, incline to phonolite.

To the westward the ridge terminates in a high plateau, the western Galla provinces of the kingdom. This vast plain is crossed in various directions by hill ranges, the greater part of which do not rise to any considerable height. Here true basalt is disclosed in all the grandeur of its columnar cleavage, but no other species of rock. Deep and narrow ravines carry off the superabundant waters, and pits of tolerable ironstone afford a supply of metal for the manufacture of weapons.

The chief bearing of the mountain chains in Shoa is north and south, with spurs to the west and east. The towering height to which they rise, in a nearly uninterrupted ascent, may be calculated to be from eight to nine thousand feet above the level of the sea, and their single pinnacles far exceed that limit. They are most abrupt, and difficult of access, excepting by the only two passes to the high western plateau. Ravines and chasms of a depth which admits the sun but for few hours, tell of the catastrophe which resulted in their formation. Inaccessible steep cliffs and dismal precipices everywhere line the tiresome footpath of the lonely muleteer.

The hills of Efát present more rounded forms; their slopes are better cultivated, and their tops afford the

most eligible positions for the abode of the Abyssinian farmer. During the rainy season, all the many rivers which at other times carry only sufficient water for the purposes of the cultivator, not only fill their deeply-excavated beds, but overflowing and inundating all the lower parts of the hills, would sweep off any of the fragile Abyssinian buildings within reach; but the soil, when saturated with humidity, becomes so heavy and compact as to be not easily washed away. The impetuosity of the mountain torrent undermines the fast-decomposing rock, and frequently brings down large boulders and loose stones, which, dashing against the sides of the ravine, are in no small degree instrumental to its destruction.

Not less important are the changes going on in the high range, since the time of their formation. Ice is of so uncommon occurrence, that we can scarcely attribute to it any considerable cooperation; but the action of water is materially assisted by occasional earthquakes. Gradual decomposition and decay has produced on the base, and produces still, conglomerates of various thickness and extent. The high plateau enjoys a thick coat of fertile black soil. Lakes, pools, morasses, and swamps, are frequent; the rivers of little fall have muddy and miry beds, which on that account become unfordable during the rains.

A few hot mineral wells are known and made use of in Efát and Giddem. Precious metals and precious stones have not yet been discovered; but of useful mineral products, iron, sulphur, and coal, are the principal. Iron ores are the riches of the high plateau, the oxy-hydrate being the best of them. Enclosed in the basalt, it comes to view only in the ravines,

whence it is scraped out. From the western borders of the Adel country, and from the extinct volcanoes of Mentshar, is derived the small supply of native sulphur required; the pits are described as exceedingly copious. Coal-beds appear to extend along the whole of the eastern frontier of Shoa; but the combustible nature of the fossil is scarcely known in the country. Copper, tin, zinc, and salt, are all imported into Shoa; the Adaïel possessing the last commodity in abundance. The Shoan clay proves a very indifferent material for the manufacture of earthenware. Excellent quarries could be worked, but the primitive fashion of the dwellings is independent of the use of stone.

Botany.

The provinces that compose the kingdom of Shoa enjoy not only political but also natural and physical boundaries. From the luxuriant vegetation, or the parched-up desert of a tropical clime, we suddenly ascend to regions where the blessings of fertility are more equably diffused, and which serve as granaries to the inhabitants of the lowlands.

From the general nature of the rocks, it is obvious that the soil consists chiefly of decomposed feldspar, which requires abundance of water. Dews, rains, and springs, however, so moisten the mountain side, that artificial irrigation need be resorted to but on few localities. Along the foot of the hills, rude channels, dug out of the sandy or gravelly soil, conduct abundance of water to plantations at a distance from the river side; and, in these lower regions, periodical inundations supply the want of rain.—

It is an established fact, that the *cryptogamic plants*

of cellular construction, are in different zones nearly the same. Under similar circumstances the same lichen covers the face of the rock in Europe as in the continents of the torrid zone, the same mould lines decaying matter, and the same fungus cleaves to bark and root. But, compared with the other orders of plants, the cellulars are most defective in numbers throughout Abyssinia, the peculiarities of the climate being very unfavourable to their development.

Every kind of parasitic plant is looked upon with a suspicious eye in Abyssinia; and those of the vascular orders furnish to the conjuring practitioner his principal remedies. But the mushrooms (*Demastafi*), the fungi and puff-balls (*Ya arrogie siet phis*), are believed to pollute the finger that touches them, and to be downright poison. Mould, of course, thrives exuberantly on every substance in so moist a climate as that of Shoa. The blight is but too well known; the *Boletus igniarius* grows abundantly in the forests; *Parmeliae* and other lichens cover rocks, or depend fantastically from the withered branches of gigantic trees. *Mosses*, however, are very scarce, and only of four kinds.

The *vascular acotyledonic plants*, the ferns, might likewise be expected in greater variety among the Abyssinian weeds than is actually the case. The deep recesses of the few remaining forests harbour some kinds which very closely resemble European forms, and belong to the genera *Aspidium, Polypodium, Asplenium, Adiantum, Scolopendrium, Ophioglossum*, and *Pteris*. No tree is among them, nor are the Abyssinians aware of the useful properties of the tribe. *Adianthum Capillus Veneris* is called in Amháric "*Sera Besoo*" i.e. much work—finely wrought.

Of the four orders into which the tribe of *monocotyledonic plants* is naturally subdivided, viz. the Grasses, the Lilies, the Orchides, and the Palms, the first undoubtedly deserves our principal attention, for it is by far the most numerous and important. The great elevation of the Abyssinian plains is so favourable for the cultivation of all *Cerealia* of the temperate zone, that they may rival the very best agricultural districts of Northern Europe, whilst the low country along the foot of the mountains produces some kinds of tropical grain, and would fully answer for the cultivation of rice, which at present is unknown in the country.

The Abyssinian husbandman takes great trouble in improving the cultivated sorts of grain, by changing the seed-corn at every season, and sometimes by sowing promiscuously different sorts to produce new varieties. Hence the astonishing number of distinguishable kinds cultivated in a small compass of ground under certain established appellations, and brought into use for very different purposes. Within a circumference of five miles around Ankóber are found, of juwarree, 28 varieties; of wheat, 24; of barley, 16; of rye, 2; of teff, 4; of oats, 2; of maize, 2. Various kinds of bread and cakes are prepared from some of these; malt for beer is chosen from others; and the inferior kinds are given to slaves and cattle.

The existing meadow-grasses answer so well, that an introduction of new species, or a regular culture, is not attempted. In times of great famine the seeds of some of these grasses come into use as food. In the swamps and humid meadows, and in many rivulets, species of Cyperus and Scirpus are very frequent, some of which attain immense height, being used for thatching, or in the manufacture of baskets, mats,

etc. Papyrus also grows in the low countries of Efát.

The following species of grasses and grain are cultivated: Lorghum vulgare (*Mashila*), the Juwarree of India, and Durrha of Arabia, in many varieties, the principal of which are: a (*Sengada*), with red spreading spike; b (*Wogari*), with yellow, compact pendent spike. The young stalks contain a great deal of saccharine, and are chewed: they attain, in good situations, the enormous height of eighteen feet. The produce of Efát and Giddem in this grain is chiefly exported to the countries of the Adaïel; but a small quantity comes to the Shoan marts for inferior kinds of beer, unleavened bread, and the food of mules. In Shoa itself Mashila cannot be raised on account of the low temperature.

Saccharum officinarum, the sugar-cane (*Shonkar*), is also planted to a small extent in the low country. The art of making sugar being unknown, it is only chewed; and although regarded a great luxury, and sent in token of friendship by the great, no particular care is bestowed upon improving its growth.

Elusine Tocussa (*Dagusa*), a minute grain in quarternaire crosswise disposed spikes, is produced on a low grass extensively cultivated in Northern Abyssinia; and the Emperor of Gondar is said to be forced by etiquette to eat cakes of it, to the exclusion of other farinaceous food.

Poa Abyssinica (*Teff*). This millet-like seed is a favourite with all Abyssinians, although the bread made of it is extremely unwholesome and insipid. Four varieties are found, two of a brown, and two of a white kind. The latter has the preference; and the finest, called *Manya Teff*, is grown only upon the

king's fields, and can never be purchased by the subject. The straw of the *Teff* is regarded the best stable-fodder.

Zea Maize (*Mar Mashila*), i.e. Honey-sweet Mashila, is principally eaten when fresh and milky. A little roasted it is a most acceptable offering to the visitor. Sixteen kinds of barley (*Geps*) are raised on the hill-tops, and on the high plateau of the Galla country, where neither juwarree nor wheat will thrive. Its greatest consumption is in brewing, but mules and horses are also fed on it, and the finer sorts are eaten (*Mariam Sahr Litch Alkuso Sandarash). Barya Settat*, i.e. "the slaves' portion," as might be imagined, is not of first-rate quality.

Secale cereale (*Damash Sanaf Kolo*) finds a limited consumption, mixed with other flour in bread.

Triticum aestivum, hibernum, etc. (*Sendi*). Shoa can boast of twenty-four varieties of wheat. Many of these were originally cultivated by the Galla, and subsequently introduced. The other provinces of Abyssinia have also furnished various kinds; but the most esteemed are indigenous, viz. *Y'abuna ehel, Ya beri mangada, Ya gosh gumbar*, i.e. "Aboon's grain;" "bullock's molar tooth;" "buffaloes' forehead." Wheat is frequently eaten unground, in a mixture of parched grain, called *Kolo*, which is the only store carried by the Amhára warrior into the field.

Avena spec. (*Gherama*) is a small kind of oats, sown on the poorest fields, in order that favourite mules and horses may crop it while yet green. In times of scarcity the poor are compelled to resort to it.

Bambusa arundinacea (*Shemal*). The bamboo is not

indigenous in any part of the country, but groves are planted on the king's grounds, in order to supply poles for the royal tents.

The following are the grasses found in every pasture:—Lolium temulentum (*Enkerdad*), much dreaded as poison; Chloris spec. (*Agerma*); Andropogon distachyum (*Gasha*); Anthistiria spec. (*Sambalet*); Sporobolus spec. (*Ya teff sahr*) the seeds eaten as those of the teff; Poa brizoides (*Ya Kiri sahr*); Kiri is a species of finch, which eats the small seeds; Setaria spec. (*Ya oosha Sendado*).

The next order, that of the *Lilies*, is not so numerous as might be expected of Africa, but when a species does appear, it covers vast tracts with its lovely colours. None but the edible kinds of Allium are cultivated in Abyssinia, ornamental gardens being quite unknown throughout the country. Some grow in swampy meadows, especially those with bulbs, more properly ranking as lilies: others, with perennial stem, are found on dry waste places, such as the Asparagus and the Aloe. The whole year round, the meads are graced by the lovely blossoms of two Commelineae, viz. Commelina Africana, and Tradescantia spec. Both having small oval tubers, they are called *Off angoon* and *Off gola*, i.e. "bird's egg" (*off*, a bird; *angoon* and *gola*, or more commonly *angola*, an egg). These tubers are eaten in times of famine. One ixia, a very beautiful kind, of the morasses around Angollála, springs up immediately after the termination of the rains. Haemanthus coccineus, Amaryllis clavata, Gloriosa spec, are rare plants of Efát; Bulbocodium spec, is a very transient form, observable a few days after the "rains of Bounty." Onions and garlic (*Neitch Shongort*) are favourite vegetables; various kinds of Aloe (*Ya jib*

Shongort) adorn the wastes of Efát, and furnish good fibres for making ropes. Asparagus retrofractus (*Saréti*), and Asparagus Ethiopicus (*Kastanitcha*), are fructiferous and climbing shrubs: a green twig of the first, stuck in the hair of the sinciput, is a token of exultation after a successful encounter with an enemy or wild beast; the wood of the second is of peculiar hardness, and splitting well serves the Amhára scribe as a pen. Lastly, one Smilax (*Ashkila*) affords the stick in common use as a tooth-brush.

That equally beautiful and important order, the *Orchideae*, might be supposed to find its natural ground in Abyssinia, where both atmosphere and soil are so favourable; but ginger is still imported from Guráguê: arrow-root and salep are unknown, and not a single kind of the respective genera is an inhabitant either of Shoa or Efát. The real *Orchideae* of the forests, moreover, are few in number. Epidendrum capense, cleaving to the bark of the wild olive-tree, is the only representative of that interesting group, the *Epidendreae*. Of the plantain tribe, three species have been introduced from the south, but apparently with little advantage; viz. *Mooz*, Musa paradisiaca, a coarse kind of plantain, which is reared on some few spots in Efát for the royal table, and two species of Urania, called *Ensete* and *Koba*. These are planted in Shoa for the sake of their leaves; they seldom advance to flower and fruit, in consequence of the low temperature. The only visible difference between them is, that in the Koba the middle rib of the leaf is on the underside red, as also the stem; whilst in the Ensete both are light green. Either of these trees, when suffered to grow, attains a height of twelve feet in the stem, exceeding by far that of the Mooz; the leaves are equal in size to those of the latter, and are

only used to bake bread upon. Their proper home is Guráguê, the famous seat of so many botanical riches. Seed-capsules of the Koba brought from that country contain four or five angular nuts, full of a mealy substance, like the finest arrow-root, which is boiled and given to children to make them grow; the base of the fruit is filled with a delicious pulp like that of the plantain. In Guráguê the young shoots of the Ensete form a principal part of the diet, but they are despised by the Amhára, who are not at all addicted to vegetables. The fibres are used in the manufacture of ropes and mats, which form an important article of trade with Shoa. Ensete and Koba are hardier than the Mooz; and towering above the enclosures of the lofty villages, impart an aspect not properly belonging to the landscape, and strangely contrasting with many alpine associates.

The *Palms* of the continents of the eastern world are, with very few exceptions, inhabitants of the sea-borders, and do not thrive at any considerable elevation or even distance inland. The coast of the Adaïel is therefore the only locality where three species of this tribe, viz. Phoenix dactylifera, Hyphaene crucifera, and Borassus flabelliformis, appear; but so scantily, that the date must be imported from Arabia. Baskets and mats are manufactured of the leaves of all, and some toddy is prepared of the Borassus especially.

The preceding enumeration of acotyledonic and monocotyledonic plants is not sufficient to determine the systematic place due to the Abyssinian vegetation in general. The Dicotyledones, comprising two-thirds of all the plants, will necessarily help to show, that although included within the tropics, the Flora of Shoa, and of some of the Galla provinces to

the west, is, on the whole, subalpine. The avenues of approach to them from the eastward, evince in their scanty dress the influence of a tropical sun; and between these two extremes, a happy and most fertile province intervenes, where, by the side of the hardy grain, cotton and coffee may be raised—where a tea-plant and many species of indigo grow wild—and where, in fact, a temperate and a torrid clime exchange their products as it were upon neutral ground.

The *Chlamydoblasta* number but very few species in Abyssinia. One Nymphaae only, on the lakes of Shoa, and one Aristolochia (bracteata) of the Adaïel country, could be discovered. This latter, called *Gerbaad*, is a secret remedy with the Danákil against poisoned wounds, and in fact they are prone to attribute mysterious qualities to the most of their weeds. Pepper is not found either in a wild or cultivated state, although nothing would oppose the introduction of that favourite condiment, which at present, under the appellation of *Gunda Berberi* (*Gunda*, an ant; *Berberi*, hot spice) is imported from Arabia and India.

Of *apetalous Gymnoblasts*, some important species are to be recorded, since they form the chief pride of the forests. And justly beginning with the Coniferae, the fir (cedar), which graces the Alps of Northern Abyssinia, is replaced in Shoa by a gigantic juniper, Juniperus excelsa (*Det*). This noble tree of the woods as well as of the churchyards attains in its life of one century a height of upwards of one hundred and sixty feet, with four to five in diameter at the base. Growing nearly in the shape of a cypress, it throws off continually the lower branches, which shoot out almost at a right angle from the stem, so that two-

thirds of the same are void of green; the top is always a pyramid, and generally scanty. The wood is very inferior, but splitting readily, it supplies, in the absence of proper carpenters' tools, the chief timber used in the construction of huts and churches; and it forms, besides, the common fuel. Neither is any use made of the resin or berries; but twigs lopped off the melancholy trees that overshadow the cemetery, are often strewn upon the corpse before the grave is filled up. A yew tree, Taxus elongata, *Sigba*, also of the Shoan forests, keeps within more moderate dimensions; sixty feet in height, and five in circumference, is the utmost. The tough wood, like that of the wild olive-tree, furnishes the timber for works of art which are to last some time. To tarry beneath its shade, or to inhale the smoke of burning yew wood, is regarded as particularly noxious.

The low temperature reigning in the Alps of Abyssinia does not prohibit the growth of a species of fig, which contrasts strangely enough with the tall juniper. The *Shoala*, a kind of Banyan tree, with large, oval, acute, serrated, and subcordate leaves, and racemes of fruits attached only to the stem and principal branches, measures frequently seven feet in diameter, with a height of forty feet, at an age of two-score years. Its roots are partly above ground; but of secondary, or branch-roots, there is no vestige. Requiring no small space for expansion, it stands commonly on the outskirts of the forests, or quite alone, but its shade is extremely dense and unfavourable to other vegetation. The fruit, of the size of a pigeon's egg, brown and insipid, might be eaten by people in distress. In the low country the Sycamore Fig-tree makes its appearance; it is called *Worka*, i.e. "the Golden," by the Amhára, and *Woda*

by the Galla; and has, with those of the latter nation, who are still in the bonds of idolatry, a sacred signification. Being planted over the tombs of notable persons, conjurers, or heroes, offerings are brought to it, and hung up on the branches at certain festivals, when the neighbouring tribes feast together upon that holy and neutral ground. The Worka stands always near running water, towering far over the jungle, although the undivided stem is scarcely ten feet high. The leaf has a yellow tomentum below; and the fruit forms a favourite food of monkeys and of various birds, but is not touched by man.

The *Kuaraf*, Gunnera spec, another plant of the same family, of *Artocarpeae*, is an important vegetable during the strict fast of Lent. It grows in swamps and rivulets, and is an annual low plant from a perennial root, with large radical leaves and a leafless stalk, bearing the minute flowers on a bunchy raceme. The petioles, ribs of leaves, and stalks, are eaten fresh when stripped of the epidermis; and their taste is similar to that of the sorrel. The common stinging-nettle (*Sama*) is, by boiling, also prepared into an indifferent food during the quadragesimal low diet. The troublesome weed grows everywhere to a height of five feet.

Of the many *Polygoneae*, a few must be noticed on account of their frequent occurrence and of their use. Polygonum tomentosum (*Ba Waha lay*, i.e. “upon the water,”) and Polygonum serratum, cover the margins of morasses and lakes. Polygonum frutescens (*Umboatoo*) is the most common hedge-shrub. Rumex arifolius (*Makmako*), frequent in swampy meadows, yields, in its fleshy root, a reddish dye for colouring butter. The root of another species of Rumex, called *Tutt*, is believed to be a nostrum for

barbarous and criminal purposes; but, happily, it is quite innocent. Instead of these species, which all belong to the Flora of Shoa, there appear in the Adel country several Boerhaaviae. Introduced into Shoa is a kind of willow (*Aheia*), much employed in the manufacture of saddles.

The *monopetalous Gymnoblasts*, being a class next to the highest and most important, contain a large number of plants, of which the following are pointed out: Plantago Capensis (*Ya gura wosfi*), and Plantago Egyptiaca (*Burrh*), both common weeds in Shoa; Plumbago Capensis, with large white corolla, in Efát, and Scabiosa decurrens (*Adai*), with snowy heads, in Shoa, are highly ornamental; Echinops horridus, growing to the height of ten feet about Angollála; Carthamus tinctorius (*Suf*), extensively cultivated in Efát for the oil of the seeds and for the dye yielded by the flowers; Carduncellus spec. (*Dorakus*),—a decoction of the dried flower-heads is administered in ague. Several twining species of Mikania adorn the forests of Shoa; two fructiferous Cacaliae, full of a balsamic sap, and one Klenia, exhibit the brightest scarlet in the jungles of Efát. Pteronia spinosa, and Helichrysum vestitum, are hardy shrubs found on the slopes. Species of Gnaphalium and Bidens are annoying weeds in the cotton-fields. The numerous kinds of Radiatae contain only one of importance, viz. the Polymnia Abyssinica (*Nug*), which is the chief oil plant. *Suf* and *Nug* oil mixed is called *Kabanug*, and only used for burning, since it possesses strong purging qualities. The family of the *Compositae* furnishes altogether but a small number of useful plants in proportion to its extensiveness.

The *Campanulaceae* are low annual insignificant

weeds, one Lobelia excepted, viz. the Rhynchopetalum montanum, or *Jibera*. This strange perennial plant, with the aspect of a palm-tree, grows chiefly in moist ravines among the high mountains, and is especially frequent about Ankóber. The stem attains upwards of fifteen feet in height, and five inches in diameter. The top carries a crown of large leaves; and the spike is one foot and a half long. When the seeds are ripe, the plant dies suddenly. One Erica (*Asta*), five feet in height, assists likewise to dispel the aspect of a European Flora, which is conveyed by the Veronica Beccabunga and Anagallis of the meadow rivulets. Scrophularia frutescens (*Djodjo*), with a strong smell of camphor, is used as a febrifuge and charm; two kinds of Orobanche are also among the conjurer's infallible medicines. Acanthus carduifolius is the choicest camel-fodder in the desert. Rare specimens of Hyperanthera Moringa, the same as in Arabia, stand near the pools of the low country: a gum, becoming instantly red in the air, flows freely out of any bruise, but is applied to no use. Mint, thyme, and other plants of the family *Labiatae*, so replete with aetheric oils, do not enjoy the reputation due to them. Of the many kinds only three have names and use, viz. Origanum spec. (*Kassi*), and Ziziphora spec. (*Lomi shett*, i.e. "lime-smell"), which are used in the fomentation of boils; Leonotis spec. (*Ras Kimr*), as anthelminthicum by a decoction of the dried leaves, mixed with a little oil. Several *Convolvulaceae* and *Borragineae* pass disregarded. Of the former. Convolvulus pes caprae binds the sand of the sea-beach; of the latter, a few specimens of Cordia Abyssinica (*Wanzey*) grow in Efát.

Capsicum frutescens (*Geich Berberi*, i.e. "red

pepper"), the most important of hot spices in warm climes, and Nicotiana Tabacum (*Tombako*), also an indispensable commodity to many of the Moslem population, are objects of diligent cultivation in the lower country: yet the only tolerable tobacco must be imported from the Ittoo Galla. Solanum marginatum (*Umboi*), a shrub, the seeds of which are strewed on the surface of ponds to stupify the fish, which are nevertheless still eatable, and Atropa arborea (*Amoraroo*), the red juice of whose berry is used by the Amhára women to stain their palms and nails, are common hedge-shrubs in Shoa. Of the narcotic qualities of the Datura Stramonium (*Atafaris*), the Abyssinian sorcerer is well aware. The thief-detector makes a youth smoke the dried leaves of it in order to cause stupefaction, and thus promote the semblance of powers of divination. Neither the potato nor any other edible kind of Solanum has yet been introduced into Shoa.

The families of *Contortae, Rubiaceae, Ligustrinae*, have many representatives in the low country. Stapelia pulvinata and Calotropis gigantea are the most prominent: the former has a fleshy, quadrangular, and four-winged stem of two feet height, and when in flower is scarcely approachable; the latter furnishes good charcoal for gunpowder. Kannahia laniflora, with particularly sweet-smelling flowers, lines the borders of the rivulets in Efát; Carissa spec. (*Agame*) has edible berries, and flourishes both in Efát and Shoa. Melanea verticillata (*Adguar*), is a jungle-tree of ten feet height, with purging berries. Psychotria spec. (*Doda Gula*), is a shrub found in Shoa; Coffea Arabica (*Boon*) grows wild in many of the warmer provinces, but is diligently plucked out by the Christian population, who consider

the use of the berry to be as foreign to salvation as the doctrine of the false prophet. Where his followers abide in greater numbers, or uncontrolled, as in Giddem and in the countries of the Ittoo and Aroosi Galla, the coffee-tree grows unmolested, no care, however, being taken of it; but its proper home seems to lie far to the west and south, in the kingdoms of Cáffa and Enárea, where a donkey's load is sold for the twentieth part of a dollar. Two kinds of jessamine grace with their fragrant flowers the hedges and groves. Olea spec. (*Woira*) is, with the juniper and yew, the principal forest-tree of Shoa; sixty to eighty feet in height, and four in diameter, are its common dimensions. The wood of the wild olive-tree affords excellent fuel and timber; but no use is made of the fruit, which attains the size of a large pea.

Among the *polypetalous Gymnoblasts*, in which vegetation has attained the highest degree of perfection with respect to variety of shape and colour, as well as medical and nutritious qualities, we find several important families altogether wanting in the Flora of Abyssinia. The Pomaceae and Amygdaleae are absent, and the existing scarcity of fruit-trees, whether wild or cultivated, is indeed most apparent. Others of more limited utility are very numerous, as the Tricoccae, Rhocadeae, Amarantinae; but the Leguminosae form by far the largest family of polypetalous phanerogames.

Of *Umbelliferae* there exists in the low country one Ferula, a small tree of unknown properties. In Shoa there are several Caucalis (*Karambashu*), growing on pasture grounds, and poisonous to cattle. Coriandrum sativum (*Dumbelan*), and Anethum foeniculum, the well-known European spices, are

cultivated. Berberis tinctoria of the forests yields a good yellow dye for mourning apparel. Clypea spec. (*Engotshid*), is a creeper with pellate leaves, upon which small cakes are baked. Ranunculus trilobus (*Goodie*) is a troublesome weed on the meadows. Nigella sativa (*Asmud*) is occasionally cultivated as a spice. Several species of Polygala flourish unnoticed. Some *Balsamineae* grow in shady places; one of them, Impatiens grandis (*Girshid*), has a tuberous root, with the juice of which the women paint their palms and faces red. Thlaspi bursa pastoris (*Ya bug elat*, i.e. “sheep’s tail”), the cosmopolitan weed, follows agriculture also in Abyssinia. Sinapis Nigra (*Sanafitch*) grows wild, and is sometimes resorted to as an additional ingredient of the pepper sauce called *wotz*. Brassica spec. (*Goomun*), a cultivated coarse kind of cow-cabbage, perennial, and five feet high, is eaten as a vegetable after much boiling; the seeds are also used for oil. Of the numerous *Capparideae*, Cadaba Indica is particularly important in the Adel desert, being for many scores of miles the only shrub which affords shelter from the noontide sun. Two species of Capparis make impenetrable hedges in Efát. Cucumis Africanus (*Ya medur oomboi*) is an annual plant, of sandy and desert places; the seeds are a favourite medicine in Shoa, and also with the Galla. Cucumis colocynthis is frequent in the valleys adjoining the Bahr Assal, but is not collected either for home use or for exportation. Cucurbita lagenaria (*Kel*) grows wild, and is cultivated in Efát for water-bottles. Cucurbita pepo, a common coarse pumpkin in Shoa, serves as a vegetable. Bryonia scabrella (*Ya Amor a M’sa*) is a much dreaded poison. Two species of Flacourtia, *Koshim* and *Menedem*, have edible berries.

Viola montana, a violet without smell, grows in the forests of Shoa. *Tamaricinae* occur in the desert, from the sea-shore as far as to the Háwash; the presence of the principal kind, called *Sagan*, is, to the Dankáli herdsman, a sure indication of water near the surface. The genus Hypericum has only showy plants. The *Chenepodeae*,—chiefly weeds, contain one species (called *Amedmadoo*) which is used for polishing metal. Achyranthes spec. (*Talineh*) is a styptic medicine. Phytolacca Abyssinica (*Endott*) is a common shrub in Shoa and Efát; a cold infusion of the dried and pounded berry possesses wonderful cleansing qualities, and is used instead of soap. Silene dianthoïdes (*Siakul*) is a pretty flower found on the high mountains. Calanchoë verea (*Endehahoola*) is a very common succulent plant, the leaves of which are dried and smoked like tobacco in phthisical affections, or the juice of them administered as refrigerants in inflammatory fevers. Epilobium villosum (*Ya lahm tchau*, i.e. “cows’ salt”) is regarded as an excellent and wholesome fodder for homed cattle, if given occasionally Punica granatum (*Rooma*), sometimes cultivated in Efát, was introduced from Arabia. Several species of Grewia bear edible fruits in the desert, where their acidity is very grateful.

To the various kinds of *Byttneriaceae* and *Malvaceae*, no particular interest is attached, except to the cotton (*Det*) Gossypium Nigrum, which is cultivated in two varieties, the finer and smaller species growing in the shade of the taller and more hardy. Both are regarded as indigenous to Abyssinia. Grain and cotton-cloth form the principal staple commodities of Shoa. Linum usitatissimum (*Tulbah*) is cultivated merely for the seeds, of which oil is

made: flax-dressing not being understood. Vitis vinifera (*Woin Saf*), planted as a curiosity in the king's gardens, bears plentifully, and would doubtless answer well upon volcanic soil. Several species of Cissus interlace the jungles of Efát; one, especially, is a constant companion of the Camel-thorn Acacia in the desert.

Euphorbia Abyssinica (*Kolqual*), a singular sconce-like milk bush of the Abyssinian groves, gives charcoal for gunpowder; with the corrosive sap it is frequently attempted to stop ulcers of a phagedenic nature. The inspissated juice of two other species of Euphorbia, *Birgut* and *Anderfa*, serves as a drastic purgative. The ostrich-hunting Somauli poisons his arrows with the milk of Euphorbia antiquorum, which does not make the meat injurious. Ricinus Africanus (*Gulo*) affords in its seeds a famous medicine for cattle, and is frequent in Efát. Rhamnus spec. (*Gesho*) is a tonic, and a decoction of the leaves of this cultivated shrub is used in the manufacture of hydromel and beer instead of hops. Celastrus spec. (*Chaat*) is a species of the tea planted and used in Efát, but more extensively in Cáffa and other countries of the interior. In Efát the fresh leaves are both chewed and used as an astringent medicine, or taken in order to dispel sleep: a decoction in water or milk being also drunk as a beverage, which tastes bitter enough. Hagenia Abyssinica (*Cosso*) affords, in a cold infusion of the dried flowers and capsules, the famous drasticum purgans and anthelminthicum of the Abyssinians. The tree is one of the most picturesque in appearance. Balsamodendron Myrrha (*Kurbeta*) grows on the borders of Efát, in the jungle of the Háwash, and in the Adel desert. The resinous gum called *Hofali*, is collected for exportation.

Balsamodendron Opobalsamum (*Besham*) is commonly found with the former, and grows even at Cape Aden. Citrus medica (*Lomi*) flourishes wild in the jungles of Giddem, and is cultivated in Efát: Citrus aurantium (*Bahr Lomi*), lately introduced from Arabia, and Citrus decumana var. (*Trunco*), with apple-like solid pulp, are both found in the royal orchards. Rubus pinnatus (*Injori*) yields the best of all wild-growing fruits in Abyssinia—a true blackberry of the forests. Rosa Abyssinica (*Kaga*), a tree-like dog-rose, bears an edible hip. The Brayera Abyssinica, which serves in Tigré instead of *Cosso*, is not known in the southern provinces.

Trifolium saxatile cespitosum (*Nagad*) is sown on the best meadows for green fodder. Vicia faba (*Bakkela*) is most extensively cultivated in Shoa and in the Galla countries to the west; the beans are eaten either fresh and green during the season, or, when dry, made up into soups. Ervum lens (*Missur*), Cicer arietinum (*Shimbrah*), Pisum sativum (*Attur*), Phaseolus spec. (*Adunguari*), are produced in Efát and other warm provinces of the kingdom. Many species of Indigofera, wild and unheeded, grow in the desert and on the borders of cultivation. Pterolobium lacerans (*Kantuffa*) is an impenetrable hedge-shrub abounding in Efát: the bark gives a red dye for leather. Tamarindus Indica attains a majestic size in the jungles of Efát, but is quite neglected; as are also various kinds of Senna (*Senamaki*). Dichrostachys cinerea. Acacia eburnea. Acacia planifrons, and other Camel-thorn trees called *Gerar*, are of the utmost importance to the wilderness and desert; in the latter, the umbrella-like tops collect man and beast beneath their scanty shade during the hottest hours of the day. Some yield superior gum arabic; the twigs serve

as food for the camel, and the pods for goats and sheep.

The foregoing list of Abyssinian plants comprehends nearly all those which are of importance to the cultivator, farmer, or physician; but no doubt double the number could be added by any people more enterprising and inquisitive than the inhabitants of Shoa. All kind of vegetation not directly useful and beneficial is regarded as a weed, and receives no special appellation; and few of the population know the names of any plant that is not a daily necessary of the kitchen. The physician's lore is kept a profound mystery; and there is not much lost by its limited diffusion, since the whole is a motley collection of very questionable experience and most degrading superstition.

Zoology.

Of the lowest order of animals, the *Radiates*, nearly the same may be said that was remarked above respecting the lowest order of plants; namely, that their species are in a less degree bound to certain limits of geographical distribution than those in which the respective types hasten in more marked characters to the highest possible perfection. None of the numerous tribe of *Radiatae* are, in their proper home, directly exposed to the external air and its changes. They live in a medium, which generally preserves a mean temperature, with extremes not prohibiting the possibility of animal existence, and their ephemeral life is little liable to be cut short by any sudden change. Thus we find that the waters and animal humours produce, in different climes, similar beings, in which either the deficiency in bulk is made up by countless multitudes of individuals, or the

deficiency in number by high reproductive powers.

Intestinal worms (*Wosfat*) prove one of the chief plagues of the Abyssinians. Not only ascarides, but also tape and thread worms (Taenia and Filaria), are to be constantly contended with. The frequency of this disposition must have its source in the usual diet, consisting of unleavened dough-like bread and raw meat, which the accompanying pepper sauce is not sufficient to correct. Once in every month the *Cosso* and other powerful purgatives are resorted to, and bring momentary relief; but the Guinea-worm, living in the fleshy parts of the limbs, must be endured until it shall have perforated the skin.

The influence exercised upon the nature of the *Articulated Animals* or *Insects* by the quality of the other visible organised beings, both plants and animals, is much more apparent than in the above-named order of the *Radiatae*. Being bound by the strongest ties to the limits of those beings which are assigned to them as food and home, their species present distinctly marked characters of geographical distribution throughout the world.

In Shoa and Efát there appears with the increase of vegetation a larger number of insects, but the most noxious of them remain only during the height of the season. This is most perceptible in the migrations of locusts and caterpillars, which, by a few cold rains, are induced to descend into the open wildernesses and deserts. Such a sudden relief from countless hosts of the locusts, called *Anbasa*, is invariably ascribed, by the superstitious farmer, to the special interposition and agency of his guardian saint, at whose shrine, in the hour of need, offerings and vows are liberally made. Various grasshoppers (*Sada*),

mantidae (*Feenta*), and cockroaches, do considerable damage during the hot season. A large black ant (*Goonda*), which bites ferociously, constructs no water-tight habitation, but intrudes at the beginning of the rains into the huts, from which it is expelled with the utmost difficulty. The Egyptian honey-bee (*Neb*), either kept in the farm-yards within baskets, or existing wild in the woods, finds abundance of odoriferous flowers. Honey is an important article of consumption, both in its natural form and when converted into mead.

Although so cold, the country is not free from the annoyances of flies (*Sembi*), and musquitoes (*Tenang*). White ants (*Mest*) are not so numerous and destructive in the upper as in the lower country. Small colonies of them live and build their chambers beneath loose stones, but they never come into the houses, and, in fact, the juniper timber of the fragile edifices is seldom attacked by any wood vermin. Various most beautiful butterflies, phalaenes, and moths, while in the caterpillar state (*Tel*), despoil trees and plants that are of no value to the Abyssinian; but his plantations of cotton and cabbage rarely suffer. Neither the silkworm nor the mulberry-tree are found in the country.

Numerous varieties of beetles, of those families especially which remove animal matter and soil, with others of more cleanly habits, are comprised under the general appellation of *Densissa*. Among the former, the Coprophaga, many Egyptian species may be met with, as Copris Isidis, Ateuchus sacer, and others; among the latter, chiefly Cetoniae, are found species nearly allied to or identical with some of Senegambia. One notable Inca, the male of which is armed with a powerful head excrescence, lives

principally on the sap of wounded trees; Lycus appendiculatus frequents chiefly the flowers of Umbelliferae; many Curculionides inhabit the plants of the family Compositae, but Coccinellae are the most numerous. Species of Lytta abound, but no use is made of them, the Shoans having no real medicine prepared from the animal kingdom. Spiders (*Sherarit*) and scorpions (*Kind*) are studiously avoided, or destroyed, as particularly impure and noxious, though the former never attack aught save their prey, and the sting of the latter is little dangerous. Total disregard of cleanliness is punished with a frightful increase of bodily vermin, as fleas (*Kunitsha*), lice (*Kemal*), bugs (*Tochan*), and acarus scabici (*Ekak*).

The large number of water-birds upon the lakes and morasses of Shoa effectually restrain an increase of *Snails* and *Shells*; some species of Bulimus (*Kendautchi*), minute Helices, Pupa, and Limax, are so few, that the damage done by them is not perceptible. Neither serve the larger kinds as food.

The known fresh-water *Fish* are insignificant in quality and quantity, and only serve to feed the numerous crocodiles which infest the main stream of the Háwash. Its various tributaries, when they first escape from the mountains, carry small species of Salmo and Perca (*Asa*), which are in great request during Lent; but the manner of taking them is primitive and imperfect.

All the *Amphibia* are objects of apprehension and superstition. Serpents (*Ebab*) are not numerous, and are chiefly of small kinds, nor venomous, but the awe in which they are held is quite ridiculous. Tribes in the far west, described as being the meanest of men, and scarcely above the beasts, are charged by the

Abyssinians with the heinous custom of eating snakes, and ornamenting their persons with necklaces of the backbone of that accursed animal. Two kinds of tortoises (*Yeli*) are found in the low country, Testudo Graeca and Indica; the latter attains an enormous size in the deep impenetrable jungles of Mentshar. The dread entertained of the Saurii comprises all kinds, the harmless and the formidable. The Egyptian Gecko (*Enkakela*), the chameleon (*Eist*), the Seineus officinalis, and other numerous lizards, which make themselves most useful by the removal of so many annoying insects, are unrelentingly doomed to destruction, whilst the crocodiles (*Azo*) roam unmolested on the abandoned shores of the larger rivers and lakes.

The *Feathered Tribe* exist in great variety of species, which may in some degree be due to the preponderance of migratory birds. The *Scansores*, however, are principally stationary, their food seldom failing throughout the year. The noblest of them is a parrot-like Coliphimus (*Sorit*) of the Shoan forests. Lovely shades of green, and many tints of the brightest red, a stately crest, and a long rounded tail, make it a favourite with the Abyssinians. A tail-feather fastened in the hair of a daring warrior, is a token of late achievements in the battle-field. Two other kinds, called *Wans Sorit*, i.e. Sorit of the river-side, and *Aheia*, i.e. donkey, from its asinine tunes, are much inferior in beauty, though not in size. One, Coliphimus concolor, is of a dull greyish green; the other, C. fasciatus, black and white, with white zones, across the tail; the beak of the female is green; both live in Efát upon different grains and wild figs. Two small kinds of parrot inhabit the fig and tamarind trees of the lower country: their name, *Donkoro*, is also used

figuratively of persons talking nonsense. One corresponds almost with Psittacus Taranta. In the other, which is a little larger, the sexes are distinguished by the gay plumage of the male, which is green above and red below, whilst the female is greyish brown and yellow. Centropus Jardini, a beautiful kind of cuckoo, lives solitary on the fig-trees in Efát: several species of woodpeckers, which do not seem to differ from the South African kinds, are found on acacias and tamarinds.

Among the *Ambulatores* many migrate during winter-time from the mountains to the eastern plain; others arrive during summer from the North, most likely from Sennaar and Egypt. They rarely do any considerable damage on the plantations of Teff and Juwarree, whilst their services in destroying numberless vermin are most conspicuous. Bird-catching for food or for amusement is not a sport with the Amhára, but, on the other hand, there is no privilege in favour of the songsters—a study and imitation of the tunes of which might greatly improve the execrable attempts of music, vocal and instrumental, vented by the unskilful Abyssinian performer.

Two gaudy kinds of Alcedo play on the rivulets—Merops Bulockii and Nubicus. These truly African species of the flycatcher are in the lower, Upupa epops, the common hoopoe, in the upper country. Certhia tacazze and chalybea, with two other equally beautiful kinds of the humming-bird, proceed with the seasons to their flower-gardens, when the return of rain here, and of warmth there, elicits the most fragrant blossoms, and covers the shrubs of the mountain-side, or the jungle-trees, with soft honey-insects. One of these humming-birds suspends its baglike nest, ingeniously woven of raw cotton, by a

string of the same material, to reeds, or cotton-plants. Buphaga Africana picks the larvae of gad-flies out of the galled backs of camels, oxen, and mules, in spite of the struggles of the tortured animal. Jeterus larvatus, and other species of stares, weave their nests of grass, and line them inside with the woolly flowers of an Achyranthes. These nests are suspended in great numbers to the lower branches of solitary trees, and may have given origin to the story of the wonderful groves, where all the fruits are birds enclosed in a shell. Lamprotomis auratus, and some other kinds of thrushes, consume, during their short stay in Shoa of two months, immense numbers of insects. Among the Sylviadae are some eminent songsters, especially Sylvia Pammelaina, and also species of Motacilla, and Saxicola, whilst one Muscipeta, the male of which has two tail-feathers three times as long as the whole body, is quite silent. The head and neck of this remarkable bird are steel-blue, the other parts of the plumage rusty-brown, except the two elongated middle feathers of the tail, which are snowy white, with black quills, and a brown plot at the extremity: they are used as an ornament for royalty. Lanius humeralis (*Gurameile*) is one of those fatal birds, the sudden appearance of which before an army at its outset, forebodes ill-success, and all manner of misfortune to single persons, if the tail be directed towards them. To the other kinds of shrikes no such unhappy celebrity is attached, although they seem not less litigious, and anxious to draw off by their noise the attention of a wayfarer from the vicinity of their nests. Alauda alpestris comes from the West, and returns again after two months, April and May. The most numerous kinds of finches, Ploccus, Pyrgita, Linaria, etc., are all comprised under the appellation *Off*, i.e. small bird:

they seem generally to have fixed quarters. Colius Capensis (*Rasa*) is solely in Efát, in company with the Wans sorit.

Ravens and crows are of three kinds, but one of them (*Kura*) is particularly remarkable on account of its beak, which is much higher than the crown, carrying a considerable protuberance on the top, the nostrils being situated in an excavation, which runs forward in a broad furrow; the bill is very massive, twice as high as it is broad, and terminating in a small hook; the colour of the plumage is deep brownish black, except a broad bar of white feathers across the sinciput, and sometimes a narrow white line down the back of the neck. Its voice and mode of living and walking is just like that of our crows, but it does not suffer the approach of other species.

Swallows are never failing, but the species vary in their visits. Hirundo Capensis and rustica appear to avoid each other, not being seen together in the same localities. Cypselus apus and Caprimulgus species are rarely met with. Coracias afra and Abyssinica live only in the lower country, also the various kinds of Hornbill. *Erkoom*, Buceros Abyssinicus, by far the largest, is mischievous to the Juwarree fields; but the damage done is compensated by his great liking for field-mice also. The Erkoom runs swiftly, and rises seldom into the air: the white wing-feathers are much esteemed as an ornament of the hair by the triumphant warrior. Buceros nasutus, and another species, which differs slightly in colour and size, eat small lizards and chameleons. Buceros erythrorhynchus (*Sholak*), the most frequent of them, rids the plantations of many noxious insects.

The tribe of *Raptores* (*Amora*) is uncommonly numerous, and on the whole very useful in Abyssinia. Those that feed on living animals seldom stoop even at a stray fowl, whilst all their other prey is quite indifferent to the farmer, and the carrion-birds remove quickly whatever the indolent grazier has dragged outside his door. Finding plenty of food, they have no need to wander widely or periodically; yet the large species have their nests at considerable distances from their hunting districts, and commonly on inaccessible precipices.

Strix bubo, the only but very common owl of the up-country, and one Otus of the low plain, are treated as birds of ill-omen. From the entrails of the former the necromancer prepares a potent charm. The eagle, Aquila naevia (Nas'r), comes seldom near the villages, nor is he forward in his depredations. Falco biarmicus fights his superiors in size, and deprives them forcibly of their prey; it has got hence the appellation, *Ya Amora Alaka*, i.e. chief of the birds of prey. Morphnus occipitalis (*Adagoota*), a beautiful crested falcon, lives in the lower country of Giddem, and is particularly inert. Several species of Astur and Accipiter (*Bazi*) feed on small songsters and mice. Ternis, spec. (*Goodie*), removes innumerable quantities of locusts; and Milvus parasiticus (*Tshelvit*) cleans streets and premises in company with the crows. Gypaëtos barbatus (*Cheffie*), extremely frequent in Shoa, draws near to butchers, and waits patiently for his share—the paunch and other rejected parts of the victim. Vultur arrianus and fulvus (*Vellos*) smell their food many miles off, and gather round it in great numbers. The periodically returning wars, and the extensive stock of cattle kept throughout the habitable parts, feed, with never-

failing supplies of carrion, horrible gangs of hyenas, jackals, dogs, and vultures. Cathartes perenopterus and Neophron Niger are less frequent, and always solitary.

The tribe of *Rasores* contains the few birds that are considered fit for Christian food; yet the common fowl (*Doroo*), the only domesticated kind, kept almost in every compound, is very much neglected, and not being of a superior breed, remains small and lean. All other meat is eaten raw by the Abyssinians, but fowls, either tame or wild, must be cooked. The wild ones, pintado, partridge, quail, and grouse, are not prohibited, but still suspected as unwholesome food; and if even long after an indulgence of such meat the gourmand falls sick, he invariably looks back upon that trespass as the cause of his indisposition. Numida cristata (*Chickra*), in bevies of many hundreds, range throughout the lower country. A very large kind of partridge (*Kok*) is found, not in coveys, but in pairs, running swiftly through furrows of the corn-fields. Dogs are taught to catch them without injury; and before being eaten, the bird is kept for some days, to obviate the bad effects of any unclean food which it may possibly have taken. This partridge attains the size of the pintado. Another kind, living on the high plateau, and also hunted down with dogs, resembles more that of middle Europe. Pterocles arenarius, and other species of grouse, occur in the deserts.

Pigeons are frequent both in Shoa and in the eastern provinces. *Wani, Ergeb*, and *Kumroo*, are appellations of different kinds, all too wild to tempt the Abyssinian to any exertion to catch or domesticate them. *Wani* is the largest, above brown, below slaty-grey; the head grey, with a black zone across the

sinciput. Another is all grey, except a white zone on the upper neck, and a collar of darker arrow-headed feathers; a third also grey, but with a white head, and brown edges on the wing-feathers. *Ergeb* has a peculiarly inflated beak; head and neck grey, shoulders and back olive-green, breast and belly citron-yellow, wing and tail-feathers whitish edged and tipped. *Kumroo* is the turtle-dove, one kind of which has elongated tail-feathers.

Otis Arabs, the largest bustard, which is as swift as the ostrich, destroys a great number of locusts and scorpions, and is therefore never eaten. Another smaller bustard (*Wato*) is variously coloured; it lives on the borders of the desert. Charadrius spinosus is a rare visitor of the lakes near the Háwash. Tachydromus isabellinus is an inhabitant of the plains of Efát; and Himantopus atropterus of the morasses near Angollála.

Abundance of water makes the provinces of Shoa a favourite place of resort to many species of *Grallatores*. Among the herons are remarkable Ardea ephippiorhyncha, and another called *Alaka fattah*, having particularly long wing-feathers of a darker colour than the remainder of the body, which is above grey, below white. The former lives in the valley of the Abai, the latter about Angollála, but migrates also to the West. Smaller kinds, as Garzetta, Nycticorax, arrive from the North in February, but commonly pass on still more southward, whence they return in May. Ibis religiosa stays for some months on the lakes of the upper country; Numenius, spec. (*Gaga*), about Ankóber. The common snipe, some kinds of peewits, the spoonbill, and the flamingo, sometimes extend their migrations as far as Shoa.

Geese and ducks swarm unmolested over the lakes of the western provinces; a few descend also to the plain. Chenalopex Egyptiacus builds its nest upon high trees on the river side in Efát. Another rare species carries on the frontal basis a thinly-feathered flexible bunch. All the birds of this class are strangely inapprehensive of danger when moulting or hatching. During their stay in Shoa they are occupied with both of these processes, but the rigorous proscriptions regarding food usually afford them protection.

Of *Mammalia*, the *Rodentia* seem to have no great extension through the cultivated provinces of Shoa. One small house rat (*Eid*), and a field mouse, Otomys albicaudatus, are very obnoxious indeed to the grain, but snares and traps keep them easily down on well-managed farms. Lepus capensis (*Dindjel*) frequents more the plains both of the low and of the up country, and does little damage. To eat of its flesh would be considered downright criminality, not less than myophagy itself. Hystrix cristata (*Shart*) lives only in abandoned termite-cones in the desert. A very rare large squirrel is found upon tamarind trees.

Cattle-breeding is, on the whole, in a more advanced state among the Galla than among the Amhára, who prefer agricultural pursuits. The common sheep (*Bug*) of Shoa is small, with coarse black wool; the Adaïel have the Hejaz lamb, short haired, with fat tail; the Galla, a most superior tall fleecy kind, also with fat tail, and without horns. With the latter the Amhára cross their breed. The Galla of Northern Abyssinia rear a peculiar kind with immensely long hair, commonly white; its fleece, dyed black, and then called *Lophisa*, is a dress much prized by chiefs and men of renown throughout the country. The cured

skin (*Dabbalo*) of the common sheep is an indispensable part of the male dress. From the wool a kind of camlet cloth is woven. Goats (*Fial*) thrive better in the mountains; they are tall, horned, with short matted hair of many colours; in fact, quite identical with the European kind. The Adel have no breed of their own, but drive down annually from the Shoan marts vast herds into their savannas.

The Abyssinian horse (*Feras*) is small, and held in little repute. The donkey (*Aheia*), of a sturdy and strong race, is indispensable to communication and commerce, and as a beast of burthen suffers less than the camel from long privation. The mule (*Bagalo*), higher priced than the mare itself, is eminently useful in the hills, being more sure-footed and better-winded than the horse; it is, however, much better cared for. The she mules are larger and stouter, but the males are the most enduring. The breed from the horse-mare and donkey-stallion is patronised by the Abyssinians, but despised by their more warlike neighbours, the Galla, with whom the horse is a favourite. A wild donkey (*Ya meida aheia*, neither Zebra nor Quagga), a little larger than the common ass, herds in the prairies of the Adaïel country, and is timid, cautious, and swift of foot.

Bullocks (*Beri* or *Ferita*) are similar to the Zebu, but the hump is smaller. Some Galla tribes possess a peculiar breed (*Sanga*), the horns of which attain an enormous size, and serve for bottles; from the smaller horns drinking-cups are manufactured. The calves are not used for food. No work except dragging the plough and thrashing is required of the ox.

The wild buffalo (*Gosh*), Bubalus Pegasus, fierce and

as yet untamed, inhabits the forests and jungles of Bulga and Mentshar all along the river Háwash; its chase is considered one of the most dangerous pursuits of the hunter, several human lives being frequently expended on the conquest of one beast. Strepsiceros capensis (*Agazin*), and Oryx capensis (*Sala*), are hunted on the borders of the desert. In the latter species, accident sometimes causes the loss of one horn,—a fact which probably gave rise to the story of the unicorn; moreover, the parallel horns are placed so near each other, that when the animal is seen *en profile* from a distance, it might well appear single-horned. Gazella Mhorr wanders in large herds through the desert; Antilope Saltiana (*Medaqua*) abounds from the sea-coast to the foot of the mountains.

Hyrax Abyssinicus (*Ashkoko*), a harmless inhabitant of nooks and corners of the rocks, is common to Shoa as well as to the hills of the Adel. Bruce's Rhinoceros (*Worsisa*), combining the more striking characters of the Asiatic and African species, that is, the two horns of the latter and the plaits and folds of the former, deserves a closer investigation; it lives in the deep jungles of Mentshar, on the banks of the Háwash. Phascochoerus Africanus (*Erya*), the African hog, infests the woods of the warmer districts, and is a horrible-looking brute. Hippopotamus amphibius (*Gomari*) hides its colossal frame during the day in the floods of the Háwash, the Jumma, and other large rivers and lakes. The Wato, a certain caste among the Galla, subsist upon its flesh; and the thick skin is cut into shields or whips. Elephas Africanus (*Zihoon*) is dispersed in many small families, and destroys the plantations of sugar-cane and Juwarree along the foot of the mountains. Not

the slightest attempt is made to put a stop to his ravages, the paltry weapons in use being of no avail, whilst severe loss of life follows the footsteps of the enraged animal. A small trade in ivory is notwithstanding carried on with the coast in the tusks found accidentally.

Lutra inunguis (*Devil's sheep*), rarely surprised on the banks of the river Bereza, furnishes in its body divers secret medicines to the initiated. Viverra Civetta (*Angeso*) is wild, but frequently kept in cages in the Galla countries to the south-west of Shoa. The Civet (*Dering*), taken out of the bag by means of a small spoon, and collected in cow-horns, is one of the precious articles which the slave caravans proceeding from the interior through Shoa to the coast, barter for their daily food. One Ichneumon (*Mootsheltshella*) robs the poultry-yard. The lion (*Anbassa*), and the leopard (*Nabr*), are well-known throughout Abyssinia. The former seldom pays a visit to the hills, hunting nightly along the banks of rivers, and lurking during the day in his jungle retreats; the latter is more common, and shuns less the presence of man. Both are run down on foot by bodies of men armed solely with lances, which they shower over the slowly retreating beast under a deafening yell. The spoils are an indispensable part of a chief's dress, and objects of importation from the West; the most prized, however, is the skin of the black leopard (*Gasela*), living in and beyond Guráguê.

The domestic cat is a rarity in Shoa; only great men place them as guardians in their storehouses. The dog (*Oosha*), generally a half-wild companion of the farmer, and inmate of his premises, becomes attached and useful when allowed to share the master's protection. It is taught to keep the herds in

order, to catch birds, to defend property, to give warning on the approach of wild beasts. Not the tenth part of the quickly-multiplying race possess owners; but their utility as scavengers proves their safeguard. Canis Anthus (*Dahela*), a wolf-like dog and an offensive thief, frequent in Efát, is caught in pitfalls; its liver has some mysterious virtue. The jackal (*Kabbaro*), and Hyaena crocuta (*Gib*), make nightly inroads into villages and towns; they fight the dogs, and for want of other prey drag off some of these. On the borders of the low country, the night camps must be fenced round with thorns, as a protection against their inroads.

Cercocebus griseo-viridis (*Tota*), lives upon wild figs. Cynocephalus Hamadryas (*Zingiro*), the male, with the mane of a lion and a powerful frame, is very mischievous and even dangerous; it congregates in caves and fissures of the rocks. Colobus (*Guresa*), the prettiest of all monkeys, and one duly patronised by the Abyssinians on account of its retired habits, is always on the top of the highest trees, commonly on the Woira, which bears its food.

Filfil, an animal that throws up mole-hills, baffles all attempts to catch it. Pteropus Egyptiacus and Nycteris Thebaica (*Lelit off*, i.e. night-bird), are harmless, but suspected inhabitants of ruined buildings. An obscure idea of a former supremacy of man over the beasts of the field causes the Abyssinian Christian to view, in a literal sense, those legends which his pious ancestors have recorded of the singular dealings of holy men with the arch-fiend; and he still figuratively personates every evil passion of the human heart by some savage, treacherous, or subtle animal of the inferior creation.

The highlands of Abyssinia can, however, offer but a small number of wild animals, and even of these very few are exclusively her own. The cultivation of the greater portion of the land, the absence of extensive forests, jungles, morasses, caverns, and other places of retreat, added to the great diversity of the clime from that of the adjacent countries, which at once excludes the migratory tribes, are the causes of the fortunate contrast presented to the lowlands of the Adaïel, where the dominion of man has yet been very imperfectly established.

On the Coffee Tree, Tea Plant, and Cotton, of Southern Abyssinia.

Tradition assigns to the countries of Enárea and Cáffa the indigenous residence of the coffee tree. In Shoa Proper the cultivation and consumption are strictly interdicted, as savouring too strongly of the abhorred Mohammadan; but in proper situations it grows strong and healthy, and in all the bordering districts subject to Sáhela Selássie, where the restriction is not enforced, the plantations are numerous and thriving.

Planted before the rains, the seed soon appears above the ground, and when six months old, the offspring is transferred to take the place of some worn-out tree. Water and the manure of the sheep are plentifully supplied, and the crop, which, from a full bearing adult, is generally from thirty to forty pounds, is gathered in March and April. Averaging from eight to ten feet in height, with dark shining foliage, and branches loaded with fruit, it grows luxuriantly in the valleys in any sheltered situation, delighting especially in the soil produced by a decomposition of trap rock, which has been washed

down from the adjacent heights; and although taking six years to arrive at maturity, it yields a slight return on the second season of its transplantation.

The berries are in the first instance of a dark green hue, which before pulling is suffered to turn red, a white milky-looking pulp called *gullaboo* meanwhile filling up the space between the cuticle and the seed. Having been shaken and gathered from the branches, the crop is spread in the sun until the pulp becomes sufficiently dry to admit of its removal, which, by continual free ventilation out of doors, is usually the case in one month. The seeds intended for the plantation are not divested of the husk, but sown by the handful in a small plot, which is carefully manured and watered; and the (*gullaboo*), sold separately from the bean, is employed as a beverage with the decoction of the *chaat*.

For the better security of his own monopoly at the ports of Zeyla and Berbera, the Ameer of Hurrur opposes the importation of coffee into his own dominions, both from Shoa and from the country of the Galla. The plant is extensively and successfully cultivated; but the price given at Hurrur is high in comparison with that paid in Abyssinia; and the average demanded on the coast by the merchants of the former principality, varying from five pence to seven pence per pound, would seem to be in unison with that customary at Massowah in the Red Sea.

The difficulties attending the tedious road to the coast; the lazy indifferent character of the Danákil camel owners, who, regardless of the value of time, spend months upon the journey; and the fitful caprice evinced by the various chieftains though whose territories the caravan must pass—all form great

obstacles to the conveyance of the cheaper produce from Abyssinia, although these might doubtless be overcome within a reasonable period by the well-directed efforts of British perseverance. In Cáffa and Enárea, coffee grows wild like a weed over the rich surface of the country. The beverage is in universal use among the inhabitants; the price paid is almost nominal; and the convenience of water carriage is alone wanting towards the transportation of the product in unlimited quantities to every portion of the globe.

Chaat is a shrub very extensively cultivated, both in Shoa and in the countries adjacent. It is in general use among the inhabitants as a substitute for tea, which, in all its properties and qualities, it closely resembles. The plant is said to have been brought originally from the western mountains, of which the elevation being from five to eight thousand feet, agrees with that of the Chinese tea districts, whilst the average temperature does not exceed 60 degrees Fahrenheit. In a light gravelly soil it attains the height of twelve feet; and the leaves being plucked during the dry season, and well dried in the sun, fetch from one penny to two-pence the pound. They are either chewed, or boiled in milk, or infused in water; and by the addition of honey, a pleasant beverage is produced, which, being bitter and stimulative, dispels sleep if used to excess.

The virtues of the *chaat* are equally to be appreciated with those of the *yerba mate*, recently introduced into England from Brazil and Paraguay. It is already known under the appellation of “Celastrus edulis,” and belongs to Pentandria Monogynia *Linn*, and to the natural family of Celastrineae, or to that sub-family of the Rhamneae, which have in the flower the

stamens alternating with the petals. The family of Rhamneae, namely, the genus Rhamnus itself, supplies to the poorer classes in China a substitute for tea, and is known under the name of Rhamnus Theezaus *Linn*.

(The *chaatt* may thus be characterised:— Frutex inermis; foliis oppositis, petiolatis, oblongis, serrato-dentatis, glabris. Calyx minimus, persistens. Petala 5. Stamina 5-petalia alternantia. Fructus superus, oblonge baccatus, 5-locularis, polyspermus, vel abortive monospermus. Inflorescentia axillaris, cymosa: cymi dichotome stipulati. The plant supplying the Paraguay tea is a species of ilex, and belongs to the same family of Celastrineee, sub-order Aquifoliaceae.)

Cotton of two kinds grows in the sequestered nooks of the eastern face of the mountains of Shoa, and in the valleys at the extreme foot of the range; but from the superior luxuriance of the plant, and the amount of crop produced in the lower situations, the natural climate would appear to exist in those sheltered spots, which in atmosphere much resemble the more favoured parts of Western India. The Efát shrub varies, according to the locality and supply of water, from three feet in height to upwards of seven, and usually assuming the form of a pyramid, extends its lower branches to a width equal to the stature—the size of the leaves, and the soft and yielding nature of the stem, imparting a strong external resemblance to the Bourbon cotton. Eight and nine inches in circumference are not unfrequently attained; and the advantages of a very productive crop twice in each year, the existence of the plant during five seasons, and the heavy return of the particularly fine wool during the very first, award to the species a most

deserving pre-eminence.

(Gossypium Efatense. Seeds completely covered with a close down. Cotton white; capsules 3-celled, 3-valved; flowers small, with a red fundus; leaves 3 to 5-lobed; lobes acuminated.)

The indigenous plant of Efát is not, however, so much esteemed as that from Gondar, which, instead of rising tall and straight from the ground, assumes a spreading dwarfy appearance. The wool is considered superior, and the cloth produced is softer and more elastic, but its existence is limited to three years. Both are planted indiscriminately in the same field, although, when gathered, the crops are preserved unmixed; and after the fifth year the Efát shrub is cut over close to the ground, which is then ploughed up, and sown with wheat or other grain, when, on the removal of the harvest the young cotton shoots are well above the ground, and will yield during two further seasons.

(Gossypium Gondarense. Seeds sprinkled with short hairs. Cotton white; capsules 3-celled, 3-valved; flowers large, yellow; leaves 3 to 5-lobed; lobes commonly obtuse.)

The seed, having been placed for some time in wood-ashes, is well rubbed with red earth before planting; and wherever the locality is favourable to irrigation, water is not spared. The pod, when ripe, is cut with a knife, the husk removed, and the wool deposited in a bag, with the utmost care to exclude extraneous matter. One full bearing bush produces twice during the twelve months between four and five pounds of raw stuff.

End of Volume II.

Volume Three—Chapter One.

The House of Solomon.

Ethiopia is the classical appellation for Abyssinia, or Hábesh, the most ancient as well as the greatest monarchy in Africa. It is by the latter title that the inhabitants themselves, and all their circumjacent neighbours, still distinguish the highlands included between Nubia and the sources of the blue Nile; and the limits of the Christian empire, governed by the sovereigns of Axum, formerly extended over wide tracts of country, now peopled by heathen and stranger nations.

The early history of Hábesh is lost in the fogs of fable. In the Chronicles styled Kebra za Negest, “the glory of the kings,” a romance which pretends to be a faithful repository of the past, Ittopia is modestly stated to have divided with Romia the dominion of the world, received in direct inheritance from Adam. —“Their rulers were both descended from Shem, who was nominated the lineal descendant of Noah, whence all the globe north of Jerusalem belonged unto the former, and all south to the latter!”

This record is believed to have been discovered in the church of Saint Sophia, and it claims for the present royal family descent from the queen of Sheba, whose visit to king Solomon is stated to have placed the sceptre in the hands of the tribe of Judah, with whom it has remained until the present day; and from the peasant to the despot this legend is firmly believed by every native of Abyssinia.

“The queen of Ethiopia,” saith the Chronicle, “whose name was Maqueda, had heard from the merchant Tamerin of the wisdom and the glory of king Solomon; and resolving to visit him in his own country, she proceeded to the land of Israel with all the rich presents that her empire could afford.”

After a season the royal lady returned; and her son Menilek, the result of her visit to the greatest potentate of the age, was born, and in due time transmitted to his august sire, that he might be duly instructed in all the mysteries of Jewish law and science. Having been anointed king under the name of David, he returned to his native land, with a large suite of the nobles of Israel, and a band of her most learned elders under the direction of Ascarias, the son of Zadok the High Priest.

But previously to his setting out, the gates of the temple of Jerusalem were left unguarded, and the doors miraculously opened in order to afford an opportunity, which was not neglected, of stealing and carrying away the holy ark of Zion and the tables of the law. To queen Maqueda also is attributed the inhuman treatment since experienced by the royal princes, for on resigning the reins of authority to her son, about nine hundred and seventy years before the birth of Christ, she caused a solemn obligation to be sworn by all, that henceforward no female should hold sway in the land; and that those princes of the blood-royal upon whom the crown did not devolve, should, until the succession opened to them, or during their natural term of existence, be kept close prisoners on a lofty mountain; a cruel and despotic enactment, which, through a long succession of ages, was jealously observed.

The Emperor of Ethiopia early adopted the title of Negoos, or Negásh; and the coast of the Indian ocean towards Sofala was held by his deputy with the style of Bahr Negásh, “the King of the Sea,”—a vicegerent with the same title, governing Yemen, which from the earliest times down to the Mohammadan conquest of Arabia belonged to Abyssinia. The family of Menilek ibn Hákim are stated in the Kebra za Negest to have worn the crown in uninterrupted felicity until the year of our Lord 960, when an event occurred which nearly obliterated that dynasty, and first spread anarchy, violence, and oppression throughout the once happy realm.

Christianity became the national religion of Abyssinia in the beginning of the fourth century. The Fálashas, descendants of the Jews, who are believed to have accompanied Menilek from Jerusalem, had meanwhile waxed extremely powerful, and refusing to abandon the faith of their forefathers, they now declared independence. Electing a sovereign of their own creed, they took possession of the almost impregnable mountain fastnesses of Simien, where their numbers were augmented by continual accessions from the Jews who were expelled from Palestine and from Arabia. Under the constant titles of Gideon and Judith, a succession of kings and queens held a limited sway until, in the middle of the tenth century, the Princess Esther, styled, by the Amhára, Issát, which signifies “fire,” a woman of extraordinary beauty and talent, conceived the design of subverting the religion, and with it the existing order of succession in the empire. A fatal epidemic had swept off the Emperor, and spread desolation through court and capital. Del Naad, who had been nominated to the crown, was of tender years; and

Esther, deeming no opportunity more favourable, surprised the rock Dámo, on which, by virtue of the existing statute, the other scions of the royal house were confined, and having massacred the whole, five hundred in number, proclaimed herself the queen over Abyssinia.

The sole surviving prince of his race was hurried by the Amhára nobility into the distant and loyal province of Shoa; and the reins of government passed into the hands of a Christian family of Lasta, styled Zegue, with whom they remained until the thirteenth century. During the administration of Naakweto Laab, the last of this dynasty, Tekla Haïmanót the monk, a native of Abyssinia, was created Abuna, (Abuna, or more properly Aboon, signifies “our father”) or Primate of Ethiopia. He had previously founded in Shoa the celebrated monastery of Debra Libanos, and was a man celebrated alike for the purity of his life, the soundness of his understanding, and his devotion to his country. Obtaining extraordinary influence over the mind of the king, he prevailed upon him, for conscience-sake, to resign a crown which could never be purified from the stain of usurpation. The banished line of Solomon, content with the dominion of Shoa, had made no effort towards the recovery of their ancient boundaries; but by a treaty now concluded, Yekweno Amlak was restored to the throne of his ancestors. Naakweto Laab was to retain Lasta in perpetual independence, with the golden stool, the silver kettle-drums, and other insignia of royalty, whilst one third of the realm was permanently ceded to the Primate for the maintenance of his ecclesiastical dignity, and for the support of the clergy, convents, and churches. This was styled the “Era of Partition;” and it formed a stipulation, that the

functions of Archbishop should in future be vested in none save a Copt, appointed from Cairo by the chair of Saint Mark.

Volume Three—Chapter Two.

The Lineage of Shoa.

Thus affairs continued until the sixteenth century, when the invasion of Mohammad Graan led to the total dismemberment of the Ethiopic empire; and Shoa, amongst other of the richer provinces, was overrun and colonised by the Galla hordes. Nebla Dengel, the emperor of Gondar, fell by the hand of the Moslem conqueror. Fáris, the son of Dilbonach, by a daughter of the house of Solomon, held a Ras-ship under the crown, in the stronghold of Dair, and from his son Sumbellete sprang Nagási, the first monarch of Efát, who was born at Amad Wásha, the capital of Agamcha, and a century and a half ago held his capital in Mans. Prior to the conquest of that province, which was followed by the gradual subjugation of Shoa and its present dependencies, this prince occupied a lofty fortress in the Yedjow country, where some of his descendants still remain. From it are visible the high and impregnable mounts Ambásel and Geshama; the latter of which fastnesses, in the more remote periods of Ethiopic splendour, had served as a place of confinement for the younger brothers of the reigning emperor; whilst the former is in the hands of an independent ruler, whose ancestress becoming the mistress of the Christian governor, the father of the Delilah contrived, during the celebration of her nuptials, to surprise the

garrison, and put every man to the sword.

Nagási repaired in due time to Gondar, to be formally invested by the Emperor; but after receiving at the royal hands twelve “nugáreet,” he died suddenly. To one of his four sons he bequeathed on his death-bed a shield, to a second a spear, to a third a ring, and to Sabastiye, his favourite child, a war-steed which he had always ridden to the combat. The youths were summoned to court in order that they might receive their legacies; and on opening an amulet attached to the horse’s neck, it was found to contain the will and testament of the deceased, nominating Sabastiye the successor to his possessions.

This prince reigned twenty-five years, and was succeeded by Abiyé, his eldest son, who after fifteen years was gathered to his fathers at Arámba, which he had wrested from the Aréeo Galla. Emmaha Yasoos, who succeeded next, and reigned thirty-two years, introduced several matchlocks from Gondar, conquered Ankóber, and removed his capital thither from Dokáket. At the period of his accession, the sorcerers predicted that if one Arkarádis should be appointed minister, the empire would be doubled. Diligent search was made throughout the realm, but a mendicant was the sole individual of that name who could be found. He was duly inducted into office; and his first step was to revive among the circumjacent Galla an ancient prophecy, that when fires should be seen on the summits of the three loftiest peaks of the great barrier range, their possessions would be overrun by the Christians. After the lapse of a few months, Arkarádis caused beacon-fires to be kindled during the night on the crests of Kondie, Ankóber, and Mamrat; upon beholding which many of the heathen fled, and without a blow being struck, sundry

districts were appended to Shoa.

Asfa Woosen, grandsire to the reigning monarch, succeeded to his father Emmaha Yasoos, and reigned thirty-three and a half years. Of forty-eight male children he was the bravest. He was a great Nimrod, and an unparalleled warrior, slaying three hundred Pagans with his own spear from the back of his favourite war-steed Amádoo. Amongst many other despotic laws enacted during his reign, was one prohibiting the manufacture of hydromel by the subject. Three great rebellions threatened the stability of his empire, which had now shaken off all allegiance to Gondar, but each in turn was quelled by his personal valour. The last insurrection was headed by Woosen Suggud, the heir-apparent. In a pitched battle the youth was wounded by the hand of his father, taken prisoner, and immured throughout the term of the monarch's life. During the last fifteen years of his reign, Asfa Woosen was totally blind. It is fully believed that the sight of one eye was destroyed by Thavánan, as already narrated in the legend of "the tormentor," and that one of the royal concubines, whom that sorcerer had spirited away, destroyed the other shortly afterwards, by means of a powerful spell imparted by her paramour.

Since the commencement of the present century, the custom of consigning to a dungeon the brothers and kindred of the reigning monarch has fallen into desuetude in Northern Abyssinia. The princes of the blood-royal now wander over the country unmolested and unheeded, attaching themselves to any chief who may be willing to extend countenance and support, and holding themselves at his disposal in the event of his gaining ascendancy over his rivals, and requiring a titular emperor to perform the

indispensable ceremony of nominating a Ras. But the form is still retained, of placing the crown upon the brows of a descendant of the ancient line of Solomon, who is content to be a mere puppet in the hands of the temporary minister; and enjoying a stipend of three hundred dollars per annum, with the paltry revenues accruing from the tolls of the hebdomadal market in the capital, he remains a prisoner upon parole in his palace at Gondar.

Volume Three—Chapter Three.

The Monarch and the Court.

Sáhela Selássie, “the clemency of the Trinity,” seventh king of Shoa, whose surname is Menilek, was twelve years of age when the assassination of Woosen Suggud called him from a monastery to the throne, and placed in his hands the reins of despotic government over a wild Christian nation. His sire had enjoyed a brief, but exceedingly active reign of four and a half years, during which he extended his empire far beyond the limits bequeathed to him by Asfa Woosen—made conquests in the south to the mountains of Garra Gorphoo, and in the west to the Nile. The most despotic measures marked his transient but iron rule; and had he survived, the expectations formed of him would in all probability have been realised, and he would have become monarch of all Abyssinia. But the nation groaned under his oppression; and after a series of the harshest acts, induced by visits in disguise, like those of Haroun Alraschid, the great Kaliph of Bagdad, to the houses of his subjects, and to places of public

resort, a Shankela slave, whom he had provoked by ill usage, turned upon his royal master, and having slain him with a sword, set fire to the palace at Kondie, which was burned to the ground; and the wealth amassed in many earthen jars melted, according to the tradition, into a liquid stream of mingled silver and gold, which flowed over the mountain-side.

In Shoa, as in other savage countries, the tidings of the dissolution of the monarch, unless timely concealed, spread like lightning to the furthest extremities of the kingdom, and become a signal for rapine, anarchy, and murder, which rage unrestrained during the continuance of the interregnum. Every individual throughout the realm deems himself at full liberty to act according to the bent of his own vicious inclinations—to perpetrate every atrocity, and to indulge in the gratification of every revengeful and licentious passion, without fear of retribution or of punishment; and it being perfectly understood that there exists neither law nor rule until the new sovereign shall have been proclaimed, the kingless land for a season runs rivers of blood. Fearful was the tragedy that followed the assassination of Woosen Suggud. The royal family residing at Ankóber, and the heir-apparent at a still greater distance from Kondie, there ensued a scene of anarchy and confusion which it would be difficult to describe; and at Debra Libanos alone there fell no fewer than eight hundred victims to private animosity, of whose murder no account was ever taken.

The eyes of the monarch being closed in death, the minister styled Dedj Agafári, “the introducer through the door,” proceeds to the inauguration of the successor, who, unless some other arrangement

shall have been willed, is usually the heir-apparent. Presented to the senators and to the inmates of the palace, the herald proclaims aloud, “We have reason to mourn, and also to rejoice, for our old father is dead, but we have found a new one.” The accession thus declared, the king is invested with the robes of state, and taking seat upon the throne, the public officers first in order, and then the people, offer homage, and bow before his footstool.

General mourning is invariably observed during the seven days which follow the promulgation of the national calamity. Men, women, and children, evince their grief by tearing the hair, scarifying the temples with the nails, and casting themselves sobbing and screaming upon the ground—the good qualities of the deceased being extolled the while. But the chief mourners on the melancholy occasion are those princes of the blood-royal who are affected by the barbarous practice handed down from the earliest periods of Abyssinian history. For in the kingdom of Shoa revolutionary projects against the crown have invariably been anticipated by consigning the uncles and brothers of the sovereign to a subterranean dungeon, where they pass the remainder of their days in the elaborate carving of harps and ornaments of ivory.

Widely different from that of the aspiring Rasselas is the lot of these pining members of the dynasty of Shoa. No happy valley is theirs, whom a barbarous policy has from time immemorial condemned thus to linger in hopeless imprisonment during the remnant of their sublunary pilgrimage, unless the demise of the despot without issue should, peradventure, call some one of the captives from the dank vault to the throne. Food, with scanty materials for amusement

and occupation, are indeed allowed, together with permission to breathe the air of heaven after the sun has set upon their own green hills. But no domestic tie links them to the society from which they are immured—no sympathy of wife or child can ever, by a word of kindness, alleviate their lonely condition. The bonds of relationship have been rudely snapped asunder, and the very name of brother is the stern curse of those whose only crime is their affinity to the monarch.

Seven princes of the blood-royal were inmates of the vaults of Góncho on the arrival of the British Embassy in Shoa. The legitimate issue male of the reigning sovereign has fortunately been limited to two; but it was not the less melancholy to reflect, that one or other of these interesting youths must, in all human probability, drag out the noon and evening of his days within the walls of that dismal dungeon, where so many have sunk into the grave unrecorded and unpitied. The crown, although hereditary in the house of Solomon, is elective by will at each decease, and the eldest born can assert no exclusive title to succession by right of primogeniture. Bashakh Woorud, “go down if go like,” is an ominous title enough to distinguish the heir-apparent to the throne. Better known by his Christian appellation of Hailoo Mulakoot, and now in his sixteenth year, he has by his royal sire been permitted to accompany the army into the field, when he slew some of the Galla with his own hand; but entertaining a predilection for the church, he is educating in the monastery of Loza; whilst his brother, Seifa Selássie, “the sword of the Trinity,” who is three or four years younger, is the favourite of his father, and may be regarded as the heir-presumptive.

In accordance with the custom of the land, this prince is also secluded in a monastery at Medák, under the Alaka Amda Zion. In addition to a eunuch and a nurse, each of the royal scions is attended by guardians, whose office it is to prevent his playing truant or creating disturbances in the kingdom. They are trained to equestrian and warlike exercises, and to the use of the shield and spear; and are made to attend divine service, to fast, to repeat their prayers, and to peruse the psalms at night. Their course of education differs little from that of other Abyssinian youths, than whom they are even more under monkish influence. The study of the Gebata Hawáriat, or "table of the apostles," which comprises the seven epistles of Peter, John, James, and Jude, and the acquisition of the Psalter by heart, is followed by the perusal of the Revelation, the epistles of Saint Paul, and the gospels—the histories of the Holy Virgin, of Saints George and Michael, Saint Tekla Haïmanót, and others, completing the course. Few of the priesthood understand the art of writing, and all regard the exercise of the pen as shameful and derogatory. The royal princes therefore stand little chance of instruction in this branch of education, and their acquaintance with the Abyssinian code of jurisprudence must depend also upon the erudition of their preceptors. The strictest discipline is enforced; disobedience is punished by bonds and corporal chastisement, which latter the king causes to be inflicted in his presence; and fully imbued with the conviction that to "spare the rod is to spoil the child," His Majesty occasionally corrects the delinquent with his own hands.

Queen Besábesh—"thou hast multiplied"—the mother of the young princes, and also of four

princesses, is the daughter of the last independent ruler of Morabeitie. She was relict of Tekla Georgis, a commoner of Shoa; and although not permanently resident in the palace, is much beloved by Sáhela Selássie. Five hundred concubines complete the royal harem, of whom seven reside under the palace roof, thirteen in the immediate outskirts, and the residue in various parts of the empire. By these ladies the king has a numerous progeny; the males, who are not obnoxious to imprisonment on a new accession, being created governors of provinces, whilst the illegitimate daughters are bestowed in marriage upon whomsoever his despotic Majesty may think proper to select among the nobles and magnates of the land.

The ceremony of taking into the royal harem a concubine of rank, which measure is usually connected with some political object, consists in an interchange of presents betwixt the monarch and the parents of the damsel. Chámie, the Galla Queen of Moolo Fálada, near the Nile, presented with her daughter, who occupies a niche in the harem, a dower consisting of two hundred milch cows, one hundred teams of oxen with ploughs, a number of horses, and many slaves of both sexes, *gássela* skins, and other choice peltries, and five hundred vessels of virgin honey, with twelve cats to watch over and protect them from the inroads of the mice. Mohammadans and Pagans are compelled, after the formation of the royal alliance, to embrace the Christianity of Ethiopia; but that fidelity is far from being a consequence of the conversion has been evinced in numerous disgraceful instances, the not least notorious of which involves the reputation and the health of one who long enjoyed a most exalted

place in the king's affections—a sister of Wulásma Mohammad.

Throughout intra-tropical Africa the *nugáreet*, or kettle-drum, forms the emblem of power, as does the sceptre in other realms. Appointments, edicts, and proclamations, roll with its notes to the ears of the attentive nation of Shoa. It accompanies all forays and campaigns, is the symbol of investiture, and even the Church is controlled by its echoes reverberating from the palace hill. The trumpet is also a concomitant on state occasions, when two large crimson *debáboch*, or aftabgirs, screen the royal person. The attire of Sáhela Selássie, although usually plain and unassuming, is, on certain pageants, more imposing, and is then assisted by all the gold and tinsel that the wardrobe can boast. The precious metal, for which he entertains a vast affection, forming his exclusive prerogative, is displayed in massive bracelets and rings, and in the embroidery with which his tight vest of green silk is profusely loaded, although partially hidden beneath the enveloping robe of Abyssinia. His Majesty's crown is an elegantly embossed tiara, with numerous chains hanging in gorgeous clusters around the brow, and surmounted by the imperial plume of white egret feathers.

On the Saturday in Passion week, a solemn assembly is held in the palace court, which is decked out with carpets, and velvets, and gay cloths. The priests then rehearse the military achievements of the monarch, and the gathered population respond with the loud hum of approbation; but with this exception, and that of the great annual review at the feast of Máskal, or the triumphal return from the successful foray against the heathen Galla, there is little pomp or

pageant to be witnessed at the present day. Badges and honorary distinctions, however, still continue to be conferred upon the brave in war. The high-sounding titles of household officers are yet scrupulously retained; and these, with the embossed shield, the silver sword, the gauntlet, the bracelet, the armlet, and the glittering *akodáma*, attest the presence at the court of Shoa of the last remnant of the ancient, but faded grandeur of the proud emperors of Ethiopia.

Volume Three—Chapter Four.

The Reigning Despot.

A more singular contrast of good and evil was perhaps never presented than in the person and administration of the Christian despot. Avarice, suspicion, caprice, duplicity, and superstition, appear to form the basis of his chequered character, and his every act exhibits a proportion of meanness and selfishness, linked with a desire to appear munificent. Yet are these radically bad ingredients tempered and concealed by some amiable and excellent qualities. His virtues are many as they are conspicuous: his faults entail harm chiefly upon himself; and the appropriation of the greater portion of his hours might be held up as a worthy pattern for imitation.

During the entire forenoon of every day in the week, the Sabbath and Saturday excepted, which latter, as a remnant of Jewish religion, is universally reverenced, is he engaged in public affairs—in trying appeals, and in deciding suits which are brought from

all quarters of his dominions. Notwithstanding the impediments offered by a weak constitution, and by many bodily infirmities prematurely brought on by excess, he leads a life of constant activity, and, both as respects his public and his private avocations, stands greatly distinguished above other Abyssinian rulers, who too justly incur the reproach of idleness and perpetual debauchery.

After the religious performance of his matin devotions, the king inspects his stables and workshops, bestows charity upon the assembled poor, despatches couriers, and accords private audiences of importance. Then reclining in state upon the throne, he listens for hours to all appeals brought against the decisions of his judges, and adjusts in public the tangled disputes and controversies of his subjects. Here access is easy. Sáhela Selássie listens to all, foreigners or natives, men and women, rich and poor. Every one possesses the right to appear before him, and boldly to explain the nature of his case; and although the established usage of the land compels the subject to prostrate himself, and to pay rather adoration than respect, yet may he urge his complaint without the least hesitation or timidity. Judgment is always prompt, and generally correct; nor will the observer be less struck with the calmness and placidity that mark the royal demeanour in the midst of the most boisterous discussions, than at the method and perspicuity with which such manifold affairs are disposed of; and whilst thus receiving the most favourable impression of His Majesty’s capacity for the transaction of business, a parallel might be drawn between his demeanour and that of many more civilised monarchs, which would be flattering to the semi-barbarous ruler of Shoa.

At three o'clock the king proceeds to dine alone; and no sooner is the royal appetite appeased, than the doors are thrown open, and the long table in the great banqueting-hall is crowded with distinguished warriors and guests. Harpers and fiddlers perform during the entire entertainment, and singers lift up their voices in praise of the munificence and liberality of their sovereign, who, during all this scene of confusion and turmoil, still continues to peruse letters or to issue instructions, until the board has been thrice replenished and as often cleared, and until all of a certain rank have freely partaken of his hospitality. At five he retires with a few of those who enjoy the largest share of intimacy, to the private apartments. Prayers and potent liquors fill up the evening hours, and the company depart, leaving the favourite page who is made the bearer of the royal commands.

Midnight calls His Majesty from his couch to the perusal of psalms and sacred writings. A band of sturdy priests in the antechamber continue during the livelong night to chant a noisy chorus of hymns to preserve his slumbers from the influence of evil spirits or apparitions, and daylight brings a repetition of the busy scene, which is diversified by exercise on horseback, whenever leisure and the fickle sky will permit. Making excursions with from four to five hundred mounted followers, it is then his wont to sit for hours on the splashy banks of some sequestered brook, conversing familiarly with those about him, witnessing the exercise of his stud, and devoting every spare moment to the numerous petitioners who crowd with complaints around the royal person.

Dreading the fate of his father, the monarch never stirs from his threshold without a pistol concealed

under his girdle along with his favourite amulet, in which he reposes implicit faith and reliance. His couch is nightly surrounded by tried and trusty warriors, endeared to his person by munificence displayed to no other class of his subjects, whilst the gates of the palace are barred after the going down of the sun, and stoutly guarded.

The principal officers of the royal household, and those most confided in by the suspicious monarch, are the eunuchs. Ayto Baimoot, their late chief, was specially charged with the royal harem, in all its branches, as well as with the establishment of slaves. Long faithfully attached to his indulgent master, he was, whilst he lived, the king's only intimate counsellor, and was never separated from his person.

Next in order is the herald, or Dech Agafári, who, in addition to the important duties already detailed, is the channel through whom all new appointments by the crown and all royal edicts and proclamations are published to the nation. Armed with a rod of green rushes, he ushers into the presence-chamber all officials, strangers, and visitors, introducing at the appointed time those who have complaints or representations to lay at the footstool of the throne. He is the Alaka of all who have any boon to crave, and is in charge of the host of pages and younger sons of the nobility who attend upon the king—is in general master of the ceremonies on occasions of state or pageant, and introduces guests who may be invited to the banquet.

The keys of the royal library are in the custody of the chief of the Church, the Alaka Wolda Georgis, a layman and a soldier, who was elevated to the

exalted post he occupies in direct violation of the established usage of the country. The office of chief smith and Alaka of all the *tabiban*, “wise people,” or handicraftsmen, throughout the realm, and of Body Physician, are concentrated in the person of Ayto Habti, who must freely partake of all drugs that are to be administered to the king, and, with the Commander-in-Chief of the Body-Guard, the Master of the Horse, and the dwarf Father Confessor, be in constant attendance upon His Majesty.

As well from religious as from worldly motives, Sáhela Selássie entertains a vast number of pensioners, who receive *dirgo*, or daily rations, in various proportions—some being limited to dry bread, whilst others extend to mead, the greatest luxury which the country can afford. The distribution of this maintenance comes exclusively within the province of the Purveyor-General, the food being prepared in the royal kitchen by the numerous slaves, who, shame to the Christian monarch, compose the entire household establishment. All foreigners and visitors receive it; and, in addition to about one thousand of this class, there are many besides who possess the privilege of always dining at the royal table.

Making munificent donations to churches and monasteries, the king stands in high odour with the fanatic clergy, and thus enjoys the advantage of their influence over the priest-ridden population, whom he rules principally through the church; and, never undertaking any project without consulting some of its members, is in turn much swayed by their exhortations, prophecies, dreams, and visions. Strongly attached to the Christianity of Ethiopia, which abounds in Jewish prejudices, he is still far from being intolerant. According to the best of his

uncultivated ideas he encourages letters, and spends considerable sums of money in collecting ancient manuscripts. Possessing natural talents and shrewdness, which have been improved by the rudiments of education, he rules his hereditary dominions with tact and advantage; and might, had his energies been properly directed, have shone one of the greatest potentates that ever wielded the sceptre in the now disorganised empire.

Were the active life of Sáhela Selássie guided by superior principles—could he be brought to despise petty things, and to sink the details of unimportant affairs in matters of greater moment—how wealthy and powerful a monarch might he not still become! He would have time at command to plan truly royal projects; and, possessed as he is of means the most ample, would find leisure to carry through his designs. Although, like other rulers of Abyssinia, he is ever entertaining some project of aggrandisement, his mind is yet filled with trifles, and not sufficiently expanded to mature a plan of operations upon an extended scale. Precluded by want of liberal education or of intercourse with civilised nations, from calculating events, or looking deep into the page of futurity, he lives in fact for little beyond the present day. Old in constitution, though not in years—enfeebled by excess, as well in mind as in body—uncivilised—called early to the throne, and ruling during a long succession of years according to one unvarying system—the dictates of his own caprice—he requires some violent impulse, some imminent and apparent peril, to arouse him from the torpor of security, to stimulate his latent energies to greater exertion, and to induce him temporarily to sacrifice a portion of his idolised gold, in order to reap a harvest

five hundred fold.

From the merciful hand of this unique specimen of absolute authority, the sceptre falls lightly upon the head of the offender. “I have before mine eyes the fear of God,” is his frequent exclamation when passing the extreme sentence of the law. Guilty of none of the cruelties or enormities which stain most of the other rulers of Abyssinia—accessible, not easily offended, even-tempered, patient in his investigations, mild and usually just in his despotism —he is universally adored in his own dominions, rather through love than through fear. The oath by the life of the king is the only binding obligation in the land; and from the general success of his military expeditions, he is feared and respected by all the adjacent tribes. Conducting himself with that easy freedom which generally distinguishes conscious superiority, his demeanour is dignified and commanding; and the appearance of the half-civilised Christian savage, who sways the destinies of millions in the heart of heathen Africa, would proclaim his high descent even in the courts of Europe.

Volume Three—Chapter Five.

The Government and the Royal Household.

The hereditary provinces subject to Sáhela Selássie are comprised in a rectangular domain of one hundred and fifty by ninety miles, which area is traversed by five systems of mountains, whereof the culminating point divides the basin of the Nile from that of the Háwash. The Christian population of Shoa

and Efát are estimated at one million of souls, and that of the Mohammadan and Pagan population of the numerous dependencies at a million and a half. Without including tribute in kind, the royal revenues are said to amount to about eighty or ninety thousand German crowns, accruing chiefly from import duties on slaves, foreign merchandise, and salt. The annual expenses of the state not exceeding ten thousand dollars, it is probable that His Christian Majesty, during his long reign of nearly thirty years, must have amassed considerable treasure, which is carefully deposited underground, and not lightly estimated by its possessor.

Nearly in the centre of the kingdom presides Zenama Work, “the golden rain,” relict of Woosen Suggud, and mother of the reigning monarch. The seat of her government, it has already been said, is at Zalla Dingai, “the rolling stone;” and she rules over nearly the whole of the north-west, or in fact over almost one half of the realm—appropriating in reversion to the crown the entire revenues of her dependent territories, and appointing her own governors with the royal approval. Judge in her own dominions, her decisions nevertheless lie under appeal to the throne; and even as queen-dowager, she is debarred participation in certain privileges which form the exclusive prerogatives of her son, over whose mind she exerts an influence, compared by the people of Shoa to that which they believe the holy Virgin to exercise over the Redeemer.

Long tired of the world and of its vanities, the venerable lady has made numerous applications for permission to retire to a convent, and assume the veil, the royal entreaties to the contrary having alone delayed the execution of the design. Many years

barren, she sought the benediction of the wandering "Wáto," and her nuptial couch being shortly crowned by the birth of Prince Menilek, the happy event was ascribed to necromantic intervention. Thus the tribe of the soothsayer is to this day left in peaceful occupation of its mountains on the bank of the wooded Háwash, whilst the destroying hand of the Amhára presses in wrath upon the head of the surrounding heathen.

Four hundred governors, styled *Shoomant*, are appointed under the crown of Shoa, and these with fifty *Abogásoch*, or guardians of the frontier, literally "fathers of war," corresponding with the margraves of Germany in olden times, conduct the affairs of the kingdom and its dependencies. Some few of these appointments are hereditary; but the majority are purchased by the highest bidder, and the tenure is at best extremely precarious. A governor on his appointment is invested with a silver sword as a badge of office, and is bound to appear with his contingent of militia, whensoever summoned for military service. His grants are regulated by the amount of his levy; and as he rises in the royal estimation, so he receives badges also for subordinates, who may have distinguished themselves by their zeal, activity, or valour.

No courtier or great man can, after a long absence, approach the throne empty-handed. Thousands of stern warriors bend down with profound and slavish abasement before the fellow-mortal who presides over their sublunary destinies; and even the nobles of the land twice prostrate themselves, and kiss the dust in a manner the most abject and humiliating. All public officers make oblations from time to time in kind; and the king is, besides, in the habit of requiring

arbitrarily from those in charge of districts, tribute in honey, clarified butter, cloth, or whatever else he may happen to require. Weak, and at the same time cunning—suspicious of every one, and placing not the smallest confidence in any of his functionaries—he sometimes precipitates them from affluence into a dungeon, when they believe themselves in the enjoyment of the largest share of favour. Resolved to disgrace a nobleman, he either sends for or visits the doomed personage, treats him with marked kindness and condescension, in view to dispel alarm; and embracing a favourable moment when no resistance can be offered, gives the fiat to those in attendance to secure their prisoner.

If not retained by fees and oblations, governments are constantly forfeited and resold. Frequent changes are also made with the design of counteracting collusion and rebellion. Although the power of the Negoos is absolute, it is subdivided amongst all who execute his orders, and little despots arise in all the numerous governors of provinces—each actuated by the same desire of being the executor of his own supreme will. Still they bear a heavy responsibility, and the slightest error in judgment, or, even in the absence of all delinquency, the mere whim of the monarch, may involve them in destruction when least anticipated. Accountable for every event, whether probable or improbable, assiduity in the management of affairs does not always avail. Talents and bravery are sometimes displayed in vain, and mere caprice may hurl the possessor of both from his high estate to the deepest ruin and disgrace.

Armed with the delegated authority of the despot, each governor, enacting the autocrat in his own domains, fashions his habits and privileges after

those of his royal master. His fields are cultivated in the same manner, and he possesses the advantage of being able to extort from the inhabitants, for a very inadequate compensation in grain, many days of extra labour in each of the great agricultural operations. A fluctuating tribute in kind, regulated by his will and caprice, is exacted from all land-holders, to meet the demands of His Majesty, who, in addition to an inauguration fee of from four to six hundred dollars, is, unless voluntary offerings be frequently made, ever sending requisitions for live stock and farm produce. This system falls heavily upon all classes. A governor trusting to his own resources is speedily impoverished; whilst he who taxes too roughly is certain to be stripped of authority and property, on representation made to the throne.

But the Abyssinian is never loth to climb up again whence he has fallen, and the humbled grandee, although impoverished and shunned by the servile crowd, strives again to ingratiate himself with his sovereign—frequently succeeds by long and patient attendance, and once more girded with the silver sword of authority, he attains that perilous and giddy pinnacle, where the weapon of destruction hangs over his head suspended only by a single hair.

The essence of despotism pervading the land to its very core, the Negoos is the true God of its adoration. All the best portions of the soil pertain to His Majesty, and the life as well as the property of every subject is at his sole and absolute disposal. Every act is performed with some view to promote his pleasure, and the subject waits on his sovereign will, for favour, preferment, and place. All appointments are at the king’s disposal—all rewards and distinctions come from the king’s hand. In years of famine, food itself is

only to be obtained from the royal granaries; and it is not therefore surprising that those over whom one so absolute presides should be mean, servile, and cringing, and that they should, in their aspirations after power and place, mould every action of their life according to his will.

Concealment of any acquisition, howsoever small and valueless, is invariably visited with loss of office and confiscation of property. Gold forms the exclusive privilege of royalty. Personal ornaments and coloured raiment have until now been restricted by the severest sumptuary laws, and none, except the highest chiefs and warriors of the land, were ever honoured by an exemption from the rule. But these harsh prohibitions, which exist under no other government in Abyssinia, originated long before the present reign, and have been enforced during so many generations, that they are now little irksome to the people.

Shoa has hitherto stood exempt from the unceasing endeavours to acquire ascendancy on the part of all the various chieftains who divide the sceptre in the north—allied to-day in bonds of the closest amity, the next arrayed in the most bitter animosity. Engaged in perpetual strife, the march of any one prince beyond the border of his own territories proves the signal to the nearest of his neighbours to carry fire and sword into the heart of his undefended domain; but although torn by civil war from one extremity to the other, the bond of the ancient Ethiopic empire is still not entirely dissolved; and notwithstanding that the “king of kings” has dwindled into the mere spectre of imperial dignity —is deposed and restored to the throne at the caprice of every predominant ruler—his name at least is deemed essential to render valid the title of Ras,

and through the latter, of the governors of all the dependent provinces of Abyssinia.

But herein the King of Shoa forms an exception; and fortunate it is for His Majesty as well as for his dominions, that the surrounding Galla tribes, united with natural defences, should have so completely shut him out from participation in the intestine disturbances which have ravaged and laid waste every other province of this beautiful and once prosperous land. Although he propitiates the leader of every party, and pursues a conciliatory policy, it would be in his power to mediate with a high hand for the advantage of all; yet is it curious to observe with what tenacity the Abyssinians adhere to preconceived opinions. The kingdom of Shoa, which was formerly a portion of the empire, still continues in general estimation to form an integral part thereof; and Sáhela Selássie is therefore, but in name only, regarded as a vassal of the puppet Emperor of Gondar, notwithstanding that he is, *de facto*, an independent monarch.

Volume Three—Chapter Six.

Galla Dependencies in the South.

During the reign of Asfa Woosen, grandsire to Sáhela Selássie, the independent states of Shoa and Efát were of very inconsiderable extent. Morát, Morabeitie, Giddem, Bulga, and other districts now appended, were at that period distinct governments, as is now the case in Guráguê where there are more rulers than provinces. It is not therefore surprising,

that amid the perpetual quarrels of the Christian princes, the Galla should have been left in undisturbed possession of the lands which they had wrested from Southern Abyssinia. But no sooner had Asfa Woosen subdued King Zeddoo, the usurper of Morabeitie and Morát, with whom sank also those of inferior pretensions, than he began with his united forces to make inroads upon the Galla tribes. The unsettled state of the newly-conquered provinces precluded extensive operations; and the task of reducing the Pagans to obedience was thus principally bequeathed to Woosen Suggud, whose strong arm not only kept in submission the territories conquered by his father, but added greatly to the western limits of Shoa by the acquisition of Moogher on the Nile, and by the conquest of the Abitchu, Wóberi, and Gillán, so far south as the mountains of Garra Gorphoo.

Conceiving that a youth who had scarcely numbered twelve years would be unable to hold them in subjection, the tributary Galla revolted immediately upon the accession of Sáhela Selássie. But subsequent events proved that they were mistaken in the estimate formed of the monarch's military capacity. He vanquished King Hailoo, who still asserted his dignity in Morát. Having amassed firearms from Gondar and Tigré, as well as from the sea-coast of Tajúra, he was enabled to quell many successive insurrections, and for a number of years was fortunate in the fidelity of the lion-hearted Medóko, who was even more feared than himself by the surrounding Gentiles. He caused all the Galla of the province of Shoa-Méda to be circumcised and baptised; and having commanded them to wear about their necks the "*máteb*," or cord of blue silk, to

fast, and to eat neither with Mohammadans nor Pagans, nor to touch meat that has not been killed in the name of the Holy Trinity, they have thenceforth been denominated Christians.

Throughout his long reign, it has been the king's favourite project to re-unite the scattered remnants of Christian population which still mark the extent of the dominions of his forefathers. The countries to the south and south-west have therefore always received the largest share of His Majesty's attention, and in those directions he has attacked and subdued in succession all the tribes on this side of the Háwash. The Metta, Metcha, Moolo Fálada, Betcho-Woreb, Betcho-Foogook, and Charsa-Dagha, are all appended to Shoa. Moreover the royal arms have crossed the Háwash, and to a certain extent accomplished the reduction of the Sóddo, of the frontiers of Guráguê, of the Karaiyo, Loomi, Jillé, and other remote clans. In the north little progress has been made, and many reverses have deterred further attempts upon the wild mountaineers; but in the north-east the Selmi, the Abóti, and several other tribes previously independent, have been reduced to feudal submission, and by judicious management are made to secure the frontier from invasion.

But although Sáhela Selássie has thus widely extended the limits of his empire, he has adopted no efficient measures to consolidate his conquests. As a contrast between the former and the existing administration, it is said of the southern Galla, "where all was once strength, there is now nothing save weakness. Of yore, tribute was paid by all, whereas at the present day the possession of the dependencies does but entail expense." Three annual expeditions, made, throughout a period of

thirty years, for the purpose of collecting the revenues of the crown, have hitherto proved ineffectual to the preservation of permanent tranquillity amongst the tribes subjugated by his ancestors; and the Sertie lake, with other morasses, remain monuments of the dire disasters which sometimes attend his usually successful arms. He neither erects fortifications, nor does he establish outposts; and the government being continued in heathen hands, the tributary tribes rebel during each rainy season, only to be re-subdued as soon as it is over—the insurgents sometimes tendering their renewed allegiance the instant they perceive the crimson umbrellas of state, but more frequently delaying until the locust-like army of the Amhára has swept their fair fields, and like the devastating stream from the volcano, has left a smoking desert in its train.

Chastised by two or three successful forays, the chiefs and elders of the rebellious and ruined clan, finding the futility of further opposition to the yoke, come in with the tribute exacted, and make feudal submission, whereupon they are suffered to ransom their wives and daughters who have been enslaved. It cannot fail to appear extraordinary, that those who are unprepared for resistance should occupy their beleaguered abodes one minute after they had become aware of the presence of their ruthless and implacable foes; but in almost every instance they are in blood feud with all the surrounding tribes of their own nation, at whose merciless hands they would experience even worse treatment than at those of the Amhára. Neither, during persecution, could the tax-repudiating hope to find an asylum among tributary neighbours, with whom they might

perchance be on amicable terms, since their reception would inevitably entail on those who harboured the fugitives the last vengeance of the despot. Thus the choice is left between precarious flight to the mountain fastnesses, in the very teeth of the enemy, and the alternative of lurking in the vicinity of the invaded hamlet, upon the slender chance of eluding the keen scent of the bloodhounds.

The governor, or, in fact, the king of all the Galla now dependent on Shoa, is Abogáz Maretch, who resides at Wona-badéra, south of Angollála. At first a bitter enemy of Sáhela Selássie, this haughty warrior chief, renowned for his bravery, was finally gained over by bribes, and by promises of distinction and advancement, which have actually been fulfilled. Partly by force, and partly by soft words and judicious intermarriages with chiefs of the various tribes, he contrives to keep in some sort of order the wild spirits over whom he presides; but he is taxed with want of proper severity, and although still high in favour, has more than once been suspected of divulging the royal projects.

Abba Mooállé, the governor of Moogher and of the surrounding Galla in the west, was also formerly very inimical to Shoa; but being won over to the royal interests by the espousal of his sister, by preferment to extensive power, and by the hand of one of the despotic princesses, he was four years since converted to Christianity, when the king became his sponsor. The valuable presents which he is enabled to make to the throne, owing to his proximity to the high caravan-road from the interior, preserve him a distinguished place in the estimation of the Negoos, to whom he is little inferior in point of state. At constant war with the Galla occupying the country to

the westward, between Sullála Moogher and Gojam, he hastily assembles his troops twice or thrice during the year, and making eagle-like descents across the Nile at the head of ten thousand cavalry, rarely fails to recruit the royal herds with a rich harvest in cattle.

Dogmo, who resides in the mountain of Yerrur, was educated in the palace; and his undeviating attachment to the crown has been rewarded with the hand of one of the king's illegitimate daughters. Bótha, Shámbo, and Dogmo, are the sons of Bunnie, whose father, Borri, governed the entire tract styled *Ghera Méder*, "the country on the left," which includes all the Galla tribes bordering on both sides of the Háwash in the south of Shoa. Bunnie was, in consequence of some transgression, imprisoned in Arámba; and Bótora, another potent Galla chieftain, appointed in his stead. But this impolitic transfer of power creating inveterate hatred between the two families, each strove to destroy the other. Bunnie was in consequence liberated, and restored to his government; but resting incautiously under a tree on his return, not long afterwards, from a successful expedition against the Aroosi, whom he had defeated, he was suddenly surrounded by the enemy, and slain, together with four chiefs, his confederates, and nearly the whole of his followers. His sons were then severally invested with governments; and Boku, the son of Bótora, was at his father's demise entrusted with the preservation of the avenues to the Lake Zooai, long an object of the royal ambition.

Among the most powerful Galla chieftains who own allegiance to Shoa, is Jhára, the son of Chámie, *soi-disant* Queen of Moolo Fálada, who, since the demise of her husband, has governed that and other

provinces adjacent. Sáhela Selássie, who it will be seen relies more upon political marriages than upon the force of arms, sent matrimonial overtures to this lady, and received for answer the haughty message, "that if he would spread the entire road from Angollála with rich carpets, she might perhaps listen to the proposal, but upon no other conditions!" The Christian lances poured over the border to avenge this insult offered to the monarch of Shoa, and the invaded tribe laid down their arms; but Gobánah, foster-brother to Jhára, and a mighty man of renown, finding that His Majesty proposed burning their hamlets without reservation, rose to oppose the measure. At this critical moment an Amhára trumpeter raised his trombone to his lips. The Galla, believing the instrument to be none other than a musket, fled in consternation, and their doughty chieftain surrendered himself a prisoner at discretion.

Upon learning to whom he had relinquished his liberty, Gobánah, broken-hearted, abandoned himself to despair, and refused all sustenance for many days. The hand of the fair daughter of the queen was eventually the price of his ransom; and on the celebration of the nuptials, the king, who, with reference to his conquest of Moolo Fálada, might have exclaimed, with the Roman dictator, "*Veni, vidi, vici*" conferred upon Jhára the government of all the subjugated Galla as far as the sources of the Háwash, and to the Nile in the west. Warlike, daring, and ambitious, exercising his important functions almost beyond the ken of his sovereign, and possessing from his proximity to Gojam and Dámot, the means of creating himself the leader of a vast horde, there can be little doubt, although he has hitherto evinced strong attachment to the crown, that,

imitating the example of all pagan chieftains who have gone before him, he will one day profit by his opportunities to take up arms against Shoa, and may thus not improbably enact a most conspicuous part in the history of the Galla nation.

Volume Three—Chapter Seven.

The Galla Nation.

Abyssinia had long maintained her glory unsullied under an ancient line of emperors, until, in the sixteenth century, the ambitious and formidable Graan, at the head of a whole nation of Moslem barbarians, burst over the frontier, and dashed into atoms the structure of two thousand five hundred years. Defended by hireling swords, which, in a series of sanguinary conflicts, wrested the victorious wreath from the brow of the invader, and since supported rather by the memory of departed greatness than by actual strength, small portions of the once vast empire have struggled on, the shadow only of imperial dignity. But the glory had departed from the house of Ethiop, her power had been prostrated before the mighty conqueror, and his wild band; and the Galla hordes, pouring into the richest provinces, from southern central Africa, re-erected heathen shrines during the reign of anarchy, and rose and flourished on her ruins.

The history of these African Tartars is, however, veiled in the deepest obscurity. Under the title of Oroma, they trace their origin to three sisters, daughters of Jerusalem, to whom are applied

traditions similar to the Scriptural chronicle of the descendants of Lot. In their own language, the word "Galla" signifies *ingressi*; and of themselves they affirm that Wolláboo, their father, came from beyond Bargámo, "the great water;" and that his children were nine—Aroosi, Karaiyo, Jillé, Abitchu, Ghelán, Wóberi, Metta, Gumbitchu, and Betcho-Fugook—from whose loins have sprung the innumerable clans or houses which now people the greater portion of intra-tropical Africa. But by the Moslem bigots, who form the chief curse of Ethiopia, it is said that the term by which the nation is recognised was applied to the Ilma Oroma, or seed of Oroma, by the Prophet himself, who, on sending to summon Wolláboo to become a proselyte to the true faith, received a direct refusal. "Gal La," "he said No," reported the unsuccessful messenger on his return. "Let this then be the denomination of the infidels in future," exclaimed the arch impostor, "since they will not receive the celestial revelations made to me through the angel Gabriel."

But whatever may be the origin of the heathen invaders, it is certain that, as a martial people, they have greatly degenerated from their ancestors. Under one head, they overran the fairest provinces of Ethiopia; and had they remained united, they might, with equal ease, have completed the conquest of the greater portion of the African continent. Relaxing, however, in their common cause against the Christians, the tribes soon began to contest among each other for the possession of the newly-acquired territory. Intestine feuds and dissensions neutralised their giant power; and the weakness and disorganisation by which the majority are now characterised is to be ascribed to the fact of there

being no paramount chief.

Roving in his native pastures, where his manners are unadulterated by the semi-civilisation of Abyssinia, the equestrian Galla is an object worthy the pencil of Carle Vernet or Pinelli. Tall and athletic, his manly figure is enveloped in a toga, such as graced the sons of ancient Rome, and his savage, wild, and fiery features, are rendered still more ferocious by thick bushy hair arranged either in large lotus-leaved compartments, or streaming over the shoulders in long raven plaits. But grease and filth form his delight; and he sparkles under a liberal coat of the much-loved butter, which is unsparingly applied when proceeding to the perpetration of the most dastardly and inhuman deeds. Accoutred with spear, sword, and buckler, and wedded to the rude saddle, whereof he would seem to form a part, the Pagan scours fearlessly over the grassy savannas which he has usurped from the Christian, and is engaged in perpetual desultory strife with all his border neighbours.

Possessing the finest breed of horses in Ethiopia, and wealthy both in flocks and herds, which roam over boundless meadows smiling with clover, trefoil, and buttercups, this pastoral people devote their time equally to agricultural pursuits, and herein they are aided by a delightful climate, and by a luxuriant, well-watered soil. Whilst the women tend the sheep and oxen in the field, and manage the hives of bees, the men plough, sow, and reap, presenting in this respect a striking contrast to their indolent lowland neighbours, the Adaïel, whom they rival in barbarous ferocity, in treachery, and in savage propensities. Rich and verdant valleys, the glory of the mountains, and the pride of the proprietors, flourish with the most

luxuriant crops, which are but too frequently swept from off the land by the sudden burst of war. Often is the cup of hope dashed from the lips when the enjoyment of the contents is deemed most certain; and the mangled corse of the husbandman is left on the borders of the very field of which he was garnering in the ripe corn.

Nor are the female portion of the Galla population less eminent in the equestrian art than their warlike lords, whose steeds it is their business to tend and saddle for the foray. Distinguished for their beauty among the dark daughters of Africa, their fine figures are slenderly attired in a short leathern petticoat, embroidered with a flounce of white cowrie shells, and clasped around the waist by a zone of coloured beads. A flowing cotton robe completes the toilet of the wealthy; and the time of all is equally devoted to the braiding an infinity of minute tresses, which fall over the shoulders after the manner of the ancient Egyptians. But their garments and their persons are unsparingly anointed with lard and butter; and the romance that might otherwise attach to their native charms cannot fail to be dispelled on near approach.

The conically thatched cabins of the Galla are grouped in rural clusters, and uniformly surrounded by a stone wall as a precaution against surprise. The hamlet is often concealed by a dark forest of juniper overhanging the deep ravine, whose ever foaming torrent fertilises the adjacent pastures. Bees form a portion of the wealth of every family, and the flower-clothed meads, fostered by an Italian sky, are covered with them. The same whimsical customs which have been generally practised since the days of Virgil are here extant. The same confused clamour is raised to induce the swarm to alight; and the

cylindrical hive having been rubbed inside with the leaves of odoriferous herbs to entice the wild insects to remain, it is suspended under the eaves of the hut, and twice during the year robbed of the honey.

To the performance of the religious rites of the Pagan, a tree is indispensable, his devotions and his sacrifices being invariably performed under the shadow of its boughs. On the interment of a priest, a sycamore, or a coffee tree, is planted over the grave, and held sacred for ever; whilst on the banks of the Háwash stands the venerable Woda Nuwee, (*Ficus sycamorus*, the wild fig. It is called *worka*, "the golden," by the Amhára, and attains a vast size) to which the tribes flock from far and wide to make vows and propitiatory offerings, and to recount their exploits in war. Paying adoration only to stocks and stones, and bending the knee to none but idols and serpents, they here make oblations of butter and honey to secure the favour of the deity—hang upon the spreading branches the trophies taken from their enemies; and performing incantations to *Sár*, the prince of the demons, bind around their necks the entrails of the slaughtered victim which has yielded auspicious omens.

Two great annual sacrifices are made to the deities Ogli and Atéti, the former between June and July, the latter in the beginning of September. A number of goats having been slain, the Lúbah, or priest, wearing a tuft of long hair on his crown, proceeds with a bell in his hand, and his brows encircled by a fillet of copper, to divine from the fat, caul, and entrails, whether or not success will attend the warriors in battle. This point determined, the assembled multitude, howling and screaming like demons, continue to surfeit themselves with raw meat, to

swallow beer, and to inhale smoke to intoxication until midnight—invoking *Wák*, the Supreme Being, to grant numerous progeny, lengthened years, and abundant crops, as well as to cause their Spears to prevail over those of their foes; and when sacrificing to Atéti, the goddess of fecundity, exclaiming frequently, “Lady, we commit ourselves unto thee; stay thou with us always.”

The Kalicha is the Galla wizard, conjurer, and physician. With the putrefying intestines of a goat hung about his neck, and armed with a bell and a copper whip, his skill in the expulsion of the devil is rarely known to fail. Adoration having been paid to a serpent, the patient is rubbed with butter, fumigated with potent herbs, and exorcised with frantic howls, a few strokes of the lash being administered until the cure is perfected. No Amhára will slay either a Lúbah or a Kalicha under any circumstances, from a superstitious dread of his dying curse; and Galla sorceresses are frequently called in by the Christians of Shoa, to transfer sickness, or to rid the house of evil spirits, by cabalistic incantations, performed with the blood of ginger-coloured hens, and red he-goats.

But among the Galla sorcerers and soothsayers, the Wáto, already mentioned as inhabiting the mountain Dalácha, towards the sources of the Háwash, are the most universally celebrated. Neither Pagan nor Christian will molest this tribe, from the same superstitious apprehension of their malediction, and still more from a desire to obtain their blessing; whilst he who receives the protection of a Wáto may travel with perfect security over every part of the country inhabited by the Galla. Subsisting entirely by the chase, they wander from lake to lake and from river to river, destroying the hippopotamus, upon the flesh

of which animal they chiefly live—whereas no other heathen will touch it. Feared and respected, and claiming to themselves to be the original stock of the Oromo nation, they deem all other clans unclean from having mixed with Mohammadans and Christians; and refusing on this account to intermarry, remain to this day a separate and distinct people.

All barbarians are orators; and the euphonical language of the Galla, which unfortunately can boast of no written character, is admirably adapted to embellish their eloquent and impressive delivery. Cradled in the unexplored heights of Ethiopia, many of the customs of these fierce illiterate idolaters are closely and remarkably allied to those of the more civilised nations of antiquity. Seeking presages, like the Romans and Etrurians, in the flight of birds, and in the entrails of slaughtered sacrifices; wearing the hair braided like the ancient Egyptians, and, like them, sleeping with the head supported by a wooden crutch—wedding the relict of a deceased brother, according to the Mosaic law, and bowing the knee to the old serpent, whom they regard as the father of all mankind—an acquaintance with these wild invaders suggests curious speculations on their origin, when referred to a common parent; and these are rendered still more interesting by the existence of a prophecy, that their hordes are one day to quit the highlands of their usurpation, and march to the east and to the north, “that they may conquer the inheritance of their Jewish ancestors.”

Volume Three—Chapter Eight.

Unexplored Countries to the South.

Divided into endless houses, the majority of the independent Oromo tribes, to the south of Shoa, are governed by hereditary chieftains; and it is only where the Moslem slave-dealer has successfully commenced the work of conversion to the creed promulgated by the Prophet, that this wild heathen race have been brought to bow the neck to the yoke of kings. Of this Enárea affords a most striking example, for there one-half of the entire population have abandoned idolatry, whilst despotism has taken root, and flourishes under a line of Mohammadan rulers.

Surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains, this kingdom embraces an extensive table-land, which separates the waters to the north and south, and ranks among the most elevated regions of Africa. Menchilla, stretching from east to north-west, is the principal range, and a spur to the south-west is described as joining the so called Mountains of the Moon. Sáka, the capital, contains from ten to twelve thousand inhabitants, mixed Pagans and Mohammadans, who inhabit houses of a circular form, somewhat better constructed than those of the Amhára.

Sáeed was the son of Ascári, a Mohammadan, and his sister Elikkee wedding a Galla, bore a son, Téso, who was brought up in idolatry, and conquered Enárea. His son Bóko also died a Pagan; but Bófo, “the serpent,” who succeeded on the death of his father, was converted to Islamism by Mootár, his uncle, the nephew of Elikkee. Abba Bókibo, the present and fourth monarch, is represented to be just

and merciful, but his ancestors were monstrous and relentless tyrants, who “caused rivers of blood to flow, and slew the people like cows.” Arrayed in a black mantle of goat’s hair, His Majesty dispenses justice in the market-place, sitting on the trunk of a tree with a bullock’s hide spread beneath his feet. Sáka contains upwards of one thousand *moolahs*; but in the absence of mosques, prayers are held at the tomb of Bófo, the first convert to the faith. Twice during each year, great military expeditions are undertaken, which rarely extend beyond eight or ten days. Every soldier carries a small supply of bread, and trusts for further subsistence to pillage and plunder. Many bloody battles are annually fought with the surrounding tribes, and wide tracts of country thus annexed to the royal possessions.

The Agállo, Yelloo, Betcho, Sudécha, Chora, and Nono, are all subject to the Suppéra, or king, of Enárea, whose sway extends to the Sóddo, Metta, and Maleema Galla, about the sources of the Háwash, which rises in Adda-Berga. Limmoo, whereof the capital is Sobitcha, is a province annexed of old to Enárea; and Abba Bókibo, desirous of subjugating Gooderoo, and the countries to the north as far as the Nile, sent to propose an alliance with Dedjasmach Góshoo, the ruler of Gojam. “You sell slaves,” was the reply of the Christian potentate, “and are a Mohammadan to boot. It cannot be.” One hundred horns of civet and fifty female slaves which had been sent by the Suppéra, were nevertheless accepted, and thirty matchlocks, with persons versed in the use of firearms, were forwarded in return.

Little sickness of any sort prevails, and mendicants, the pest of Abyssinia, are said to be unknown in the land. The wild vine flourishes, and bears abundance

of grapes. The “gosso” tree, which attains a vast height, is covered during the season with delicious berries, and is ascended by means of the tendrils of the vine bound around the stem. Coffee grows wild in every wood, to the height of eight and ten feet, and bends under the load of fruit. A large skin full is purchased for twopence-halfpenny sterling, and the decoction, prepared as in Europe, is invariably presented to the stranger, as is an infusion of the “chaat,” a coarse species of the tea-plant, which there flourishes spontaneously, and is cultivated in Shoa.

The civet cat is a native of Enárea, and being caught in gins, is kept in the house and fed on meat and boiled maize. The cages are daily placed before the fire preparatory to the operation of removing the secretion, which is performed with a wooden spoon. A lump about the size of a small filbert is yielded at each baking, and it forms a considerable article of export. Myrrh and frankincense are also produced in great quantities, and are employed in religious ceremonies, burnt sacrifices of incense being made to the guardian genius.

Notwithstanding the conversion to Mohammadanism of so large a portion of the population, sacrifices are still made to “Wák” on the festival of Hedár Michael, which, together with the Sabbath, is strictly observed by all the Galla tribes. The Woda tree is at Betcho; no woman is suffered to come near it; and under its sacred shade all priests are ordained—even the followers of the Prophet placing blood upon it as a superstitious oblation. Thousands upon thousands of the heathen having assembled, the Lúbah sprinkles over the crowd, first beer, then an amalgamation of unroasted coffee and butter, and lastly, flour and

butter mixed in a separate mess. A white bull is then slaughtered, and its blood scattered abroad to complete the ceremonies, which are followed by eating, drinking, and drunkenness.

Zingero, which is visible from the high land of Enárea, was, until within the last two years, at constant war with the Galla states. Jimma and Limmoo uniting, then overran the country; and having dethroned Amno Zérmud, the occupant of the throne, annexed the ancient kingdom to the dominions of Abba Bókibo. It is bounded on the south by a great river called the Gochob. Anger, the capital, is situated on the summit of a very high mountain; and the whole country, which sinks to a much lower level, is rich and fertile.

In days of yore, fourteen kingdoms are said to have been tributary to the sovereign of Zingero. The succession to the throne was determined from amongst the nobles, who, at the demise of the monarch, were wont to assemble in an open field, when he over whose head a bee or a vulture first chanced to fly was elected by the unanimous voice of the people. Although no portion of the population professes the Christianity of Ethiopia, and none of its fasts are observed, the rite of circumcision is universal, and the Sabbath is respected, together with the Abyssinian festivals of Kidána Meherát and Saint Michael.

Prior to the conquest of Zingero, no male slave was ever sold,—a practice which is said to have originated in the conduct of one of the daughters of the land. A certain king of old commanded a man of rank to slaughter his wife, her flesh having been prescribed by the sorcerers as the only cure for a

malady wherewith His Majesty was grievously afflicted. Returning to his house for the purpose of executing the royal mandate, the noble found his fair partner sleeping, and her beauty so disarmed him, that his hand refused to perpetrate the murderous deed. Hereat the despot waxing wroth, directed the lady to slay her husband, which she did without any remorse or hesitation, and thus brought odium upon the whole sex, who have since been considered fit only to become slaves and drudges.

Immediately upon the birth of a male child the mammae are amputated, from a belief that no warrior can possibly be brave who possesses them, and that they should belong only to women. This fact is fully corroborated in the persons of the few prisoners of war who reach the kingdom of Shoa. Since the overthrow of the ancient dynasty, the country has been ravaged for slaves by all the surrounding states, but few will deign to survive the loss of liberty; and suicide is so frequent in captivity, that the males are hardly considered worth the trouble of exporting.

Human sacrifices have ever been, and still are, frightfully common in Zingero. When carrying off slaves from that country, the merchant invariably throws the handsomest female captive into lake Umo, in form of a tribute or propitiatory offering to the genius of the water. It is the duty of a large portion of the population to bring their first-born as a sacrifice to the deity, a custom which tradition assigns to the advice of the sorcerers. In days of yore it is said that the seasons became jumbled. There was neither summer nor winter, and the fruits of the earth came not to maturity. Having assembled the magicians, the king commanded them to show how this state of things might best be rectified, and the rebellious

seasons be reduced to order. The wise men counselled the cutting down of a certain great pillar of iron which stood before the gate of the capital, and the stock whereof remains to the present time. This had the effect desired; but in order to prevent a relapse into the former chaos of confusion, the Magi directed that the pillar, as well as the footstool of the throne, might be annually bathed in human blood; in obedience to which a tribute was levied upon the first-born, who are immolated upon the spot.

Of the independent Galla tribes lying immediately contiguous to Enárea, Góma, under Abba Rébo, is the principal. This king is also a convert to Mohammadanism; and the life of his father having been saved by a vulture, which, according to the legend, plucked out the eyes of a host of Gentiles by whom the royal person was assailed, he retains a domesticated bird, which, with a tinkling bell around its neck, invariably accompanies the army on all predatory expeditions. At the termination of the first march, Abba Rébo, with his own royal hands, slays a white bull, and if the wild vultures of the air join the trained bird in the repast, the omens are esteemed to be fortunate.

The Mohammadan Galla tribes, those on the border especially, are uniformly the most savage and barbarous. The Alaba are dire monsters, and more dreaded than the wild beasts, whom they far exceed in ferocity. The cruelties practised by the chief of the Góma are almost incredible. Offenders are deprived of hands, nose, and ears; and their eyes having been seared with a hot iron, the mutilated victims are paraded through the market-place for the edification of the populace. The sight of all prisoners taken in war is similarly destroyed; and a stone having been

tied about the neck, they are thrown by hundreds into a river formerly styled Daama, but now denominated the Chuba, from a belief that its waters are composed solely of human blood. It rises in Utter Gudder, where is a tributary tribe called Mergo, subsisting entirely upon the chase of the elephant and wild buffalo. In Góma the Moslem faith is universal. Every man is a warrior; and retaining a number of Shankela slaves to cultivate the ground, remains idle himself, unless when engaged in war or in the chase.

The Boono are a republican tribe of Pagans, bordering on Enárea, and who, acknowledging no king, are governed by a council of the elders. Inhabiting lofty mountains to which there is only one accessible road, strongly fortified by nature as well as art, none venture to invade this commonwealth, whilst the Boono make war with impunity upon all the surrounding clans; and, from their signal prowess in the field, are said to be propitiated even by the King of Enárea.

Jimma and Mancho are independent Galla tribes under Saana, surnamed Abba Juffár, from the title of his war-horse, which in Ethiopia is usually assumed by the chieftain. From Sáka, a southerly course through these provinces leads, by fifteen or twenty easy stages, directly to the Gochob, above the cataracts of Dumbáro, the neighbourhood of which is infested by banditti, who lie in ambush to kidnap the unwary. The river is crossed by means of rafts belonging to the Queen of Cáffa. They are capable each of containing from thirty to forty persons, and are formed of the trunks of large trees lashed together with strips of raw hide, and surrounded by high gunwales of the same construction—the helm being a moveable spar, unaided by oars or other

propelling power.

Cáffa is the mountainous peninsula formed by the junction of the Omo with the Gochob. It is an independent country of mixed Pagans and Christians, over whom presides Bálee, the relict of King Hulláloo. She is represented to be a young woman of extraordinary energy and ability, very hospitable to the rovers who visit her with blue calico, beads, and trinkets, in return for which she gives cloth and other produce of the country. On the demise of her husband she assembled all the governors of the different provinces, and having caused them to be put in irons, proclaimed herself queen. Her only son Gomárra, “the hippopotamus,” still a youth, leads the army into the field; but she often proceeds with the troops in person, and invariably plans the expedition. Whensoever she moves abroad, her subjects are bound to spread the way with their raiment; and as well during the administration of justice from behind a screen with a small aperture, as during the public banquet, drums, fiddles, and flutes play incessantly.

Nyhur, Moyey, Ziggahán, Boora, and Alera, are the principal towns of Cáffa; and the entire rugged and mountainous country is covered with thick forests, which also clothe the banks of the Gochob, affording shelter to the elephant, the buffalo, the rhinoceros, and other wild beasts, in extraordinary numbers. The river is said to take its source in the distant provinces of Bédee Yédee and Goma, and below the cataracts abounds in hippopotami, which are much hunted by the natives. Dumbáro, Wurretta, and Tufftee, as also the Golda negroes, who go perfectly naked, are tributary to Bálee, and pay chiefly in gold obtained from the hot valleys. The inhabitants of Cáffa reverence Friday and Sunday, as do the Galla, and

like them celebrate the festival of Saint Michael by a great feast; but their language, which is common to Gobo, Tufftee, and Dumbáro, is quite distinct from that spoken by the Galla nation.

A considerable trade exists with Enárea in slaves and cotton cloths, which latter are to be purchased for a piece of salt value twopence-halfpenny sterling. Coffee is produced in immense quantities, of the finest quality, and tradition points to this country as the first residence of the plant. It was spread by the civet cat over the mountains of the Ittoo and Aroosi Galla, where it has flourished for ages in wild profusion, and is thence said to have been transported five hundred years ago by an enterprising trader from the opposite coast of Arabia.

Beyond the extensive wilderness which bounds Cáffa on the south, are the Doko, an exceedingly wild race, not much exceeding four feet in height, of a dark olive complexion, and in habits even more closely approximated to “the beasts that perish” than the bushmen of Southern Africa. They have neither idols, nor temples, nor sacred trees; but possess a glimmering idea of a Supreme Being, to whom in misfortune—such as any of their relatives being slain by the kidnapper—they pray with their feet resting against a tree: “*Yere*, if indeed thou art, why dost thou suffer us to be killed? We are only eating ants, and ask neither food nor raiment. Thou hast raised us up. Why dost thou cast us down?”

Many natives of Cáffa and Enárea, who for evil purposes have visited the country inhabited by this people, describe the road to it from the former kingdom to pass through forests and mountains, for the most part without population, and swarming with

wild beasts, the elephant and buffalo especially. From Bonga, distant about fifty or sixty miles, it is ten days journey to Tufftee, the Omo river being crossed midway by a rude wooden bridge, sixty yards in length. Seven easy stages beyond Tufftee is Kooloo, whence the Doko may be reached in one day. Their climate is warm and the seasons extremely wet, the rains commencing in May, and continuing with occasional intermission until February.

The wilderness is principally clothed with a dense forest of bamboo, in the depths of which the natives construct their rude wigwams of bent canes and grass. They have no king, no laws, no arts, no arms; possess neither flocks nor herds; are not hunters, do not cultivate the soil, but subsist entirely upon fruits, roots, mice, reptiles, ants, and honey. They beguile serpents by whistling in a certain note, and having torn them piecemeal with their long nails, devour them raw; but although the forests abound to such an extent with elephants, buffaloes, lions, and leopards, they have no means of destroying or entrapping them. A large tree called Loko is found, amongst many other species, attaining an extraordinary height, the roots of which, when scraped, are red, and serve for food. The *yebo* and *meytee* are the principal fruits; and to obtain these, women as well as men ascend the trees in numbers, and in their quarrels and scrambles not unfrequently throw each other down from the branches.

Both sexes go perfectly naked, and have thick pouting lips, diminutive eyes, and flat noses. The hair is not woolly, and in the females reaches to the shoulders. The men have no beard. The nails, never pared, grow both on the hands and feet like eagles' talons, and are employed in digging for ants. The

Doko are ignorant of the use of fire. They perforate the ears in infancy with a pointed bamboo, so as to leave nothing save the external cartilage, but they neither tattoo nor pierce the nose; and the only ornament worn is a necklace composed of the spinal bones of a serpent.

Great annual slave hunts are undertaken from Dumbáro, Cáffa, and Kooloo; and the dense forests of bamboo, the creaking of which is represented to be loud and incessant, often prove the scene of fierce and bloody struggles between rival tribes. Wide tracts having been encircled, the band of rovers, converging, impel the denizens to the centre. Holding a gay cloth before their persons, they dance and sing in a peculiar manner; and the defenceless negroes, aware from sad experience that all who attempt to escape will be ruthlessly hunted down, and perhaps slain, tamely approach, and suffer themselves to be blindfolded. One hundred merchants can thus kidnap a thousand Doko; and although long prone to their old habits of digging for ants, and searching for mice, serpents, or lizards, the captives rarely attempt to escape. Their docility and usefulness, added to very limited wants, rendering them in high demand, none are ever sold out of the countries bordering on the Gochob, and none therefore find their way to Shoa.

Nothing that is related of these people, whether as respects stature or habits, would seem to be preposterous or unworthy of credit, the descriptions given of them differing in no very material points from what is known of the Bushmen of Southern Africa, amongst whom I have travelled. Agreeing in every respect with the type of Herodotus, they are unquestionably the pygmies of the ancients, who describe them as found in tropical Africa; and it is a

fact, well worthy of observation, that the natives of Cáffa represent their forefather *Boogázee* to have issued from a cave in a forest—a tradition which cannot fail to call to mind the Troglodytes, who are also mentioned by the father of history as being inhabitants of this portion of the African continent.

It would be beside my purpose to collect and introduce here all that the ancients and modems have written to render probable the existence of a diminutive race of men; but it may be worth observing, in addition to what has been adduced above, that Aristotle, in his History of Animals (Book eight chapter 12) professes his belief in the existence of such a race, which he supposes to have inhabited the marshes about the sources of the Nile, and to have dwelt, like the Troglodytes, in caverns. It would appear from this, that some report of the Doko had reached Greece. The great naturalist does not fix the stature of the small men of whom he speaks, though he adopts the popular name of Pygmies, because he is led to speak of them while noticing the Homeric fable respecting their battles with the Cranes. Homer (Iliad, iii 3, onwards), however, himself, places them near the ocean, where, according to the accounts I received, they are really found. Strabo (Geography xvii 2), who had already imbibed something of the spirit of modern philosophy, thought it better to sneer than to inquire, and rejected the whole story; though he did not hesitate to believe, contrary to experience, that all the animals of Upper Egypt were of diminutive size. Pliny (Natural History vi 35), whose faith was of boundless expansion, could discover no absurdity in the supposition, that there existed a race of men twenty-seven inches high, probably because he may have seen individual dwarfs who were no larger. He

makes, however, one remark which may be worth notice,—namely, that the small race had scarcely any nose at all, but instead, two spiracles above the mouth, which served them in lieu of nostrils.

But laying aside all these legends, I can discover no absurdity in what is related concerning the stature of the Doko. They are, it is said, about four feet high, in which they resemble the Laplanders, the Samoyedes, and, as I have already observed, the Bushmen. The Naturalist, Commerson (Camus, Notes sur l'Histoire des Animaux d'Aristot, page 405) had heard of a similar people, called Quimos, in the opposite island of Madagascar, though Rochon, and other modern travellers, say they could obtain no information respecting them. Some naturalists, in this as in most other cases, easily elude the difficulty by a bold profession of incredulity. (Virey, Histoire Naturelle du Genre Humain, volume ii page 240, onwards.) It would, perhaps, be more philosophical to investigate and inquire. Great differences we know exist in the stature of different nations, and it has possibly not been yet ascertained what is the smallest or the largest size to which the human body can attain. That no specimens of the Doko race should reach Shoa is remarkable, and may be deemed suspicious; but the reasons given are not altogether destitute of plausibility; and, at all events, the rumours in circulation throughout that part of Africa deserve to be reported, in order that, as discovery advances, they who are destined to achieve it may be prompted to careful examination.

Volume Three—Chapter Nine.

The River Gochob.

An inspection of the map will show on the eastern coast an extensive hiatus, which, from the scanty reports that have been gleaned, is most certainly studded with high mountains, and drained by numerous and powerful rivers; but no details have hitherto been obtained that justified the laying down of either with any geographical accuracy. The first accounts of the existence in central Africa of a great river were brought to Etearchus, king of the Oasis of Ammon, by certain youths of the Nassamonians, who, as related by Herodotus, “had been deputed to explore her solitudes. After a journey of many days they were seized and carried into captivity by some men of dwarfish stature, who conducted them over marshy grounds, to a city in which all the inhabitants were of the same diminutive appearance, and of a black colour. This city was washed by a great river, now ascertained to be the Niger, which flowed from west to east, and abounded in crocodiles.”

The early Arabian geographers specifically mention large rivers descending from the high mountain land to the southward of the blue Nile, and flowing to the Indian ocean; and it is a curious fact, that they designate one of these “the River of Pygmies.” The Portuguese were the next who spoke of this stream, upwards of two centuries ago; and from the highlands of Abyssinia a clue to its origin and course has now been obtained, which will serve in a great measure to supply the existing deficiencies, and to cover the wide space of *terra incognita* in Eastern Africa north of the equator.

The Gochob is described to rise in the great central

ridge which is now known to divide the waters that discharge themselves east into the Indian Ocean, from those that flow west into the Bahr el Abiad, and more southerly into the Atlantic. Spreading into a lake, and bearing on its bosom a noble body of water, it is joined, fifteen days' journey south of Enárea, by the Omo, a large tributary which rises beyond Tufftee in Susa Maketch, in a jet of water playing the height of a spear shaft. Half a day's journey below the point of junction, the united volume rolls over a stupendous cataract called Dumbáro, the roar of which can be heard many miles, whence pursuing its course to the south-east, it forms the southern limit of Zingero, and finally disembogues into the sea.

There seems every reason to believe that the Gochob must be identical with the Kibbee of the best extant maps, described to be a very large river coming from the north-west, and entering the sea near the town of Juba, immediately under the equator. If not the Kibbee, it must be the Quilimancy, which disembogues by several estuaries between Patta and Malinda, four degrees further to the south; but all accounts of the latter that have yet been collected from the coast, authorise the adoption of the first hypothesis.

The general course of the Nile to the north, and of the Kibbee to the south, are said to have been well-known to the Egyptians three thousand years ago. The sacristan of the temple of Minerva in Thebes told Herodotus that half the waters of the father of rivers flowed to the north, and the other half to the south, and that they were produced by the tropical rains. The currents experienced in five degrees north of the equator, in the vicinity of the coast, confirm the opinion of a great river rolling a vast body of water

into the eastern ocean. At their height during the prevalence of the monsoon in August and September, they are known to sweep a vessel along at the rate of one hundred and twenty miles a day, frequently exposing the inexperienced navigator to the chance of shipwreck on Socotra, whereas before and after the tropical rains the current is scarcely perceptible. Were this caused by the monsoon, it would prevail equally over these latitudes during the influence of the south-westerly winds; but the fact remains, that it is felt only off the coast in about five degrees north latitude, at the period alone when the river must be swollen with the volume of water gathered from the highest mountain land in the interior.

Beyond Zingero, and considerably lower down the great river, is the kingdom of Koocha, which is described to be hot, and subject to annual rains of two months' duration. It extends on both sides, with a numerous population inhabiting many large towns, of which Laadé, Seylo, Umpho, Jella, Gulta, Aara, and Wunjo, all on the northern bank, are the principal. The houses are conical, and constructed of mud and bamboos, which there grow abundantly. All the nation are Galla, with features strictly those of the Negro, and their king is Bosha, the son of Laadé, surnamed, from the title of his war-steed, Abba Wábotoo, "I am he who seizes."

In addition to the two umbrellas of state, the one composed of blue, and the other of crimson, this chieftain is distinguished by a shield covered with massive gold, and by many ornaments of the same precious metal on his person. The costume of all classes consists of party-coloured raiment—red, blue, and white, being mingled together in profusion.

Large pewter ear-rings are worn by the males; and by the females, whose hair is braided in long ringlets, silver armlets, anklets, and bracelets. Both sexes are great equestrians. The saddles are covered with red imported leather, and the horses and mules are large and abundant. Cultivation in every description of tropical grain is universal; honey abounds in every quarter, and beer and hydromel are manufactured by all.

Spices, odoriferous woods, and aromatic herbs, tea, coffee, oranges, nutmeg, and ginger, are exceedingly plentiful. Precious stones are also found, and bartered to certain white men, who, wearing shoes, trousers, and hats, and having yellow hair, come with their merchandise in rowing-boats thirty days from the sea. They bring blue calico, chintz, pepper, tobacco, copper, cutlery, and “fire water,” and receive in exchange slaves, ivory, spices, and gold, which latter is brought in large quantities from Douro.

Slaves being in great demand, and their acquisition extremely lucrative, Bosha is at perpetual war with all the surrounding tribes, save during the annual rains. The Dánnagem, and the Danna-Oorkeshool Galla, are attacked every year, as are also the Málee Galla, a people armed with bows and arrows, who dig pits, throw up bamboo stockades, and place pointed stakes in the ground to annoy the cavalry of Koocha, whose horses being kept in the house all the year round, and abundantly fed, are very superior. Murderers are punished according as they have dealt with their victim—one or two or more spear wounds or blows with the sword being inflicted by the nearest relative of the deceased—but all thieves, delinquents, and poor people, are sold to the white traders, and immense numbers of slaves of both sexes are

brought down by the Douro Galla, in rafts with high gunwales, containing six or eight persons.

The great river, which in this kingdom is supplied by two large tributaries—the Toreech, rising in the country of the Gama Gobo, and the Teeto, coming from the Alla Galla—is the medium of all trade. It is very broad, and, except during the rainy season, has little perceptible motion. The volume of water is always large, and comes from a great distance inland. Hippopotami and elephants abound; and the *gimjah*, or tree tiger, which infests the borders, is greatly feared for its ferocity, and prized for the beauty of its skin. Native crafts reach the sea in fifteen days, and ivory, slaves, coffee, and a variety of other merchandise, are constantly brought on rafts by the tribes higher up; but the white people never go beyond Koocha, neither do the interior tribes pass down to the sea.

The Gochob, of which the discovery promises important accessions in a geographical as well as in a commercial point of view, may be conjectured to be the “Bargámo,” or great water, from beyond which the Galla describe their hordes to have poured, when they invaded Abyssinia, after being driven from the vast unexplored interior by the centrifugal force yet unexplained. Like the barbarous nations who were made the weapons of Divine chastisement upon the corrupted empire of Rome, they also brought darkness and ignorance in their train, but were unable to eradicate the true religion. Throughout the regions included between the Nile, the Háwash, and the Gochob, which may properly be termed Galla, none but their own tongue is spoken; whereas to the south of the last-named river, the intruding population have lost their language and become gradually

incorporated with the aboriginal possessors of the soil. Whatever may be the true magnitude of the river, it is clearly navigated to a considerable extent by a white people, who reap a lucrative harvest whilst draining the country of its population, by a traffic which must reflect the blackest disgrace upon the name of any civilised people, and is here not rendered the less infamous by the fact, that many of their purchases are Christians.

Volume Three—Chapter Ten.

Existing Christian Remnants.

On both sides of the river Gochob, there exist in various quarters isolated communities professing the Christianity of Ethiopia, who, for a long period of years, have successfully held their position among the mountain fastnesses in the very heart of the now Pagan and Mohammadan country. One of the most remarkable of these seats is in the lake Zooai, called *Láki* in the Galla language, and in that of Guráguê, *Chilláloo*. Here, in the church of Emanuel, are deposited the holy arks, umbrellas, drums, gold and silver chairs, and other furniture belonging to all the sacred edifices of southern Abyssinia; which, with numerous manuscripts no longer extant, were here deposited by Nebla Dengel, at the period of Graan's invasion.

Five rivers empty themselves into this lake. It is described to be a noble sheet of water, teeming with hippopotami, which frequently destroy the frail bamboo rafts employed in maintaining

communication betwixt the shore and the Five Islands, Tudduchu, Debra Tehoon, Debra Seena, Goragi, and Amshoot. They are covered with lofty trees, and contain upwards of three thousand Christian houses, constructed of lime and stone. In religion, the population are said by the clergy of Shoa to have sadly degenerated; but although destitute of priests, the churches are preserved inviolate, and monks and monasteries abound.

In Guráguê, the population are almost exclusively Christian. Twelve isolated churches, previously unheard of, were discovered a few years since, on the conquest of Yeya by Sáhela Selássie; and between Gárro and Metcha, where forest commences in the south of Shoa, is a small tract peopled by Christians, who reside entirely in caves among the mountains, as a measure of security against the heathen, by whom they are compassed in on every side.

Eight days' journey from Aiméllele on the frontier of Guráguê, is Cambát, a small mountainous province, lying due east of Zingero. With exception of a few Mohammadan rovers, this independent state is inhabited solely by Christians, who have fifteen churches, and numerous monasteries, but, like the people of Zooai, are without priests. The capital, Karempza, is constructed on the summit of a lofty hill of the same name, and Degóyey, the king, who is extremely advanced in years, is represented as a just and upright ruler, very hospitable to strangers, and a great warrior. But between Aiméllele, which is a dependency of Sáhela Selássie, and Cambát, the road passes through the Adeea and Alaba Galla, the latter governed by a queen whose notorious treachery renders the passage unsafe.

Wollámo is another Christian province under an independent sovereign, lying below Cambát to the south-eastward of Zingero, and at constant war with both these states. The country is extremely mountainous, and the inhabitants, who are purchased for twenty pieces of salt, and frequently brought by the slave-dealers to Shoa, are of a fair complexion, and speak a distinct language. Wofána is the capital, and the province is watered by a considerable river termed the Ooma—the surrounding tribes being the Koolloo, Woradda, Assoo, and Jimma. Eight days' journey beyond Zingero is the country of Mager, the king of which is represented to be a very powerful monarch. Korchássie, which is famous for the great river Wábi, flowing to the Indian ocean, is peopled by Christians, as is Sidáma also, and both are surrounded by the heathen.

But of all the isolated remnants of the ancient Ethiopic empire to the south of Abyssinia, Susa would appear to be the most important and the most powerful. This kingdom is situated beyond Cáffa, and extends to the head of the Gitché, which rises in Chára-Nára, and is one of the principal sources of the Gochob. The rains are violent during three months of the year, and the climate is excessively cold, the elevation being much greater than that of Shoa, whilst beyond are mountains which "seem to touch the skies, and are covered with perpetual snow."

Sugga Surroo was king over Susa. He was a Pagan; but wore a "máteb," as many of the heathen tribes are wont to do. Hoti and Beddoo were his sons; and on his death-bed he bequeathed the sceptre to the former, who, after a reign of ten years marked by the most galling tyranny, was deposed by the people,

and Beddoo elevated to the throne. Turning his attention to Christianity, which had greatly degenerated, he revived the custom of bathing the holy cross on Christmas-day, in the river Gitché, where all the surrounding Galla tribes perform the same ceremony without knowing why.

Hoti was exiled in Goma; and having contrived to raise three hundred cavalry, he set out to recover his throne, but was pursued and slain by Abba Rébo. Beddoo is brother to Bálee, the Queen of Cáffa; and it is now six years since he gave his daughter Shásh in marriage to the King of Enárea, through whose country a constant traffic has since been carried on with Northern Abyssinia—numbers of muskets and matchlocks being annually imported, and exchanged for civet, ivory, gold dust, horses, and slaves.

The road being thus opened, the priests proceeded to Gondar to the patriarch of the Abyssinian church, who breathed the breath of the Holy Ghost into a leathern bag, which was safely conveyed back to Susa, and hung up in the cathedral. Ecclesiastics in great numbers have been since ordained by the process of opening this bag, and causing a puff to pass across the face. They are distinguished by antique robes and silver mitres, and the churches and religious observances would appear to be similar in every respect to those of Shoa.

The King of Susa is described as a tall, fair, and very handsome man of five and thirty, without beard or moustaches, and wearing the hair in the bushy wig-like form of the Amhára. He carries state umbrellas of yellow silk, surmounted by golden globes, wears a sword with a massive golden scabbard, and bears a shield decorated with radii and crosses of the same

metal. The government is not despotic. No subject can be put to death unless condemned by the judges. Property is free; and there is no restriction upon dress save in the article of gold, to wear which is the exclusive privilege of royalty.

Bonga is the principal town and capital of Susa; and there the king principally resides, in a stone house of two stories. His queen is Meytee, but he has besides "concubines as numerous as the hairs of the head." The banqueting-hall is a long building similar to those of Sáhela Selássie, and it is the scene of similar revels. His Majesty presides daily at the feast, but is concealed from the gaze of his carousing subjects by an intervening curtain, whilst the Dedj Agafári, styled "Gubburchu," acts as master of the ceremonies. Public audience is daily given, when the decisions of the judges are confirmed or annulled from a raised throne of solid gold concealed by velvet draperies.

Susa is a kingdom of much greater extent than Shoa, but in manners and customs nearly similar. The monarch is approached with shoulders bared, and three prostrations to the earth. On the festival of *Máskal* an annual review takes place at Boorétta. Oxen are then slain for the soldiery, and each warrior receives a jar of beer from the royal cellars. The herald proclaims the approaching expedition to the sound of the *nugáreet*. The foray resembles that of the Amhára rabble—the same lack of discipline on the march—the same band of flutes and kettle-drums —the same female culinary establishment. The warriors are similarly armed, and adopt the green sprig of asparagus in token of deeds of blood; and the only existing difference would appear to be, that the booty captured in war is not monopolised by the crown.

Tribute is paid to Beddoo by the chiefs of many surrounding Countries, and principally by the Shankela with tattooed breasts. He annually extends his dominions by murderous inroads, directed chiefly against the Sooroo, a tribe of naked negroes inhabiting the wild valleys of Sása. The Gumroo, a wild people clothed in hides, and rich in flocks and herds, are also frequently invaded, and hundreds swept into captivity. The chief mountain ranges of Susa are Decha, Gobo, and Saadee; and the principal rivers are the Gitché, Chéso, and Adiyo. Large slave caravans pass through the realm at all seasons from the most remote parts of the interior, the Mohammadan rovers being frequently absent from one to two years.

The costume of the male portion of the population consists of a robe of striped red and blue cotton in alternate bands, with tight trousers and a loose kilt of the same colours and material. The hair is worn *en "goferi*," as in Shoa, unless after the slaughter of a foe, when it is braided in long tresses like the ancient Egyptians. Copper and ivory bracelets decorate the successful warrior; and a ring of silver is worn in the ear by those who have slain the giant amongst mammalia.

The females are described as being fairer and more comely than their frail sisters of Shoa. They wear red and blue striped trousers, reaching mid-leg, with a loose shift and a robe, also party-coloured, the former enclosed by a zone of beads. The hair is dressed, like that of the Amhára, in the shape of a beehive, with minute rows of elaborate curls; but the odour of rancid butter with which these are clotted, is somewhat alleviated by the liberal application of oil of cloves.

Marriage is celebrated without the intervention of the priesthood, and polygamy is universally exercised at the discretion of the man according to his worldly substance. The contracting parties simply pledge fidelity, and in event of subsequent separation, the lady carries off her portion. Every house possesses its slaves; but those both of king and subject are permitted to work for themselves one day out of the seven. All occupation is interdicted on the Sabbath, as well as on the festivals of Gabriel, Michael, and Georgis, which are the only saints' days observed in Susa.

The language spoken is quite distinct from that of the Galla, from the Amháric, and from the ancient Geez or Ethiopic. It possesses a written character. The houses are constructed upon a circular plan of wattle and thatch. All classes are warriors, well mounted, and frequently engaged in the chase—large packs of dogs being kept for the purpose of hunting the rhinoceros, buffalo, elephant, lion, leopard, giraffe, zebra, and ostrich, which, with many other animals new to natural history, are said to abound. Bridles are manufactured of the skin of the hippopotamus, with which the rivers teem, and numbers of them are slain by the wandering Wáto.

Raw flesh, eaten with pepper, butter, and wheaten bread, forms the principal diet. Edible fruits are abundant. Citrons, nutmeg, ginger, coffee, and tea, grow wild over the whole country. The two latter are taken by the Christians of Susa, as is also snuff; but tobacco is not inhaled. The grape vine is indigenous and extensively cultivated; and the Outoo, the Gondweiyo, and the Goddo, are described as aromatic trees, of which the flowers, possessing the richest perfume, are dried, pulverised, and

amalgamated with civet—the cats producing which are kept in every house, fed on raw beef, and placed before the fire, as in Enárea.

Amongst the manifold superstitions of the people of Susa, a new knife, before being used for cutting meat, must be blown upon by the priest. Witchcraft has a firm hold upon every mind; and many a luckless worker in iron is with his whole family condemned to be burnt alive in his house, as an atonement for evil deeds. Theft is punished by sewing up the culprit in a green hide, when he is suspended by the heels in the market-place, with the stolen property about his neck, until the contraction of the drying skin at length puts a period to his sufferings—a refinement this upon the cruelty of the Emperor Maximin.

The particulars that I have embodied in this and the two preceding chapters have been gathered from the concurrent testimony of numerous individuals of various tribes, ages, and religions, who have either visited or were natives of the countries referred to, and who, after attaining to manhood, had been borne away in slavery. Together with their own language they retained a perfect recollection of the land of their birth, and of all that had befallen them since the loss of liberty—a loss by many dated from a very recent period, and which had resulted either from the lawless violence of the freebooter, or from the unrestrained cupidity of mercenary relatives. Making due allowance for superstition and geographical ignorance, the fullest credit may be accorded—minute cross-examinations of individuals who could have held no previous communication with each other having corroborated every point.

Shedding the clearest light over the countries more immediately adjacent to Shoa, the evidence collected becomes less and less distinct as the lands and tribes under consideration verge towards the distant edge of the horizon. It is important to know that the Gochob, in its upper course, is occupied by so powerful a Christian people, whose sovereign exercises over the destinies of the surrounding Gentiles an influence which, if properly directed, could be made to check the rapid spread of Islamism, instead of fostering the traffic in human beings. The extensive wildernesses beyond Susa may be concluded to form the barrier betwixt the unfruitful land of Nigritia and the fair provinces occupying the most elevated regions of Africa. Seneca relates that two centurions, who were sent by Nero Caesar to explore the head of the Nile, were recommended by the King of Ethiopia to the nearest kings beyond; and that after a long journey they came “even unto the further countries, to immense morasses, the end of which neither the natives themselves did know, nor any body else may hope to find.”

Volume Three—Chapter Eleven.

The Conversion of Ethiopia.

In the year 330 after the birth of our Saviour, Meropius, a merchant of Tyre, having undertaken a commercial voyage to India, landed on the coast of Ethiopia, where he was murdered by the barbarians, and his two sons, Frumentius and Edesius, both devout men, being made prisoners, were carried as slaves before the Emperor. The abilities, the

information, and the peaceable demeanour of the brothers, soon gained not only their release, but high office in the court; and living in the full confidence of the monarch until his decease, and subsequently under the protection of the queen-mother, they soon secured the good-will of the entire nation. The work of conversion was commenced, and having proceeded with wonderful rapidity and success, a thriving branch was shortly added to the great Eastern church.

Bearing the happy tidings, Frumentius appeared in Alexandria, where he was received with open arms by the patriarch Athanasius. Loaded with honours, and consecrated the first bishop of Ethiopia, a relation was thus happily commenced with Egypt, which has remained firm and friendly to the present day, and throughout fifteen centuries has bestowed upon a Coptish priest the high office of Patriarch Abuna of the Ethiopic church.

On his return to the country of his hopes, Frumentius found that the spark of life had spread rapidly throughout the gloomy darkness of the land. Baptism was instituted, deacons and presbyters appointed, churches erected, and a firm foundation laid whereon to establish the Christian religion in Abyssinia. Frumentius was deservedly honoured with a favoured niche in the annals of her church history, and, under the title of “Salama,” formed the subject of high praise to all the sacred poets of Ethiopia.

> “Hail him with the voice of joy, sing praises to Salam
> The door of pity and of mercy and of pleasant grace;
> Salute those blessed hands bearing the pure torch o
> For the splendour of Christ’s church has enlightened

During the succeeding century, priests and apostles, men of wonderful sanctity, flocked into the empire from all parts of the East, and miracles the most stupendous are related in the legends of those days. Mountains were removed, and the storms of the angry ocean stilled by the mere application of the staff. The adder and the basilisk glided harmless under foot, and rivers stayed their roaring torrent, that the sandal of the holy man should remain unstained by the flood. Aragáwi raised the dead—the fingers of Likános flamed like tapers of fire—Samuel rode upon his lion; and thus the kingdom of Arwé, the old serpent of Ethiop, was utterly overthrown.

The Abyssinians now became subtle casuists and disputants. Abstruse doctrines were propounded, and speculative theories largely indulged in; and the generation passed away ere the knotty points had been satisfactorily determined, how long Adam remained in Paradise before his fall? and whether in his present state he held dominion over the angels?

In the year 481, the celebrated council of Chalcedon lighted up the torch of misunderstanding regarding the two natures of Christ. The Eastern church split and separated in mortal feud, and the Saracen pounced upon Egypt, rent and wasted by discord and distraction. The Abyssinians, denouncing the council a meeting of fools, concurred in the opinion of the Alexandrian patriarch. The faith of the Monophysite was declared to be the one only true and orthodox, and the banished Dioscorus received all the honours of a martyr.

> “The kings of the earth divided the unity of God and r
> Sing praises to the martyr who laughed their religion
> He was treated with indignity, they plucked out his flo

Yea, and tore the teeth from his venerable face;
But in heaven a halo of honour shall encircle Dioscoı

But during the ensuing oppressions and exactions of the Moslem, the successor of Saint Mark could barely retain his own existence in Egypt; and Ethiopia, his remote charge, now nearly isolated from the remainder of the world, rested for the next ten centuries a sealed book to European history, preserving her independence from all foreign yoke, and guarding in safety the flame of that faith which she had inherited from her fathers.

The reign of the ascetics succeeded to that of disputation, and men lacerated their bodies, and lived in holes and caves of the earth like wild beasts. Tekla Haïmanót and Eustathius were the great founders of monkery in the land. An angel announced the birth of one, and the other floated over the sea, borne in safety amidst the folds of his leathern garment. Miracles still continued to be occasionally performed. Sanctity was further enhanced by mortification of the flesh, and austerity of life was highly praised and followed by the admiring mob. The original discipline of the anchorite was severe in the extreme. He was to be continually girt around the loins with heavy chains, or to remain for days immersed in the cold mountain stream—to recline upon the bare earth, and to subsist upon a scanty vegetable diet.

Monasteries were at length founded, and fields and revenues set apart for the convenience of their inmates; and although a visiting superior was appointed to check corruption and punish innovation or transgression, the asperities of the monastic life gradually softened down. The Etchéguê, or grand prior of the monasteries, preferred the comforts of a

settled abode to wearisome tours and visitations. Further immunities were granted to all loving a life of ease and spiritual licence; and the commonwealth had to deplore the loss of a large portion of her subjects, who neither contributed tax, nor assisted in military service.

Thus converted at an early period of the Christian age, Ethiopia spread her new religion deep into the recesses of heathen Africa. Extending her wide empire on every side, the praise of the Redeemer soon arose from the wildest valleys and the most secluded mountains. From the great river Gochob to the frontiers of Nubia, the crutch and the cowl pervaded the land. Churches were erected in every convenient spot; and the blue badge of nominal Christianity encircled the necks of an ignorant multitude. The usual wars and rebellions arose, and schisms and sects fill up the archives of ten centuries with all the uninteresting precision of more civilised countries. But still the church flourished; the patriarch was regularly received from Alexandria, and a long list of ninety-five Abunas flows quietly through the dull pages of Abyssinian record, from the time of Frumentius the First, until the days of the venerable Simeon, who, whilst gallantly defending the faith of his fathers, was barbarously murdered by the European partisans of the Italian Jesuit.

The rise of the Mohammadan power in Arabia, and the rapid spread of Islamism, first circumscribed the limits of the empire, and begirt it round with foes. But although the nation was now called upon to repel the fierce assaults both of the heathen and of the fanatic followers of the false prophet, the measure of her oppression was not filled until the cup had been deeply drained of the converting zeal of European

priesthood. The usual horrors attendant upon religious war were then painfully undergone, and the blood of her children was unsparingly poured out. Nearest and dearest relatives rallied under opposite standards; and the same cry of destruction rang from either host, “The glory of the true faith.”

The zeal of the Jesuit has seldom been displayed in more glowing colours, or in more decided defeat, than in the attempts so perseveringly made to draw within the meshes of his net the remote church of Ethiopia. And although the means employed are to be justly condemned, still that ardour must be the theme of the high praise of all, which impelled old men and young to dare the difficulties and the dangers of a rude uncivilised land, with exposure to the prejudices of a people as bigoted as themselves in the cause of their religion.

But the wily system of establishing rival orders and monasteries of mortification—of snapping asunder domestic ties, and of collecting together bands of discontented enthusiasts—well served the interests of the Catholic faith; and there were always to be found obedient servants to bear instructions to the farthest corners of the earth;—men who relinquished few comforts or enjoyments on quitting their austere cells, who were prepared at all hazards, and in all manners, to carry into execution the will of their superiors, and who gloried in the alternative of erecting an eternal fabric in honour of their order, or of obtaining the crown of martyrdom.

The custom of ages had, however, struck too deeply into the heart of the Abyssinian. The power of the officiating clergy was paramount in the land. All the passions and the prejudices of the multitude were too

firmly enlisted in the cause of ancient belief; and degraded as was the Christianity of the country, its forms and tenets were not more absurd, and not less pertinaciously supported, than those Romish innovations which were so fiercely, though so ineffectually, attempted.

The soft wily speech and the thunder of excommunication were alike disregarded. Treachery and force were both tried and found equally unavailing. Blood flowed for a season like water, and the sound of wailing was heard from the palace to the peasant's hut; but the storm expended itself, and finally passed away; and after the struggle of a century, the discomfited monks relinquished their attempts upon the church of the Monophysite, without leaving behind one solitary convert to their faith, and bearing along with them the loud maledictions of an exasperated nation.

Volume Three—Chapter Twelve.

The Court of Prester John.

During the darkness of the middle ages, the church of Abyssinia had fallen into complete oblivion; but about the commencement of the sixteenth century rumours were whispered abroad of a Christian monarch and a Christian nation established in the centre of Africa; and the happy news was first brought to the court of Portugal that a Christian church still existed, which had for ages successfully resisted, among the lofty mountains of Abyssinia, the fierce attacks of the sanguinary Saracen.

In the year 1499, Pedro Covilham succeeded in reaching Shoa, where he was received with that favour which novelty usually secures; and although the stranger was prevented by the existing ancient laws from leaving the kingdom, the quest had been successfully performed. The first link was re-established of a chain which had been broken for ages; and shortly afterwards the glories of Prester John and his Christian court were fully disclosed, to abate the intense anxiety that reigned in the heart of every inhabitant of the West.

In due process of time an Abyssinian ambassador made his appearance in Portugal. Unbounded delight was experienced by King Emanuel, and every honour was lavished upon Matthew the merchant of Shoa. All believed that the Abyssinians were devout Catholics, and that a vast empire, estimated at four times its actual extent, was about to fall under the dominion of the Roman church. A mission on a great scale was fitted out—the journey was safely accomplished—and excited fancy rioted for a time in the description of palaces and fountains which never existed, and pomp, riches, and regal power, utterly unknown in the land.

Missions continued from either court during the succeeding forty years. An alliance was formed. Men learned in the arts and sciences were despatched to settle in Abyssinia. Zaga Zaba arrived in Lisbon, invested with full powers to satisfy the interests of both countries, temporal as well as spiritual. But the difference of faith was now for the first time understood. The bitter enmity of the Roman creed stood prominently to view; and the envoy, after studying the details of the Catholic doctrine, and refusing to subscribe a similar contract on behalf of

his church, was unscrupulously put to a violent death in a Portuguese prison.

The first flattering ideas regarding the religion of the country being thus found erroneous, the delusion respecting the extent and power of the mighty empire was next to fall to the ground. The Galla were now streaming in hordes from the interior, and Graan, the Mohammadan invader, was carrying fire and sword throughout the country. The dying Coptish patriarch of Abyssinia was prevailed upon to nominate as his successor John Bermudez, a resident Portuguese; and, hurried by the king, this priest proceeded, without loss of time, to seek military assistance from the courts of Rome and Lisbon.

Schemes of ambition flitted over the minds of the first conquerors of India, and an alliance with Ethiopia seemed highly desirable as a handle for further acquisition in the East. But dilatory measures delayed the arrival of the Portuguese fleet until the suing monarch had been gathered to his fathers; and it has already been seen that Christopher, the son of the famous Vasco de Gama, anchored in the harbour of Massowah at a time when the new Emperor Claudius was sorely pressed to sustain himself upon the throne of his ancestors. The opportunity was not neglected by the archbishop to reduce the heretic Church to the fold of the Roman see; and a series of attempts were commenced, equally to be deplored from the mischief which they created, and the unworthy means that were employed during the struggle.

The signal service rendered by the Portuguese troops in the ensuing wars, the total rout of the Galla and the Moslem, with the slaughter of their invading

leader in battle, placed Bermudez in a position to demand high terms from the reinstated monarch. The conversion of the emperor to the Roman Catholic faith and the possession of one-third of the kingdom, were imperiously proposed, and scornfully rejected. Excommunication was threatened by the proud prelate of the West, and utterly disregarded by King Claudius, who retorted that the pope himself was a heretic. Open hostilities broke out; and although the superior discipline of the Europeans for a time gave them the advantage, they were at length separated by a wily stratagem, and hurried to different quarters of the kingdom; and Bermudez being then seized, was conveyed in honourable exile to the rugged mountains of Efát.

Although much blood and considerable treasure had been thus fruitlessly expended, the conversion of Ethiopia was far from being forgotten in Europe; and the spark of hope was further kept alive by an Abyssinian priest, who asserted, on his arrival in Rome, that the failure of Bermudez had entirely arisen from his own absurd and brutal conduct, and that the utmost deference would be paid to men of sense and capacity. Ignatius Loyola volunteered to repair in person to re-unite the Ethiopic and Roman Catholic churches; but his talents being required for more important objects, the pope refused the desired permission to the great founder of the society of Jesus, and thirteen missionaries from the new order were chosen instead. Nunez Baretto was elevated to the dignity of patriarch, and André Oviedo appointed provisional successor.

At that period the navigation of the Red Sea was rendered dangerous by numerous Saracen fleets; and the patriarch, deeming it inexpedient to hazard

his own valuable person in the perils of the voyage, reposed quietly at Goa, whilst a deputation headed by Gonsalvez Rodrigues, a priest of secondary rank, was despatched in advance, to ascertain the capabilities of the route, and the sentiments of the reigning monarch.

The Emperor Claudius little relished the arrival of these monks, and Rodrigues entirely failed in every attempt at conviction on the points at issue—that the pope, as representative of Christ upon earth, was the true head of all Christians, and that there was no salvation out of the pale of the Catholic church. Dismissed with the reply that the people of Ethiopia would not lightly abandon the faith of their forefathers, the monk retired to work upon the mind of the monarch by the brilliancy of his controversial writing; but a lengthy treatise on the true faith produced no happy result, and the envoy, disgusted with his reception, returned shortly afterwards to Goa.

The spiritual conclave was plunged into consternation by the untoward intelligence; and after much mature deliberation it was resolved, that the dignity of the patriarch, and of the great King of Portugal, could not be exposed to the consequences attending the ill favour of the Emperor of Abyssinia; and that therefore the prelate should still remain the guest of the Bishop of Nicea, whilst the daring and restless Oviedo, with a small train of attendants, attempted the business.

Arriving in safety, the Jesuit experienced a most friendly reception from the Emperor Claudius; and although the letters of recommendation from the pope were received with mistrust and impatience, the habitual mildness of the monarch restrained him from

any overt act of oppression. Deceived by this calm behaviour, the bishop, during a second audience, was sufficiently foolhardy to represent, in the most insolent language, the enormous errors under which the Emperor laboured, and to demand imperatively whether or not he intended to submit himself to the authority of the successor of Saint Peter, and thus remove the heavy obligation under which his empire already groaned. King Claudius replied that he was well inclined towards the Portuguese nation—that he would grant lands and settlements in his country—that permission would not be withheld to the private exercise of the religion of the West; but that as the Abyssinian church had been for ages united to the charge of the patriarch of Alexandria, a subject of such serious alteration must be canvassed before a full assembly of divines.

Indignant at what he termed Ethiopian perfidy, but still buoyed up with the faint hope of realising his object, Oviedo changed his mode of attack, and addressed a laboured remonstrance to the monarch, written in the hypocritical tone of false friendship, earnestly entreating him to recall to his remembrance the assistance rendered by Europeans to his afflicted country, and the many promises made by his sire in the day of his urgent distress; imploring him at the same time to preserve a stern vigilance upon the evil influence of the Empress and of the ministers of state; “for in matters of faith the love of kindred must give way to the love of Christ, and in similar situations the nearest relation often proves the bitterest enemy to the salvation of the soul.”

This insidious reasoning was, however, vainly expended upon the intelligent Claudius, and served but to turn his heart further from the Roman and his

cause. The offer of a public controversy on points of disputed faith being shortly afterwards accepted, the Emperor entered the lists in presence of the assembled court, and by his clear knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, utterly defeated the subtilties of the Italian priest; and thus, notwithstanding the conviction of the Portuguese missionary that by supernatural aid he had triumphantly refuted all the arguments urged by his illustrious antagonist, it was fully decreed by the Abyssinian conference, that neither king nor people owed any obligation or obedience whatsoever to the church of Rome.

Still Oviedo was far from being reduced to silence. Treatise after treatise was published on the controversy, to confound the minds of the Ethiopians. The errors of the Alexandrian faith were fiercely attacked in every form and fashion; and the superior beauties of the Catholic religion fully expounded. But no advantage resulted. Rejoinders and confutations followed fast from the insulted clergy; and the bishop, furious at the thoughts of his futile exertions to gain a footing in the country—entertaining no hope of making one single convert, whether among prince or people—resolved upon a last effort in the struggle. On the fifth of February, 1559, he issued his spiritual ban over the land, proclaiming that the entire nation of Abyssinia, high and low, learned and ignorant, having refused to obey the church of Rome—practising the unholy rite of circumcision—scrupling to eat the flesh of the hog and the hare—and indulging in many other flagrant enormities—were delivered over to the judgment of the spiritual court, to be punished in person and goods, in public and in private, by every means the faithful could devise.

But the folly of issuing this curious rescript without

any means of enforcing it was fully appreciated; and the tyrannical conduct of the bishop did but serve to strengthen the Emperor in the bonds of his own faith, finding, as was observed by an historian of the times, “that popery and its wiles were the more dangerous and reprehensible, as the veil was withdrawn from before the spirit of her tenets.”

There is every reason to believe that the succeeding invasion of the Adaïel was procured through the treacherous designs of the Jesuits, but the event again proved disastrous to their cause. Although the revenge of the baffled bishop was allayed in a torrent of blood, yet the death of the mild, moderate, and liberal Claudius, who perished on the battlefield, shed a baneful influence on their ensuing efforts; and the sceptre devolved into the hands of his brother Adam, a haughty and vindictive prince, who is depicted in Portuguese records as “cruel and hard of heart, and utterly insensible to the beauteous mysteries of the Catholic faith.”

Swearing vengeance against the Latins, to whose treason he attributed the murder of his brother and the ruin of his country, the new monarch seized all the estates which had been granted to the Portuguese for rendered service, and threatened the bishop and his colleagues with instantaneous death if they presumed to propagate the errors of the Romish church; and on a humble remonstrance being attempted, in the violence of his wrath, he rushed upon the missionary with a drawn sword, vowing to immolate him upon the spot. “The weapon, however,” say the holy fathers, “dropped miraculously from his impious hand,” and for a season the last extremity of vengeance was exchanged for a system of vile durance.

Portuguese troops in the meantime arrived from Goa, and the Bahr Negásh, “the lord of the sea-coast,” bought over by the gold of India, and stirred up by the wily emissaries of the viceroy, assembled his forces in rebellion. Marching with his European allies to the capital, he defeated and slew the Emperor in a pitched battle, and rescued the Jesuit missionaries from their unpleasant captivity.

Warned by former difficulty and distress, the worthy fathers now assumed a more modest and humble demeanour, and were allowed to settle again in their old haunt of Maiguagua, where they remained for a time unmolested by the new Emperor Malek Sáshed, who inherited all the horror of his father to the Catholic creed, although tempered by the mildness of his uncle Claudius. But the jealous monks had not yet relinquished their hope of advancement, and bending to the pressure of the times, the deep plot was veiled under the garb of passive obedience. The most pressing solicitations were despatched to Goa for assistance; and the dauntless Oviedo pledged himself with six hundred staunch Europeans to convert, not only the empire of Abyssinia, but all the countries adjacent.

The scheme, however, did not suit the politics of the day; and in 1560 the bishop received an order from the head of his society to repair forthwith to his more promising charge in Japan. Loth to abandon all his favourite projects of ambition in the country, and utterly reckless of truth, he addressed the most specious letters to the pope, holding out a certain prospect of prostrating the church of Ethiopia before the apostolic throne, whilst to his immediate superior he dilated upon the richness of the land, and the mines of pure gold which he falsely asserted to exist

in every province of the kingdom. But his artful motives were thoroughly pierced by the more wily successor of Saint Peter; and vessels soon after arrived on the coast of Africa, to convey the reluctant fathers to the monastery of Saint Xavier, in Goa.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirteen.

The Religious War.

Miserable indeed appeared the chance of conversion; and after a fierce struggle of thirty years, there remained not one priest of the Romish faith to administer the sacraments to the numerous European settlers and descendants in the country. Even the Jesuits themselves lost heart for the time; but the zeal of Philip the Second stirred the dying embers, and fresh candidates for strife, honour, and martyrdom, were soon in the field.

Peter Pero Pays and Antonio de Montzerado, disguised as Armenian merchants, first attempted the perilous undertaking; but being wrecked upon the Arabian coast, they were recognised as Christian ministers, and languished during seven years in a Moslem dungeon.

Goa next poured forth her priests to the ineffectual contest. In seeking the promised land, Abraham de Georgis was discovered in Turkish garb on the island of Massowah, and the governor swore by the holy Prophet, that, since the káfir had donned the attire of the true believer, he should also adopt the tenets of the true faith, or die the death of a dog. But the Jesuit

clung to his creed, and suffered accordingly; and, shortly afterwards, Jean Baptiste being detected in assumed costume, by the Turks of Comera, he also shared the same fate as his immediate predecessor, in the thorny path of martyrdom.

Thus even the road itself seemed to close, and all intercourse was denied with a country wherein the presence of Europeans was neither desired nor permitted; and which would have been suffered to remain unmolested, had not exaggerated ideas of its wealth still pervaded the imagination of all classes throughout the western world.

Don Alexis de Menezez, the zealous Archbishop of Goa, who had already with fire and sword propagated Christianity throughout Malabar, now entered the lists, and his sagacious and discerning mind selected the vicar of Saint Anne as a fit tool for the execution of his project. Melchior Sylva, a converted Brahmin, might, from his colour and language, pass through the Turkish wicket. His zeal was great as that of his superior, and the valuable presents whereof he was made the bearer, might prove a bait sufficiently tempting to lure the simple Abyssinian into a fresh connexion.

The intelligence of his safe arrival, and of the gracious reception of the presents, again roused the ardent spirit of the order of Jesus; and Peter Pays was quickly ransomed from the Arabs, and despatched with a full train of priests to Ethiopia, where he arrived in September of the year 1603.

Superior in every respect to his predecessors, this missionary, instead of attempting to carry his measures by force and overbearing insolence,

sought the softer path of insinuation; and whilst his extensive knowledge and plausible address proved strong recommendations in his favour, many circumstances also conspired to forward his views. The country was in a most unsettled state, and the assistance of a few Portuguese troops could turn the scale of war. The condition of the church was low and miserable. Eighty years of incessant strife and distraction had crushed the very name of learning and literature. Few persons were to be found who could read, write, or dispute. Ignorant and unworthy men filled every sacred office; and the ancient defenders of the Alexandrian faith had been swept away on the battlefield.

Amidst wars, and rumours of wars, Peter quietly settled with his followers at Maiguagua. Schools were opened, and the wonder ran through the land, that youths of tender age could refute the most learned sages of the wilderness of Walkayet. The curiosity of Za Dengel, the temporary occupant of the throne, was excited, and Peter, with his erudite pupils, was summoned to the court.

Prompted by the hope of obtaining assistance from Portugal, this weak prince, under an oath of secrecy, immediately embraced the religion of his guest. But his time was fully occupied in the more worldly object of strengthening himself upon a throne to which he had been elevated by his evil genius; and the falling away from the faith of his forefathers being at length whispered abroad, a rebellion was the consequence.

The approaching storm having been perceived by the monk, he withdrew from court before the burst of a revolution, which for some time crushed his every hope of success. The Emperor was slain. New

aspirants strove for the ascendency; and war reigned for a season throughout the entire land.

Confident in the near approach of Portuguese troops, which had been requested when Sylva carried to India the tidings of the first conversion, Peter now resolved upon the bold game of espousing the weaker party, and thus gaining a firmer hold in event of success. The expected reinforcements did not, however, arrive in time; and the defeat and death of his *protégé* was followed by the advancement of the pretender Susneus to the throne of the empire.

Notwithstanding his appearance as a declared partisan in the opposing ranks, Peter's abilities as an architect now created a fresh diversion in his favour. The novel idea of a two-storied edifice engrossed the thoughts of the reigning king; and men flocked from the remotest parts of the country to gaze upon a fabric of stone, which was considered to be one of the wonders of the world. A missionary possessing the varied abilities and acquirements of Pays could not be long in gaining ascendency over a rude and illiterate monarch; and by address and perseverance he had soon effected that which the threats and violence of his predecessors had vainly attempted during a long course of years.

Ras Sela Christos, brother to the Emperor, was the first-fruit of the harvest. Partaking of the holy supper with the Latins, he publicly embraced their religion, and many chiefs and nobles followed his illustrious example. Crowded assemblies were held, in which the eloquence of the Jesuits entirely bore down the feeble efforts of the ignorant and uncultivated natives. The holiness of life which was strictly preserved among the neophytes and proselytes of the

Catholics, added to the impression entertained of their wisdom; and the introduction of useful arts, raised the glory of the fathers still higher in the land; and the prospect of the aid of disciplined soldiers from the West overturned the last remaining scruple in the mind of the monarch.

An edict was published interdicting all persons from holding office who were not well inclined towards the Latin religion; and severe punishments were threatened for the promulgation of ancient doctrines. Assistance was solicited from Rome and Lisbon; and the work of European persecution favourably commenced, by scourging with whips all those stubborn monks who refused to forego their ancient belief.

Abba Simeon, the Abuna, repaired to the court to remonstrate with the Emperor on the scandalous interference with his prerogatives in convening meetings and authorising debates upon ecclesiastical matters; but his pride was timely soothed by the royal assurance that all had been undertaken for the benefit of true religion, and that the subject should be fully discussed in his own presence. Again the subtilties and dialectics of the missionaries prevailed; and the total defeat of the Patriarch and his clergy was followed by a second more severe ordinance, awarding the penalty of death to all who should henceforth deny the two natures of Christ.

Wonderful was the sensation created by this severe edict, so diametrically at variance with the mild spirit of religion, and with all the ancient usages of the land. Aware of the feelings of the strong party at court, as well as of the entire body of the people, the Abuna placarded on the doors of the chapels an

excommunication of all who should accept the religion of the Franks; and the monarch, irritated by this resistance, published a manifesto, “That his subjects should forthwith embrace the Catholic faith.”

This served as the signal-trumpet for the fight. All classes armed themselves in defence of their religion; and Aelius, the king’s son-in-law, placed himself at the head of the malcontents in Tigré.

Not yet thoroughly prepared for the struggle, the Emperor found it convenient for a time to temporise, and requested one further debate, which was to prove final between the disputants. The mild Abuna listened to the proposal, and accompanied by a large train of monks appeared in the royal camp, whilst the Jesuit and his colleagues advanced into the arena from the opposite side. The controversy was renewed, and raged fiercely for six days; but disputes in religion are seldom adjusted by the reasoning of the doctors, and the parties withdrew mutually incensed against each other.

One further effort was made to restore the disturbed harmony. The Empress Hamilmála, and many of the courtiers, with tears implored the king to desist from his undertaking; and the patriarch and the clergy, throwing themselves prostrate on the earth, embraced his knees, and entreated him to turn a deaf ear to the poisonous insinuations of the deceitful Jesuits, and graciously to allow his subjects to remain faithful to the religion of their forefathers. But the heart of the monarch remained closed to the prayer. The Abuna quitted the court, plunged in the deepest distress, and a bloody war ensued, which shook the empire to its foundation.

When Aelius fully understood the last resolution taken by his father-in-law, to defend the Catholics and their religion, he publicly appealed to the people of Tigré, and proclaimed that all who were disposed to embrace the Jesuitical faith might repair to the deluded Emperor, whilst those who held to the ancient belief should forthwith gather under his standard. Finding himself shortly afterwards at the head of a large army, he marched towards the royal camp, resolved to establish the received doctrine of the land, or to perish in the attempt.

Abba Simeon, who had attained the venerable age of one hundred years, joined the army of the defenders of the Alexandrian faith; and in giving them his patriarchal blessing, assured the soldiery that all who should fall in the combat died the death of the martyr, and would receive the reward in heaven. The desired effect was produced, and the hearts of the entire force burned with one eager zeal to meet the accursed enemies of their religion.

On the appearance of the inflamed force a reconciliation was attempted, and the daughter of the Emperor was made the bearer of terms to her rebel lord. Her tears and entreaties were, however, totally disregarded. The impetuous youth prepared for instant attack; and the princess had barely time to regain her father’s tent, when hostilities were commenced.

The soldiers of the viceroy rushed furiously upon the royal encampment, and Aelius succeeded in forcing his way, at the head of a small body of troops, to the very pavilion of his father-in-law. But he was here struck from his horse by a stone, and stabbed upon the ground. A panic seized the army of the fallen

leader, and the rabble, casting away their arms, fled in all directions.

The aged Abuna found himself alone and deserted in the same spot which he had occupied during the attack. His years and high clerical bearing disarmed the violence of the Abyssinian soldiery; but a Portuguese partisan at length threw himself upon the patriarch, and, regardless of his white and venerable hairs, transfixed him with a spear. A frightful massacre ensued; and the heads of the principal leaders of the unsuccessful rebellion were exposed on the gates of the capital as a bloody warning to the seditious.

Volume Three—Chapter Fourteen.

Temporary Submission to the Pope of Rome.

Strengthened by this signal victory, other points of the Alexandrian creed were attacked in succession; and the time of the Jesuits was fully occupied in the translation into Ethiopic of sundry dogmatical treatises on subjects of disputed faith. But the barbarism of the language was despised by most—the Latin interpolation abhorred as magic by all—and a furious paper controversy raged for a time; until the Abyssinians becoming scurrilous, the wrath of the monarch was again roused, and he issued a severe edict, wherein the people were forbidden from celebrating the Jewish Sabbath, which from time immemorial had hitherto been sacred.

The inhabitants of Begemeder flew to arms; and people from all parts of the country, groaning under the yoke of foreign oppression, poured in to join the standard of rebellion which Joanel had reared on the plains of his government. A horde of Galla, delighting in the confusion, offered their assistance, and the most haughty conditions were speedily conveyed to court from a large assembly in arms.

Again the most earnest entreaties were employed to induce the emperor to compromise; but influenced by the words of the Jesuits, he called together his principal chieftains, monks, and learned men, and in their presence solemnly declared that he would defend the Catholic religion to the last drop of his blood; adding, that it was the first duty of his subjects

to obey their legitimate monarch. Energetic measures were forthwith agreed upon, and, at the head of a large array, the king proceeded in person to the war. Joanel, finding himself too weak to contend in the plains, withdrew to the inaccessible mountains, where a blockade by the royal troops soon caused a scarcity of provisions. His forces gradually deserted, and he himself escaping to the Galla, was pursued, betrayed, and put to death.

This reverse sustained by the defenders of the old cause did not, however, intimidate the inhabitants of Dámot, a province situated on the borders of the Nile; for scarcely had the emperor reached his capital, when the population rose *en masse*, with the determination of dethroning a monarch who so basely truckled to a foreign yoke, and of driving from the land the authors of its distraction. An army of fourteen thousand warriors was speedily organised; and monks and hermits, burning with zeal in the cause, emerged from the cave and from the wilderness to join the fast-swelling ranks.

Ras Sela Christos marched against the rebels, but desertion considerably thinned his troops; and he confronted the enemy with barely one-half the numerical strength of their formidable array. Governor of the province, and greatly beloved by the people, a proposal was tendered to him, that if he would only lend his assistance in burning the monkish books and hanging the worthy fathers themselves upon tall trees, he might be seated upon the imperial throne of his ancestors. But the general, despising the offer, and resting confident in the firelocks of the Portuguese, rushed to the attack. The combat raged fiercely for a time. Four hundred monks, devoting themselves to death, carried

destruction through the royal host; but the tide of victory set at length in his favour, and after a fearful carnage on either side, he found himself master of the field.

Great rejoicings at court followed the news of this success. Peter declared that Heaven, by the extermination of his enemies, had given the desired sign that the Roman Catholic should be the religion of the land; and the emperor, who, partly from fear of his subjects, and partly from dislike to relinquish his supernumerary wives and concubines, had not as yet publicly professed the Latin religion, now openly embraced the faith, and confessed his sins to the triumphant Jesuit.

A letter containing the royal sentiments was published for the benefit of the nation:—"The king henceforth obeys the pope of Rome, the successor of Peter, chief of the apostles, who could neither err in doctrine nor in conduct; and all subjects are hereby advised to adopt the same creed." And the missionary, who now reasonably imagined that the work was satisfactorily concluded, wrote to the courts of Rome and Lisbon, requesting that a patriarch and twenty ecclesiastics might be immediately sent to the vineyard; adding, that "although the harvest was plentiful, the labourers were but few."

These happy and unlooked-for tidings were received by Philip the Fourth of Spain. Mutio Vitelesi, the general of the Jesuits, offered to proceed in person, but the pope refused permission, as he had done in the case of his predecessor Loyola; and Alphonso Mendez, a learned doctor of the society of Jesus, was inaugurated at Lisbon with all the customary solemnities.

After suffering much difficulty and delay in his passage, the Portuguese patriarch at length arrived on the Danákil coast with a large train of priests, servants, masons, and musicians. The same greediness and cupidity were experienced amongst the savage Adaïel that the traveller finds at the present day—baseness and avarice having stamped their character for generations; but the troubles of a weary march were soon forgotten in the cordial reception which awaited the party at the royal camp; and the day was finally fixed when the homage of the king and of the country should be rendered to the Pope of Rome.

On the 11th of February, 1626, the court and the nobles of the land were assembled in the open air. Two rich thrones were occupied by the monarch and his distinguished guest, and a surrounding multitude gazed upon the imposing ceremony in silence. “The hour is come,” exclaimed Mendez, “when the king shall satisfy the debt of his ancestors, and submit himself and his people to the only true head of the church.” A copy of the Gospel was produced, and the monarch, falling upon his knees, took the oath of homage. “We, King of the kings of Ethiopia, believe and confess that the Pope of Rome is the true successor of the Apostle Saint Peter, and that he holds the same power, dignity, and dominion, over the whole Christian church. Therefore we promise, offer, and swear sincere obedience to the holy father Urban, by God’s grace Pope and our Lord, and throw humbly at his feet our person and our kingdom.”

As the emperor rose from his position, Ras Sela Christos, suddenly drawing his sword, shouted aloud, “What is now done is done for ever; and whoso in future disclaims the act, shall taste the sharp edge of

this trusty weapon. I do homage only to true Catholic kings." The monks, clergy, and noblemen followed the example of their superiors; and the assembly was closed by a public edict, proclaimed through the royal herald, that all Abyssinians should, under pain of death, forthwith embrace the Roman religion.

Palaces and revenues were set apart for the ministers of the new faith; seminaries for youth were established throughout the country, and baptism and ordination went on in peace. The success of the Jesuits increased rapidly, and many thousand souls were enrolled, who had been converted from the delusions of the Alexandrian creed.

The trial of two years failed, however, to convince the nation of the benefits of the new religion; and the emperor and patriarchs could not deceive themselves in the fact, that the cause advanced rather in appearance than in reality. Missionaries who entered the native churches were found murdered in their beds; the most disparaging stories were everywhere circulated regarding the holy fathers, and more particularly on the representation of scriptural performances at the Paschal feast, when demons being introduced by the Romans upon the stage, the spectators rushed simultaneously from the theatre, exclaiming, "Alas! they have brought with them devils from the infernal regions," and the tale spread like wildfire through the land.

Nothing daunted by the unfortunate fate of Aelius and Joanel, Tekla Georgis, another son-in-law of the emperor, with a large body of the discontented, rose to defend the religion of their forefathers. Burning the crosses and rosaries, together with a Jesuit priest who fell into their hands, the party rapidly increased,

and the emperor was compelled to march an army to quell the insurrection. The rebels were completely routed by Rebaxus, the viceroy of Tigré, and all who fell into his hands, men, women, and children, were barbarously massacred. Georgis and his sister Adera concealed themselves in a cave during three days, but were at length discovered and brought before the irritated emperor. Condemned by the advice of the Jesuits to be burned to death as a heretic, Georgis was allowed by the monarch publicly to solicit the patriarch to be admitted into the Roman church; but it being afterwards considered politic to imagine that his intentions were insincere, the unfortunate prince was hung in front of the palace in presence of the whole court; and his devoted sister, fifteen days afterwards, suffered the same fate upon the same tree, notwithstanding that the most strenuous efforts were made to save her life by the queen and by all classes of society.

To increase the dread effects of his tyranny, the emperor now issued a manifesto, that even as he had punished with death the obstinacy of his own son-in-law, so would he of a surety not spare any who in future committed a like transgression. The remarks of the worthy missionary Antoine, regarding this execution, will show the spirit which animated the fathers in their course of persecution, so novel in the annals of Abyssinia, and so contrary to the mildness of the Christian faith. “He who reads with attention the history of Ethiopia, will observe, that at no previous period was such ardent zeal displayed for the honour of religion, and a direct miracle, indeed, must have induced the emperor to hang his own son-in-law in the blessed cause.”

Dazzled by the success that had hitherto attended

their measures, the patriarch and his colleagues now plunged headlong into proceedings which eventually proved disastrous to their cause. Excommunications were lightly launched in civil disputes, and the soul of every counsellor of the state was committed to the devil if he dared to question the authority of the foreign priest. Conspiracies were hatched against the imperial person; and the body of a distinguished non-conforming ecclesiastic, which had been interred within the walls of the church, was exhumed by order of the Portuguese prelate, and thrown to the wild beasts—an action which raised the indignation of the ethiopians to the highest pitch against a set of men "who had ever the words of religion in the mouth, but who, after persecuting the living, denied even to the dead that repose which neither Pagan nor Mohammadan ever disturbed."

The detestation of the fathers and their religion daily waxed stronger in the hearts of all. Their great patron, Ras Sela Christos, was deprived of power and property for seditious attempts; and the bold mountaineers of Begemeder at length seized their long spears to uphold the faith of their ancestors. The viceroy was driven from the province, and Meleaxus, a youth of royal blood, appointed defender of the ancient religion, and leader of the armed host of peasants who flocked to his standard from all parts of the country, but especially from Lasta, the seat of the bravest warriors of the land.

To quell this insurrection, the Emperor assembled in Gojam an army of twenty-five thousand men, and attacked the insurgents among their strongholds. His troops were, however, repulsed at all points with the loss of many officers and men, and he was reluctantly obliged to retreat to the plains. Deputies

followed from the victorious camp, to supplicate him to take pity upon his subjects, and to dismiss those evil-minded strangers who had so long oppressed Abyssinia. The royal army was in no heart or condition to renew hostilities. Rumours went through the land that angels sent from heaven had proclaimed the restoration of the ancient religion; and in the general excitement the king perceived that his own authority would be fatally compromised unless some concessions were made.

The patriarch was nevertheless inflexible; and letters were at the same time received from Rome, instigating the emperor to combat stoutly with his rebellious subjects, and extending to Ethiopia the general absolution of the great year of Jubilee. But the unhappy inhabitants laughed the offer of this indulgence to scorn, and were utterly unable to comprehend by what authority the pope held in his possession the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Volume Three—Chapter Fifteen.

Expulsion of the Jesuits from Ethiopia.

The civil war continued, meanwhile, to rage with great expenditure of life, and with alternate success on either side. Enticed into the plain, the enemy were generally worsted by the royal troops, but among the recesses of their native rocks the mountaineers had always the advantage. No sign of intended submission could be observed; and the monarch, becoming suspicious of the Jesuits, who were erecting forts and strongholds under the guise of

churches and residences, lent a favourable ear to the entreaties of his subjects.

A second remonstrance was penned, wherein he forcibly set forth to the Portuguese bishop, “that the Roman religion had not been introduced into the country by the miracles or the preaching of the fathers, but by royal edict and ordinance, in opposition to the wish of the entire population; and that the prelate must devise some milder measures for the furtherance of the true faith.”

Foreseeing a heavy storm in case of refusal, Mendez reluctantly complied with the proposal of a modified church code, under the restriction that no public manifesto should announce the change, which must be gradually and silently introduced. The ancient liturgy and the ancient holydays were thus restored, and the celebration of the Jewish Sabbath once again permitted.

But the concession was insufficient, and came too late to pacify the turbulent mountaineers of Lasta, who had been altogether victorious during the war. They would listen to no modification of their first demand; but imperatively insisted upon the complete re-establishment of their ancient ecclesiastical institution, together with the expulsion of the foreigners from the land.

The liberty and the customs of highlanders are seldom invaded with success; and a religion detested by the common people cannot, without much difficulty, be introduced by the prince. Weary of so many rebellions, and murders, and excommunications, the king, in his advanced age, began to view with an unfavourable eye the firebrand

authors of these disturbances. Suspecting his brother and the patriarch of seditious views—offended by the contumacy of his subjects, and the increasing diminution of his own authority—disgusted with the present state of affairs, and apprehensive of future events—he now seriously bethought him of restoring the church to its original footing. But the rebellion must, in the first instance, be quelled; and having with this view concluded an alliance with the Galla, he marched towards Lasta.

Twenty thousand peasants, confident of victory, descending from their mountains, rushed into the plain to meet the royal force. The two armies for a time remained in sight in that still calmness which precedes the earthquake. At length the Galla cavalry dashing at speed on the crowded masses of the enemy, threw them into complete confusion—a fierce combat lasted until the going down of the sun—and the field of battle was left covered with eight thousand bodies of the insurgents.

Throwing themselves prostrate before the triumphant monarch on this scene of carnage, the vanquished peasants expressed their grief in the following lively terms:—“Who are these men,” they asked with groans, “whom you now behold bathed in blood? Are they Moslems, or Pagans, or even the enemies of the kingdom? No, they are Christians—they are all thy subjects, knit together by the most tender bonds of blood, friendship, and affection. Those warriors who now lie lifeless at thy feet, would, under a better government, have proved the bulwarks of thy throne, and the terror of those very men by whose hands they have fallen. The very heathen blush at thy cruelty, and call thee renegade for having abandoned the religion of thy fathers. Cease, O emperor! in

mercy cease to prolong a struggle which must end in the downfall of the throne, and the ruin of all religion in the land!"

The empress also mingled her tears with the groans of the wounded petitioners, and adjured the king for the love of God, and in the name of future generations, to take pity upon his subjects, and desist from preparing a sepulchre for himself and for his family. "What have you gained by this battle?" she exclaimed. "You have introduced into the kingdom hordes of pagan Galla, who detest yourself equally with your religion; but futile will be your attempt to establish in Ethiopia a form of worship which is unknown to the greater part of your people, and to the remainder is known only to be resisted to the last drop of their blood."

These representations sunk deep into the heart of the emperor; and instead of proceeding in triumph to his capital, he retired to a secluded spot to give vent to his feelings, and bewail the loss he had created. The Galla troops were dismissed; and having collected all the principal monks and clergy, he announced his resolution of allowing the nation to return to the faith of their forefathers.

Immediately on this intelligence, the patriarch hurried with all the Jesuit fathers to soothe the ruffled mood of the monarch. "I had fondly imagined," exclaimed Mendez, "that we were the victors, but behold we are the vanquished; and the rebels, routed and put to flight, have obtained all that they desire. Call to mind how many fields thou hast won with the assistance of God and the Portuguese, and remember that thou didst embrace the true faith of thine own free will. We have been sent unto thy charge by the Pope of

Rome, and by the King of Portugal. Beware of irritating great potentates to just indignation. They be indeed far off, but God is nigh at hand; and thy apostasy will defile thy name and that of thy nation, and will leave an everlasting tarnish upon the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which now glitters in the standard of Ethiopia." On the conclusion of this harangue, all threw themselves at his feet, and entreated an immediate order to execution, rather than a confirmation from his lips of the rash resolution that he had taken.

Retaining a too lively recollection of the streams of blood that had been poured out upon the plains of Lasta, the emperor quietly allowed the Jesuits to arise, and unmoved by their earnest prayers and entreaties, replied shortly, "that his adherence to the Catholic faith had already caused the slaughter of a great portion of his subjects, and that he would have no further dealings whatever with their doctrines."

The film fell from before the eyes of the discomfited monks. The friends of the Alexandrian faith, rallying round the throne, united their utmost efforts to strengthen the emperor in his resolves; and the rumour spread abroad that on the feast of Saint John the Baptist the ancient religion was to be re-established throughout the land. Thousands assembled in the capital on that day to assist in the ceremony; and, although temporarily disappointed, the event clearly proved that this act of justice could no longer he safely delayed.

Every art and stratagem was still resorted to by the patriarch to put off the evil day; but the Emperor, roused at length by the harsh and uncompromising character of the Jesuit, fiercely exclaimed, "Has,

then, the sceptre departed from mine hand for ever?"—and the royal trumpets suddenly sounded through the streets of Gondar, as the herald announced the following proclamation to the empire:—

"Listen and hear! We formerly recommended to you the adoption of the Roman Catholic creed, on the firm conviction that it was the only true one; but numbers of our subjects having sacrificed their lives for the religion of their ancestors, we henceforth accord its free exercise unto all. Let the priests resume possession of their churches, and worship the God of their forefathers. Farewell, and rejoice."

It is not possible to describe the rapture with which this welcome edict was received. The praises of the Emperor resounded from every quarter. The rosaries and the chaplets of the Jesuits were tossed out of doors, and burned in a heap. Men and women danced for joy in the streets, and the song of liberation burst from the lips of the disenthralled multitude.

> "The flock of Ethiopia has escaped from the hyenas
> The doctrine of Saint Mark is the column of our churc
> Let all rejoice and sing hallelujahs,
> For the sun of our deliverance has lighted up the lan

Thus perished the hopes of a mission which, for craft and cruelty, has been seldom equalled in the annals of time. Whilst Rome must indeed have been prompted by no ordinary motive to persevere so pertinaciously in a work of conversion, through all the horrors of banishment and martyrdom, the unworthy means resorted to by the dauntless but unsuccessful agents employed in the enterprise, have left an

indelible stain upon the page of her history.

Volume Three—Chapter Sixteen.

The Church, Second Great Power in Shoa.

Christianity is the national religion throughout the more elevated portions of Abyssinia; but the wild Galla has overrun her fairest provinces, and located himself in her most pleasant places—the bigoted Moslem crowds thick upon the skirts of her distracted empire, and the tenets that she professes are base, foolish, and degrading. Engrafted on the superstitions of the Jew, the Mohammadan, and the Pagan—promulgated by rude and ignorant men—and received by a people emerging only into the first stage of civilisation—the light of religion must have been feeble, even in the beginning; but as it was imparted, so it still remains. Sects and parties have arisen, and province has been banded against province in all the fiery wrath of the zealot; but, lost in the maze of subtle controversy, these internal wars have raged for generations without disturbing the original doctrine; and the same errors of the church prevail to this day throughout the land, as when first propounded in the beginning of the fourth century.

The Abuna or Archbishop is the spiritual chief of Ethiopia. Consecrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria, and possessing with rich revenues the intelligence of other lands, the Primate is universally feared and respected throughout the empire, and all religious differences and dissensions must be carried for the final decision of his Holiness. Princes and rulers pay

implicit deference to his high behest, and, seated on the ground before his episcopal throne, receive with the utmost respect his every wish and advice. Feuds and quarrels betwixt state and state are satisfactorily arranged in his presence; and war, tyranny, and violence, are controlled by his all commanding voice of mildness and benevolence. But whilst his influence is thus potent, the extent of his diocese is also great; and many local difficulties opposing the pastoral visit to the extremities of his see, the kingdom of Shoa has for ages been deprived of the advantages accruing from the residence of an archbishop.

In the hand of the Abuna is vested the exclusive power of consecration. Bishops, priests, and deacons, can from him alone receive holy office. He only it is who grants absolution for heavy offences against either God or man; and the ark of a church, whether newly constructed or polluted by the unhallowed touch of a Mohammadan, must be purified by his hands with the holy *merom*, before being entitled to that high adoration which it thenceforward receives.

The second place in spiritual dignity is filled by the Etchéguê, the Grand Prior of the monks of Debra Libanos. Seated on the throne of Tekla Haïmanót, one of the first founders of the orders of Seclusion, he engrosses the management of all the various monastic establishments throughout the land, and in his hands remains the charge of the existing literature and education. Deeply versed in the subtilties of theology, his opinion is held of the highest import in the never-ceasing disputes upon the uninteresting subjects of false faith which occupy the mind of the Abyssinian divine; but his authority extends only to the simple admittance into the monkish order, and to

granting absolution for minor offences.

The Comus, or Bishop, who ranks next above the Priest, is without diocese or even authority over the inferior members of the church; and his peculiar function is to bless and purify the sacred ark, should it accidentally receive the impure touch of deacon or layman; to repeat the prayer of admission, and sign the cross on the skull-cap of the candidate for monastic seclusion; and to afford absolution for trivial offences against the conscience.

Twelve thousand clerical drones, “Fruges consumere nati,” fatten in idleness on the labour of the working classes, and employ their influence to foster the prejudice, bigotry, and superstition of their flock. The kiss imprinted on the hand of one of these licentious shepherds being believed to purify the body from all sin, they are treated with the highest respect and veneration, are fed and caressed both by high and low, and invariably addressed as “Father.”

Upon payment each of a few pieces of salt, many hundred candidates receive the breath of the Holy Ghost from the Abuna in a single day; but every Abyssinian being ignorant of his own age, it is essential to the reception of priestly orders that the beard should have appeared. Deacons are chosen from among boys and children, because on reaching maturity the life of the adult is not always distinguished by that spotless purity which is held indispensable. The juvenile novices are present during divine service in capacity of servitors, and they complete the requisite number at the administration of the holy communion.

The father confessor is bound to the strictest secrecy;

and it is believed that on this point a dread oath is taken before ordination, when all the mysteries of religion are expounded by the Abuna, and especially those which have reference to the preparation of bread for the holy supper. In a small house styled Bethlehem, which rises immediately behind every church, the mysterious ceremony is performed. The deacon can alone bake the cake; and the most vigilant guard is invariably preserved against the approach or intrusion of females or other improper visitors during the hour of solemn occupation.

Certain revenues and estates are set apart for the support of each clerical establishment; and to ensure the proper distribution, an Alaka, or chief, is selected by the monarch from either class of society. Whilst a successful foray is invariably followed by donations from the throne, the safe return from a journey is acknowledged by an offering on the part of all private individuals; and the shade of the venerable juniper-trees, which adorn the churchyard on the summit of the greenest knolls, is ever crowded with groups of sleek, hooded priests, who bask in the enjoyment of idle indulgence.

There are, perhaps, more churches in Abyssinia than in any other part of the Christian world; and he who has erected one believes that he has atoned for every sin. But even the best are very miserable edifices of wattle plastered with mud, only to be distinguished from the surrounding hovels by a thin coating of whitewash, which is dashed over the outside to point with the finger of pride to the peculiar privilege of the two great powers in the land. Circular in form, they have a door to each quarter of the compass, the apex of the conical thatch being surmounted by a brazen cross, which is usually

adorned with ostrich eggs, whilst the same depraved and heathenish taste pervades the decorations of the interior. Sculpture is strictly forbidden; but the walls are bedaubed with paintings of the patron saint of the church, the blessed Virgin, and a truly incongruous assemblage of cherubim and fallen angels, with the evil one himself enveloped in hell-flames. Timbrels and crutches depend in picturesque confusion from the bare rafters of the roof; no ceiling protects the head from the descent of the lizard and the spider; and the *tout ensemble* of the slovenly Abyssinian church presents the strangest imaginable picture of cobweb finery.

The Jewish temple consisted of three distinct divisions—the fore-court, the holy, and the holy of holies. To the first laymen were admitted, to the second only the priest, and to the third the high priest alone. All entrance was denied to the Pagan,—a custom which is rigorously enforced in Abyssinia; and her churches are in like manner divided into three parts.

Eight feet in breadth, the first compartment stretches, after the fashion of a corridor, entirely around the building. It is styled *Kene Máhelet*, and, strewed throughout with green rushes, forms the scene of morning worship. To the right of the entrance is the seat of honour for priests and erudite scribes; and beyond this court, save on certain occasions, the bare foot of the unlearned layman cannot pass.

Makdas is the second compartment. This is the sanctuary in which the priests officiate, and a corner is set apart for laymen during the administration of the holy supper, whilst a cloth screens the mysteries of the interior. Here also hang, arranged around the

walls, the bones of many deceased worthies, which have been carefully gathered from the newly opened sepulchre, and are deposited by the hand of the priest in cotton bags. By the nearest relative, the first opportunity is embraced of transporting these mouldering emblems of mortality to the sacred resting-place of Debra Libanos, where the living and the dead are alike blessed with a rich treasure of righteousness, since the remains of Tekla Haïmanót, the patron saint of Abyssinia, still shed a bright halo over the scene of his miracles upon earth.

To *Kedis Kedisen*, the holy of holies, none but the Alaka is admitted. Behind its veil the sacrament is consecrated, the communion vessels are deposited, and the tremendous mysteries of the *tábot*, or ark of the covenant, are shrouded from the eyes of the uninitiated. The gold of the foreigner has penetrated the secret of the contents of this box, which are nothing more than a scroll of parchment, on which is inscribed the name of the patron saint of the church; but the priest who dared to open his lips on the subject to one of his own countrymen would incur the heavy penalties due to the sacrilege.

The most ridiculous exploits are recorded of Menilek the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, who crowned a long course of iniquity by plundering the Temple of Jerusalem. The true ark of Zion is believed still to exist in the church at Axum; but prayers, vows, and oblations, are equally made to the handicraft of any vain ecclesiastic, which may be held up to the admiring multitude as having been secreted in a cave during the inroad of the conquering Graan, and since revealed by a miraculous dream from Heaven.

In the presence of the mysterious casket consists the

only sanctity of the church. Heretics alone doubt of its inherent virtues; and every individual who professes Christianity must during life make his vows and oblations to the one he has selected, in order that after death he may enjoy the privilege of interment under its sacred influence. Young and old, rich and poor, prostrate themselves to the ground as the idol is carried in procession through the streets under the great umbrellas; and when replaced in its case in the holy of holies, the air is rent by the attendant priests with shouts of “The temple of the eternal God!”

All the disqualifications of the Levitical law oppose entrance to the sacred edifice, and both the threshold and the door-posts must be kissed in passing. Like the Jews, the Abyssinians invariably commence the service with the Trisagion, “Holy, holy, holy, is God, the Lord of Sabaoth.” The sweet singer of Israel danced before the Lord, and a caricature imitation remains, the chief point of Abyssinian worship. Capering and beating the ground with their feet, the priests stretch out their crutches towards each other with frantic gesticulations, whilst the clash of the timbrel, the sound of the drum, and the howling of harsh voices, complete a most strange form of devotion. The lessons are taken partly from the Scriptures, partly from the miracles of the holy Virgin and of Tekla Haïmanót, the life of Saint George, and other foolish and fabulous works; but all are in the ancient Ethiopic tongue, which to the congregation is a dead letter; and the sole edification of a visit to the church is therefore comprised in the kiss that has been imprinted on the portal.

In order to obtain the desired and enviable position of eating the bread of comparative idleness, a sacrifice is indispensable. The priest is restricted to the

possession of a single wife; and on her demise or infidelity, no second marriage is authorised. A small portion of lore must, moreover, be imbibed—the Psalms of David must be carefully conned—and the mysteries of Abyssinian song and dance be fully penetrated, before the sacred office can be attained. The lessons of early youth are, however, speedily forgotten, and the constant repetition of the same words removes the necessity of retaining the character. Few in after years can read—still fewer respect the vow of chastity—and the employment of the morning hours of the Sabbath, and of the holydays, in dancing and shouting within the walls of the church, entitle the performer to all the immunities and comforts pertaining unto holy orders.

In every clerical conclave the king possesses the supreme voice of authority; and the despotic monarch may in Shoa be justly regarded as the head of his own church. Loss of office is the great punishment inflicted by the spiritual court, which is composed of the assembled members of the individual church, and degradation is followed by the expulsion of the offending brother from the community. But the great hall of justice is not unfrequently graced with the presence of the refractory priest; and fetters in the dungeon, or banishment from the realm, maintain a wholesome fear of the royal power of investigation in matters ecclesiastical.

The monk is admitted to the order of his choice by any officiating priest. A prayer is repeated, the skull-cap blessed with the sign of the cross, and the ceremony is complete. But a more imposing rite attends the oath of celibacy before the Abuna. The clergy assemble in numbers, and fires are lighted

around the person of the candidate. His loins are bound about with the leathern girdle of Saint John, and the prayer and the requiem for the dead rise pealing from the circle. The *Glaswa*—a narrow strip of black cloth adorned with coloured crosses—is then placed on the shaven crown, and shrouded from view by the enveloping shawl; and the archbishop, clad in his robes of state, having repeated the concluding prayer and blessing, signs with his own hand the emblem of faith over the various parts of the body.

Education was in former days to be obtained alone from the inmate of the monastic abode, and a life of scanty food, austerity, and severe fasting, was embraced only by the more enthusiastic. But the skin-cloak, and the dirty head-dress, now envelope the listless monk, who, satisfied with a dreamy and indolent existence, basks during the day on the grassy banks of the sparkling rivulet, and prefers a bare sufficiency of coarse fare from the hand of royal charity, to the sweeter morsel earned by the sweat of his brow.

Priest-ridden and bigoted to the last degree, the chains of bondage are firmly riveted around the neck of the infatuated Abyssinian. The most ridiculous doctrines must be believed, and the most severe fasts and penances must be endured, according to the pleasure and the fiat of the church. Uncharitable and uncompromising, her anger often blazes forth into the furious blast of excommunication; and for offences the most trivial, the souls of men are consigned to eternal perdition.

Fasts, penances, and excommunication form, in fact, the chief props of the clerical power; but the repentant sinner can always purchase a substitute to

undergo the two former, and the ban of the church is readily averted by a timely offering. Spiritual offences are indeed of rare occurrence; for murder and sacrilege alone give umbrage to the easy conscience of the native of Shoa, and all other crimes written in the book of Christian commandment have been well-nigh effaced from his tablet. Abstinence and the disbursement of suitable largesses to the priest and mendicant, are of themselves quite sufficient to ensure the requisite absolution for every sin committed in the flesh.

The death-bed and the funeral feast are attended with much advantage to the temporal interests of the church. The choicest food is unsparingly dealt out, and the bereaved widow is glad to leave the management of her affairs to the assiduous father confessor, who is entertained in the house of all who can afford the expense. The dying man bestows a portion of his estate in this world for the bright hopes which absolution extends in that which is to come; and the holy sacrament is even administered after the soul has quitted the tenement of clay, in order that the superstition of grateful relatives may grant a rich reward for the blessing of the priest, and for his undeniable assurance of exemption from punishment hereafter.

But the Abyssinian possesses no idea of the more salutary doctrine of Christianity. Polluted faith is here reflected in the mirror of depraved manners, and long severe fastings constitute the essence of his degenerate religion. The idol worship of saints has made rapid progress in the land, and the ignorance of the clergy is only to be equalled by the impurity of the lay classes. Their belief in Christianity, if that term can be applied, is strange, childish, and inconsistent;

and bigoted to the faith of their ancestors, they abhor and despise all who refuse acquiescence in this their absurd confession:—

“That the Alexandrian faith is the only true belief.

“That faith, together with baptism, is sufficient for justification; but that God demands alms and fasting, as amends for sin committed prior to the performance of the baptismal rite.

“That unchristened children are not saved.

“That the baptism of water is the true regeneration.

“That invocation ought to be made to the saints, because sinning mortals are unworthy to appear in the presence of God, and because if the saints be well loved, they will listen to all prayer.

“That every sin is forgiven from the moment that the kiss of the pilgrim is imprinted on the stones of Jerusalem; and that kissing the hand of a priest purifies the body in like manner.

“That sins must be confessed to the priest—saints invoked—and full faith reposed in charms and amulets, more especially if written in an unknown tongue.

“That prayers for the dead are necessary, and absolution indispensable; but that the souls of the departed do not immediately enter upon a state of happiness, the period being in exact accordance with the alms and prayers that are expended upon earth.”

All ideas regarding salvation are thus vague and indefinite; and vain; foolish doctrines have taken

entire possession of the shallow thoughts of the Christian of Ethiopia. Born amid falsehood and deceit, cradled in bloodshed, and nursed in the arms of idleness and debauchery, the national character is truly painted in the confession of one of her degenerate sons:—“Whensoever we behold the pleasing ware, we desire to steal it; and we are never in the company of a man whom we dislike, that we do not wish to kill him on the spot.”

The uphill task of the missionary is therefore hard, and the wonder is that so much has been accomplished—not that the harvest is scanty. The example of a holy life cannot fail to produce a beneficial effect, and the preacher of the Gospel is acknowledged to possess every quality that is good, mild, and just; but disliked as a stranger of envied accomplishment, despised as an alien to the land, and hated by the jealous priesthood, the words of truth fall unheeded from lips the most eloquent, and the best directed endeavours prove of small avail. Perfectly satisfied with his own creed, the Abyssinian finds it easier to kiss the holy book than to peruse its contents, and to trust to the fast and the priestly absolution than to mould his conduct according to the Gospel; and it is not until commerce with the arts of civilised society shall have been introduced, that the barrier can be overcome, or one step be gained towards the restoration to the unhappy country of the true word of God. The bigotry of ages is confirmed by the self-pride and the excessive ignorance of the present race; and on the rising or on the unborn generation must rest the sole hope for a moral resurrection.

Volume Three—Chapter Seventeen.

Abyssinian Rites and Practices which would appear to have been borrowed from the Hebrews.

The appellation of *Hábeshi*, “a mixed and mingling people,” is aptly exemplified in this strange medley of religion, to which the Jew, the Moslem, and the Pagan, has each contributed. A mixture from different nations, as stigmatised by the original term, the Abyssinians have garbled the faith of all their ancestors; and there is assuredly no Christian community in the whole world which has jumbled together truth and falsehood with such utter inconsistency as the vain church of Ethiopia.

Many circumstances have conspired to render the nation more peculiarly susceptible of Hebrew influence. The first Christian missionary found the people idolaters and worshippers of the great serpent Arwé; but the ancestors of those Jews who to the present day exist in the country, unquestionably arrived long before the nation had embraced the Christian religion; and in their attempts to obtain a moral influence over their pagan hosts were far from being inactive in their adopted home. Thus the early Christian church, that of Egypt especially, by which many Hebrew customs had been embraced, was the more readily received when introduced into a nation amongst whom similar doctrines and practices were already in use.

Boasting a direct descent from the house of Solomon, and flattering themselves in the name of the wisest man of antiquity, the emperors of Abyssinia preserve the high-sounding title of “King of

Israel," and the national standard displays for their motto—"The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed." The tradition of queen Maqueda has been ascribed to the invention of those fugitive Jews, who, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus, migrated into the northern states by way of the Red Sea—who disseminated it with the design of obtaining the desired permission to settle in the country, and whose descendants are the Fálashas still extant among the mountains of Simien and Lasta. But whatever may be thought by others of the legend of descent, the firm national belief in the origin traced, will in a great measure account for the general inclination and consent to receive Hebrew rites and practices as they were from time to time presented. Jews as well as Christians believe the forty-fifth psalm to be a prophecy of the queen's visit to Jerusalem, whither she was attended by a daughter of Hiram the king of Tyre—the latter portion being a prediction of the birth of Menilek, who was to be king over a nation of Gentiles.

Whatever the true date of their arrival, it is certain that the Hebrews have exercised a great influence upon the affairs of Abyssinia since the days of their dispersion; and although their religion was abjured by the nation on the promulgation of the Gospel, the children of Israel, moulding a portion of their worship on the formulae of the Christian faith, and esteemed as sorcerers and cunning artists in the land, found a safe asylum among the mountains, and exist to the present day, here as elsewhere, a separate and peculiar nation.

With the destruction of the race of Solomon, the Jewish party for a time obtained the preponderance. Again, on the restoration of the legitimate dynasty,

they were hunted among the mountains as a race accursed, and the feeling reigned paramount to sweep the wanderers from the face of the land. But the custom of ages had impressed the Hebrew practices too deeply to be removed. They were, in fact, regarded in the light of orthodox Christian doctrines; and, as might have been expected from a bigoted and superstitious people, the severest persecutions were enforced against the members of another creed, without the nation observing in how far they were themselves tainted with those very principles which in others they considered so justifiable to oppress.

The Abyssinian Christian will neither eat with the Jew, nor with the Galla, nor with the Mohammadan, lest he should thereby participate in the delusions of his creed. The church and the churchyard are equally closed against all who commit this deadly sin; and the Ethiopian is bound by the same restrictions which prohibited the Jews from partaking of the flesh of certain animals. The act which is deemed disgraceful in the eyes of men, is regarded as a moral transgression, and is visited, as was the case in the Mosaic institution, by the stern reprimand of the priest. The penance of severe fasting, or of uneasy repose upon the bare ground, is enforced by the father confessor to efface the taint of the interdicted animal; and prayers must be repeated, and holy water plentifully besprinkled over the defiled person of that sinning individual who shall have dared to touch the meat of the hare, or the swine, or the aquatic fowl.

“The children of Israel did not eat of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh.” This in the Amháric language is termed *Shoolada*, and it is

held unlawful to be eaten in Shoa, more especially to the members of the royal blood; a universal belief prevailing, that the touch of the unholy morsel would infallibly be followed by the loss of the offending teeth, as a direct proof of the just indignation of Heaven.

The Jewish Sabbath is strictly observed throughout the kingdom. The ox and the ass are at rest. Agricultural pursuits are suspended. Household avocations must be laid aside, and the spirit of idleness reigns throughout the day.

By order of the great council of Laodicea, the Oriental churches were freed from this burden; and the industrious gladly availed themselves of the ecclesiastical licence to work on the Saturday. Here, however, the ancient usage agreed too well with a people systematically indolent; and when, a few years ago, one daring spirit presumed, in advance of the age, to burst the fetters of superstition. His Majesty the king of Shoa, stimulated by the advice of besotted monks, issued a proclamation, that whoso violated the Jewish Sabbath should forfeit his property to the royal treasury, and be consigned to the state dungeon.

Ludolf, the celebrated Strabo of Ethiopia, most accurately remarks, that there is no nation upon earth which fasts so strictly as the Abyssinians; and that they would rather commit a great crime than touch food on the day of abstinence. They not only boast with the Pharisee, “I fast twice a week,” but pride themselves also upon their mortification of the flesh during half the year, whilst the haughty and self-sufficient monk vaunts his meagre diet as the only means of expiation from sin and evil desire.

The Abyssinians, in common with other Christian communities who rigidly observe the fasts of Wednesday and Friday, advance as an argument, that the Jews seized our Saviour on the first of those days, and on the second carried into execution their design of crucifixion; but as this account differs from the evidence of the Gospel, which shows that the arrest took place upon the Thursday, the observance is most probably an imitation of the weekly fasts in existence among the Jews.

The fast of the forty days before Easter is observed with much greater rigour than any other in Abyssinia; and the reckless individual who shall neglect the great “Toma Hodádi” cannot possess one sentiment of true religion in his heart. To the abstinence of this season especially are attached peculiar virtues which completely nullify the effect of every sin that may be committed throughout the residue of the year.

According to the Jewish practice, all culinary utensils must be thoroughly cleansed and polished, to the end that no particle of meat or prohibited food may remain to pollute the pious intention. Journeys and travel are strictly interdicted; and from the Thursday until Easter morn no morsel should enter the lip, and the parched throat ought to remain without moisture.

During the fast of the holy Virgin, children of tender years are not even exempted from the penance of sixteen days; and during the many and weary weeks of abstinence which roll slowly throughout the entire year, the Abyssinian priest would grant no dispensation to the famished mortal, “were he even to receive an immediate mandate from heaven.”

Sáhela Selássie arose some years ago a mighty

zealot in the cause; and perceiving that the custom was beginning to decline, proclaimed through the royal herald pains and penalties sufficiently severe to insure the future strict observance of the fast. The commands of the defender of the faith were, however, in one instance, transgressed by a soldier, during a military expedition; but his excuse of fatigue under a heavy load of the king's camp equipage was admitted; and although on similar occasions a certain licence is extended, still the monarch keeps a strict watch over the maintenance of church discipline.

On the annual day of atonement, the Jews were obliged to confess their sins before a priest. In like manner the Abyssinians are commanded from time to time to perform the ceremony, during the great fast of Hodádi more particularly, and on Good Friday, the day of the Jewish expiation. And as the slave, in token of his freedom and dismissal, received the blow from the Roman praetor, so the penitent on absolution receives a stroke over the shoulders from a branch of the Woira tree, as a sign of his deliverance from sin and Satan.

Like the Pagans of ancient and modern times, who placed between the most high God and themselves an inferior deity, the Abyssinians observe this species of idolatry, although the names of their tutelar spirits have been changed. Saint Michael and the holy Virgin are here venerated as in no other country in the world—the former as the martial leader of all the choirs of angels—the latter as chief of all saints, and queen of heaven and of earth; and both are considered as the great intercessors for mankind.

The detrimental influence of this superstition is fully exemplified in the conduct of the nation. The

mediator is ever employed when individual courage fails in impudent assurance or insatiable beggary. Time is uselessly wasted in importunity, which all believe must in the end prove successful; and the practice of invocation and intercession thus exerts the most baneful tendency even upon the daily dealings of life.

Like the Jews of old, the Abyssinians weep and lament on all occasions of death, and the shriek ascends to the sky, as if the soul could be again recalled from the world of spirits. The Israelites employed hired mourners; but here the friends and relatives of the departed assemble for the same purpose, and the absence of any from the scene is ascribed to want of love and affection. As with the Jews, the most inferior garments are put on; and the skin is torn from the temples, and scarified on the cheeks and breast, to proclaim the last extremity of grief.

In later days, the extravagance of mourning has been somewhat moderated, through the agency of a priest of the church of Saint George, who stood boldly forward to arrest a practice equally at variance with the sacred books of the country, and with the spirit of the New Testament. Excommunication was thundered upon all who should thenceforth indulge publicly in the luxury of woe; and the people trembled under the ban of the church. The death of a great governor soon confirmed the restriction. Being loved and esteemed by all classes, the prohibition was severely felt. The complaint was referred to the throne; and as the deceased was a man of rank, and a royal favourite withal, the clergy were commanded to grant absolution in this one instance. But Zeddoo, the stout-hearted priest, arose, and declared that he

had no respect for persons, and that the words of truth must be defended to the death. The silence of the monarch enforced the ecclesiastical fiat; and to this day the drum is mute at the funeral wake, and the customary praise of the defunct is heard no more in the public resorts of the capital.

The Talmud asserts that those who died piously remained in a state of active knowledge of all the occurrences of this world. Philo, the learned Jew of Alexandria, informs us, that the souls of the patriarchs pray incessantly for the Jewish nation, and the erudite rabbins alleged that angels are the governors of all sublunary things, and that each man and every country has a guardian angel for protection and direction. The Abyssinians carry this belief still further—they confidently anticipate the intercession and assistance of saints and angels in all spiritual and secular concerns, and invoke and adore them in even a higher degree than the Creator. All their churches are dedicated to one in particular, and the holy “tábot” is regarded as the visible representative of the celestial patron. The ark of Saint Michael accompanies all military expeditions, to insure success against the Gentiles; and that of Tekla Haïmanót stands the palladium of the north, to preserve the empire from the attacks of the Mohammadan prince of Argóbba.

All the absurd ideas of the Jewish rabbins regarding the dead have been received and embraced by the fathers of Abyssinia. They maintain with the Romanists too, that the soul of the departed does not immediately enter into the kingdom of joy, but is conducted to an habitation situated in an invisible spot between the heaven and the earth, where it remains until the resurrection, in a state of happiness

or torment, according to the alms and prayers bestowed by surviving relatives and friends. This Abyssinian “limbo” is supposed also to be occupied by the saints; and the absurdity is increased by the belief that intercession with the Almighty is absolutely necessary to absolve the Heavenly host from their spiritual imperfections, and insure their resting in peace until the coming of Christ.

But the interest of the avaricious priest is concerned in the preservation of this doctrine, and a corner of the churchyard is sternly denied to all who die without death-bed confession, or whose relations refuse the fee and the funeral feast. The payment of eight pieces of salt, however, wafts the soul of a poor man to a place of rest, and the *téscar*, or banquet for the dead, places him in a degree of happiness according to the costliness of the entertainment. The price of eternal bliss is necessarily higher to the rich; whilst royalty is taxed at a still more costly rate, and the anniversaries of the deaths of the six kings of Shoa are held with great ceremony in the capital. Once during every twelve months, before the commencement of a splendid feast, their souls are fully absolved from all sin; and the munificence of their illustrious descendant is still further displayed in the long line of beeves which afterwards wends its way to the threshold of every church in Ankóber.

Volume Three—Chapter Eighteen.

The People.

Ethiops, one of the twelve descendants of Cush, the

son of Ham, said to have been begotten and buried at Axum, is regarded by the Abyssinians as their great progenitor. Shortly after the Flood, the grandson of Noah is believed to have advanced from the low country, then under the dominion of the sea and the marsh, until, after crossing a tract little fitted for the occupation of the shepherd, he ascended the highlands of Ethiopia, which afforded an inviting habitation to the parent stock, from which have emanated the different shoots of African population.

Like most other Abyssinian legends, this version is somewhat at variance with received history, which assigns to Arabia the original seat of the Cushites. The strange medley of colour and feature observable at the present day, does not, however, overturn the theory of origin. The habits of the people and the peculiarly varied climate of their country, together with the usual result of mingling intercourse with the fairer and more beautiful among the various hordes of slaves which have for ages streamed through the land from the ravaged interior, are in themselves fully sufficient to account for the diversity.

The connection with Arabia, commencing at a period the most remote, is known to have existed for many centuries. Armies from both nations respectively visited each other in wrath—merchants reciprocally sustained the intercourse. Later still, the family of the false Prophet found an asylum among the mountains of a country which, as a Christian state that was not overwhelmed by the resistless flood of Islamism, stands alone in the history of Eastern nations; and to the present day many peculiarities in the language, the laws, and the customs of both, continue to mark a common origin. Existing usages would also tend to confirm what was asserted in the days of Diodorus,

that Egypt was originally colonised from Ethiopia, the very soil being brought down from the highlands by the floods of the Nile.

Caucasian features predominate amongst the Amhára, notwithstanding that the complexion passes through every shade, from an olive brown to the jet black of the Negro. An approximation to the thick lip and flattened nose is not unfrequently to be seen; but the length and silkiness of the hair invariably marks the wide difference that exists between the two races. The men are tall, robust, and well formed; and the women, although symmetrically made, are scarcely less masculine. They are rarely beautiful; and their attempts are indeed ingenious to render hideous the broad unmeaning expanse of countenance bestowed upon them by nature.

All savages esteem certain deformities to be perfection, and strive, by augmenting the wildness of their aspect, to enhance the beauty of their persons. Having first eradicated the eyebrows, the Amhára damsel paints a deep narrow curved line in their room with a strong permanent blue dye; thus imparting a look of vacancy and foolishness, which in the high-born dame is heightened by plastering the cheeks to the very eyes with a pigment of red ochre and fat. If not close shaven and encircled by a narrow greasy fillet of rag, the head is adorned with many minute rows of elaborate curls, which diverge from a common centre, and are besmeared with stale butter until the wig has assumed the appearance of an ordinary English beehive.

The costume consists of a wide sack chemise with full sleeves, confined round the waist by a narrow girdle, and surmounted by a long winding sheet

thrown over the head, and descending to the heels—very coarse and strong, and, like Ruth's veil, fully capable of containing six measures of wheat. Large black wooden studs in the lobe of the ear are on high days and holydays replaced by masses of silver or pewter, resembling a pile of hand-grenades, or the teething rattles employed in nurseries. Bracelets and anklets of the same metals, which, from their clumsiness, are aptly denominated "fetters," are worn by those who can afford such extravagance. Blue and gold-coloured beads are ingeniously wrought into a necklace by the wealthier, who never appear without a bandoleer of potent amulets, terminating in a huge bell-rope tassel; and the lady of rank completes her toilet by dyeing her hands and feet red with the bulb called *ensosela*, securely plugging up the nostrils with lemon-peel or some aromatic herb, so that the end of the bouquet may dangle before the mouth.

From the king to the peasant the costume of the men consists of a large loose web of coarse cotton cloth, enveloping the entire person in graceful folds, but well-nigh incapacitating the wearer from exertion. Frequently disarranged, and falling ever and anon upon the ground, the troublesome garment must be constantly tucked up and folded anew about the shoulders, from which it is removed in deference to every passing superior. A cotton waistcloth of many yards in length is swathed about the loins, and a pair of very wide loose trousers, termed *senáphil*, hang barely to the knee.

The sword, the spear, and the buckler, are the national weapons, and the first is girded to the loins of every male subject in the kingdom, be his profession what it may. Barely two feet in length, and

highly curved, it rather resembles a sickle than an implement of war. It serves equally at the banquet and in the field; but being firmly lashed to the right side, protrudes most incommodiously behind, and is not to be detached from the scabbard unless by much grunting and personal exertion. The serf still appears in the raw fleece of the sheep, which he shifts according to the vicissitudes of the weather,

> "With the unfashion'd fur
> Rough-clad, devoid of every finer art.
> And elegance of life;"

but during the journey or the foray, a cloak, composed of the prepared skin of the lion, the leopard, or the ocelot, is thrown over the shoulder of the better classes. Neither shoes nor sandals are ever employed. The despot and the wandering mendicant are alike bare-footed, and, unless by the clergy or the inmate of the monastery, no covering is worn over the head. A wooden skewer, displaying either a feather or a sprig of wild asparagus, is stuck in the hair of two-thirds of the nation, and the arm of every man of any note is encumbered either with an infinity of copper rings forming a gauntlet, with ponderous ivory armlets, or with a mass of silver which might serve as a shackle to a wild colt.

In the absence of a razor, the men scrupulously denude their cheeks and chin with a pair of very indifferent scissors—a mode of proceeding which serves greatly to enhance the dirty appearance of their unwashed faces. Water, not less than coffee and tobacco, being studiously avoided, as savouring too strongly of abhorred Islamism, the Christian contents himself with rubbing his eyes in the morning with the dry corner of his discoloured robe; but the

greatest attention is paid to the management of the hair with which nature has so liberally supplied him, and many hours are daily expended in arranging the mop into various and quaint devices. At one time-worn hanging in long clustering ringlets over the cheeks and neck—at another, frizzed into round matted protuberances; to-day fancifully tricked and trimmed into small rows of minute curls like a counsellor's peruke, and to-morrow boldly divided into four large lotus-leaved compartments.

During the period of mourning, which extends to one year, black or yellow garments, or the ordinary apparel steeped in mire, must be worn; and on the demise of a relative or friend, both sexes scarify the cheeks by tearing from below each temple a circular piece of skin about the size of a sixpence; to accomplish which, the nail of the little finger is purposely suffered to grow like an eagle's talon. An ecclesiastical remonstrance to the throne, representing this practice to be in direct violation of the written law, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead," long since obtained the promulgation of a royal edict directing its discontinuance; but it is still universally practised, and throughout the kingdom there is scarcely an individual to be seen, whether male or female, who has not at some period of life been thus horribly disfigured.

The *máteb*, a small encircling cord of deep blue silk, chosen in reference to the smiling sky above, is the badge of debased Christianity throughout the land, and those who accidentally appear in public without it are severely censured by their pastors. Like other Eastern nations, the Amhára have no family name. They soon ripen and grow old. Girls become mothers

at the early age of twelve, and are decayed before the summer of life has well commenced.

It has been conjectured by Pliny, that the Orientals received their first hints in architecture from the swallow, and that, in imitation of the abode of the feathered instructor, their primeval essays were made in clay. Whence the Abyssinians obtained their ideas on the subject it were difficult to tell, but it is certain that they have made little progress whether in execution or in design. Their houses, constructed as in the earliest days, are still a mere framework of stakes sparingly bedaubed with a rude coating of mud. Here thieves can readily break through and steal; and of such a flimsy nature are the materials employed, that the morning sun often rises a witness to the truth of the scriptural metaphor, “He built his house upon the sand, and it was swept away by the rising flood.”

The windows, when any windows there be, are mere perforations in the wall, furnished with clumsy shutters, but unprovided with any transparent substance; and thus, if the ponderous door is closed against the searching fog, or the cutting wintry blast, all possibility of admitting light is precluded; whilst, excepting through the crevices in the plank, and the apertures of the cracked walls, there exists no exit for the smoke of the sunken wood fire, which thus fills the solitary apartment, blackens the low roof, and occasions frequent attacks of ophthalmia. Throughout, the most slovenly appearance pervades the dreary interior. Furniture is limited to a small wicker table, a bullock’s hide, and a rickety bedstead abounding in vermin; and whilst the universal objection to the use of water, whether as regards the person or the apparel of the inmates, enhances the

gloomy vista of cobweb desolation, dirt and filth choke up the surrounding enclosure.

The absence of drains or sewers compels the population of the towns and villages to live in the miasma of decomposing matter and stagnant water. The comfort of space is never consulted—stables and outhouses are far beyond the notions of the proprietor; and in the absence of all tidiness or comfort in the arrangement of the yards, the unseemly dunghill, which in other countries is carried away to improve the soil, is here suffered to accumulate and rot before the entrance. Poisoning the atmosphere with its baneful exhalations, it is periodically swept away by the descending torrents to feed the rank weeds which fatten in the mire; but no attempt is to be seen at the small trim garden, or neat rustic porch, even in the lone farm-steadings which are scattered throughout the country. All alike present a dreary look of desertion. The poultry, and the mules, and the farm-stock, and the inhabitants, all reside under the same roof. Bare walls and slovenly thatch rise from a straggling wattle stockade, which environs the premises to preserve the inmates from the nocturnal attacks of the prowling hyena, and to impart the fullest idea of confinement and misery. Few trees break the monotony of the scene. No busy hum of glad labour is to be heard—no bustle or noise among the elders—no merry game or amusement among the children; and thus to the European visitor the whole appears strange, savage, and unnatural.

With doors allowing free ingress to every injurious current, with roofs admitting the tropical rain, and sunken floors covered with unwholesome damp, it is only surprising that many more of the people of Shoa are not martyrs to disease. It is now nine years since

an epidemic called *ougáret* made its appearance at the capital, and, as might have been anticipated, spread with fearful virulence in the foul city. The iron drum of misfortune was heard by the credulous pealing over the land; and although a black bull was led through the streets, followed by the inhabitants carrying stones upon their heads in token of repentance, and the sacrifice of atonement was duly performed, one half of the whole population were speedily swept away. The monarch sought strict seclusion in the remote palace at Machal-wans, where he would see no person until the plague was stayed; and those who survived of his terror-stricken subjects fled for a season from a hill which was declared by the superstitious priesthood to have been blasted by a curse from heaven.

Volume Three—Chapter Nineteen.

Social and Moral Condition.

In Shoa a girl is reckoned according to the value of her property; and the heiress to a house, a field, and a bedstead, is certain to add a husband to her list before many summers have shone over her head. Marriage is generally concluded by the parties declaring, before witnesses, “upon the life of the king,” that they intend to live happily together, and the property of each being produced, is carefully appraised. A mule or an ass, a dollar, a shield, and a sheaf of spears on the one side, are noted against the lady’s stock of wheat, cotton, and household gear; and the bargain being struck, the effects become joint for the time, until some domestic

difference results in both taking up their own, and departing to seek a new mate.

Matrimony is, however, occasionally solemnised by the church, in a manner somewhat similar to the observance of more civilised lands; the contracting parties swearing to take each other for life, in wealth or in poverty, in sickness or in health, and afterwards ratifying the ceremony by partaking together of the holy sacrament, and by an oath on the despot's life. But this fast binding is not relished by the inhabitants of Shoa, and it is of very rare occurrence. Favourite slaves and concubines are respected as much as wedded wives. No distinction is made betwixt legitimate and illegitimate children; and, to the extent of his means, every subject follows the example set by the monarch, who, it has been seen, entertains upon his establishment, in addition to his lawful spouse, no fewer than five hundred concubines.

The king resides only for a few weeks at either of his many palaces; and whenever he proceeds to another, is accompanied by all his chief officers, courtiers, and domestics. At each new station a new female establishment is invariably entertained. All conjugal affection is lost sight of, and each woman is in turn cast aside in neglect. Few married couples ever live long together without violating their vow; and the dereliction being held of small account, a beating is the only punishment inflicted upon the weaker party. The jewel chastity is here in no repute; and the utmost extent of reparation to be recovered in a court of justice for the most aggravated case of seduction is but fivepence sterling!

Morality is thus at the very lowest ebb; for there is neither custom nor inducement to be chaste, and

beads, more precious than fine gold, bear down every barrier of restraint. Honesty and modesty both yield to the force of temptation, and pride is seldom offended at living in a state of indolent dependence upon others. The soft savage requires but little inducement to follow the bent of her passions according to the dictates of unenlightened nature; and neither scruples of conscience nor the rules of the loose society form any obstacle whatever to their entire gratification.

The bulk of the nation is agricultural; but on pain of forfeiting eight pieces of salt, value twenty-pence sterling, every Christian subject of Shoa is compelled, whenever summoned, to follow his immediate governor to the field. A small bribe in cloth or honey will sometimes obtain leave of absence, but the peasant is usually ready and anxious for the foray; presenting as it does the chance of capturing a slave, or a flock of sheep, of obtaining honour in the eyes of the despot, and of gratifying his inherent thirst for heathen blood.

The principal men of the country who may not be entrusted with government, spend their time in basking in the sun, holding idle gossip with their neighbours, lounging about the purlieus of the court, or gambling at *gébeta* or *shuntridge*, (see Note 1) the management of the house being left to the women, and the direction of the farm to the servants and slaves. Visits are customarily paid early in the morning; and it is reckoned disreputable to enter a stranger's house after the hour of meals, because the etiquette of the country enforcing the presentation of refreshment, the unseasonable call is ascribed to a desire to obtain it.

Whether in the cabinet or in the field, a great man is constantly surrounded by a numerous band of sycophants, and never for a moment suffered to be by himself. The custom of the country enjoins the practice; the cheapness of provisions favours the support of a large retinue; and through the lack of manufactories, the population is able to supply an unlimited number of idlers, who are willing to pick up a livelihood by any means that chance may present. But to the stranger the nuisance is a crying one. No privacy is to be enjoyed, for no retirement is ever permitted. A dozen naked savages are perpetually by one's side, restrained by no very correct ideas of order or decorum. Each intruder seizes the first object that comes within his reach, and attacks ears, teeth, and nose, with the most reckless indifference to appearance. The confused hum and the half-suppressed chatter are far from affording assistance during the hours of mental employment; and at the season of meals, or during the presence of illustrious visitors, the whole establishment, denuded to the girdle, crowd into the apartment to satisfy their own curiosity, under pretext of doing honour to their lord and master.

On the first introduction of a stranger, an individual is selected from the establishment, and appointed the *báldoraba*, or "introducer." He is designed to illustrate the agency of the holy Virgin and of the saints, between the Redeemer and the sinning mortal. To him and to him alone can a visitor look for admittance into the house; and unless he be present, the monarch and the great man are alike invisible. Courtyards may be thronged with attendants, and the doors may seem invitingly accessible, but the *open sesame* is wanting, and the repulsed party returns to

his home disgusted with the insolence received. Time, however, gradually softens down the rigidity of this most inconvenient practice, which is at first so pertinaciously observed. Suspicion of evil design gives way on matured acquaintance; and after a certain probation, there is not much more difficulty experienced in gaining admittance to an Abyssinian hut, than to the lordly halls of the English nobleman.

Respect is paid by prostration to the earth in a manner the most degrading and humiliating—by bowing the face among the very dust—by removing the robe in order to expose the body—and on entering the house, by kissing the nearest inanimate object. Every subject, of whatever rank, when admitted to the royal presence, throws himself flat before the footstool, and three times brings his forehead in contact with the ground. All stand with shoulders bare to the girdle before His Majesty, or any superior; but to equals the corner of the cloth is removed only for a time. Any thing delivered to a domestic must be received with both hands in a cringing attitude; and should a present be made, the nearest object, generally the threshold of the door, is invariably saluted with the lips.

Amongst persons of rank, presents are frequently interchanged, and the utmost display is attempted on their delivery. Whenever anything was offered to us by our Amhára hosts, the articles were subdivided into a multiplicity of minute portions, placed in baskets covered with red cloth, consigned to a long train of bearers, and each component part of the gift exposed in turn to our view. Wild bulls and unruly he-goats, half as large as a donkey, were sometimes forcibly dragged into our sitting apartment, to the imminent danger and frequent pollution of all around.

My personal inspection and approval was required to cocks and hens, unseemly joints of raw beef, loaves of half-baked dough, pots of rancid butter, sticky jars of honey, or leaky barillés of hydromel, sacks of barley, bundles of forage, and coarse overgrown cabbages; and any deviation from this established rule was certain to be visited with the most dire displeasure.

Meals are taken twice during the day—at noon and after sunset. The doors are first scrupulously barred to exclude the evil eye, and a fire is invariably lighted before the Amhára will venture to appease his hunger —a superstition existing, that without this precaution, devils would enter in the dark, and there would be no blessing on the meat. Men and women sit down together, and most affectionately pick out from the common dish the choicest bits, which, at arm's length, they thrust into each other's mouth, wiping their fingers on the pancakes which serve as platters, and which are afterwards devoured by the domestics. The appearance of the large owlish black face bending over the low wicker table, to receive into the gaping jaws the proffered morsel of raw beef, which, from its dimensions, requires considerable strength of finger to be forced into the aperture, is sufficiently ludicrous, and brings to mind a nest of sparrows in the garden hedge expanding their toad-like throats to the whistle of the school-boy. Mastication is accompanied by a loud smacking of the lips—an indispensable sign of good breeding, which is send to be neglected by none but mendicants, "who eat as if they were ashamed of it;" and sneezing, which is frequent during the operation, is accompanied by an invocation to the Holy Trinity, when every by-stander is expected to exclaim, *Mároo*! "God bless you!"

Raw flesh forms the grand aliment of life. It is not unfrequently seasoned with the gall of the slaughtered animal; but a sovereign contempt is entertained towards all who have recourse to a culinary process. The bull is thrown down at the very door of the eating-house; the head having been turned to the eastward, is, with the crooked sword, nearly severed from the body, under an invocation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and no sooner is the breath out of the carcass, than the raw and quivering flesh is handed to the banquet. It is not fair to brand a nation with a foul stigma, resting on a solitary fact; but from my own experience I can readily believe all that is related by the great traveller Bruce of the cruelties practised in Northern Abyssinia.

Sour bread, made from teff, barley, and wheat, is eaten with a stimulating pottage of onions, red pepper, and salt. *Dábo*, the most superior description of bread manufactured, is restricted to the wealthier classes; but there are numerous other methods employed in the preparation of grain, descending through all the grades of *hebest, anbabéro, anabroot, deffo, amasa, debenia, demookta*, and *kitta*; the first four being composed of wheaten flour, and the remainder of teff, gram, juwarree, barley, and peas.

Mead formed the beverage of the northern nations, and was celebrated in song by all their bards. It was the nectar they expected to quaff in heaven from the skulls of their enemies, and upon earth it was liberally patronised. In Shoa the despot alone retains the right of preparing the much-prized luxury, which, under the title of *tedj*, is esteemed far too choice for the lip of the plebeian. Unless brewed with the greatest care, it possesses a sweet mawkish flavour, particularly

disagreeable to the palate of the foreigner; but its powers of intoxication, which do not appear to be attended with the after-feelings inseparable from the use of other potent liquors, extend an irresistible attraction to the Amhára of rank, who will never, if the means of inebriation be placed within his reach, proceed sober to bed.

The branches of the *gesho* plant are dried, pulverised, and boiled with water, until a strong bitter decoction is produced, which is poured off and left to cool. Honey and water being added, fermentation takes place on the third day. Chilies and pepper are next thrown in, and the mixture is consigned to an earthen vessel, closely sealed with mud and cow-dung. The strength increases with the age; and the monarch's cellars are well stored with jars filled thirty years ago, which, little inferior in potency to old Cognac, furnish the material for the nightly orgies in the palace.

The *tullah*, or beer of the country, also possesses intoxicating properties, and if swallowed to the requisite extent, produces the consummation desired. Barley or juwarree, having been buried until the grain begins to sprout, is bruised, and added to the bitter decoction of the *gesho*. Fermentation ensues on the fourth day, when the liquor is closed in an earthen vessel, and according to the temperature of the hut, becomes ready for use in ten or fifteen more. The capacity of the Abyssinian for this sour beverage, which in aspect resembles soap and water, is truly amazing. In every house gallons are each evening consumed, and serious rioting, if not bloodshed, is too often the result of the festivity.

Rising with the liquor quaffed, the fiercer passions

gradually gain the entire ascendency, and guests seldom return to their homes without witnessing the broil and the scuffle, the flashing of swords and the dealing of deep cuts and wounds among the drunken combatants. If but a small portion of the grease which is so plentifully besmeared over the Christian persons of the Amhára were employed in the fabrication of candles, the long idle evenings might be passed in a more pleasant and profitable manner than in the swilling of beer like hogs, and the consequent brawling contentions which at present stigmatise their nocturnal meetings.

On ordinary occasions, however, when not engaged in a debauch, the Abyssinian retires to his bed as soon as the shades of night close in. A bullock's hide is stretched upon the mud floor, on which, for mutual warmth, all the inferior members of the family lie huddled together *in puris naturalibus*. The clothing of the day forming the covering at night, is equitably distributed over the whole party; and should the master of the house require sustenance during the nocturnal hours, a collop of raw flesh and a horn of ale are presented by a male or female attendant, who starts without apparel from the group of sleepers, exclaiming *Abiet*! "My lord!" to the well-known summons from the famished *gaita*.

Coffee, although flourishing wild in many parts of the kingdom, is at all times strictly forbidden on pain of exclusion from the church; and the priesthood have extended the same penal interdiction to smoking, "because the Apostle saith, that which cometh out of the mouth of a man defileth him." One half the year, too, which is reserved for utter idleness, is marked by an exclusion of all meat diet, under the penalty of excommunication. Eggs and butter are then

especially forbidden, as also milk, which is styled “the cow’s son.” Nothing whatever is tasted between sunrise and sunset; and even at the appointed time a scanty mess of boiled wheat, dried peas, or the leaves of the kail-cabbage, with a little vegetable oil, is alone permitted to those who are unable to obtain fish, of which none are found in any of the upland rivers.

Besides Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the twelve months, which are observed as holydays, the fast of the Apostles continues eighteen days, that of the holy Virgin sixteen, Christmas seven, Nineveh four, and Lent fifty-six. During all these, labouring men are strictly prohibited from every employment, and, as they desire their souls to be saved, are compelled to live like anchorites, to the serious diminution of their bodily strength. This is encouraged and promoted by the king; yet there is no system more baneful than that of devoting so many precious days to idleness and vice, and none forming a more fatal obstacle to the amelioration of the people. Where such a waste of time as this is sanctioned by religion, how deeply laid must be the foundation of mental ignorance! Six months out of the twelve devoted to listless idleness is indeed an immense source of evil, and God, who has placed men here for useful and worthy exertion, is not likely to reward them for their sloth. But throughout Abyssinia the evil is in full force. In arts, in industry, and in social as well as in moral existence, her sons are shrouded under a dense cloud of ignorance. Want of education denies them the relaxation of intellectual employment—little amusement varies the dull routine of a life awed by the church, by the king, and by the nobles; and an unprofitable existence having been passed in this

world, the spirit passes away without any very distinct idea being entertained of what is to happen in the next.

Note 1. *Gebeta* is a game something allied to backgammon, but played with sixty-four balls, stored in twenty cavities on the board.

Shuntridge is, with few deviations, the Arab game of chess.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty.

Language and Literature.

Geez, the ancient Ethiopic, was the vernacular language of the shepherds. Until the fourteenth century of the Christian era it remained that of the Abyssinian empire, and in it are embodied all the annals of her religion. After the downfall of the Zeguean dynasty, and the restoration of the banished descendants of Solomon, Amháric became the court language, to the complete exclusion of the Geez. It prevails in Shoa, as well as in all the provinces included between the Taccázê and the blue Nile, and is thus spoken by the greater portion of the population of Abyssinia.

The province from which the language has derived its appellation is at the present day in occupation of the Yedjow, and other Mohammadan Galla tribes, who speak a distinct dialect; but the fact of “Amhára” being a term held synonymous with “Christian,” would

prove that it must formerly have exerted pre-eminent influence in the empire.

Of Semitic origin, and acknowledging the Ethiopic as its parent, the Amháric displays much interchange with the surrounding African languages—those, especially, which are spoken by the Danákil, the Somauli, the Galla, the people of Argobba, and those of Hurrur and of Guráguê. The cognate dialect peculiar to Tigré has received much less adulteration from other tongues, and consequently preserves a closer similitude to the Ethiopic; and this circumstance may be traced to the greater intercourse maintained with a variety of foreign nations by the versatile and unstable population in the south.

Amháric excepted, none of the many languages extant in Abyssinia have assumed a written form. The Ethiopic characters, twenty-six in number, are the Coptic adaptation of the Greek alphabet, modelled upon the plan of the Arabic, deranged from their former order, and rendered rude and uncouth by the fingers of barbarous scribes. Each individual consonant, being subjected to variations of figure correspondent with the number of the vowels, produces a prolific kaleidoscope mixture, which might have been deemed sufficient. But the ingenious phonologist who applied these to the Amháric tongue, has superadded seven foreign letters, each undergoing seven transformations by the annexure of as many vowel points; and these, with the addition of a suitable modicum of diphthongs, complete a total of two hundred and fifty-one characters, of the separate denomination of any of which, notwithstanding that most have possessed names from all antiquity, it may not perhaps be considered extraordinary that the

most erudite in the land should profess entire ignorance.

When the Egyptian monarch interdicted the employment of the papyrus, parchment was invented. The Jews very early availed themselves of the *charta pergamena*, whereupon to write their Scriptures. The roll is still used in their synagogues; and being introduced into Abyssinia on the Hebrew emigration, it continues the only material used by the scribe. His ink is a mucilage of gum-arabic mixed with lamp-black. It acquires the consistency of that used in printing, and retains its intense colour for ages. The pen is the reed used in the East, but without any nib, and the inkstand is the sharp end of a cow's horn, which is stuck into the ground as the writer squats to his task.

But it must be confessed that the Abyssinian scribe does not hold the pen of a ready writer; and the dilatory management of his awkward implement is attended with gestures and attitudes the most ludicrous. Under many convulsive twitches of the elbow, the tiny style is carried first to the mouth, and the end having been seized between the teeth, is masticated in a sort of mental frenzy. Throughout the duration of this necessary preliminary, the narrow strip of dirty vellum is held at arm's length, and viewed askance on every side with looks of utter horror and dismay; and when at last the stick descends to dig its furrow upon the surface, no terrified school-boy, with the birch of the pedagogue hanging over his devoted head, ever took such pains in painting the most elaborate pothook, as does the Abyssinian professor of the art of writing, in daubing his strange hieroglyphics upon the scroll.

As with the Chinaman, each individual character must, on completion, be scrutinised from every possible point of view, before proceeding to the next. Every word must be read aloud by the delighted artist, spelt and re-spelt, and read again; and the greasy skin must be many times inverted, in order that the happy effect may be thoroughly studied. During each interval of approval, the destructive convulsions of the jaw are continued, to the complete demolition of the pencil, and, long before the termination of the opening sentence, European patience has become exhausted at the scene of awkward stupidity, and the gross waste of valuable time which it involves.

Seventeen years have been employed in transcribing a single manuscript, and an ordinary page is the utmost that can be produced by one entire day's steady application. A book is composed of separate leaves enclosed between wooden boards, usually furnished with the fragment of a broken looking-glass for the toilet of the proprietor, and carefully enveloped in a leathern case. The contents being of a sacred nature, and generally in an unknown tongue, they are looked upon with the eye of superstitious credulity, and more especially venerated if embellished with coloured daubs and an illuminated title-page.

The pictorial art is still far behind the middle ages of Europe; and the appearance of the limner arranging his design with a stick of charcoal, or tilling in the gaudy partitions with the chewed point of a reed dabbled in the yolk of an egg, which is placed on end before him, proves sufficiently diverting. The conceits of some of the most celebrated masters also afford a fund of amusement. Christ stilling the tempest is a subject fraught with perplexity to those who have

never seen either a maritime vessel or the “great water,” and firearms are placed somewhat before their invention in the hands of the heroes of antiquity. Our common father in the enjoyment of Paradise is at the present day invariably depicted with an emblazoned buckler, a sprig of asparagus, and a silver sword; and his erring partner appears with a bushy beehive wig most elaborately buttered, and with silver ear-rings resembling piles of cannon shot. But although doubts exist as to the complexion of the first parents of mankind, the fact is not a little complimentary to the heretic Franks, that the fairest skin is given to saints, angels, and the “dead kings of memory,” whereas black or blue are the colours invariably employed in depicting his Satanic majesty.

One hundred and ten volumes (Vide Appendix) comprise the literature at this day extant in Abyssinia; but tradition records the titles of other works, which it has already been said were deposited for security in the islands of the lake Zooai, at the period of the Mohammadan inroads. Of the accumulated lore of ages, four manuscripts only are written in the language at present spoken and understood; and, with exception of the Holy Scriptures, the whole is little more than a tissue of absurd church controversy and lying monkish legend.

Four monstrous folios, styled Senkesar, which are to be found in every church, briefly record the miracles and lives of the numerous saints and eminent persons who receive adoration in Abyssinia; and on the day ordered by the calendar for the service of each, his biography is read for the edification of all those of the congregation who comprehend the Ethiopic tongue. A host of pious worthies thus preside over every day of the entire year; and fables

of the most preposterous kind, detailed with scrupulous minuteness, are vouched for upon unexceptionable authority.

Idle legends form the delight of the people of Shoa. The Ethiopic saint is nothing inferior to his western brethren. He performs yet more marvellous miracles, leads a still more ascetic life, and suffers even more dreadful martyrdom; whence he is proportionably adored in the native land of credulity, superstition, and religious zeal. Between apocryphal and canonical books no distinction is made. Bel and the Dragon is read with as much devotion as the Acts of the Apostles, and it might be added, with equal edification too; and Saint George vanquishing his green dragon is an object of nearly as great veneration as any of the heroes in the Old Testament.

But the stores of literature being wholly bound up in a dead letter, few excepting the priests and *défteras* can decipher them, and many of these learned men are often more indebted to the memory of their early youth than to the well-thumbed page in their hand. The ignorance of the nation is indeed truly deplorable; for those children only receive the rudiments of an education who are designed for the service of the church; and the course of study adopted being little calculated to expand the mind of the neophyte, a peculiar deficiency is presented in intellectual features. The five churches of Ankóber have each their small quota of scholars, but the aggregate does not amount to eighty out of a population of from twelve to fifteen thousand!

Abyssinia, as she now is, presents the most singular compound of vanity, meekness, and ferocity—of

devotion, superstition, and ignorance. But, compared with other nations of Africa, she unquestionably holds a high station. She is superior in arts and in agriculture, in laws, religion, and social condition, to all the benighted children of the sun. The small portion of good which does exist may justly be ascribed to the remains of the wreck of Christianity, which, although stranded on a rocky shore, and buffeted by the storms of ages, is not yet wholly overwhelmed; and from the present degradation of a people avowing its tenets, may be inferred the lesson of the total inefficacy of its forms and profession, if unsupported by enough of mental culture to enable its spirit and its truths to take root in the heart, and bear fruit in the character of the barbarian. There is, perhaps, no portion of the whole continent to which European civilisation might be applied with better ultimate results; and although now dwindled into an ordinary kingdom, Hábesh, under proper government and proper influence, might promote the amelioration of all the surrounding people, whilst she resumed her original position as the first of African monarchies.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty One.

Theological Controversies.

Ever since the arrival of the British Embassy in Shoa, the king's attention had been occupied with controversies, which, during a period of sixty years, have perplexed the Abyssinian divines. The doctrines which His Majesty conceives to be most conducive to salvation are, unfortunately, diametrically opposed to the historical facts and clear evidence of the Gospel;

but as summary deposition and confiscation of property is the sure meed of heresy, he bids fair in due process of time to promulgate a most curious creed of his own.

At the expense of a bloody civil war, Gondar, with Gojam, Damót, and all the south-western provinces of Amhára, have long maintained the three births of Christ—Christ proceeding from the Father from all eternity, styled “the eternal birth;” his incarnation, as being born of the holy Virgin, termed his “second or temporal birth;” and his reception of the Holy Ghost in the womb, denominated his “third birth.” The Tigré ecclesiastics, on the other hand, whose side is invariably espoused by the primate of Ethiopia, deny the third birth, upon the grounds that the reception of the Holy Ghost cannot be so styled—the opinions of both parties being at variance with the belief of the Occidental churches, which, on the evidence of the Gospel, believe that our blessed Saviour received the Holy Ghost at his baptism in his thirtieth year, immediately prior to the commencement of his preaching.

Further, the Gondar sectarians assert that Christ received the Holy Ghost by the Father, whilst those of Tigré affirm that, being God himself, he gave the Holy Ghost unto himself. This creed has obtained for the latter faction the opprobrious epithet of *Kárra Haïmanót*, “the Knife of the Faith,” in allusion to their having lopped off an acknowledged scriptural truth.

Asfa Woosen, grandsire to Sáhela Selássie, being assured by his father confessor, a native of Gondar, that in event of his embracing the doctrine of the three births, the district of Morabeitie, already conquered by Emmaha Yasoos, but not at that period

completely annexed to Efát, should be permanently secured to him through the spiritual influence of the church, adopted it without hesitation. Until within the last few years the belief was limited to the monarchs of Shoa; but the hospitality of the reigning sovereign attracting to his dominions numerous visitors from the north and west of Abyssinia, the latent flame was quickly fanned; and the dispute reaching a great height, was at length brought before the despot, who put an end to it by issuing a royal proclamation, under the solitary tree at Angollála, “That he who should henceforth deny the three births of Christ, should forfeit his property, and be banished the realm.”

Aroë, a eunuch from Gondar, shortly disseminated another curious doctrine, which asserts that the human soul possesses knowledge, fasts, and worships in the womb, and immediately on separation from the body renders an account on high. On the recent nomination of the Alaka Wolda Georgis to be head of the Church, and of Kidána Wold to be the Alaka of Debra Libanos, three monks set out to Gondar for the purpose of denouncing them, as being opposed to this creed. Ras Ali, erroneously concluding that they denied the three births, sent to Sáhela Selássie to inquire how it happened that he had seceded from the faith of his forefathers by the appointment of the two individuals in question. Hereat the Negoos waxing wroth, exclaimed, “Am I then the vassal of Ras Ali, that he thus interrogates me?” But reflection showed him the propriety of avoiding a dispute which must have involved serious consequences, and with his usual temporising policy he sent a reply declaratory “that he had not abjured the belief of his ancestors.”

The monks of Debra Libanos having thus failed in

their attempt to remove the newly-appointed Alakas, next sought to accomplish their purpose by the establishment of their creed throughout the kingdom, and gaining numerous proselytes, the disputes had soon reached the climax. After fruitless efforts to satisfy the interests of all concerned, His Majesty sought to escape participation in the quarrel, by referring the parties to Gondar; but Zenama Work, the Queen-dowager, well assured that Ras Ali and the head of the monks would decide against the sect whose doctrines she espoused, denied a passage through Zalla Dingai, and thus compelled the whole to return to Ankóber.

As had been anticipated, this step resulted in the complete triumph of the Gondar eunuch, and the consequent dismissal with disgrace of the Alaka Wolda Georgis, chief of the church of Shoa, the Alakas of Saint Michael, Saint George, Aferbeine, Kondie, Arámba, Debra Berhán, and Angollála; of the king's confessor; of Wolda Haïmanót, great Alaka of Mans, chief of thirty-eight churches, styled *Bála Wámber*, "the Master of the Chair," from his possessing the privilege of sitting in the royal presence on an iron stool; and of numerous other priests, whose property was confiscated by the crown, and who received sentence of banishment from the kingdom.

On the herald proclaiming under the palace gate at the capital that the belief of the knowledge of the human soul in the womb should henceforth be received by all classes, under similar pains and penalties, public thanksgivings were offered in the victorious churches; and the priests, forming triumphant processions through every street of the town, chanted psalms amid the shrill acclamations of

the women, and the din of the sacred drums. The defeated party, on the other hand, complained loudly that they had been dismissed without an impartial hearing; the monarch having simply observed that the fact of their not proceeding to Gondar, as commanded to do, sufficiently proved their error. This they disclaimed, and after requesting to be convinced upon the Scriptures, added, “Will the king adjudge the faith as he adjudges moveables and lands?” But the despot cut the matter short in these words: —“Enough, you are dismissed; and since you will not receive the faith of my forefathers, by their manes, and by the holy Trinity, I swear that you may beg your bread through the land, rather than that one of your creed should be received again into the bosom of the church.”

The success of the Debra Libanos sectarians was speedily followed by discussions relative to the equal adoration due to the holy Virgin and her Son, whilst the despotic and ill-advised proceedings of His Majesty raised a storm throughout the entire realm. The ban of excommunication was instantly resorted to—the curse of the church was pronounced upon the triumphant party—the priests who passed it, after having been seized and compelled to accord absolution, were expelled the kingdom—and a brave and courageous leader seemed alone wanting, to induce those who had been defeated to raise the standard of revolt once more in a religious war.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Two.

Christmas Festivities.

Abyssinia had for fifteen years been left without an archbishop, when Abba Salama, a Coptic youth, nominated by the hundred and ninth occupant of the chair of Saint Mark, arrived at Gondar to enter upon the functions of his sacred office. Oubié, the tyrannical ruler of Tigré, had, with diplomatic sagacity, despatched an expensive mission to the Alexandrian Patriarch, to solicit a successor to the post so long vacant by the death of Abba Kérlos—a wily measure, involving the sacrifice, indeed, of lands and ecclesiastical revenues, but securing to himself a sure political preponderance among the manifold rulers in the North, who know no law but that of the strongest. Heretofore the dignity had invariably been conferred on some bigoted old monk, extracted from one of the convents of Saint Anthony—the only monastic order recognised by the Coptic church. Much against his will, the patriarch elect was often dragged by force from his cloister, where he had passed years of abstinence and mortification, and being duly exalted to the episcopal throne, on which the residue of his days were to be passed, he never failed to impart a full share of ignorance and superstition. But the new primate, raised at the early age of twenty-two years to the pontificate of Ethiopia, and invested with despotic powers, proved, fortunately for the country, to be possessed of abilities of a very superior order, whilst his mind had been expanded by a liberal education at Cairo under the Reverend Dr Lieder, a pious and learned missionary of the Church of England.

One of the first steps of the new Abuna was to depute a confidential servitor to Shoa, as the bearer of a letter of compliments to myself, expressive of his desire to cultivate a friendly understanding, and

urging on me a speedy visit to his court. War had for some months past been raging on the western frontier betwixt Góshoo, the ruler of Gojam, and his son Birroo, who had risen in open rebellion, and the messenger brought a confirmation of the long-rumoured defeat of the former, and of the forces of Ras Ali, which had been sent to his assistance. The return of killed and wounded is in this country never suffered to fall short of the reality, and on the present occasion it had certainly not lost by the distance it had travelled.

“It was a little before nightfall,” said the turbaned priest, “that the rival armies, countless as blades of grass, came in sight of each other at Ungátta, on the banks of the Suggara. Before the morning dawned, Birroo, who occupied the upper ground, moving down to the attack, secured the fords of the river. The action presently opened with a heavy fire of musketry and matchlocks, which did great execution. Five thousand warriors were slain—two thousand five hundred stand of arms were captured—Libán, who commanded, was, with several of his principal chiefs, taken prisoner—and Góshoo was compelled to seek the inviolable sanctuary afforded by the monastery of Dima Georgis. Five governors were hewn alive down the middle; and the conqueror, after standing up to his neck in water for three days, as an atonement for the slaughter he had committed among a Christian people, sent to Ras Ali a horse with its mane, tail, and ears cut off, and a pair of new trousers greatly soiled, with a haughty message to the effect, that these were but types of the fate that yet awaited his liege lord!”

The month of January had now come round; and the arrival of queen Besábesh, who invariably precedes

the movements of the court by one day, proclaimed the advent of the Negoos to celebrate at the capital the festivities of the Abyssinian Christmas. Her Majesty had become extremely indisposed from the long journey, and was desirous of receiving medical aid; but it being contrary to the court etiquette that the royal consort should be seen by any male, an interview could not be accorded. Seated in a small closed tent, the hand of the illustrious patient was passed outside through a tiny aperture; and, although eunuchs further embarrassed conversation, a condescending voice inquired, in reply to some common-place civilities, on the part of Dr Kirk, “If I did not befriend the foreigners, pray who is there else to do so?”

Entertaining such a bigoted aversion to every Mohammadan custom, it cannot fail to appear singular that the licentious court of Shoa should have preserved one of the most objectionable—the seclusion of females. Yet such is the extreme jealousy on this point, that although from our first arrival the queen had expressed herself in the most friendly terms, and almost daily sent me through her maids of honour trifling presents of mead or bread, coupled with complimentary inquiries, an introduction, under any circumstances, was quite impracticable.

From day to day, however, the most curious applications were still preferred for beads, trinkets, cloth, and perfumery, and the utmost disappointment was evinced at my making no demand in return. “I possess honey and I possess butter, and have fowls and eggs in abundance,” was the undeviating message. “Why do not my children ask for what they want? All I have is theirs, for all that they have is mine!”

Even when residing at a distance, I continually received laconic notes on scrolls of parchment varying in breadth from one inch to three, bearing neither signature nor superscription, and tightly rolled up in wax. Their contents revealed some newly conceived fancy, such as might have been expected from a queen that eats raw beef. “The brass in your country is like gold,” formed the sum and substance of one epistle, “and you might therefore order the bracelets to be made of the pattern sent by the hands of Dinkenich;” (i.e. “She is beautiful.”—One of Her Majesty’s Abigails.) and again, “May this letter come to the hands of the English commander. Are you well? are you well? are you quite well? That the soap may not end quick, you will send it in large quantities, saith Besábesh.”

Not long after Her Majesty’s arrival, she sent me an unfortunate child, recently purchased from a Guráguê slave caravan, with a request that *Hubsheeri* might be exchanged for some clear salad oil which had met with special approval “for medicine for the face;” and great surprise was elicited by my reply, “that such a course of proceeding would involve disgrace and criminality, inasmuch as the unchristian-like traffic in human beings was held in abhorrence beyond the great water.” But in this matter the Emábiet was not singular. Certain of the courtiers, who considered themselves under obligations, had previously tendered us “strong Shankela slaves” as a Christmas gift, and all had been equally at a loss to comprehend our motives in refusing.

Amongst the followers that I had brought from India was a native of Cabool, who acted in capacity of tailor, and his proficiency in the needle involved a most unreasonable tax upon his services. Day after

day for weeks and months had he been in attendance at the palace; and when at length, under the royal eye, he had completed a sumptuous *burnoos* (cloak), on the elaborate embroidery of which half the treasures in the *gemdjia* house were lavished, the king, in the plenitude of his munificence, sent by the hands of Ayto Melkoo a shabby cotton cloth, value three shillings and sixpence, with a half-starved goat, and a message that "it was Christmas, and the tailor might eat."

Hajji Mirza was furious. "Take back these gifts to your Shah," he growled indignantly; "I want none of them. By the beard of the prophet, I'm the son of a Pathan; and praise be to Allah, the meanest overseer of a village in Afghanistán is possessed of greater liberality than Sáhela Selássie."

This *tirade* had fortunately been delivered in a tongue not familiar to the ears of the king's Master of the Horse, who was meanwhile diligently occupied with the Pathan's needle and scissors. Having taken the bag out of his hands, and extracted a scrap of red cloth, he had carefully fashioned a minute cross, which, with elbows squared, he was now proceeding to stitch over a hole in the lower part of his striped cotton robe.

"Why do you do that?" inquired the tailor, peevishly, in broken Amháric, not relishing the interference in his department, and anxious also to exhibit his own talents. "Let me darn it for you, and then there will be no blemish."

"No," replied the party addressed, with great gravity declining the proffered assistance. "Don't you know that the hole has been burnt, and therefore that it

must be repaired with another colour?"

In Abyssinia, as in other parts of Christendom, the festival of the nativity is a season of frolic and rejoicing, during which people display the strength of their piety by the quantity of beef that they can consume; the principal difference being, that it is here eaten raw instead of roasted. Our cook, a Portuguese from Goa, had been frequently summoned to the palace for the royal edification in culinary matters, but although he was a *bonâ fide* Christian, and wore a "máteb" too, the king could never persuade himself to partake of any of the viands prepared by his hands. Loaf sugar being now employed in the manufacture of a Christmas cake, His Majesty, after attentively watching operations, enquired, as a matter of course, "How they made it white? Was the ox whose blood was employed killed in the name of the holy Trinity?"

"Certainly not."

"Then it might remain," was the abrupt rejoinder. "*Ye noor*—I don't want it; it doth not please me."

The Abyssinians, assigning to the world an existence of 7334 years, refer the birth of Christ to the five thousand five hundredth after the creation. Thus eight years have been lost in the computation of time, and their Anno Domini 1834 corresponded with the Christian era 1842.

On the 4th of January, which was Christmas eve, the usual contest took place on the king's meadow between the royal household and the dependents of the Purveyor-General and the Dedj Agafári. A cloth ball having been struck with a mall, a struggle for its possession follows, and the party by which it is thrice

caught in succession being declared victorious, enjoys the privilege of abusing the vanquished during the ensuing two days of festivity, the first of which is celebrated by the male, the second by the female portion of the population. Every tongue is unloosed; and the foulest slander may be heaped upon the most illustrious, as well as upon the holiest personages in the land, the monarch alone excepted.

His Majesty's partisans gained the day, and we were summoned to the palace to witness their Christmas exhibition. Filling the courtyard, they danced and recited before the throne couplets defamatory of all the principal functionaries present, not omitting the Lord Bishop, who appeared to consider himself infinitely complimented by the vices whereof he stood accused. Bodily imperfections were not overlooked; asses and dromedaries afforded frequent comparisons; and the fat of the corpulent State-Gaoler, who sat a witness to the festivities, was declared sufficient to light the entire capital during the approaching public entertainment, which, given at the expense of the defeated chiefs, closed the disgraceful Saturnalia in riot and debauchery.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Three.

Feast of the Epiphany.

But by far the greatest holiday of the Abyssinian year is held on the Epiphany, styled Temkát, (i.e. Baptism) when the baptism of our Lord, by John, in the river Jordan, is commemorated with extraordinary pomp. He who neglects to undergo the annual purification

enjoined on this day by the Ethiopic church, is considered to carry with him the burden of every sin committed during the preceding twelve months, and to be surely visited by sickness and misfortune, whereas those who perform the rite, are believed to have emerged thoroughly cleared and regenerated.

On the evening preceding this festival, the priests of all the churches in Ankóber and the environs, carrying the holy *tábots* under gaudy canopies, assembled in the open space, termed Aráda, immediately in front of the palace. Here, according to custom, they were received by the governor of the town, who, after falling prostrate on his face before the arks, escorted the procession to the river Airára—the clergy dancing and singing, whilst the female portion of the inhabitants lining the hill-side, indulged in the shrillest vociferation. A tent for each church had been erected on the bank; and a temporary dam being thrown across the stream, the night was spent in chanting appropriate hymns and psalms.

Long before dawn, the pent up waters having been blessed by the officiating priest, the entire population, the young, the old, the wealthy, and the indigent, gathered from many miles round, casting off their habiliments, flocked promiscuously into the pool—even babes who were unable to totter being thrown in by their naked mothers. Not the slightest modesty was evinced by either sex, all mingling together in a state of perfect nudity, and affecting, under the light of innumerable torches and flambeaux, which shed the broad glare of day over the disgraceful scene, to believe that a supernatural veil concealed each other's shame.

The sacrament of Christ's supper was then

administered, accompanied by rites and ceremonies highly unbecoming the solemnity of this most sacred of Christian institutes. The multitude next proceeded to devour a pile of loaves, and to drain accumulated pitchers of beer, supplied by the neighbouring governors. Here too the most indecent excesses were committed. Declaring themselves to have swallowed a specific against intoxication, the clergy indulge to any extent they please, and each priest vying with his brother in the quantities he shall quaff, avers that if “the whole of the Lord’s bread and the Lord’s wine” be not consumed on the spot, a famine will arise throughout the land!

Festivities terminated, the officiating dignitaries, robed and mitred, preceded the holy arks and canopies in grand procession to the capital, singing hallelujahs. Holding in their left hands cymbals in imitation of David, and in the right the ecclesiastical staff, wherewith various absurd gesticulations are described, they danced and sang for some time in front of the palace gate. As usual, the performance displayed the most uncouth attitudes, and the least graceful figures. The beard and the crutch, and the aged face, and the sacred calling, were but ill in unison with the mountebank capers undertaken; and the actors rather resembled masks at the carnival than holy functionaries of the church.

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests,” is a passage of Scripture which the clergy of Shoa interpret to their own advantage. “Who are the foxes,” they invariably inquire, “but the kings and the governors of the land, who seek only after worldly vanities? and who the birds but the priests and bishops, who in hymns and hallelujahs thus fly upwards, and build their nests in heaven?”

The clergy are distinguished from the laity by a beard, and by a monstrous white turban encumbering the head. This is designed to typify Moses covering his face on his descent from the Mount, when he had received the tables of the law. Their sacred persons are usually shrouded in a black woollen cloak, studded with emblems of the faith, and furnished with a peaked hood. The sacerdotal vest was first embroidered by command of Hatzé David, the father of Saint Theodórus, to commemorate the arrival from Jerusalem of a fragment of the true cross on which Christ died; and officiating priests are expected to appear in one of these, composed either of scarlet or party-coloured cloth.

A silver or brazen cross and a slender crutch are the never-failing accoutrements of the priest; and on all occasions of ceremony, the mitre, the censer, and the great umbrellas are conspicuous objects. Long rods, furnished with streaming pennants, manufactured of the light pith of the juwarree, in alternating bands of red and white, were carried by the host of dirty boys who swelled the procession; and after the labours of the day were over, these emblems of regeneration were hung up in the churches as votive offerings. On the conclusion of the exhibition, the clergy dispersed under a salvo of musketry to their respective churches, and individuals who, from any unavoidable circumstance, had been precluded from participating in the general immersion, were then privately baptised, males and females being alike divested of every portion of apparel, and plunged into a large reservoir prepared for their reception.

Four years have elapsed since Sáhela Selássie underwent this lustration, wherein he was wont

annually to participate, but from which he is now held exempt, in consideration of the height of his power. Although in a state of perfect nudity, a cloth was held around him during the ceremony—a privilege to which neither virgins nor females of the highest rank are ever admitted.

Pots and pans that have been defiled by the unclean touch of a Mohammadan, are on this day purified by immersion in the water that has been blessed by the priest. Among many other superstitions there exists a firm belief, that all mules and horses that are not led forth to exercise on the festival of *Temkát* will die during the ensuing year. It is considered to be “a day of great splendour;” and on pain of excommunication, every good Christian is bound to appear clad in his best habiliments, and in all the trinkets he can muster, to the end that he may prostrate himself before the ark which he has adopted.

If enforced with rigour, excommunication is in fact a capital punishment, for it is *interdictio aquâ et igne*. No one can speak to, or eat, or drink with the proscribed person, nor even enter his house. The offender can neither buy nor sell, nor visit. He cannot recover debts. He may be murdered at pleasure by any ruffian who will take the trouble to cut his throat, and when dead his body cannot be buried.

The bell, book, and candle are to be hired by any disappointed enemy, and the hooded priest may be purchased to perform the ceremony; but the undertaking in some cases is not without its attendant danger. The cells of the state prison frequently enclose the rash fanatic who wantonly interferes with the royal salvation. Scanty fare and close confinement eventually insure absolution, and the

martyr to religious intolerance is summarily banished from the realm. Another powerful antidote is found in the *argumentum baculinum*, which, when persuasively applied to the shoulders of arrogant church pride, by the sturdy sinews of Europe especially, possesses a wonderful efficacy in allaying the storm.

A century has not elapsed since excommunication was performed upon one of the fair sons of the North. The turbaned bearer of the bell, book, and candle, was quietly introduced into the domicile, and his countenance fell as he perceived the object of his visit armed with a formidable cudgel. “My father must have been mistaken,” was the exordium that greeted his astounded ear, as the staff descended with an equally startling salutation—“My father never could have proposed the excommunication of his dear friend.” Again the weapon pattered upon the priestly back; and during full five minutes an able running commentary was supported by frequent playful taps over the head, to quicken the clerical understanding. This powerful appeal concluded, the crest-fallen functionary willingly withdrew his ban, and bestowing entire absolution, slunk back to his cell, mentally resolved to interfere no more with the incomprehensible European, who neither displayed terror at the curse of the church, nor entertained respect for the sacred persons of her ministers.

Unquies, the Bishop of Shoa, had long meditated the adoption of extreme measures towards the British escort, whom he declared to be no better than Mohammadans, since it was notorious that they did not kneel when the holy ark passed, and had no hesitation in partaking of flesh slaughtered by an infidel, instead of in the name of the holy Trinity. No

one, however, could be found sufficiently bold to undertake the customary process where the Irish soldier was concerned; and the king's "strong monk" had been fain at length to content himself with the clandestine promulgation of his spiritual denunciation for the many heresies committed.

The honorary distinctions conferred by the monarch for the destruction of the elephant first produced a good effect, which was still increased by the presentation of the silver shield that distinguishes the highest functionaries in the land; and although the opinions of the clergy generally were still far from favourable, there was a certain influential priest who invariably found it convenient to pass the long dreary evenings over the Residency fire. The pious father evinced no disinclination to participate in the good things of this world; and whilst sipping his strong drink, it was his delight to speculate upon scriptural grounds whether the skin of Eve was really white or black, and to prove that locusts could never have been tasted by John the Baptist, because they form the food of the unclean Mohammadan.

Edifying topics such as these were doubtless handled with greater eloquence than either abstinence, or the mortification of the flesh. Proceeding on his annual visit to Debra Libanos, the principal resort of those who prey upon the credulity of the public, the devout father at length stood voluntarily forward as the advocate of the Gyptzis; and so eloquently did he explain away the non-observance of fasts and other imputed heresies, that a wax taper of which we had made him the bearer was actually lighted in the sanctuary of Saint Tekla Haïmanót, and an immediate revulsion thereby created in the ecclesiastical sentiments entertained throughout the

entire realm.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Four.

Excursion to Berhut, on the South-Eastern Frontier of Shoa.

I deemed it to be an object of great geographical importance that the flying survey of the kingdom of Shoa should be completed by a visit to the country forming the boundary to the south-east, famous for its numerous volcanoes, recently in full activity, and hitherto untrodden in any part by European foot. A pretext presented itself in the existence of the wild buffalo in the lower districts; but it was necessary, in the first instance, to overcome the royal scruples, which opposed our attempting the chase of that animal. This I at length succeeded in doing; and the despot being made to comprehend that his children ran less risk of being demolished than he had formerly chosen to believe, vouchsafed the desired permission. The requisite instructions were issued to men in authority to promote the views of those “whom the king delighteth to honour;” and, preceded by queen Besábesh, His Majesty then set out on his annual visit to Mésur Méder.

“There is one point,” he observed, when we proceeded to take leave, “on which I wanted to consult you. The locusts are destroying the crops, and the priests have been unable by their prayers to arrest their progress. Have you no medicine to drive them away?”

Ayto Wolda Hana, under whose immediate orders are all the second-class governors in the realm, had received commands to summon to Ankóber the Misleyni (Literally “Like myself”) or vice-governor, of Berhut and of the plains lying betwixt the Casam and the Háwash—a tract inhabited partly by the Adaïel, whose nominal fealty is preserved through the influence of Wulásma Mohammad, and partly by the Karaiyo Galla, over whom the Negoos asserts more substantial jurisdiction. But many days elapsed without the appearance of that worthy, whom His Majesty had delegated to make efficient arrangements for our journey; and Déftera Séna, chief of the king’s scriveners, having, after twelve hours of close application, contrived to complete a written representation to the throne, a courier was despatched with it on horseback to the royal camp. No Abyssinian will ever think of declaring himself the bearer of an express, unless pointedly questioned upon that head, nor will he then relinquish possession until distinctly ordered so to do. On the return of the special messenger, who had been three days absent on the service confided to him, I asked him for the answer, but my application was followed by none of the usual fumbling among the folds of his girdle for the tiny scroll in its wax envelope; and the caitiff was finally fain to confess, that on being summoned to the presence of his sovereign at Mésur Méder, and commanded to deliver up the document with which he had been charged, he for the first time recollected that it had been mislaid at Ankóber!

But a peasant, who fortunately fell in with the missing parchment by the road-side, had carried it, in accordance with the immutable law of the realm, straightway to the king, who immediately, upon

becoming aware of the contents, and long before Déftera Séna had completed a duplicate copy, deputed Mamrie Salomon, now chief of the eunuchs, to see his royal intentions on my behalf carried into instant effect. A number of tribute-bearers from Berhut were on the point of returning to their district; they were forthwith pressed for the transportation of our baggage, and all minor difficulties being at length overcome, we quitted the capital on a cold morning towards the close of March.

Immediately beyond the church dedicated to Aboo, one of the most celebrated of Abyssinian saints, the path struck off to the southward along the course of the Airára, which, from the diminutive mill-stream of the Cháka, soon assumes a more brawling demeanour, and receives numerous tributaries from the mountains on either side, its deep channel cutting so smoothly through the trap rock, as to wear the appearance of being artificially formed. This valley is extremely varied in width, extending in some parts from six to seven miles, whilst in others it is reduced to a mere ravine by the converging spurs of the two great ranges. Throughout, the scenery is tame, the cliffs being flat and naked, and the vegetation restricted to a small scrubby species of dwarf acacia, interspersed with the euphorbia, styled *kolquál*—the charcoal obtained from which is preferred in the manufacture of gunpowder. But wheresoever the plough could be held, there the hand of industry had been busy, and for the first eight miles there was little uncultivated soil.

In these parts the rains descend with extreme violence; and having, in the first instance, scooped up and carried away all the rotten débris, each succeeding deluge has added its mining activity and

perseverance, until the entire mountain range, for miles, presents the singular appearance of a succession of perfectly isolated cones, the apices of many being crowned by villages or by the dwellings of great men, whilst the sloping sides are smoothed and levelled with the utmost nicety. The valley is thickly peopled, flourishing hamlets peeping out in every direction; but, as in other parts of the country, the best of the land, whether arable or pasture, pertains to the crown—Bukerfine, one of the richest farms in the district, having been conferred upon Misht Malafeya (i.e. “The Lady Excellent.”), a royal concubine, by whom the king has a favourite daughter.

Many monasteries dotting the wooded peaks, are here visible in all the pride of place above the residence of the common herd—their localities no doubt tending to rivet the chains of the infatuated Abyssinian. Priestly intimations issuing from a temple often shrouded from human ken under impenetrable fog, are received with increased attention, and the thunder of excommunication commands utter abasement and prostration of spirit, when fulminated from these grand scenes of elementary strife. The revenues of many of the villages passed are appropriated to the service of the church; those of Moi-Amba, containing upwards of two hundred houses, being appropriated to the cathedral of Saint Michael in Ankóber.

A few hours’ journey had substituted the heat of a tropical climate for the cool breezes of the mountains; and the momentarily increasing temperature afforded sufficient proof of the rapid declination of the route, even had it not led along the banks of the Airára, which, having been crossed and recrossed a dozen

times, was now tumbling down through a succession of foaming cascades, with a sound most refreshing to the ear. Emerging at length from its walls of basalt, and joined by the Kubánoo, bearing a large body of water from the west, it expands into a broad channel, and is employed in irrigating the extensive cotton plantations which every where abound on its borders. The stream is diverted by a simple pile of pebbles; but the elevated aqueducts, somewhat ingeniously termed *masalel wahá*, "the water-ladder," are constructed with infinite care, and passing frequently along narrow ledges, are widened by means of wooden tressels supporting a trough of brushwood and shingle. A sufficient supply is thus raised to nurture the magnificent cotton plants, the stems of many of which measuring seven, eight, and nine inches in girth, support a crop that, on arriving at maturity, does justice to these gigantic proportions.

Shortly after the accession of Sáhela Selássie, His Majesty marched to the Kubánoo, for the purpose of holding a conference with the Adaïel; and his armoury being in those days by no means so well furnished as it now is, the array of old matchlocks was regarded by the Moslems with the utmost contempt and derision. A rush was made during the night upon the royal camp—many of the Christians were slain—and whilst the remnant, with their youthful sovereign, fled in dismay to the stronghold of the capital, the treacherous assailants returned undisturbed in triumph to their desert plains.

Kittel Yellish, the village at which we proposed to halt, had been represented by our guides to be situated within a very moderate march of Ankóber; but the Abyssinians possess not a better idea of the measure of distance than of the value of time; and, after eight

hours passed in the saddle, we took refuge about sunset in the Moslem hamlet of Manyo, a cluster of huts crowning the summit of a cone, and overlooking a wild uncultivated tract, intersected by a labyrinth of tremendous ravines, arched over by the thorny branches of the acacia, and other vegetation of a strictly tropical aspect. Swine, agazin, and some of the smaller species of antelope, here abound to such an extent, that the peasants attempt no crop but cotton, exchanging the raw material for what they need of other produce. The village was strongly fortified in all directions against the inroads of the leopard and hyena, by palisades enclosing a stiff thorn fence; and there being no room even for the smallest tent, we passed the night in a shed rudely thatched with the leaves of the papyrus, which would not have been tenable for five minutes in the alpine regions that we had quitted in the morning.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Five.

The Royal Granary at Dummakoo.

The reception that we experienced at the hands of the virago who owned this comfortless hovel, had been neither hospitable nor flattering. In the temporary absence of her husband, the wrinkled beldame considered herself to be vested with charge of the hamlet, and for a full hour after our arrival, standing in the dark porch of her adjacent house, she had exerted her cracked voice in a tissue of shrill comments levelled against the impropriety of entering private demesnes unannounced. The first crowing of the cock invited a renewal of her far from melodious

clamour, and it was not silenced without much difficulty, even by the jingle of silver crowns.

The road now descended to the Umptoo, a rapid stream, with a broad stony bed, which rises in the lofty mountain Asságud. Cotton, in its most perfect state of cultivation, clothed all the level terraces. The papyrus, here, as in Egypt, designated *pheela*, fringed the banks of the stream in close thick patches; the honey-sucker, arrayed in green and gold, flashed in the morning sun, as it darted among the flowering acacias; birds of rare plumage filled the tangled brushwood; and the fantastic forms of the circumjacent mountains enhanced the beauty of the wild scene. But every man's hand was armed for strife. The peasant carried spear and shield, and wore the sword girded to his loins; and the site of his habitation had been carefully selected with a long look-out on all sides as a precaution against attack and invasion.

Leaving the bed of the river, which measured some eighty yards across, the path ascended a ridge running east and west, and deriving its appellation from the conspicuous peaks of Golultee and Demsee. To the eastward, through a wide gap in the mountains, could be seen a long reach of the Airára, now expanded into a noble river, by the junction of the Umptoo, and glittering under its numberless channels, which bear in the rains a vast volume of water to the Casam, to be poured eventually into the Háwash. From the summit of the pass in the direction of Ankóber, a strange view extended for a distance of thirty or forty miles—a broken abyss of hill tops seeming as though the waves of the troubled ocean had been suddenly petrified in their progress—Mamrat, the monster billow, shewing above all in the

far horizon, as the last barrier arrested in fall career.

The belt of rugged hills of limestone slate, through which the course lay, is an almost uninhabited waste of neutral ground, forming the boundary betwixt the Christian and Moslem subjects of Shoa. A few goats alone found a sufficiency of food among the scanty leaves of the now withered acacias; and the human denizens of the soil were wild as their rocky mountains. Fleeing at the approach of the white men, they took up a secure position on the very summit of the loftiest peaks, and looked down with evident mistrust upon the cavalcade, which was sufficiently well armed, and formidable in point of number, to instil terror into the bosom of all conscious of the wrath of princes, and of tribute rashly withheld. The termination of this sultry range forms an abutment upon the country of the Adaïel, whence is derived all the sulphur employed in the manufacture of gunpowder in the royal arsenals; and specimens which were picked up by the way would lead to the inference that the vein continued even beyond the point at which we crossed.

Like that of the Umptoo, the bed of the Korie, another tributary of the Casam, to which the road next descended, is bordered with luxuriant cotton cultivation, and in many parts overgrown with tangled papyrus. Shut in by a deep valley, it threads the mountainous district of Dingai-terri, and many wild bananas were seen luxuriating on its moist banks. The dusty path led on through a jungle composed chiefly of a bastard description of the Balm of Gilead, which being crushed under the foot, scented the whole atmosphere. On our arrival near the Moslem cemetery, below Kittel Yellish, the civility of the governor of the district was evinced in the display, on

skins beneath the trees, of every article considered necessary for Christian sustenance during this most holy season of Lent—bread, beer, and water proving truly acceptable to the Abyssinian followers, already much distressed by the intense heat of a nearly vertical sun, to which they were so little inured. A wild roguish-looking Moslem dervish, decked in a rosary of large brown berries, and carrying a staff of truly portentous dimensions, here introduced himself as an acquaintance made many months previously at Dathára, upon which grounds he considered himself entitled to share in the repast. Leading a roving and an idle life, and armed with scrip and water-flagon, he had for years subsisted upon the alms of the superstitious followers of the Prophet; and if judgment might be formed from his sleek exterior, they had not been niggard of their contributions.

Grey, water-worn precipices, with deep semicircular basins at their base, now flanked the road, a formation of limestone occasionally out-cropping beneath a thick stratum of basalt. After crossing the bed of the Meynso, we gained a more level tract, over which a gallop of five miles led to Dummakoo, one of the royal granaries, where, by His Majesty's commands, our head-quarters were to be established. This village, constructed on a knoll three thousand feet below the level of Ankóber, is situated in a fine, open, undulating country, well populated, and intersected by numerous milk-bush hedges. Richly-cultivated, and fanned by a cool breeze, it afforded a most agreeable contrast to the barren sultry hills through which the greater part of our course had lain. The lofty range of Mentshar and Bulga, rising to an extinguisher-like cone called Megásus, was the principal feature in the landscape;

and at the foot of these mountains, which abound in coal, sinks the valley of the Casam, which was to form the scene of coming operations.

One of the king's numerous magazines for grain and farm produce extends its long barn-like front in the centre of the hamlet, every house of which is screened by a tall green hedge; and that the safety of the royal stores has been alone consulted in the selection of the site, is sufficiently proved by the fact of the inhabitants being compelled to drive their cattle many miles on either side for their daily draught of water, whilst the long-tressed Mohammadan damsels are fain to trudge with a heavy jar at their back to a remote pool, carefully fenced and barricadoed.

All agricultural operations connected with the royal farm at Berhut, are annually performed by the surrounding population *en masse*. Several heavy showers which had recently fallen having fully prepared the ground for the reception of the seed, a vast concourse of rustics had collected from the entire district—the inhabitants of each hamlet bringing their own oxen and implements of husbandry; so that in the course of a very few hours many hundred acres, already ploughed, were sown and harrowed by their united efforts, the praises of the despot being loudly sung throughout the continuance of the tributary labour, which is similarly exacted in all parts of the kingdom.

On the crop arriving at maturity, a sheaf is cut and presented in token of joy to the governor of the district. The reaping and threshing again call for the assembly of the agricultural population; and the harvest-home having been celebrated with suitable festivity, the accessions to the royal granaries are

duly registered by scribes delegated on the part of the crown.

Upon a rising ground about a mile from Dummakoo, is held the monthly market of the district. Tradition asserts that one of the inhabitants of a neighbouring hamlet saw in a dream that the Imám Abdool Kádur, appearing upon this hill, picked up a stone, and in a loud voice proclaimed that the spot belonged henceforth to himself; and no sooner had the pious disciple of the Prophet declared his vision, than the site was adopted by the unanimous voice of the assembled multitude for the celebration of the bazaar, which, in the lapse of a few generations, has become one of considerable importance.

Almost immediately upon our arrival I received a visit from Habti Mariam, (i.e. “The property of the Virgin”) the vice-governor, whose residence is at Wurdoo, the principal village of the Berhut district. He explained that his non-appearance to escort the party from Ankóber had arisen from severe ophthalmia, contracted during a recent visit to the hot low country. Some very potent amulets had been now attached to various parts of his body in order to remove the disorder; and the good man was moreover provided with a large raw onion, with which he rubbed his eyes alternately during the interview.

It has already been mentioned that the influence of Wulásma Mohammad extends along the whole of the Moslem districts of the eastern frontier; and it had now been advantageously exerted in the despatch of a body of his immediate retainers, commanded first to announce to the Adaïel on the border our intention of visiting their country, and afterwards to escort us thither. In order to counteract any offensive

demonstration to which this unusual excursion might give rise, Habti Mariam had issued orders to assemble his levy, in accordance with strict injunctions received from his royal master to secure the safety of his “European children,” upon penalty of loss of liberty and government. The greatest difficulty was, however, experienced in persuading his followers to undertake the much-dreaded journey to the lower regions, as well from their unanimous detestation of the intense heat, as their innate dread of the lawless population; and he was finally compelled to put them to the blush by a declaration of his resolve to perform the king’s behest at all risks in his own person; when a handful of the boldest setting the example, the lists were speedily filled to the number of two hundred and fifty, which force had been considered by the Negoos as sufficient for the excursion.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Six.

Aden on the Casam River, the Territory of the Adel Sub-Tribe Gareemra Damoosa.

A canopy of thick clouds clinging to the high hills of Ankóber had indicated that rain still continued to deluge the more elevated regions; but on the wide undulating plains of Berhut, the thermometer in the tents stood at 105 degrees; and although the sky was occasionally overcast in the morning, the sun shone with due tropical fervour up to the day fixed for departure to the low country. It was still dark when the cavalcade filed past the church of Saint George, which, ornamented with a triangle of ostrich eggs as

a spire, stands at the extremity of the village; and as every Abyssinian lip in succession saluted with a pious kiss the rough bark of the kolquál trees by which it is fenced round, many an offering was vowed for individual safe return from the dangerous expedition.

Dawn of day found the party at the termination of the tract of table-land claimed by the crown; and the sun, as he rose behind the lofty peak of Assibote, lighted our descent by the Dodóti pass, a winding path overhanging the valleys, which still lay in darkness. Commanding a boundless prospect across the burning plains below, it leads by a very judiciously selected line, with a gradual descent of eighteen hundred feet, over barren mountain ridges rapidly diminishing in height, to the foot of the Abyssinian range, where, watered by the Casam, stretches the Adel district of Aden; and beyond, wild, desolate, and hot, and surrounded by extensive white desert tracts, rise the isolated craters of Sáboo and Fantáli.

The entire mountain-side is well-peopled by Mohammadan subjects of Shoa, whose progenitors arriving from the country of the sun with the great invader Graan, selected this as the location most congenial to their habits, and with it bequeathed to their descendants all the ancestral aversion to a cold climate. A stronger and more athletic race than the Amhára, the dark-eyed females present features far more feminine and agreeable than their coarse highland sisters, with forms more becomingly attired. The hot dusty hamlets and scattered farm houses, which crown many of the peaks, are surrounded by extensive cultivation. The square domiciles, constructed of loose stones with mud terraces, afford sufficient accommodation both for owner and cattle,

and the rich stores of grain proclaim a life of industry and abundance.

The retinue of the governor increased rapidly with his advance. Every hamlet now poured forth its quota; and before reaching the Fótah river, he mustered in horse and foot full four hundred retainers. For some miles the road wound along the dry channel of the mountain torrent, the banks rising on either side steep and perpendicular, so as to form a deep chasm, partially obstructed by huge masses that had been precipitated from above. Here and there a solitary Karaiyo hamlet met the eye—the flocks and herds assembled in the neighbourhood of the only well, around which the heathen maidens, in rude leathern petticoats, fearlessly drew water, proclaiming a district dependent upon Shoa. Debouching at length upon the plain of the Casam, the increase of temperature was at once perceptible; and the feeble breeze could not be felt through the mass of acacias and wild aloe which in full blossom covered the entire face of the country.

We were here joined by a weather-beaten old warrior, covered with silver decorations for valour, who had lost an eye by the spear of the Galla. He was to act in capacity of guide; and an hour through the low jungle brought us to the river at a point where the width is from seventy to eighty yards, a strong stream of turbid water running through a rocky channel, in parts choked with groves of tamarisk. Skirting the northern bank for a considerable distance across hot loose boulders and hard volcanic terraces, we gained a prominent height, whence the view extended over the lowest valley threaded by the well-wooded Casam, the whole reach of which was covered with great herds of homed cattle.

Here the cavalcade halted, and was presently joined, from a group of Adel wigwams, by Godána, one of the braves of the Gareemra Damoosa, carrying a broad-headed spear, and wearing his lank hair twisted into thin cords. A long and animated conference ensued, through the medium of an interpreter; in the course of which it was set forth, on the part of the puissant warrior, that the appearance of so large a body of the Amhára had led his tribe to apprehend meditated hostilities; that their flocks and herds were grazing in the vale below, peaceably tended by their young men and maidens; and that as the unwonted descent of such a host of Christians could not fail to create great alarm, he was desirous, before authorising further advance, to be more distinctly apprised of the nature and object of the visit. It was explained by the governor, “that the sole intention was to hunt buffaloes—that the white men were the special guests of the king; and having already slain elephants at Giddem, His Majesty sought to honour his friends the Adaïel, by the performance of equally extraordinary feats in their country:—concluding with the assurance, that the fear of the Ittoo Galla having alone dictated the presence of so many followers, both Godána and his people might rest satisfied that the visit was in good faith, and perfectly pacific.”

The cattle having first been driven to a distance, the Christian chivalry were finally, after much demur, permitted to descend into the bed of the Casam, and there to enjoy the shelter afforded by groves of spreading tamarinds which grace its shady banks, the elders of the tribe being meanwhile summoned to debate the subject more fully. Parties of the Adel population of the adjoining district of Dessé now

sauntered up by threes and fours, and tall, gaunt, meagre savages they were—their loins girded by a scant and filthy rag, but each equipped with a serviceable creese, a battered shield, and a spear decked with some trophy of the chase. The scowling downcast eye, habitually half closed against the glare of their parched plains—the dissatisfaction so legibly written on every face—the sun-burnt bushy wig—the pinched features—the loose shambling gait—the air of insolent independence—and not least, the rank disagreeable odour—all combined to proclaim them members of the great family peopling this sultry desert for hundreds of miles, and differing but slightly in manners or in appearance throughout the entire of the wide extended tract.

In the course of another fierce palaver, it was intimated that many expected to die before the affair should be terminated; but the promise of handsome remuneration to the survivors worked successfully upon Adel cupidity. After devouring the greater portion of our own supply of bread, which to those who till not the ground forms an unheard of luxury, they unanimously expressed their resolution of acceding to the royal wishes, and of leading the way to their choicest preserves. Greatly to the horror of Moslem antipathy, the river had meanwhile been dragged of many of its finny inhabitants by the Amhára, who are permitted to eat fish *ad libitum*, although prohibited from touching either flesh or fowl during the tedious fast of Lent.

Under the guidance of a party selected by the tribe, we now continued our route along the bank of the river; and after passing a volcanic fissure, which winds for miles between high walls of black lava to the very foot of the Fantáli crater, a halt was called

upon a spot lower down the Casam, where grass was abundant. Here we bivouacked among huge loose boulders; and between the bold headlands which bound the stream, numerous glimpses were obtained of its distant course. Thermal springs were stated to exist in the vicinity of Fantáli, now about six miles distant to the south. Although said to have emitted no smoke within the memory of the present generation, this hill was pictured as a fiery furnace, and a desert waste, inhabited only by gins and demons—doubtless a less formidable race than the Ittoo and Aroosi Galla, who continually prowl over the intervening plain. The presence of these predatory neighbours, added to our former experience of Adel treachery, and the habitual apathy and timidity of every Amhára escort, enforced the necessity of precaution in so wild a spot; and in spite of the fatigue entailed by the sultry march, we accordingly maintained throughout the night a disciplined vigilance by a revival of the long-neglected rules of “watch and ward.”

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Seven.

Triumph over the Forest Bull.

Almost before break of day we were in the saddle; and having passed the lava-blocks which bounded the camp, we came upon a level tract entirely composed of hard clay. Wide-spreading camel-thorn acacias in full blossom, with their rich perfume, loaded the morning air even to satiety, and in long lines and clumps separated the outskirts into a succession of delightful glades of the most inviting aspect, which promised to teem with wild beasts of every variety. Five of the principal Adaïel attended us on horseback, together with a chosen band of mounted Moslems, from the retinue of Habti Mariam, decked out in the flaunting spoils of lions and leopards which had fallen to their prowess. This motley group of wild riders set off at a furious pace across the flat, some scouring after every insignificant animal that was descried, whilst others, truer wood-craftsmen, diligently scanned the ground over which they galloped.

Last night's traces of the wanton strength of the elephant were visible among the noble trees. Huge branches, twisted from the stem, lay scattered in various quarters, and, together with the fresh footmarks of the devastators, those of a herd of buffaloes were presently discovered. I made many ineffectual attempts to decrease the number of the rabble train, the disturbance they created having the effect, like the tail of the rattle-snake, of warning all of the approach of enemies. Several troops of agazin,

throwing back their long spiral horns, fled at our approach. Myriads of clamourous guinea fowl, whirring above the grove in every direction, spread the alarm far and wide; and the quarry we sought, driven deeper and deeper into the dark recesses, finally took shelter in a sea of tangled bulrushes, which skirted the borders of numerous rivulets of running water that pour their muddy tribute into the Casam.

During several hours thus fruitlessly passed, the exertions of the retinue were most unremitting to prevent success; but they grew weary at last, and I then succeeded in inducing a small party on foot, with three of the governor's braves, to precede me into the covert. Here the cast of a few hundred yards revealed the tracks of a buffalo, and we carried the trail through thick groves of wild tamarisk, whose shady boughs, meeting over-head, formed natural bowers and arcades. The tumult had now ceased, and we stole in Indian file through fields of tall flags, preserving the strictest silence, and carefully avoiding contact with every projecting twig. At intervals, the fresher traces of the quarry demonstrated that he was close at hand, and we had not advanced more than half a mile before a measured splashing of water in the broad channel below gave notice of his actual presence.

The leading Adel cast a keen glance through the intervening screen of blue tamarisk, and looking me significantly in the face, pointed to both his eyes. Creeping cautiously to the brink of the river bank, where it rose perpendicularly to the height of twenty feet, I perceived a noble buffalo rolling from side to side, as he waded indolently across the stream, which reached above his girth, ever and anon

whisking his tasselled tail to dislodge a host of persecuting flies. His intention evidently was to land immediately below the ambush that I had taken; and as less than fifty yards intervened, each step that he advanced rendered the target more unfavourable. Not a second therefore was to be lost. A two-ounce ball through the point of the shoulder, though it tumbled the unwieldy animal on his haunches, did not sufficiently paralyse his giant strength to bring him fairly down, and before I could obtain my double-barrelled rifle, he had burst from the eddying water, and plunged into the adjacent thicket.

No trace of blood rewarded the closest scrutiny; and, after a few minutes' deliberation, my attendants pronounced the animal unscathed; but finding me positive as to the spot in which the bullet had taken effect, and firmly resolved not to abandon the quest, they made several able casts among the tall flags that waved over the rivulet. Fifteen minutes passed on without a whisper—then a low whistle from the thicket proclaimed the success of Koorbo the Adel, who had recovered the wounded beast, recumbent in the darkest recesses of the tamarisk grove. Advancing, with my rifle cocked, towards the spot where the red eyes gleamed through the gloom, I could perceive the white saliva streaming in bellropes from his mouth, whilst his breathing was hard and husky. Rising as I approached, he made a faint charge, but his strength was on the wane, and as he stumbled across a prostrate bough, a bullet through the heart brought him headlong to the earth.

The conquest of this noble beast, standing upwards of nineteen hands at the wither, would have afforded me pleasure under any circumstances, since I had never previously killed one of the same species; but

there were other considerations which rendered its demolition subject for especial exultation. In spite of every existing disadvantage, the avowed object of our toilsome journey to the hot plains of the Adaïel had now been fully accomplished, to the delight and the amazement of my savage allies, whereas to have returned to the king without a trophy, after His Majesty's sage remarks upon the subject of buffalo-hunting, would, in the eyes of every one, have proved a blot on the escutcheon of the hitherto triumphant Gyptzis.

No sooner had the unwieldy monster fallen in its last struggles, than Adam, the chief of the braves, having severed the windpipe with true Mohammadan skill, advanced at the head of his band, and falling prostrate on the ground, kissed my feet. To allay my thirst, a shield full of water was brought from the river. Every creese was then drawn, and the solid hide, after being removed with all expedition, was, for the convenience of carriage, divided into six portions suited for bucklers. Repeated blows from a heavy stone detached the great crescent horns from the beetling brow; and these, with the ears, hoofs, and tufted tail, we bore off as trophies to be laid at the royal footstool. Elated at the conquest of a formidable and much-dreaded beast, whose destruction by this rude people—a feat sometimes occupying many days—is esteemed equivalent to the slaughter of eight Pagans in battle, the excited savages were presently retracing their steps through the intricacies of the wilderness.

Flourishing the spoils aloft in earnest of victory, they alternately whistled and chanted their wildest war-dirge, and the deep chorus raised at intervals made the recesses of the grove to ring again.

Awaiting my return with some anxiety, Ayto Habti Mariam, surrounded by his array of warriors, was seated beneath the spreading arms of a venerable acacia, which leaned in hoary pride over the bank of the bubbling Casam. Godána, the Adel brave, galloping wildly into the ring, vaulted from his rude saddle, and casting a sixth of the hide contemptuously upon the ground, declared the feat to be achieved! During the performance of the war-dance, by which his gaunt and sinewy frame was long violently convulsed, he sprang from side to side, quivering his spear with the most ferocious gestures, and chuckling in imitation of vultures revelling over their prey. His exhibition concluded, the other doughty heroes who had been present at the death, each in his turn, flung his trophy upon the earth; and the whole, with shouts, and yells, and war-whoops, accompanied by all manner of savage antics, triumphed over the spoils of the slain.

Greatly to our disappointment and surprise, the governor now intimated the necessity of our returning forthwith to the high country. The prolific covert teeming with game of every description, a respite of only one day was earnestly and repeatedly solicited, but in vain. The Amhára, who had embarked in the rash enterprise with the utmost reluctance, oppressed by the direct influence of the solar rays, and most anxious to terminate their sojourn on a perilous border, heretofore untrodden by Christian foot, with unanimous voice declared their provisions to be at an end; whilst the Adaïel, who still mistrusted the motive of the visit, and, now that the avowed object had been accomplished, would hear of no further tarry on their frontier, urged as an argument for instant departure, that the Ittoo, “having heard the

reports of the rifles, would not fail to be down in strength during the night."

Desultory hostilities are continually waged between these wild borderers, whose broils and feuds are endless; and not six months had passed away since five hundred Pagans, bursting over the frontier, had plundered the Moslem valleys. But the tocsin, resounding from village to village, was promptly responded to by the gathered population, who pursued the marauders—recovered all the booty wherewith they were laden—and left the bodies of one hundred and twenty a prey to the vultures of the air. Although a brave soldier, Habti Mariam was evidently apprehensive of a brawl in some quarter, and very unwilling to incur the responsibility. "You came," he repeated, "to hunt buffaloes; and by God's aid you have succeeded. My control extends not to these disturbed districts; and if blows should be struck, what account shall I render unto the king my lord?"

Further remonstrance being obviously useless, the Adaïel were assembled, and complimentary speeches having been delivered laudatory of their assistance, an Abyssinian, cloth and a handful of German crowns were placed among them for division. Godána, on the part of his avaricious tribe, made an oration in reply; and waxing more and more animated as he drew towards the conclusion of the harangue, ended by praying in a loud voice, "that Allah might conduct the princely visitors in safety to their homes, and cause their spear-blades to prevail over every foe!—that the eyes of their adversaries might be blinded in battle—that plenty might crown their harvests, and blood, as now, ever bedew their hunting trail!" And during the pause that followed the

interpretation of each of these benedictions, the governor, with his assembled host, ejaculated “Amen!”

We had recrossed the Casam, and commenced the ascent of the hills, when the sudden appearance of a colony of pig-faced baboons, crowning the bank of the volcanic cleft, gave birth for some minutes to an apprehension amongst the Amhára, that the much-dreaded Ittoo were already hovering on the flank. But certain playful bounds on the part of the suspected objects soon dispelled the illusion; and the setting sun saw us safely encamped on a height overlooking a bend of the river, where a group of thermal springs issue from the sod-grown channel at a temperature of 150 degrees Fahrenheit, and flow steaming on beneath a grove of odoriferous fan-palms. Celebrated for their sanative properties, these baths were speedily thronged by all who laboured under any real or imaginary ailment; and notwithstanding that they shrunk from the extreme heat, which threatened to scald a European finger, the immersion was perseveringly continued by a succession of patients so long as the daylight lasted.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Eight.

Return to Dummakoo.

In the absence of a standing army, it is truly astonishing by what magic spell the inhabitants of these remote portions of His Majesty’s dominions are bound to his rule. Owing to the difficulties inseparable from the introduction of an armed force for their

chastisement, and the inaccessible nature of their fastnesses, no situation could be more favourable to revolt and to rebellion. But it is obvious that the wily policy of government will prove successful, so long as the fear of the Galla is strong in the breast both of Christian and Mohammadan, and so long as the name of Sáhela Selássie shall continue to act as a potent talisman upon all the savage, turbulent, and refractory spirits who people his disunited empire.

During the early portion of the night, the shrill crowing, as of an hundred cocks, might have induced the belief that the wild camp stood in the neighbourhood of Ankóber, where chanticleer taxes his throat almost incessantly; but the sound to which the wild hills now rung was soon ascertained to proceed from the Amhára pickets. With a view to compensate in some measure for the brief sojourn conceded to us in the low country, we were hurried off the moment the morning star appeared, in order to beleaguer a field of reeds occupying the bed of the Casam. It was said by the governor to terminate in a *cul de sac*, and to be one great den of lions, no fewer than eight having fallen under the spears of the Adaïel in an attack made some years previously. Our path traversed the deep broken bed of the river, the lofty castellated walls of which, rising sternly in the moonlight, were garrisoned by a legion of baboons, and before dawn we halted on a sheet of bare rock, over which a small stream of water fell by a time-worn channel into a deep dark basin;—many hundred acres of tall waving flags, interspersed by shady tamarind trees, stretching away over the long reach beyond.

But the capabilities of the place proved to have been greatly exaggerated; and, although certainly

harbouring a vast number of the *felinae*, it was far too extensive and too tangled—too impervious to man, and too unassailable by fire—to admit even of a chance of success. An agazin and an oryx, of which numbers fled in all directions, were hunted down by the host of retainers, aided by their dogs. A feeble attempt was then made to dislodge the inmates of the wide covert, by a general screaming and clattering of shields on the outskirts; and this notable display of *venerie* being concluded without any good result, the cavalcade wended its way homeward.

Mounting on the left side, with the assistance of his spear, the Amhára, when in the saddle, does not by any means ride well. Frequent falls are precluded by the high bulwarks of wood and leather which fortify his position; but his seat is awkward and ungainly: and few cavaliers can be said to possess the noble science of equitation. Whilst violently kicking with the naked shanks, and retaining the stirrup in the grasp of the great toe, they tug violently at the cruel and barbarous bit to urge the horse to speed; and the blood is presently to be seen streaming from the mouth, as the tortured animal tosses its head in agony.

The bridle is especially powerful and severe; long cheeks being attached to an indented bit, whilst a solid iron ring embraces the lower jaw, and acts like a tightened curb. The saddle is of Tartar form, and consists of two light splinters, which leave a clear space for the spine, and connect a high wooden pommel for the suspension of the shield, with a cantle equally high. Firmly sewn together with wet thongs, the tree is padded, covered with a loose skin, and furnished with stirrup-rings, just sufficiently capacious to embrace the first toe of the shoeless

equestrian.

The Abyssinian horse would in England be considered under-sized, and deficient in make and bone; but the breed is hardy, enduring, and sure-footed, and, from its cheapness, might with advantage be exported to our Indian possessions. Colts reared among the Galla are deservedly held superior, the reckless character of the wild pagan rider impelling them over the most difficult ground, and thus imparting a degree of boldness and confidence which is rarely to be found in the Amhára steed. In Shoa the absence of roads precludes the use of wheeled carriages; and established custom forbidding the employment of the team in agriculture, the gelding is reserved exclusively for the saddle, whilst mares and stallions are very rarely ridden. The art of shoeing is unknown, and no attention is paid to the care of the hoof, which, being extremely hard, for a time bids defiance to the stony ground; but many of our hunters were already beginning to suffer from the want of a farrier.

The horse is by all considered a very inferior animal to the mule, whose soft agreeable pace accords much better with the general indolent habits of the Abyssinian, and whose patience and surety of foot among the steep rocky mountains are sufficiently appreciated. The prices given are consequently larger, and the care taken of the latter is proportionably greater. Whilst the steed, scantily supplied with old straw, runs in the pasture during every season of the year, the mule, on the failure of the herbage, is pampered on barley and on the best of teff fodder, and, sheltered from the cold bleak wind, remains a constant inmate of the master’s dwelling, on terms of close intimacy with the family.

Twenty-five or thirty miles within the day are rarely exceeded—the high hills to be ascended, and the deep rugged valleys to be traversed, rendering a longer stage almost impracticable. The usual pace of the sure-footed mule is three miles an hour, but when the road is level, the amble is increased to five, and the pedestrians of the party still continue to retain their place. A saddled steed is led in the train; and, excepting in the hereditary dominions of Shoa, the traveller is fain to keep a good look-out for the roving Galla, and to do battle on the moment, if occasion requires.

On again reaching the gorge of the Fótah river, the governor, surrounded by the most puissant of his chivalry, and preceded by a band of bold spearmen, each decorated with some flaunting trophy of the chase, advanced with a measured war-dance, and a martial chorus. These triumphant strains were continued with little intermission during the whole of the steep ascent, in spite of the intense heat of the sun, which shot forth with greater fervour than ever. Dense clouds of dust and sand, such as might be raised by a charge of ten thousand cavalry, whirled up towards the sultry sky from the scene of recent exploits; and the Amhára, already fanned by the cooler breeze of the highlands, looked down upon the execrated plain with joy at their deliverance from its burning atmosphere. From each hamlet along the route the inhabitants sallied forth with shrill acclamations to greet our return. The entire female population of Dummakoo, receiving the white strangers near the church dedicated to the tutelar saint of England, led the way with kettle-drums and shouts of welcome; and for many hours after arrival within the dark walls of the king’s granary, every

quarter of the village resounded with choral music.

A visit of congratulation was immediately paid to us by a diminutive gentleman, who boasted descent in a direct line from the celebrated Graan, and whose more immediate ancestors possessed the vice-gerency of the greater part of the country just visited. Ali Qui occupied a farm in the vicinity of Dummakoo, and he was accompanied by his tall, fair, dark-eyed daughter, clothed in crimson, and loaded with amulets and amber necklaces. Possessing the Abyssinian accomplishment of begging in the very highest perfection, the worthy Moslem presented ajar of milk, and requested the loan of a few hundred dollars to pay for his estate, whilst the coquettish damsel brought a loaf of bread, and exerted her powers of eloquence to bring about an application to the throne for the restoration of her parent to his hereditary dignities. She was known by the eccentric appellation of *Amesa Karetse*, or “fifty crowns”—a title bestowed in commemoration of a fine to that amount levied on the day of her nativity upon Ali Qui, as a punishment for the escape of a state prisoner consigned to his custody.

The easy and ingenious mode of extortion by *mamálacha* exists in full force throughout the land, and all are equally amenable both to its abuses and to its privileges. Bringing any article within his means, no matter what, the begging petitioner hands it over to his superior as a memento for any thing that he has the assurance to demand. Servants offer a stick or a bundle of grass, and ask for swords, clothes, and money; whilst chiefs and the highest officers of state, present to the throne a pot of butter or a cloth, and seek to receive in return a horse, or a mule, or an embroidered garment. If the *mamálacha* be received,

the case is hopeless; and indeed the custom of the country requires that the extortioner should be never met with a negative. Thus, on the occasion of loss by fire or other casualty, the sufferer makes the round of his acquaintance, who each contribute a mite to the subscription; and wonderful licence being given to imposture, the individual upon whom fortune has laid a heavy hand, soon waxes more wealthy than before.

No petitioner ever enters the presence of his superior unless furnished with an offering according to his worldly means, as a bribe to secure favour and good-will. Cattle and honey, cloth, wood, and even stones, are presented; and this system is invariably observed in all quarrels and dissensions, where either party desires reconciliation. Without the intervention of a mediator, this cannot be effected. A third individual is therefore sought, who will undertake the arrangement, and to his hands the affair is consigned. The king himself often accepts the office, and of course is very rarely unsuccessful. Inferiors come into the presence of their official master with large stones upon their heads; and, prostrating themselves upon the earth, seek forgiveness of their offences, which, at the intercession of the all-powerful mediator, is seldom withheld. The oath by His Majesty's life is the most potent in use. If adjured by the death of Sáhela Selássie, non-compliance can be visited by punishment; and the wilful breach of the solemn obligation renders the perjured party liable to penalties the most severe.

From the highest to the lowest, all classes are most pertinacious beggars. Whatsoever is seen is surely demanded,—guns, knives, scissors, beads, cloth, mirrors, and dollars. The love of acquiring property stifles every sense of shame; and no compunction is

felt in asking for the cloak from off the stranger's back. The Amhára even take a pride in this national failing, and boast that the child, before coming into the world, will stretch forth its hand to receive a gift; whilst tradition extols as highly praiseworthy and deserving of imitation the conduct of a certain great Abyssinian chief, who on his death-bed desired that his body might be interred in the track of a caravan, in order that, if possible, his spirit might be in the way of receiving a dole from the passing merchant!

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty Nine.

Visit to the Karaiyo Galla.

As each evening closed, the appearance over the high range of Bulga was magnificent. Dark clouds, occasionally pierced by a bright ray of the sinking sun, drove in dense volumes across this mountain wall; and as they rolled on towards the lofty cone of Megásus, they revealed in their track the precipitous and rugged nature of bluffs which had before presented an unbroken surface. Rain not unfrequently fell during the night, and penetrating the flimsy cotton awnings as if they had been cullenders, rendered an umbrella necessary towards the protection of the damp pillow.

Resolved to view the mysterious Fantáli from the country of the Karaiyo Galla, whence might be determined the interesting question of its activity or quiescence, I planned an excursion with Captain Graham to the lake Muttahára, whose glassy bosom, surrounded by great belts of yellow grass, and

stretching along the western base of the volcano, we had regarded with intense curiosity, as it sparkled under the beams of the setting sun. Absence of water on the road rendered it imperative that our party should be limited; and the insuperable aversion displayed by every follower to a second expedition to the low country caused little disappointment. Many had already suffered severely from inflammation of the eyes; and greater difficulty could hardly have been experienced in obtaining volunteers for the most desperate forlorn hope—the Aroosi beyond the Háwash, a tribe distinguished for surpassing ferocity, being declared the bitter enemy of every Christian and Mohammadan.

The governor had already proceeded in advance, to collect his vassals; and on the morning fixed for our departure a heavy white fog, such as is wont to envelope the capital of Shoa during three-quarters of the year, veiled the entire face of nature. The first five miles led across the richly-cultivated terrace of Berhut, amid numerous hamlets which gradually became visible as the mist ascended. Aingodiyé, on the top of the pass, together with the entire district of that denomination, pertains to the Lady Asagásh, who, decked in her holiday costume, politely sallied forth, with her train of household slaves and handmaidens, to greet the passing strangers.

This portly dame, whose appearance is truly indicative of her wealth, was the favourite concubine of the famous Medóko at the period of his assassination; and having been suffered by the despot to retain the extensive domains conferred upon her paramour during the days of his glory, a thrifty disposition has swelled her hoard of corn, oil, and beeves, beyond all bounds. In her retinue came

a disconsolate couple chained together by the wrists —thieves no doubt—and said to be man and wife, whom the Woïzoro facetiously declared it had been found requisite to link by bonds stronger than those of wedlock, in order to counteract a decided disinclination to the society of the husband, evinced by the inconstant spouse in three several elopements.

Descending by a steep pass through the district of Goorooréza—a perfect wilderness of rugged mountains—we crossed the river of that name near its junction with the Casam, and shortly afterwards the Casam itself, from which all the villages for many miles round derive their supply of water. Taking its source in the elevated plains of Germáma, this tributary of the Háwash escapes through the mountains by a deep defile, worn in the lapse of ages by the autumnal torrents, betwixt Mentshar and Bulga. Thence it winds on beneath perpendicular bluffs jutting out from the high table-land. Of these the principal is the frowning promontory of Gougou, which, like a natural fortress, abruptly terminates the Tudla Mariam plateau, extending to Angollála in one uninterrupted terrace, celebrated for the capsicums and fine cotton wool raised by its Christian population.

From the bed of the Casam the road wound up the Choba ravine, through a fissure formed near the point of junction by two gigantic blocks of granite, which confine the rugged defile to just sufficient width for the transit of a mule. The stupendous mass wore the appearance of having been hurled in remote ages from the summit of the impending cliff, the force of the concussion rending it in twain, and forming the key to a road, which by a handful of resolute men

might be defended against the mightiest host. An ascent of one thousand feet over the Woleecha mountain, by a narrow path worn in the columnar trap, led to another elevated plateau, where, after the arrival of the governor, the staff was set up for the night at the Moslem village of Seeágur, eleven miles from Dummakoo.

The threshing-floor whereon our tent was erected, standing upon one of the many tongues of table-land that intersect the district of Wolágur, looked down a long lone valley bounded on the opposite side by the perpendicular wall of Boorkikee, upon the verge of which, surrounded by a milk-bush hedge, rose the secluded church of Saint George, the last Christian edifice of Mentshar. The sudden termination of the terrace, which abruptly drops into the country of the Galla, commanded an extensive prospect over the wilderness of Táboo, bounded by the distant blue hills of the Gámoo and Aroosi. Rising among the Sáma Galla, and overflowing the level land in the season of its height, the Táboo, like most of the secondary streams in this district, is dissipated by the fiery heat of the plains before reaching the Háwash.

Double the number of retainers, both horse and foot, to that which actually appeared on the morrow, had been summoned; but many preferred paying the fine incurred by absence, to accompanying their liege lord into jungles hitherto little trodden by the Christian. A respectable retinue was, however, in attendance; and we set out at an early hour for the lake Muttahára. A rugged winding descent, due south, led to the foot of the Wolágur range, whence an extensive tract stretches away to Fantáli, beautifully wooded, covered with flocks and herds, and disclosing in every direction the beehive cabins of the Karaiyo, a

tribe equally rich in cattle and in pasture land.

It is now fifteen years since an Amhára expedition under the Dech Agafári overran this then independent district from the highlands of Mentshar. The inhabitants, flying for shelter to their thick hook-thorn coverts, sustained little loss in killed; but the whole of their wealth was swept away, and thirty thousand fat beeves were presented to the monarch on the plains of Angollála, as an earnest of successful foray. Since that period the Karaiyo have been nominally dependent on Shoa, paying an annual tribute of twenty oxen, and the left tooth of every elephant entrapped or found dead—a mild taxation, with which they are sufficiently content to abstain from revolt, although the hold over them is too slight to admit of farther impost—the principal advantage derived from their submission being the interposition of a barrier against the inroads upon the Amhára frontier of the savage Aroosi.

The Karaiyo territory, extending about forty miles in length by thirty in breadth, consists of a succession of open uncultivated plains, covered with luxuriant shade, and intersected by low ranges of grassy hills, dotted with spreading trees—altogether a highly enviable site for a small nomade tribe, although much scourged by the neighbouring Aroosi, and presenting the very theatre for a hasty inroad. Portions of the district often suffer much from drought; but a most opportune fall of rain the preceding night had completely deluged the country, and poured into every pool along the route a plentiful supply of muddy water.

Taking an easterly direction towards Fantáli, we passed numerous well-peopled hamlets, occupying

all the secluded nooks, and as wealthy in flocks and herds as if the Amhára besom had never swept the land. From constant exposure to the heat and glare, and the habit of closing the eyelid to increase the power of vision, the swarthy features of even the youngest of the blinking inhabitants were deeply furrowed with premature wrinkles, which, with a turn-up nose, and the greasy unbecoming Galla costume, rendered those who had numbered many seasons, truly hideous.

In an easterly direction the course was bounded by the great isolated crater of Sáboo, yawning in the very centre of a well populated plain, and said to have been in full activity in the time of Sáhela Selássie's grandsire, who reigned only thirty years ago; an assertion which was fully borne out by the recent appearance of the lava streams. The long-horned oryx, with great herds of antelope, grazed around every pool—the latter little disturbed by the presence of those who tended the flocks of sheep and goats, and whose groups of circular wigwams peeped forth in every sequestered corner.

An ancient crone of surpassing ugliness, attired in a leathern petticoat flounced with cowrie shells, was busily engaged by the way-side in transferring muddy water to her scrip, and looking up, was perfectly horrified at the appearance of a white face on the opposite border of the puddle. For a few seconds her old yellow teeth chattered audibly, and then, satisfied that there was no deception, she called loudly upon the goddess Atéti, threw herself back upon the ground, and became a prey to abject despair.

Resuming a southerly course from the foot of the crater, our path led at right angles over a tract where

broken abysses, lava dykes, and brilliant belts of verdure, were jumbled together in strange confusion. At an early hour in the afternoon we reached Inkóftoo, the principal Karaiyo kraal in the district of Kadécha Dima. Standing beside an extensive pool, screened on all sides by luxuriant trees, it was strongly fortified by stiff thorn-branches against the inroads of the lion; formidable troops of which, roaming almost unmolested, commit great havoc among the cattle, and had only the night before carried off a youth belonging to the village.

It wanted still some miles of the spot in which Habti Mariam had resolved to encamp, near the borders of the Muttahára lake, whose placid surface, not less than two miles across, extended almost to the base of Fantáli. The chief of Inkóftoo had seen a rhinoceros in the morning, among the dense thicket of hook-thorns covering the declivity of a hill on the way; but although one of the governor's braves, elevating his sheep-skin mantle upon the point of his lance, charged the assembled multitude in the king's name to abstain from clamour and from interference with the arrangements made for beating up the quarters of the "*ouráris*," the clattering hoofs of the advancing cavalcade presently put the animal to flight towards the Háwash. It were difficult to determine whether the fear of the Aroosi or of wild beasts now predominated in the minds of our Amhára escort. In spite of a heavy fall of rain, large watch-fires were kindled in various parts of the lone bivouac, and not a single eye was closed until the day had fairly dawned.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty.

The Wilderness of Táboo.

Extensive morasses, environing the sedge-grown borders of the Muttahára water, proved it to be far below its wonted boundaries, and precluded all access to Fantáli, even had the timidity of the guides been sufficiently overcome to induce them to acquiesce in a visit; but the non-existence of any active volcano for more than thirty years was confirmed by all. The Kobedémtoo and the Gobakoobee districts form the limit of His Majesty's Karaiyo possessions, within a few miles of the Háwash, and thither we proceeded in the morning. Arriving near the mountain Sadéka, one of the outposts of the Aroosi, whence the wooded line of the river could be traced for miles through the naked plains, I took the bearings of the conical peak of Serie, and of other conspicuous landmarks. But the appearance of a small party of armed savages in the distance soon induced precipitate retreat on the part of our escort, who by no means relished the delay. A band of treacherous barbarians had only a few weeks previously made a descent upon the Karaiyo cattle, and after putting all the herdsmen to the spear, were hurrying off with the booty, when they were pursued in force, and put to flight with the loss of twelve of their number. Another predatory visit was daily anticipated; and the caution was in every mouth, "If two warriors be perceived upon the same horse, ask no questions, but shoot them without mercy."

Sáhela Selássie has never yet attempted an expedition in person against these war-hawks, nestled in the lap of the mountains, who fight stark

naked, and are besmeared with lard from head to foot. Merciless, and of predatory habits, they are represented as extremely powerful in battle, and are the terror of every surrounding tribe—two warriors usually bestriding the same steed, and aiding each other with barbed lances jagged like the teeth of a saw, and with bucklers manufactured to imitate the shell of the tortoise. Subsisting entirely by plunder, the cultivation of their high cold hills is but little attended to; salt, which forms the principal article of barter with Guráguê, and other inland bordering countries, being obtainable in unlimited quantities from the lake Lághi, two days' journey from Serie, one of the principal market towns. Noora Hoossain is the capital of the Aroosi Galla, who are all followers of the Prophet; and the principal towns of their adjacent neighbours the Ittoo, a race of mixed Mohammadans and Pagans, are Chercha and Metokóma.

The rhinoceros was said to abound in the Karaiyo neighbourhood; but Habti Mariam would consent to no further sojourn on this dangerous border with so limited an escort, and at noon retraced his steps to the village of Inkóftoo. Here all the braves and principal men of the tribe were gathered to recount their recent exploits with the predatory Aroosi, as well as the particulars attending the slaughter of an elephant's calf that had fallen under their united lances a few weeks previously. A spear wound having stupified the beast, hundreds of warriors rushed in and overwhelmed it. Every participator in this notable achievement, which is one of extremely rare occurrence, now displayed on his person some distinguishing ornament or feather, whilst the doughty hero who claimed first blood, strutted about under a

perfect load of sable and green plumes, brass chains, and massive ivory armlets, precisely similar to those worn by the ancient Egyptians. Not quite satisfied as to the object of the visit, the Karaiyo had collected the whole of their great droves of cattle in the precincts of the hamlet. Amongst them were many splendid *sánga*, with wide-spreading horns upwards of six feet in length; under which they moved as majestically as the stag “proud of his twelve tynes.”

A heavy storm of dust obscured the entire face of the landscape in the direction of Sáboo; arriving near to which, a path struck off to the westward to the encamping ground on the side of the Kózi mountain, above a snug Karaiyo hamlet, whence provisions were obtained. The Amhára followers, although still restricted by the fast of Hodádi from participation in animal food, were fain to encase their naked and blistered feet in portions of the hide of an ox slaughtered for the entertainment of the more fortunate Mohammadans; the fields of lava lately traversed, like the “iron stones” celebrated in the travels of the Jesuit fathers of old, being “like the dross that cometh from the furnace, and so sharp-pointed withal, that they spoiled a pair of new shoes in a day.”

The next object was to visit the far-famed volcanic well of Boorchútta, on the frontier of Mentshar, bordering upon the wilderness of Táboo, which was to form the limit of our wanderings. Shortly after gaining the summit of the Kózi mountain, the road wound along the very brink of the crater of Winzégoor, from whose monstrous chasm the entire adjacent country has been recently overflowed; and three miles beyond it we halted preparatory to the passage of a dangerous defile, said to teem with the

execrated Aroosi hordes, and to form their favourite ambuscade. A council of war was held. The troops being formed into a dense body, a *woho* was appointed to prevent straggling, and to command the rear-guard. Scouts proceeded in advance to reconnoitre, and the strictest silence having been enjoined, the order was for once obeyed. Dismounted men and grazing horses descried on the impending heights of Boobisa soon caused dire alarm; and consternation reached the climax when, on gaining the gorge of the hills overlooking the wilderness of Táboo, the scouts ran in breathless, with intelligence that a large body of cavalry occupied a rising ground not two miles from the van. The jingling bells around the necks of the mules having been muffled, the party, drawn up in battle array, advanced with the utmost caution, until the gleaming of the white garments and cross-emblazoned shields of the fancied foes proved them to be none other than the Mentshar detachment of horse under Ayto Nigdoo, who had been expressly called out to reinforce the Amhára in event of the Aroosi being abroad on a foray.

Having joined the allies, who had in their turn been equally disconcerted at the appearance of the forces of Habti Mariam, we proceeded to cross the valley of Jiggra Mulkinia, “the place where the guinea fowls feed.” This fine level plain, hemmed in by high hills, presented a perfect garden of wild flowers blossoming amid a most luxuriant second crop of grass, the result of a late conflagration. Many hundreds of the white-rumped *mhorr* browsed on it undisturbed, and the pintado and the partridge seemed to be without end. A belt of dog-rose bushes, camel-thorns, and a highly aromatic undergrowth

which bordered the base of the range styled Júǰjuba Kulla, harboured a small herd of elephants, and they were soon perceived luxuriating among the young juicy reeds. But the retinue contrived as usual to put the whole to flight; and under a furious thunder-storm, which in ten minutes covered the plain with pools of water, the cavalcade, drenched to the skin, arrived at a late hour on the skirts of the Boorchútta water, where the night was to be passed.

This singular well, which wears the semblance of the crater of a gigantic mine, is situated in the bosom of the almost perpendicular mountain of Júǰjuba Kulla. One narrow passage, of barely sufficient width for an elephant, leads to the water, which lies at the bottom of a deep narrow gully with inaccessible banks. Rising to the height of two hundred feet, they are crossed by vermilion bands of lava, honeycombed with a thousand cavities and fissures, and overgrown in parts with the most brilliant vegetation. Enormous blocks of black rock, which choke this channel for the last hundred yards, form a sort of parapet to the front of the pool, which measures sixty feet in diameter, and gives “no bottom.” The still, brimstone-coloured waters were glassy smooth, and not a breath stirred within the deep suffocating crater, where the fall of a pin produced an echo like that of a whispering gallery. Black martins wheeled over-head—pigeons cooed amid the clefts and crannies—and hairy baboons grimaced and chattered on the impending cliffs, from which trailed numberless fantastic roots, laid bare by the torrent that at certain seasons pours into the well from the ravine above.

There being no other water for many miles around this reservoir, it forms the resort of all the numerous wild animals in the neighbourhood; and the narrow

passage bore ample testimony to the nocturnal visits of the elephant and rhinoceros. The inhabitants of all the adjacent hamlets deriving their supply hence, the Aroosi frequently lay in ambush to cut off their watering parties. Boorchútta is, in fact, the arena of constant conflicts; and not a month had elapsed since the ruthless barbarians slaughtered thirty-three Moslems, losing four of their own number in the skirmish. Bowers of green boughs were constructed for the accommodation of the two governors; and the whole of the retainers, standing to their arms with loins girt, danced and sang throughout the night around blazing watch-fires, which threw great masses of light into the shadowy abyss, and imparted the wildest effect to the scene of blood.

The night passed without any alarm, whether from assassin or wild beast; and in order to complete the tour of the eastern frontier, an excursion was made at early dawn through the wilderness of Táboo to the Bósut hills; the rich meadows which intervene, being tenanted by the Gámoo Galla, a pastoral tribe, beyond whom are the rebel Loomi. On terms of friendship with Sáhela Selássie, and even acknowledging a sort of nominal fealty to Shoa, we did not anticipate that our appearance would have caused alarm; but the natives believing the party of five hundred horse and foot to denote an irruption of the Aroosi, drove off their cattle with all expedition to the summits of the fastnesses, and abandoning their villages, were to be seen clustering on the heights in momentary expectation of attack. Nothing could exceed the luxuriance of the shady forests of Táboo, which bore evidences throughout of the presence of the elephant, and abounded in the pie-bald oryx, the agazin, the hartebeest, and the mhorr—clamourous

troops of guinea fowl, which covered every open glade, completing the contrast to the silent regions of Shoa, so generally destitute of animal life.

Several splendid antelope had fallen to Graham's rifle and my own, before the impatient entreaties of the governor compelled us to set out on our return. We arrived before sunset at the village of Adeláda, which occupies the summit of a steep saddle-backed hill, and is under the control of Ayto Nigdoo. Near it is the well of Wuláwula, which, although smaller, is not very dissimilar from that of Boorchútta, a sleepy, funnel-shaped hollow, likewise owing its existence to igneous agency. Crossing the Koorkurú, the Gubraiyo Ságur, and the Cosso rivulets, which are severally dissipated in the plain of the Karaiyo, we re-ascended to Wolágur, and returned the following day to Dummakoo, laden with numerous valuable accessions to natural history, and in possession of as much information as our opportunities enabled us to collect relative to this interesting but unsettled border.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty One.

The Kingdom of Shoa.

"Natura beatis
Omnibus esse dedit, si quis cognoverit uti."

Although the majestic fabrics, the pillars of porphyry, and the Corinthian domes of early writers, now exist only in the tradition, Ethiopia yet retains the fresh vegetation of a northern soil, the vivifying ardour of a tropical sun, and the cloudless azure of a southern

sky. Palaces and fanes, gardens and gushing fountains, have long since departed; but there still remains a fertile country possessing vast capabilities, a salubrious and delightful climate, and a race of beings whose existence under absolute and complete despotism, presents a striking contrast to that of the idle and improvident Adaïel, whose pride and whose boast is a banner of independence.

Whatever Abyssinia may once have been, it is not to be expected that she should, under a great lapse of time, again take place among those countries which are peculiarly happy, opulent, or abundant. All her prevailing customs and practices are utterly at variance with existing laws for the creation, consumption, and distribution of wealth. A heavy taxation is levied on the produce of the field. Monastic and clerical establishments are fostered to the ruin of the people. The venal judges are paid by fees on the suits which they decide; and popular superstition and imposture possess the royal sanction for abuse. Nothing useful is ever taken into consideration; here are no roads or bridges to facilitate traffic, no schools for the instruction of the rising generation. The improvements of life have stopped at the satisfying point “of barren, bare necessity;” and fear and prejudice unite to deter the inhabitants from visiting foreign climes, so as to improve their benighted country, by introducing the discoveries in modern science.

But although thus ignorant of comfort even in their highest enjoyments, the people are yet considerably emerged from that state of society which is denominated barbarian, and practise a species of agriculture which the fertility of the soil has heretofore blessed with an abundant return. Throughout the

kingdom the eye is greeted by extensive cultivation; and the art of husbandry in Shoa has far eclipsed the advances made by any nation hitherto visited on the western coast. Under certain despotic conditions, private property in the land is every where established. There are few forests or wastes, excepting those impracticable for pasture or cultivation. The village and the farm-steading are uniformly secure from predatory bands or hostile neighbours, and although thickly inhabited, the country is unburdened by any over-population.

The processes of preparing the ground are somewhat complex; a primitive plough is in use to the exclusion of the African hoe, and considerable industry is evinced in collecting and distributing the waters for artificial irrigation. The science of husbandry is nevertheless little understood; the implements of culture are few, and of the rudest construction; the various modes of assisting nature are unknown; and unless some civilised power interferes for good, a great length of time must necessarily elapse before the habits and prejudices of the uncultivated nation can be overcome for its own advantage.

Situated in the middle of the torrid zone, and composed of groups and ranges of lofty mountains overlooking wide plains and deep valleys, equally under the influence of the tropical rains, the climate at different elevations is of the most varied description. The high table-land, which is clothed with moderate vegetation, and destitute of wood, is at all times cool and healthy, and often extremely cold. Here there is no winter,

“Such as when birds die

In the deep forest, and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice."

The coolness of the mountain breeze is pleasant and refreshing, and the timely cessation of the rain allows a healthful rest to vegetation.

The low wooded valleys, on the other hand, are close, unwholesome, and insufferably hot. During the cold season the thermometer on the summit of the range stands at about 30 degrees, a thin coating of ice covers the pools, and the country is white under a mantle of hoar frost. Below, the quicksilver mounts to 90 degrees, and the total absence of ventilation renders the heat still more oppressive. At the termination of the rains, Fever, with all her attendant horrors, spreads her pestilential wings over the most beautiful locations; and during the month of September even the wild birds for a time forsake the poisoned atmosphere, to seek the more congenial breezes of the upper regions.

The amazing fertility of the vales is beyond all conception. Every species of crop attains the most gigantic proportions. The rich soil and the nurturing shelter, the abundant supply of water, and the ardent rays of the sun, all combine to crown the hopes of the husbandman; and these situations would have stood prominent as perfect in the creation, had nature blessed them with a climate corresponding in character to their lovely appearance. On the mountain-side, the vegetation is somewhat inferior in luxuriance—a fact that may be accounted for by the angle at which the sun's rays meet the ground, their power of imparting heat varying in proportion. As the eastern face of the range rises almost perpendicularly, it can only during half the day

receive them at all, and for many hours in the warmest part of the afternoon, it is thus entirely in the shade.

On the elevated plateau, a succession of well-watered undulations of pasture and arable land, extend in endless continuation to the view, undisturbed by a solitary tree, their scattered villages and farm houses proclaiming a country which has long enjoyed the blessings of peace. From the centre of this table-land, the craggy mountains rise in magnificent ranges, clothed in part with majestic forests, and graced by the wild rose, the myrtle, the eglantine, and the jessamine; whilst at its foot repose the rich and smiling valleys, hid in all the luxuriance of tropical foliage, from the gigantic sycamore, beloved of the heathen Galla, and measuring upwards of forty feet in circumference, to the light and elegant acacia, which distils the much-prized gum.

On the table-land the best soil is found on the sheltered hill-side, of a rich brown colour, and along the river bank where there is a loamy alluvial deposit. Black earth is occasionally met with on the mountains, where it may probably have originated in the decomposition of those forests to which tradition gives existence in ancient days, but of which no other vestige now remains. In the valleys, those which form the governments of Giddem and Geshé especially, the richest black soil prevails throughout; and blessed with an abundant supply of rain, and with a mild genial climate, they produce all the crops known in Abyssinia, whilst the soil on the surrounding mountain-side, light, loose, and gravelly, would be found well adapted for the growth of coffee and tea.

Abyssinia is happy in a most copious supply of water, the gates of heaven being opened twice during the year to the flooding of every river and streamlet, and to the complete soaking of the earth. The “rain of bounty” commences in February, and lasts for thirty days, and the “rain of covenant” setting in before the termination of June, pours down with extreme violence throughout July, August, and September—at which period is produced that never-failing increase of the Nile to which Egypt is also indebted for her fertility. Immediately after these down-pourings, nature, who had remained bound up in the preceding drought, bursts forth into a thousand interesting forms. Pastures and meadows are clothed in cheering green; the hills and dales are adorned with myriads of beautiful and sweet-scented flowers, and the sides of the mountain ranges become one sheet of the most luxuriant cultivation.

Long after the rains are over, a heavy dew falls during the night; and under its vivifying influence the plants continue to shoot forth, refreshed by the coolness of the morning breeze, and strengthened by the strong heat of the mid-day sun. By the provident husbandman two crops are every year garnered in, without the land being impoverished; and whilst the corn is being reaped in one field, the seed is but just sown in another. The cattle are employed in ploughing up the fertile soil of one estate, whilst in the next the muzzled ox is trampling out its recently yielded treasures; and all the various operations of husbandry, from the breaking up of the ground to the final winnowing of the corn, may be simultaneously witnessed on one and the same farm.

> “Hic ver assiduum, atque alienis mensibus aestas,
> Bis gravidae pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbor.”

Forty-three species of grain and other useful products are already cultivated in Abyssinia. After supplying the immediate wants of the working classes, and those of a herd of clerical drones who devour the fruits of their honest labour, there remains a considerable surplus, which is bartered to the lazy Adaïel for the produce of his salt lake—a field that without ploughing or sowing yields an inestimable crop. But if only a small portion of European knowledge were to be instilled into the mind of the Christian cultivator, the kingdom of Shoa, possessed of such unbounded natural advantages, might be rapidly raised from its present condition, and made one inexhaustible granary for all the best fruits of the earth.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Two.

Termination of the Fast of Lent.

Immediately upon our return from the eastern frontier, the king sent his confidential page with a message of congratulation on my recent success against the much-dreaded buffalo, and requested that we would visit him early the ensuing morning. In accordance with the etiquette invariably observed after a long absence, I laid “pleasing things” on the royal footstool, together with the trophies of the chase, and His Majesty listened with great interest to a detail of our adventures among his Adel subjects. On my returning thanks for the injunctions issued to the governor of Berhut and his subordinates, as well as for the royal permission to visit a portion of the realm hitherto unviewed by Europeans, the most friendly

assurances were repeated, that “he could not suffer his children to depart until they should have viewed the entire of his dominions.”

During this interview. His Majesty remained seated on a hassock before the fire, and had laid aside every portion of his usual reserve. *Akodámas*, or silver coronets, with chain pendants, of the model worn by himself on occasions of triumph, and conferred as the last honour upon those who distinguish themselves in war or in the chase, were now presented to us, together with massive silver bracelets, accompanied by many complimentary speeches upon the issue of the expedition:—“You have slain elephants and buffaloes, and are powerful in arms against the wild beasts of which my people are afraid,” concluded the despot. “You have overwhelmed me with rifles and other delightful inventions from the countries beyond the great sea, and must receive at my hands those things which my kingdom produces, in order that they may be worn on all proper occasions. You are my brothers.”

Striped cotton robes of Abyssinian manufacture followed; and three horses with plated silver bridles were subsequently presented, which, although like other royal gifts in Shoa, of ridiculously inferior quality, were valuable as tokens of favour that are lavished upon those alone who enjoy the most exalted place in His Majesty’s estimation. They did not fail to produce the desired effect upon popular opinion; and sycophants who had before taxed us with an intention to seize the throne—to extinguish the race of Solomon, and to bring a curse upon the land by the atrocious process of burning the royal bread—now found it convenient to alter their sentiments, and to confer upon the foreign guests the

ennobling, but not very enviable, appellation of “the king’s brothers.”

The tedious fast of Hodádi, which for forty days had been observed in commemoration of Lent by every individual of the population whose age exceeded thirteen years, was now about to terminate. During the three days which are termed *kenóna*, the priests had neither eaten bread nor drunk water, but had remained in the churches singing and praying incessantly both day and night. In accordance with the practice of the primitive Church, the monarch observed total abstinence throughout this period, and on Good Friday sent me a message, “that his people would eat nothing for forty hours, but that as he knew the Gypts did not keep strong fasts, he had commanded the purveyor-general to send to the residency the usual daily supplies of bread, beer, and hydromel.”

On Easter even we were invited to the palace to witness their celebration of the royal victories, held according to immemorial custom during Passion Week. Sáhela Selássie was clad in the plainest of garments, and appeared much enfeebled and emaciated by rigorous mortification, but was in high spirits at the prospect of speedy release from the irksome penance. On this joyful occasion offerings are invariably made to the throne; and every individual of the crowd present, whether great or small, advancing in turn, contributed a mite according to his means—the wealthier bringing cotton cloths, and the more indigent, logs of wood, earthen jars, or stones of a description fitted for building.

Bands of warriors next entered the carpeted courtyard, howling the war-chorus; and after the

lapse of a few seconds, the gigantic Tunkaiye, who had earned new laurels, and been severely wounded during a recent foray against the Gentiles, dashed into the arena on horseback. Richly attired, bedizened with feathers, *sarétis*, and silver decorations, and escorted by a troop of fifty mounted retainers, he galloped up and down, recounting his valorous exploits, and pointing to the scars earned in the service of his royal master, shouted defiance to the enemies of the state.

Eighty turbaned priests, in solemn procession, next entered the court, clad in their sacerdotal vestments. Preceded by the great embroidered umbrellas of the church dedicated to Saint George, they filed slowly into the space vacated by the warriors, the holy ark being supported by antique Egyptian figures, robed in long musty-looking habiliments of chequered hues, crowned with heavy mitres, and bearing in their hands rods of green rushes, bronze bells, crosses, and censers of burning incense, with an image of the Madonna, and a crucifix; for whilst hating the Papists with all their hearts, the Abyssinians nevertheless cherish many of the superstitions and buffooneries of the church of Rome.

Having formed a semicircle before the throne, the priests, although much exhausted by their long abstinence, continued, during half an hour, to dance and chant the words of the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, “Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” A portion of the Dominical orison followed. Their united harsh voices were accompanied by the music of tambourines and kettle-drums, thumped with excessive violence, and by the jingle of the *tsnasin*, the Abyssinian timbrel. This is the *sistrum*, an

instrument supposed to be included under the Hebrew term *tzitzelem*, and being composed of a frame and moveable bars of sonorous metal, it produces sounds which can best be compared to the rattle of the poker upon the tongs.

Seven long years are passed in learning to play these instruments, which are ascribed to Saint Yareed, an Abuna under the Emperor Guebra Máskal, (i.e. “Servant of the Cross”) and the reputed inventor of church music in all its various branches. The constant practice of many hours during each day might not unreasonably be expected to lead to greater perfection than is displayed. From four in the morning until nine, in every church in the kingdom, a similar clatter and noise is maintained, for the honour of the Christian religion, not only on the Sabbath, but on all the numerous holydays and festivals throughout the twelve months. Howling and screaming are the most appropriate terms by which to express the hoarse muster of cracked and ill-modulated voices; and the band of stout priests who, by their song, nightly preserve the royal person from the influence of evil demons, must be acknowledged to have selected a right cunning stratagem by which to deter the approach of those spirits, at least, that are gifted with any musical taste.

The rehearsal of the praises and martial achievements of the reigning sovereign occupied another half hour, during which the dancing was even more energetic, and the music more boisterous than ever. Taking their seats before the throne, the priests of Saint George, fairly worn out by their exertions, at length made way for those of “our Lady,” who, after the enaction of similar absurdities, were followed in succession by those of Medhanálem, Aferbeine, and

Saint Michael, the latter distinguished by the massive embossed silver umbrella. As the united body rent the air with renewed encomiums on the royal prowess in arms, dictated to them line by line by one of the Alakas, His Majesty enquired of me whether similar ceremonies were performed before the sovereigns of Egypt during the holy institution of Lent?—whether the Coptic priesthood there were not less elegantly habited than the Abyssinian dignitaries present?—and whether the Ethiopic fasts were observed in Saint Thomas's town, as India is invariably styled by the Abyssinians, or in any other part of the Christian world?

The edifying conversation was, however, suddenly interrupted by the cessation of the priestly voices. Rising and standing on the throne, the monarch now received in succession, at the hands of the dwarf father confessor, the carved croziers of brass or silver, belonging to the numerous functionaries of the five churches, many hundreds in number; and with exemplary devoutness, he raised all in turn to his lips. With each sacred symbol of the season, was handed a rod of green rushes, and every person present followed the royal example, by wreathing a fillet about his brows, to be worn during the residue of the day. Largesses, with new silver crosses, were then presented to the several Alakas, who were invested with striped cotton robes, and charged with alms for distribution to the poor.

During this tedious process, whereof the king seemed no less heartily weary than ourselves, Tekla Mariam, the state scrivener, had been carefully extracting, from an endless succession of envelopes and dirty cotton bags and wrappers, something which he appeared equally desirous to conceal and to

disclose. Drawing me mysteriously into a dark corner, he partially revealed a rudely carved block of wood, presenting nothing very remarkable in its appearance, but evidently much-prized by the possessor. “You will have perceived,” whispered the learned man, in a scarcely audible voice—“you will doubtless have perceived that this is a fac-simile of the table of the law delivered to Moses on the Mount. It requires nothing but the Ten Commandments; and of these I have no question that you will be able to furnish me with a copy in the unknown tongue.”

Oxen, assembled for consumption in the city on the termination of the great fast, completely choked the road down from the palace. Of five hundred head brought together with this munificent design, there was not one that appeared to possess another hour of natural existence, all being diseased, and so horribly emaciated as to recall vividly to mind the aged pensioners of a Hindoo cattle asylum in the East. Many had actually died since their arrival within the enclosure, and it appeared wonderful whence so many sickening objects had been collected. Yet the liberality of the monarch was vaunted and extolled by all who were to share it; and it was unanimously declared that the fault rested solely with the public officers who had been entrusted with the royal commands.

His Majesty, who, during Passion Week, had been very regular in his vigils and attendance at divine service, passed the greater part of the night in Saint Michael’s church, and on the first crowing of the cock on Easter morning, broke his long fast. The feasting now became general. The five hundred oxen having been slaughtered, were devoured raw in the various quarters of the city; and whether in eating or in

drinking, every inhabitant appeared exerting himself to the utmost to make up as expeditiously as possible for the weary restraint that had been imposed on his appetite. Numbers were soon to be seen ranging the streets in brutal intoxication; whilst the court buffoon, at the head of a party of drunken fiddlers, made his way to the dwelling of every person of note, and recited his praises in a series of extemporaneous couplets.

According to immemorial custom, two state-prisoners were liberated from Góncho, on the occasion of these festivities; the royal clemency not however extending to any of the hapless and unoffending members of the blood-royal, who have shared the dungeon from infancy. During one week a public table is kept by the viceroy, to which the town's people of every grade resorting, drunken brawls and broken heads are diurnal occurrences. Oxen, bread, and beer, were liberally supplied, by the royal command, to the long train of worthless menials at the Residency; and in such high good humour were the priesthood, that, forgetting all their former maledictions and denunciations, they were pleased to ascribe a recent heavy fall of rain, which had proved highly beneficial to the husbandman, solely to the agency of "the king's strong strangers."

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Three.

Festivities of Easter.

Easter day, instead of being celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal

equinox, is in Abyssinia kept one lunation later. On its recurrence, we received a special invitation to the annual public banquet held in the palace; and, whilst ascending the hill in full uniform, were preceded by the capering leader of the royal band. “Let me sing—I will sing,” he exclaimed, as the attendants would have restrained his antics—“why should not the father of song dance before the fathers of gold?” Tents had been erected in the courtyard, and a separate repast provided for the members of the British Embassy. Countless crowds, decked out in their gayest apparel, filled every avenue and enclosure; and long files of slaves, with jars, baskets, and trenchers, hurrying to and fro from the kitchens and magazines, proclaimed the extensive nature of the preparations making for the regal entertainment.

In the morning at eight o’clock, the doors of the great hall were thrown open, and a burst of wild music from the royal band ushered in the company to a spacious barn-like apartment, the dingy aspect of which formed a strong contrast to the galaxy of light that illumines regal hospitality in Europe. Holding high festival to the entire adult population of the metropolis, who for six weeks past had subsisted on cow-kail and stinging-nettles, the king reclined in state within a raised alcove, furnished with the wonted velvet cushions and tapestries, and loaded with silver ornaments—the abridgement of ancient Ethiopic magnificence. Priests, nobles, warriors, baalomaals, and pages, stood around the throne, which was flanked by a long line of attendants, bearing straight silver falchions of antique Roman model, belonging to the different churches. Bull-hides carpeted the floor; and the lofty walls of the chamber, although destitute of architectural decoration, were

hung throughout with a profusion of richly-emblazoned shields, from each of which depended a velvet scarf or cloak of every colour in the rainbow.

A low horse-shoe table of wicker-work, supported upon basket pedestals, extended the entire length of the hall. Thin unleavened cakes of sour teff heaped one upon the other served as platters. Mountains of wheaten bread piled in close contiguity, and crowned with fragments of stewed fowls, covered the groaning board. Bowls containing a decoction of red pepper, onions, and grease, were flanked by long-necked decanters of old mead; and at short intervals stood groups of slaves carrying baskets crammed with reeking collops of raw flesh just severed from the newly-slain carcass.

Taking their seats in treble rows upon the ground, the crowded guests were each provided with his own knife, fashioned like a reaping-hook, and serving him equally in the battlefield and at the banquet. Four hundred voracious appetites, whetted by forty days of irksome abstinence, were constantly ministered to by fresh arrivals of quivering flesh from the courtyard, where oxen in quick succession were being thrown down and slaughtered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Barilles and capacious horns filled with hydromel of intoxicating age were rapidly drained and replenished under the eye of the monarch; and strings of eunuchs with the females pertaining to the royal kitchen, clad in gala dresses and striped cotton robes, passed and repassed continually with interminable supplies of bread to rebuild the demolished fabric on the uprising of each satiated group.

Again the great doors were thrown open, and another

famished set entered, amid the increasing din. Harpers and fiddlers played, danced, and sang with untiring perseverance; and ever and anon one of the king's female choristers lifted up her shrill voice with the most extravagant panegyric on the hospitality and munificence of her royal master, or burst forth into unqualified eulogy on the liberality of his British guests.

"In stature like the lance he bears,
His godlike mien the prince declares;
And fam'd for virtue through the land,
All bow to Sáloo's just command.

"The sabre feels the royal grasp.
And Pagans writhe in death's cold clasp;
The Galla taste the captive fare.
And dread the vengeance which they dare."

"Our warriors tremble at the sight of the mighty elephant, but he sinks prostrate beneath the guns of the white men—Weiho, weiho,

"They are a brave nation.

"We have been loaded with strange gifts, for the white men hold in their hands the keys of health and wealth —Weiho,

"They are a great nation.

"Then hail to the friends who came o'er the wide wat
Strangers and guests from a far distant land;
And welcome to Shoa, the fortune which brought her
The lords of the daring and generous hand."

The royal band, which occupied the vacant space between the tables, is composed of many wind instruments of various lengths and sizes—the *embilta* having a perforation to which the lips are applied as in the flute, whilst the *malakat* is fashioned after the form of a trombone. No performer possesses above one pipe, nor, like the Russian, is he master of more than one note. Tune there is none—each playing according to the dictates of his own taste, unguided by any musical scale. After the hoarse and terrible blast of the trumps, the symphony falls soft upon the ear; and it was on this occasion curiously contrasted with the deep thunder of the *kubbero*, which pealed without intermission from the secret apartments of the queen.

The harp, styled *bugana*, is a truly strange fabrication of wood, leather, and sheep's entrails. It presents the appearance of an old portmanteau which has been built upon by children with the rudest materials, in imitation of the lyre of the days of Jubal. Possessing five strings, and used only as an accompaniment to the voice, the monotonous notes produced are in strict unison with the appearance of the instrument; and even in the halls of Menilek, where the chords are struck by a master finger, they shed "no soul of music," and might be mute with advantage.

What then is to be said of the Abyssinian fiddle, whose squeaking voice presided at this festive board? Alas! the inharmonious sounds elicited by the grating contact of the bow might lead to the conclusion that the unhappy spirit of music was confined in the interior, and uttered harsh screams and moans as fresh tortures were inflicted upon her agonised sinews! A gourd, or a hollow square of wood, is covered with a skin of parchment as a

sounding-board, and furnished with a rude neck and a single string. Years of practice have imparted to Dághie, the court buffoon, an extraordinary degree of excellence; but even he is not Paganini; and every amateur performer in the realm considering himself at perfect liberty to scrape throughout the day with soul-harrowing perseverance, unlucky, indeed, must be pronounced the site of that residence which is adjacent to the proprietor of a *masanko*.

As Easter day drew on to its close, the riotous mirth of uncontrolled festivity waxed louder and louder within the palace walls, whilst quarrels and drunken brawls prevailed throughout the city. The carousal continued until dark, by which time the bones of three hundred and fifty steers had been picked—countless measures of wheat had been consumed—and so many hogsheads of potent old hydromel had been drained to the dregs, that, saving the royal and munificent host, scarcely one sober individual, whether noble or plebeian, was any where to be seen.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Four.

Saint George’s Day.

At Kondie, in the church dedicated to the patron saint of England, lie interred the remains of Woosen Suggud, and thither, according to wont, the despot proceeded on Saint George’s day. The sepulchre of the departed monarch is screened from gaze amid a sombre grove of evergreen juniper, assuming the shapes, some of the cedar, others of the cypress and

the yew:—

> “Dark trees still sad when others’ grief is fled,
> The only constant mourners o’er the dead.”

Kings alone are honoured with a coffin. Manufactured of sweet wood, and perforated with many apertures, it is placed on stone trestles amid clouds of frankincense, and after a season removed into the mausoleum; the walls of which are usually bedaubed with clumsy designs, intended to commemorate the exploits in the hunting field, the military actions, and the heroic achievements of the royal occupant. His Majesty’s orisons at the shrine of his father being concluded, he turned his steps to the palace, now fast falling to decay, which formed the scene of the assassination of the despotic tyrant. Surrounded by the former capital of Shoa, it occupies the bleak summit of one of the loftiest mountains in the range, and commands a magnificent prospect over the greater portion of Efát. Mamrat, now diminished from thirteen to one thousand feet, no longer loomed a giant. Through the clouds which flitted across its stern bosom lay revealed the only path by which the royal treasures are accessible; and the white peak of Wóti, rising from dense masses of timber, and terminating in a basaltic column, now formed the most conspicuous feature in the rugged landscape.

“You observe those woods,” inquired His Majesty, pointing after a long silence to the gloomy forests which stretched away towards the long white storehouses of Arámba: “they conceal a cavern into which no creature can enter and five. The man who should venture one step beyond the entrance would be seen no more. If a dog goes in, or a bird, or even a serpent, it will surely die. There is no bottom to that

cave, and none can say whither it leads. Formerly people went to cut wood in the neighbourhood. A man lost his way, and was unheard of for months. His friends believed him dead. They mourned for him, and scratched their temples, and he was forgotten. Suddenly he re-appeared, reduced to a skeleton, and looking like a ghost. They brought him to me to know what should be done with him. He had lived like the *guréza* upon wild berries, and when I asked him what he had seen, he replied that he had seen the devil. Wóti is a bad place, and the forests take fire, and all my subjects fear to go thither."

A catastrophe of this nature had recently taken place; and a quantity of fuel stored for the royal kitchen having been destroyed, it was the king's present object to ascertain the extent of damage sustained. Ayto Wolda Hana exerted his cracked voice in loud complaints of others, and so that himself escaped the much-dreaded censure, the old man evidently cared not much who suffered. Herein he was so far successful, that the sub-governor of the district was fined in the amount of one hundred dollars, about ten times the value of property destroyed, and every male inhabitant of the neighbourhood received sentence of imprisonment.

The cold summit of Kondie is clothed with heather and with the *jibera*, a lofty species of *lobelia*, which attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet. As it is believed to exert a prejudicial effect upon the passer by, and often to cause death, the royal cortege waged active war against every plant by the way-side —His Majesty in person sustaining a part in hostilities designed to counteract the evil influence. Bands of warriors charging on horseback, delivered their spears simultaneously, and the doomed tree, if not

cut over, was at least transfixed by a score of shafts. Excelling in skill, the monarch betted heavily upon every throw, and rarely did he lose. At forty yards the lance left his hand with unerring precision, and perforating the soft pulpy stem immediately below the bushy head, often passed quite through, to fall on the other side.

"Where did the commander learn to throw a spear?" he suddenly exclaimed in merry mood, elevating his voice, and looking round towards the spot on which I was taking share in the proceedings. "Now, *Gaita*," he continued, as I approached, "I will give you a mule if you hit that tree, and if you do not, by the death of Woosen Suggud you shall forfeit your best rifle." Frequent practice having rendered me tolerably expert, my first lance fortunately passed through the stem, and the second threw its crown upon the ground. His Majesty was obviously satisfied; but whilst the mule completely escaped his treacherous recollection, my "best rifle," alas! had been already doomed to change hands. It remained but a brief period in those of the lawful proprietor, and Ayto Habti, the master armourer, was to be seen the very next morning engraving on the barrel with punch and hammer certain ominous Amháric characters, signifying, "Sáhela Selássie, who is the Negoos of Shoa, Efát, and the Galla."

Hunting down the partridge with dogs occupied the residue of the day. Parties stationed themselves at intervals along the heather-grown slopes of the hills, where the bird abounds, and by dint of unceasing persecution kept the victim selected so perpetually on the wing, that after three or four long flights it was unable to rise again. Many were thus killed with sticks, or taken alive; but wherever His Majesty was

forthcoming, he rested a long double-barrelled fowling piece over the shoulder of an attendant to insure steady aim—and the wearied quarry, believing itself safe in a bush, was suddenly blown to atoms.

Northern Abyssinia was now in a more disturbed state than ever; and numerous youths who had attempted to proceed to Gondar for the purpose of being ordained, had been compelled to abandon the journey, and return to Ankóber. They brought tidings of an engagement between Ras Ali and Dedjasmach Oubié (see Note 1), which had been fought at Salem Okko, in the vicinity of Debra Tabor. The Ras being personally opposed to his rebel vassal, was believed to have fallen early in the day. His rumoured death proving the signal for disorder and retreat, the camp was left in possession of the enemy, who consigned it to the flames, under the conviction that victory was theirs. But the leader had merely fled; and as the evening closed, his partisans, recovering from their panic, rallied, and fell with irresistible fury on the victors, who were little prepared for further hostilities, and the execrated tyrant Oubié, who carries with him the curses of his oppressed subjects, was, with his two sons, made prisoner.

Abba Salama, the Abuna, who is equally respected by all parties, was in the camp of the vanquished, but the holy man found an honourable asylum. The spiritual despotism exercised by the primate from the first moment of his arrival in Abyssinia calls vividly to mind the period when the mandates of the pope were as implicitly obeyed, and his ghostly influence similarly dreaded, by the potentates of Europe; and independently of his spiritual power, which exalts him greatly above the most potent of the rulers of the land, his holiness is far from being contemptible as a

temporal prince. The hundred and eighth successor to Saint Mark the Evangelist, reclining in his humble divan within the Coptic quarters at Grand-Cairo, surrounded by the dignity of coffee and pipes, would ill recognise his juvenile delegate at Gondar, where both these luxuries are held in abomination, could he behold him in the enjoyment of revenues many times in excess of his own—ordaining a thousand priests in a single day—and receiving the homage of all the proud actors engaged in the troubled drama of Abyssinian politics.

War had not visited Shoa; but the peace of many a family was yet destined to be disturbed by an arbitrary proceeding on the part of the crown. As the period of the king's departure from the capital drew nigh, many of the royal slaves who had voluntarily sold their liberty during the great famine of Saint Luke, (each year is in Abyssinia dedicated to one of the four Evangelists, according to the order of the Gospels,) casting themselves at the footstool of the throne, implored the restoration of their freedom in consideration of many long years of servitude. Enraged at what he termed the ingratitude of those whom he had fed when they must otherwise have starved, His Majesty, labouring under a strange infatuation, bade them "begone," and, in utter defiance of all the existing laws of the realm, that day promulgated an edict through the royal herald, that from thenceforth the progeny of all his numerous slaves, whether the offspring of free fathers or of free mothers, should be accounted his sole property, and forthwith render themselves to be enrolled by his drivers, in order to have their daily task allotted.

The capital was in a state of wild confusion and consternation. Weeping and wailing resounded in

every hut, and no Abyssinian possessed sufficient courage to oppose the dictates of the angry despot. The presence of the British Embassy now proved of that salutary and commanding influence which humanity and civilisation must ever exert over barbarity and savage ignorance. Deeming the opportunity imperative, and considering the chance of success to be well worth the risk of a misunderstanding with the court, I earnestly entreated His Majesty to reflect, “that the name of Sáhela Selássie, hitherto so beloved of all, would lose a portion of its lustre and brightness. That all men are mortal. That kings do not reign for ever; and that the groans of his unhappy subjects, the props of his power and kingdom, who had heretofore lived in the enjoyment of the liberty to which they were born, but were now pining heart-broken in the thraldom of slavery, would add little to the comfort of the close of his illustrious life.”

My petition was accompanied by the enquiry, “how I should be able to represent his proceedings to the Government by which I had been sent?” and it was attended with the most satisfactory results. The king, who had still the fear of God before his eyes, avowed, “that the act had proceeded in a hurried moment of wrath, and that his European children had made him thoroughly sensible of its injustice and cruelty.” The offensive proclamation was on the instant annulled; and four thousand seven hundred unfortunate victims to its promulgation, released from the house of bondage, and from the degrading shackles of slavery, after they had renounced all hope of redemption, returned to their homes and to their families, blessing as they went the name of “the white men.”

Note 1. Dedjasmach, often contracted to Dedjach, signifies “the warrior of the door,” and is the title of governors under the puppet emperor of Ethiopia. As in the Ottoman empire the Pacha is distinguished by the number of his tails, so is the Dedjasmach by the number of his kettle-drums. He is entitled to one for each province under his control, and loses no opportunity of finding his account in the troubled waters by asserting independence.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Five.

Slavery and the Slave-Trade in Shoa.

The annals of slavery point clearly to war as the principal cause of the monstrous crime of selling our fellow-creatures like cattle in the market. One nation having taken from another a greater number of captives than could be exchanged on equal terms, it is easy to comprehend how the victors, finding the maintenance of their prisoners expensive and inconvenient, first compelled them to work for their daily bread. Emerged from the limited wants of savage life, man next saw productions of art, which he eagerly coveted; and lacking habits of industry by which to earn them for himself, he compelled all whom his superiority enabled him to bring under subjection to pass their lives in labouring for his advantage.

In Africa especially, where the human passions are unbridled, and man emulates the ferocity of the beast of prey, war proves a never-drying spring of misery and bondage, and slavery is the inevitable lot of all

who are not slain on the battlefield, or massacred in the sacking of towns and villages. The weak and unsuccessful warrior, who sues for mercy beneath the uplifted spear of his opponent, purchases existence at the expense of liberty; and in time of famine the freeman often becomes a voluntary slave, in order to avoid the greater calamity of inevitable starvation. By the philosophic and reflecting mind death would doubtless be esteemed the lighter evil of the two, but the untutored savage, fainting with hunger, thinks with Esau of old, “Behold, I am at the point to die—what profit shall this birthright do to me?”

Crime, necessity, insolvency, the inhumanity of a harsh creditor, a spirit of retaliation in petty disputes, and the sordid love of gain, for which parents will even sell their own children, severally assist in feeding the demand for slaves—the law of every African state either tolerating or directly sanctioning the evil; and wherever the Mohammadan faith prevails, frequent predatory incursions, characterised by the most atrocious violence, are made into the territories of all neighbouring infidels, who are systematically hunted down and entrapped as a religious duty.

Slaves in Africa are thus in proportion to the freemen of about three to one; but although the number of individuals reduced to a state of bondage by the operation of the above causes, and the destruction created, both as regards life and property, is immense, the whole combined are but as a single grain of dust in the balance, when compared with the slavery, the destitution, and the desolation, that is daily entailed by the unceasing bloody struggles betwixt state and state. Towns and villages are then

obliterated from the face of the earth, and thousands upon thousands of the population, of whatever age or sex, are hurried into hopeless captivity.

In a country reft into ten thousand petty governments, the majority of which are independent and jealous one of the other; where every freeman, inured to arms from the first hour that he is capable of bearing them, pants for an opportunity of displaying his valour in the field; where the cherished recollection of hereditary feuds; the love of plunder inherent in every savage breast, and the bigoted zeal of religious enthusiasts, all conspire to afford hourly pretexts for war—the sword of desolation is never suffered to rust within the scabbard. The fact of one nation being stronger than another is even sufficient; and whilst hostilities, originating frequently in the most frivolous provocations, are prosecuted with relentless fury, robbery on a great and national scale, forming one of the chief features of African character, is almost universally prevalent. Here it is perpetrated by no concealed or proscribed ruffian; neither is it limited to those poorer tribes who are exposed to the temptation of rich caravans skirting their borders in progress to distant lands. Each needy soldier seeks with his sword to redress the unequal distribution made by the hand of fortune. The most distinguished warrior chieftains consider it a glory to place themselves at the head of an expedition undertaken solely for purposes of plunder; and the crime of stealing human beings in order to sell them into foreign markets, which, with all its attendant cruelty, is so widely practised throughout the benighted continent, is one in which the greatest of her sovereigns do not hesitate to participate.

The following narrative by a native of the village of

Súppa, in Enárea, detailing the history of his capture and subsequent vicissitudes, may be taken as a fair specimen of the usual circumstances attending the transfer of the kidnapped victim from one merciless dealer to another, in his progress to Abyssinia through the interior provinces which form the focus of slavery in the north-east.

"When twenty years of age, whilst tending my father's flocks, an armed band of the Ooma Galla, with whom my tribe had long been in enmity, swept suddenly down, and took myself with six other youths prisoners, killing four more who resisted. Having been kept bound hand and foot during five days, I was sold to the Toomee Galla, one of the nearest tribes, for thirty *ámoles* (about six shillings and three-pence sterling). The bargain was concluded in the Toomee market-place, which is called Sundáffo, where, in consequence of the dearness of salt, two male slaves are commonly bought for one dollar; and after nightfall, the Mohammadan rover by whom I had been purchased, came and took me away.

"Having been kept bound in his house another week, I was taken two days' journey with a large slave Caravan, and sold privately to the Nono Galla for a few ells of blue calico. My companions in captivity were assorted according to their age and size, and walked in double file, the stout and able-bodied only, whereof I was one, having their hands tied behind them. In Meegra, the market-place of the Nono, I was, after six weeks' confinement, sold by public auction to the Gumbitchu Galla for forty pieces of salt (value eight shillings and fourpence). Thence I was taken to the market-place which is beyond Sequala, on the plain of the Háwash, and sold for seventy pieces of salt to the Soddo Galla, and immediately

afterwards to Roqué, the great slave-mart in the Yerrur district, where I was sold for one hundred *ámoles*" being one pound sterling.

"From Roqué I was driven to Alio Amba, in Shoa, where a Mohammadan subject of Sáhela Selássie purchased me in the market of Abd el Russool for twelve dollars; but after three months, my master falling into disgrace, the whole of his property was confiscated, and I became the slave of the Negoos, which I still am, although permitted to reside with my family, and only called upon to plough, reap, and carry wood. Exclusive of halts, the journey from my native village occupied fifteen days. I was tolerably fed, and not maltreated. All the merchants through whose hands I passed were Mohammadans; and until within a few stages of Alio Amba, I was invariably bound at night, and thus found no opportunity to escape. Prior to my own enslavement, I had been extensively engaged as a kidnapper, and in this capacity had made party in three great slave hunts into the country of the Doko negroes beyond Cáffa; in the course of which, four thousand individuals of both sexes were secured."

From Enárea and Guráguê, the two slave-marts principally frequented by the dealers in human flesh who trade through the Abyssinian states, the traffic is conducted to the sea-coast *viâ* Sennaar, Argóbba, Aussa, and Hurrur—importations into Shoa passing through the kingdom by two great highways from the interior. The first is by Ankóber to the market-place of Abd el Russool, where purchases are eagerly made by the caravan traders from Hurrur, Zeyla, and Tajúra; the other by Debra Libanos to the market of Antzóchia adjoining Asselléli, the frontier town on the north, whence they pass through Upper Abyssinia to

Massowah and Raheïta, supplying also the Aussa caravans, which come to Dowwé, on the frontier of Worra Káloo.

In addition to a tax of one in every ten, Sáhela Selássie possesses the right of pre-emption of all slaves that pass through his dominions, his governors selecting and submitting for the royal approval those which appear best worthy of consideration, when a price placed by the holder on the head of each is modified by His Majesty at pleasure. A transit duty of four pieces of salt is further levied upon every individual, male or female, of whatever age, exposed for sale or barter; and the number annually exported by the roads above named being estimated at from fifteen to twenty thousand, the revenues derived from the traffic in his fellow-men by the Christian monarch may be averaged at eight hundred pounds.

His Majesty's household slaves, male and female, exceed eight thousand. Of the latter, three hundred are concubines of the royal harem; and of the former, fifty are eunuchs. The residue of both sexes are employed in a variety of servile offices, and they each receive a portion of barley sufficient to compose two small loaves. Beyond this they must provide their own maintenance: many whose business it is to fetch fuel from the royal forests, being, however, suffered to dispose of whatever wood they can carry away in addition to the load imposed; whilst the whole, after the due performance of their allotted task, are permitted, according to their respective functions, to hire themselves to private individuals.

Slavery is hereditary, not only on the side of the mother, but also on that of the father; and if a free

woman weds a slave, her progeny becomes the property of the owner of her husband. But the bondsmen of the king, it has been seen, form an exception to this rule, their offspring being free if born of a free woman—a privilege which may be traced to the circumstance of the royal slaves having a stated duty to perform, for which a certain daily allowance of food is granted; whereas the whole time and labour of the slave of the commoner are at the exclusive disposal of the master, who supports the wife also. Marriage between free persons and the slaves of His Majesty are thus by no means unfrequent; the bondsman, after the performance of his allotted task, enjoying liberty to return daily to his family, and to appropriate the residue of his time.

A child born in slavery receives subsistence, in a limited proportion, from the moment of coming into the world, the liabilities of bondage being incurred from the cradle. As a check on those who reside with a free parent in various parts of the kingdom, an annual census of the whole is taken by the royal scribes, when those who are ascertained to have acquired a competent age are summoned to their task at one of the royal establishments; and it too often happens that when incapacitated by infirmity from further labour, the daily dole is discontinued through the parsimony of the servants of the crown.

Caravans, consisting of from one hundred to three thousand individuals of all ages, pass through Shoa during the greater portion of the year. Three-fourths are young boys and girls, many of them quite children, whose tender age precludes a sense of their condition. Even adults are unfettered, and the majority are in good spirits, all being well fed and taken care of, although many of both sexes arrive in

a state of perfect nudity. Surrounded by the rovers on horseback, they are driven promiscuously along the road, males and females being separated at the termination of each march, and made to sit in detached groups comprising from ten to fifteen souls, who are deterred from wandering by the exhibition of the whip; but this is rarely used, except for the chastisement of the unruly, who may seek to effect their escape.

In the eyes of every African, the value of a slave increases in the ratio of his distance from the land of his nativity, the chance of his absconding being reduced in the same proportion. The usual prices in the Shoan market are from ten to twenty German crowns; but females possessing superior personal attractions often fetch from fifty to eighty, which outlay is returned three-fold in Arabia. The profits accruing from the trade are thus obviously large; and notwithstanding the murders which are annually perpetrated by freebooters on the road to the sea-coast, the mortality can scarcely be said to exceed that under the ordinary circumstances of African life.

The hebdomadal sale of human flesh which takes place in the public market at Abd el Russool, the disgusting parade of victims, and the sensuality of the savage purchasers, are sufficient to draw forth every sentiment of indignation, and to elicit every feeling of sympathy; but it must be confessed that slavery in this portion of Africa, excepting as regards the powers pertaining to it, is in fact little more than servitude. The newly-captured become soon reconciled to their lot and condition, their previous domestic life having too often been one of actual bondage, although not nominally so. And even in the sultry plains of the Adaïel, few individuals of the long

droves that are daily to be seen on their weary march to the coast with Danákil caravans, afford indications of being tortured with regret at the loss of their freedom, and of their native land, or with recollections of the verdant plains whence avarice and cruelty have torn them.

From the governor to the humblest peasant, every house in Shoa possesses slaves of both sexes, in proportion to the wealth of the proprietor; and in so far as an opinion may be formed upon appearances, their condition, with occasional, but rare exceptions, is one of comfort and ease. Mild in its character, their bondage is tinctured with none of the horrors of West Indian slavery. The servitude imposed is calculated to create neither suffering nor exhaustion. There is no merciless taskmaster to goad the victim to excessive exertion—no “white man’s scorn” to be endured; and, although severed from home, from country, and from all the scenes with which his childhood had been familiar, his lot is not unfrequently improved. Naturalised in the house of his master, he is invariably treated with lenity—usually with indulgence —often with favour; and under a despotic sovereign, to whom servile instruments are uniformly the most agreeable, the caprices of fortune may prefer the exile to posts of confidence and emolument, and may even exalt him to the highest dignities.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Six.

Introduction of Slavery into Abyssinia.

Although the history of North-eastern Africa is very

imperfectly recorded, it is certain that Carthage, Egypt, and Ethiopia, early acquired and long maintained a prevailing influence therein. The Carthaginians possessed themselves of nearly the whole of the northern portion, whilst the Egyptians and Ethiopians occupied the east to the very centre. The extension of these great empires tended considerably to limit the trade in human flesh, and the world being in feud in every quarter, needed not to be supplied with slaves from Africa.

But this aspect of affairs was materially altered so soon as these three empires, losing their power, became subdivided into sundry governments, the diffusion of Christianity and civilisation in Europe and Asia meanwhile restricting the slave-trade to the African continent. Although not generally representing the character which their name implies, the Christians of the Occident and Orient had at least given up the system amongst themselves; and by the former especially it was very little practised until after the discovery of America, when it was revived and encouraged by the Spaniards; and the Negro being considered better fitted for hard labour than the aborigines of the New World, Africa began to be regarded as the slave-mart for the whole universe. About the same period Ethiopia was first invaded by numberless hordes of Pagan Galla, migrating from the south; and not long afterwards Graan, the fanatic Mohammadan enemy, commenced the overthrow of this then powerful empire, which was speedily dismembered, and has never since been able to regain its former limits.

The heathen intruders soon relaxing in their united efforts against the Christians, those Galla tribes which had settled on Abyssinian ground began to

contest among themselves for the supremacy over the newly-acquired territory, and to enslave each other. The Mohammadans, who had meanwhile gained a footing in the disturbed country, being slave-dealers by profession, greedily availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by these intestine divisions to trade in Pagan prisoners, females especially, who possess the recommendation of superior personal attractions to the generality of "Afric's dark daughters"—and thus the traffic spread rapidly around Abyssinia. Partly from fear of then enemies, and partly from being less interested in slavery than the Moslems, the Christians no longer ventured beyond the frontiers of the country they retained, and the avenues to the sea-coast, as well as those through the Galla tribes in the interior, thus fell together with the whole commerce into the hands of the bigoted disciples of the Prophet. They devoted their lives to the purchase and sale of human flesh, a trade with which they connected the propagation of their faith, and their market was ever supplied by the out-pouring of innumerable prisoners of war from the distant nations of the interior.

The origin of the slave-trade in these quarters may thus be referred to the commencement of hostilities therein, and to the presence of Mohammadans, by whom it was fostered and encouraged. Grain and cattle excepted, the wild and greedy Galla possessed not a single commodity to barter for the alluring foreign wares exhibited by the rover, but his captured foe presented the ready means of supplying whatsoever he coveted. The empire of Abyssinia being dismembered and enfeebled by the tide of invasion, its rulers, far from seeking to crush the hostilities that prevailed among the Gentiles, naturally

rejoiced to see intestine feuds raging throughout a nation, which, if united, could have swept away the small remnant of Ethiopic power, once so predominant.

The Christians, moreover, had become so corrupted by evil example, that, in lieu of opposing a barrier to the advance of slavery, they shortly adopted and encouraged the debasing traffic. Those provinces especially which were separated from the principal seat of government not only afforded a market to numbers of Pagan prisoners, but extended to the dealer in slaves a safe road by which thousands were annually exported to Arabia; and Shoa, Efát, Guráguê, and Cambát, the southernmost provinces of Abyssinia, having more especially suffered at the hands of the Galla hordes, it is not difficult to understand how, in a confused political and ecclesiastical state of things, the detestation entertained towards their heathen persecutors prompted the population to purchase as drudges those of their enemies who had been captured in war.

When the rulers of Shoa began to extend their dominions, and to subdue the nearer tribes of Galla invaders, Christianity was propagated by the sword; but the Mohammadan traders, far from being checked or arrested in their dealings, were only induced to extend their traffic to more remote regions of north-eastern Africa. Instead of purchasing slaves at Ankóber, as had been their wont when that capital was still in Pagan hands, they were compelled, after its recapture, to seek their victims in Guráguê, and beyond. Those provinces of Abyssinia wherein the seat of government was established after the demolition of the Ethiopic empire, preserved more or

less of their ancient customs, which sanctioned the enslavement of a captured enemy for the term of seven years, according to the Mosaic law; and the practice is to the present day retained in Gojam and Tigré—the inhabitants of these states neither buying nor selling slaves, but consigning to a few years of bondage all prisoners from the wild tribes of Shankela taken in war.

The enslavement of this heathen people, who are often barbarously hunted down for sport, is defended upon the grounds that so fierce, swarthy, and bestial a race, existing in the rudest possible form of savage state, must be the accursed of mankind, and entirely beyond the pale of natural rights. But the Christians of Western and Northern Abyssinia condemn this opinion of their brethren in the south and east; and Tekla Georgis, the late emperor of Gondar, having catechised a number of Shoan ecclesiastics as to the reason of their countenancing slavery and slave polygamy, reprobated both proceedings in the severest terms.

The separation of Shoa from the imperial sway of Northern Abyssinia, by the Galla invasion, was, as may be supposed, far from improving the morals of the people. The first rulers of Shoa, aspiring to ascendency over all the minor independent principalities, were fain to tolerate a variety of abuses which had crept into the Abyssinian church during the reign of anarchy, confusion, and barbarism; and, however well they might have felt inwardly disposed to work the reformation of their subjects, they durst not, in the infancy of their power, attempt the suppression of a custom to which the entire population of the subjugated districts were so strongly wedded. Moreover, they had begun to follow

the example of the Gondar dynasty in respect to the hospitable entertainment by the crown of all foreigners and strangers; to which end a large establishment being indispensable for the preparation of the daily maintenance styled “dirgo,” they considered that the manual labour could better be performed by slaves selected from among the thousands that annually passed through their dominions than by their own free subjects.

The parsimony of their national character also doubtless favoured this introduction of slavery as a domestic institution. The sovereign was above all things desirous of acquiring a reputation for munificence without actually impairing the state revenues; and he felt anxious at the same time to pave the road to popularity by relieving his subjects of that drudgery which would have led to an aversion towards visitors, highly inimical to the royal interests. All despotic rulers are prone to greater confidence in the slave than in the freeman; and Abyssinian sophistry probably led the first kings of Shoa to argue, that hospitality extended towards strangers and pilgrims in the land would vindicate in the sight of Heaven the infliction of bitter bondage upon those who at that period, even more than at the present day, were execrated and abhorred.

The unceasing wars, wherein the feudal subjects of Shoa were personally engaged, being unfavourable for agricultural pursuits, they were not slow in imitating the example set by their monarch, as well in household slavery as in slave polygamy. Both king and people believed that the wretch exported from Africa was destined to Christian countries beyond the seas, where the truths of the Gospel would be imparted to him; and hence the slaveholder in Shoa,

although prohibited from dealing in the flesh and blood of his fellow-creatures as a trade, was permitted to resell Mohammadan or Pagan purchases, who refused to embrace the religion of Ethiopia.

Slavery amongst the Galla tribes is cradled and nursed in the unceasing intestine feuds of that savage and disorganised people; but the circumstances attending its existence in Guráguê, although resting upon the same basis, are somewhat different in character. Since the period that the heathen inroads first cut off that Christian country from the ancient Ethiopic empire, and foes begirt it on all sides like wild beasts prowling for their prey, it has been thrown into a position of peculiar misfortune, and would gladly seek repose by placing itself again under the protection of its legitimate sovereign. For this boon it has often applied to Sáhela Selássie; but from motives of prudence he has not chosen to extend either his visits or his authority beyond the frontier village of Aiméllele.

Occupying about one and a half degree of longitude, by one degree of latitude, and swarming with population, Guráguê is at this moment in a state similar to Palestine of old, whereof the Scripture saith, “There was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” In the absence of a supreme head, each village or community elects its own temporary governor, who is perpetually removed by the cabals and caprice of the people. Whilst the Galla make constant predatory inroads from without, anarchy reigns within. A multitude of private feuds animate the turbulent population; and there being neither king nor laws, it is not surprising that every man should stretch forth his hand to

kidnap his neighbour. Among the southern portions especially, in the domicile or in the open street, the stronger seizes upon the weaker as his bondsman, and sells him to the greedy Mohammadan dealers, who hover round like a host of hungry vultures, and are ever at hand with their glittering gewgaws; the innate love of which induces brother to sell sister, and the parent to carry her own offspring to the market.

Annually pouring out many thousands of her sons and daughters in every direction, this wretched Christian province, a prey to lawless violence, and the theatre of every monstrous and detestable crime, cries aloud for the intervention of the philanthropist. Guráguê is the very hotbed of slavery in Eastern Africa, north of the equator; and it claims the earnest attention of all who are interested in the suppression of the evil. None of the surrounding countries would seem to be unvitiated by the baneful influence of the slave-trade; and all are sunk in the lowest and most grovelling superstition. Susa, Korchássie, Wollámo, Cambát, with every other isolated principality once appended to the ancient empire, although still professing the mild tenets of the Christian faith, take an active part in the capture and sale of their fellow-savages. Villages are fired, and the inhabitants seized as they fly in terror from the flames that envelope their wigwams; and the aged and the infirm are butchered, because unfit for drudgery. The new-born babe is torn from its parent in the hour of its birth to be ruthlessly immolated at the shrine of the idol; and the shores of Lake Umo are white with the bleaching bones of hapless female victims, who have been selected from the drove for their superior charms, and have been launched into its depths by the superstitious Moslem slave-driver, to propitiate

the genius of the water!

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Seven.

Operation of Legitimate Commerce upon the Slave-Trade in North-Eastern Africa.

A review of the nature and actual extent of slavery in Christian Abyssinia, where the exile is sold and purchased—of the circumstances attending his loss of liberty in the countries whence he is stolen and exported—and of the various causes and passions that conspire to favour the continuance of the internal commerce in human flesh—leads naturally to the consideration of the remedy. This is no new subject. It is one which has been illustrated by the eloquence of British senators, and by the pen of many private philanthropists, who have devoted their energies to the restitution of the lost rights of man, and have sought, under God's blessing, to dry up the baneful springs that for so many ages have filled to overflowing the fountain of African misery.

Bondage has been shown to arise in wars and intestine feuds, and to be nurtured by evil passions, by avarice, and by worldly interest. The excitement and delight of the foray, the surprise, and the captivity which follows, are by all tribes in Africa regarded as the highest themes of their glory. The gratification of power, sensuality, and revenge, are difficult of eradication; and the easy though infamous acquisition of property, is a permanent incentive to violence of all kinds. The interests, also, by which the diabolical and debasing traffic is supported are not

those of a few individuals. It is interwoven with the government, the commerce, the wants, and the revenues of many nations. The tribe that mourns to-day the loss of its young men and maidens, is ready on the morrow with heart and hand to carry on amongst others the work of captivity; and the victor of one hour may be vanquished the next. The kings and rulers of the land profit by the transit of slave caravans through their dominions—the countries all derive gain from the inhuman barter—the intermediate clans have each their share in the traffic —the merchant on the sea-coast drives a most profitable trade—and the lazy Arab to whom the wretched beings are finally consigned, has existed too long in a state of utter indolence and inactivity, willingly to assist himself many of the ordinary laborious avocations of life.

Commerce being a school for the improvement of nations, it may safely be anticipated that the important treaty concluded by Great Britain with the king of Shoa will tend to the temporal and intellectual advancement of the now ignorant and degraded natives of the north-eastern interior, in proportion to the extent of their intercourse with enlightened Europeans. The supply of foreign manufactures, which the African deems indispensable, has always been, and still is, exclusively in the hands of Mohammadan merchants, declared slave-dealers, who will receive human beings only in exchange for their wares. A strong inducement to the continuance of the traffic will therefore be removed by the visits of men whose tacit example, without any declamation against slavery, cannot fail to have a beneficial influence upon untutored races, who have hitherto been taught and compelled to believe that their wants

cannot be supplied unless through the medium of the barter of their fellow-creatures. The restoration of tranquillity to the provinces, which can alone be effected by a legal trade, must have the important result of putting an end to the exportation of slaves, which is here liable not only to the same objections as on the western coast, but to the still greater evil, that the victims carried away are chiefly Christians, who inevitably lose in Arabia not only their liberty but also their religion.

The Mohammadan dealer being solely dependent for his supply of European manufactures on the brokers located in various parts of the coast—keen, artful, and rapacious Banians—he must speedily be driven from the market by the British merchant, who will at the same time create numberless new wants, to satisfy which the native will be goaded to industrious habits. The majority, both of people and rulers, will soon be enabled to comprehend the disadvantage of a trade which swallows up the flower of the population; and will open their eyes to the fact, that temporal wealth, far from being diminished, as they now believe, by the operation of such a measure, would in reality be much augmented. They will at the same time perceive that the regular supply of European trinkets, so inestimable in their eyes, depends in a principal measure upon the tranquillity of the country; and since slaves are no longer in demand as an article of barter, they will generally be better disposed to permit and to bring about that state of peace and quietude which is so essential to mercantile pursuits.

An entrance to countries now only accessible by means of commerce, and at the pace of a merchant caravan, will thus be afforded, and a friendly

understanding established, which may be expected to pave the way to the introduction of more effectual measures towards decreasing the supply of slaves in the quarters whence they are derived. European commerce conveying the strongest tacit argument against the traffic in human flesh, so long the staple business of all, must favour the speedy formation of advantageous treaties with many native chiefs for its entire suppression within their dominions—treaties which could not be proposed without prejudice so long as the slave-trade, deeply rooted, continues so intimately connected with the habits, pursuits, and interests of the whole population. Time is of course requisite to bring about the consummation desired to mercantile enterprise. The avarice of some of the more ignorant and degraded potentates may long induce them to retain the emoluments arising from the sale of their subjects, notwithstanding the more than equivalent revenues afforded by legitimate transit duties; but as establishments which are now fostered and fattened on the hotbed of slavery become gradually extinguished, the nefarious traffic cannot fail, in equal proportion, to disappear before the golden wand of commerce.

In all those interior countries to the south, whence slaves are principally drawn, the mass of the miserable population would hail the advent of European intervention, towards the preservation of their liberty. The Christian would find repose beneath the treaty concluded by the white man, and the wild Galla would cease to have an interest in the continual hostilities which now supply the market with human beings.

It might reasonably be conjectured, that if it be practicable to conclude an anti-slavery treaty with any

African ruler, it must be especially so with one professing the tenets of the Christian faith, and who may thus be supposed capable of receiving moral arguments—with a despot whose every will is law, who is guided chiefly by avarice and by self-interest, and who considers that the importation of slaves has a tendency to introduce heathenish ceremonies among his subjects. Sáhela Selássie is already fully sensible of the possibility of dispensing with slavery as a domestic institution, by the adoption of European machinery, and of the practice of other Abyssinian states, where money is dispensed to the visitor in lieu of *dirgo*, or daily maintenance. His superstitions may be worked upon with the best effect by the fear of entailing the curses and imprecations of many thousand enslaved fellow-creatures who annually pass through his dominions; and his eyes have been opened to the fact, that the whole of these wretched beings become converts to Mohammadanism—a faith upon which every Abyssinian looks down with abhorrence. The same voice that at European intercession commanded the release of many hundred Galla prisoners of war, could at once order the abrogation of domestic slavery within the kingdom; but its abolition before the establishment of British commerce shall have rendered His Majesty independent of the slave-dealing Adaïel would be delusive. It would do harm instead of doing good; and whilst it led to little actual reduction of human misery, it would arouse the worst passions of the entire surrounding Mohammadan population. For Shoa is at this moment solely dependent upon the Danákil trader, not only for every description of foreign merchandise, but also for salt, which here constitutes the chief circulating medium of the realm; and the first inducement to the importation

of this indispensable commodity, is found in the great profits derived from the traffic in slaves purchased at Abd el Russool.

In Shoa, too, every Christian subject is more or less interested in the continuance of slave importations; and notwithstanding that the trammels of the despot, who receives unbounded homage, render each in fact a bondsman, he is in no danger of being kidnapped and driven into slavery. No one would dare to disobey the royal fiat; but, involving as it must great personal hardship to all, it could not fail to be attended with universal loss of popularity to the monarch. No such difficulty would attend the formation of a treaty of suppression in the northern provinces of Christian Abyssinia, where slavery in the true acceptation of the term has no existence, excepting in so far as it is carried on by the Moslem traders, of whom both ruler and people are comparatively independent. Thus in Gondar and Tigré, where domestic slavery is neither practised nor advocated by prince or subject, the external traffic might readily be crushed, and with the greatest advantage, through the friendly sentiments entertained by the present patriarch.

The spiritual influence exerted by Abba Salama over the mind of all classes, high as well as low—the spell by which he holds his supreme power—is acknowledged by every province, however remote, which constitutes a remnant of the ancient Ethiopic empire. Access to hitherto sealed portions of the interior, by which the objects of humanity would not less be forwarded than those of commerce, science, and geography, can thus readily be obtained through his assistance. They offer gold in return for the blessings of Christianity and civilisation, and are

believed to be accessible also from the coast of the Indian ocean. But it ought not to be forgotten in England, that, independently of other considerations, the surest hopes of working any favourable change in the present degraded state of the Abyssinian church, or of substantially promoting the views of philanthropy in Ethiopia Proper, must be considered to rest solely upon the good feeling, the potent influence, and the professed assistance of his holiness the Abuna, and that one better disposed is not likely ever to fill the episcopal throne at Gondar.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Eight.

Commerce with the Eastern Coast of Africa.

The highlands included betwixt Abyssinia and the equator are unquestionably among the most interesting regions in Africa, whether viewed with reference to their climate, their soil, their productions, or their population. When the Ethiopic empire extended its sway over the greater part of the eastern horn, they doubtless supplied myrrh and frankincense to the civilised portions of the globe, together with the “sweet cane,” mentioned by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, as being brought “from a far country.” The slave caravan still affords a limited outlet to their rich produce; but the people, ignorant and naturally indolent, are without protection, and they possess no stimulus to industry. Vice alone flourishes amongst them, and their fair country forms the very hotbed of the slave-trade. Hence arise wars and predatory violence, and hence the injustice and oppression which sweep the fields with desolation, bind in fetters

the sturdy children of the soil, and cover the population with every sorrow, “with lamentation, and mourning, and woe.” It has already been remarked, that in early times, as early probably as the days of Moses, the authority of Egypt extended deep into the recesses of Africa, and there is reason to believe, at later dates, far into those countries to the southward of Abyssinia which are accessible from the shores of the Indian Ocean. The eastern coast, from beyond the Straits of Bab el Mandeb, in all probability as far south as Sofala, the Ophir of Solomon, was well-known to the enterprising merchants of Tyre, and to the sovereigns of Judea. In still later periods, the conquering Arabs, when they had become followers of the false prophet, extended their sway over all this coast as far as the twenty-fifth degree of south latitude. The remains of their power, of their comparative civilisation, and of their religion, are found throughout to the present day; and notwithstanding that their rule had greatly declined when the Portuguese first landed on this part of Africa, four hundred years ago, it was still strong and extensive, and constant commercial intercourse was maintained with India.

No portion of the continent has, however, excited less modern interest than the eastern coast; owing perhaps to the extreme jealousy with which the Portuguese have guarded its approach, and withheld the limited information gained since the days of Vasco de Gama. The illiberal spirit of their government, both civil and ecclesiastic, has had the natural effect of degrading those maritime tribes placed in immediate juxta-position with the white settlers, and of effectually repelling the more spirited and industrious inhabitants of the highlands, whose

prudence and independence have baffled attempted inroads. Many a fair seat of peace and plenty, vitiated by the operation of the slave-trade, has been converted into a theatre of war and bloodshed; and the once brilliant establishments reared by the lords of India and Guinea, now scarcely capable of resisting the attacks of undisciplined barbarians, here, as elsewhere, exhibit but the wreck and shadow of their former vice-regal splendour.

Although free to all nations, the eastern coast, from Sofala to Cape Guardufoi, has in later years been little frequented by any, save the enterprising American, whose star-spangled banner is often found in parts where others would not deign to traffic; and who, being thus the pioneer through untried channels to new countries, reaps the lucrative harvest which they are almost sure to afford. English ships from India have occasionally visited the southern ports for cargoes of ivory and ambergris, but, in the absence of any rival, the Imam of Muscat is now, with his daily increasing territories, fast establishing a lucrative monopoly from Mombás and Zanzibar.

In most of the interior countries lying opposite to this coast, to the south of Shoa, the people unite with an inordinate passion for trinkets and finery, a degree of wealth which must favour an extensive sale of European commodities. In Enárea, Cáffa, Guráguê, Koocha, and Susa, especially, glass-ware, false jewellery, beads, cutlery, blue calico, long cloth, chintz, and other linen manufactures, are in universal demand. That their wants are neither few nor trifling may be satisfactorily ascertained, from the fact that the sum of 96,000 pounds sterling, the produce of the slave-trade from the ports of Bérbera, Zeyla, Tajúra, and Massowah, is only one item of the total amount

annually invested in various foreign goods and manufactures, which are readily disposed of even at the present price of the monopolist; who being generally a trader of very limited capital, may be concluded to drive an extremely hard bargain for his luxurious wares.

It would be idle to speculate upon the hidden treasures that may be in store for that adventurous spirit who shall successfully perform the quest into these coy regions—for time and enterprise can alone reveal them. But it is notorious that gold and gold dust, ivory, civet, and ostrich-feathers, peltries, spices (see Note 1), wax, and precious gums, form a part of the lading of every slave caravan, notwithstanding that a tedious transport over a long and circuitous route presents many serious difficulties; and that the overreaching disposition of the Indian Banian and of the Arab merchant, who principally divide the spoils on the coast of Abyssinia, offer a very far from adequate reimbursement for the toil and labour of transportation.

No quarter of the globe abounds to a greater extent in vegetable and mineral productions than tropical Africa. The extent to which it contributed to the trade of antiquity has been ably investigated by Mr J.A. Saint John, in his learned enquiry into the manners and customs of ancient Greece (volume 3, chapter 13). In the populous, fertile, and salubrious portions lying immediately north of the equator, the very highest capabilities are presented for the employment of capital, and the development of British industry.

Coal has already been found, although at too great a distance inland to render it of any service without water communication; but we may reasonably infer

that it exists in positions more favourable for the supply of the steamers employed in the navigation of the Red Sea; and I received the most positive assurances that it is to be obtained within a reasonable distance of Massowah. Cotton of excellent quality grows wild, and might be cultivated to any extent. The coffee which is sold in Arabia as the produce of Mocha is chiefly of wild African growth; and that species of the tea-plant which is used by the lower orders of the Chinese, flourishes so widely and with so little care, that the climate to which it is indigenous would doubtless be found well adapted for the higher-flavoured and more delicate species so prized for foreign exportation.

Every trade must be important to Great Britain which will absorb manufactured goods and furnish raw material in return. Mercantile interests on the eastern coast might therefore quickly be advanced by increasing the wants of the natives, and then instructing them in what manner those wants may be supplied, through the cultivated productions of the soil. The present is the moment at which to essay this; and so promising a field for enterprise and speculation ought not to be neglected. The position of the more cultivated tribes inland, the love of finery displayed by all, the climate, the productions, the capabilities, the presumed navigable access to the interior, the contiguity to British Indian possessions, and the proximity of some of the finest harbours in the world, all combine inducements to the merchant, who, at the hands even of the rudest nation, may be certain of a cordial welcome.

If, at a very moderate calculation, a sum falling little short of 100,000 pounds sterling can be annually invested in European goods to supply the wants of

some few of the poorer tribes adjacent to Abyssinia; and if the tedious and perilous land journey can be thus braved with profit to the native pedlar, what important results might not be anticipated from well-directed efforts, by such navigable access as would appear to be promised by the river Gochob? The throwing into the very heart of the country now pillaged for slaves a cheap and ample supply of the goods most coveted, must have the effect of excluding the Mohammadan rover, who has so long preyed upon the sinews of the people; and this foundation judiciously built upon by the encouragement of cultivation in cotton and other indigenous produce, might rear upon the timid barter of a rude people the superstructure of a vast commerce.

At a period when the attention of the majority of the civilised world, and of every well-wisher to the more sequestered members of the great family of mankind, is so energetically directed towards the removal of the impenetrable veil that hangs before the interior, and fosters in its dark folds the most flagrant existing sin against nature and humanity, it could not fail to prove eminently honourable to those who, by a well-directed enterprise, should successfully overcome the obstacles hitherto presented by the distance, the climate, and the barbarity of the continent of Africa. But lasting fame, and the admiration of after-ages, are not the only rewards extended by the project. A rich mercantile harvest is assuredly in store for those who shall unlock the portals of the Eastern coast, and shall spread navigation upon waters that have heretofore been barren.

Note 1. Ginger is exported in great quantities from

Guráguê; and amongst other indigenous spices, the *kurárima*, which combines the flavour of the caraway with that of the cardamom.

Volume Three—Chapter Thirty Nine.

Navigation of the River Gochob.

To put down the foreign slave-trade, without first devising honest occupation for a dense, idle, and mischievous population of Africa, would seal the death-warrant of every captive who, under the present system, is preserved as saleable booty. Hence it must be admitted, that to inculcate industry and to extend cultivation by voluntary labour, are indispensable stepping-stones towards the ultimate amelioration of a people who do not at present possess the elements for extended commerce. To create these would be to change the destinies of the Negro, by including him within the league of the rights of man; and habits of industry must rapidly raise him from savage ignorance to that state of improvement which is essential to fit him for the privileges of a freeman.

The present very limited exports of this immensely populous continent, which do not amount in value to those of Cuba, with only twelve hundred thousand inhabitants, must be reckoned among the chief causes of her misery and thraldom. Few, if any, of the commodities bartered with other nations are the production of capital, labour, or industry, and in the minds of the whole population the ideas of prosperity and of a slave-trade are inseparable. But if all that is

coveted could be placed within honest reach, in exchange for the produce of the soil, the hands which should cultivate it will never afterwards be sold.

“Legitimate commerce,” writes Sir Fowell Buxton, “would put down the slave-trade, by demonstrating the superior value of man as a labourer on the soil, to man as an object of merchandise. If conducted on wise and equitable principles, it might be the precursor, or rather the attendant, of civilisation, peace, and Christianity to the unenlightened, warlike, and heathen tribes, who now so fearfully prey upon each other to support the slave-markets of the New World; and a commercial system upon just, liberal, and comprehensive principles, which guarded the native on the one hand, and secured protection to the honest trader on the other, would therefore confer the richest blessings on a country so long desolated and degraded by its intercourse with the basest and most iniquitous portion of mankind.”

The average cost of a seasoned slave in Cuba is 120 pounds sterling; but it has been seen that in Enárea and other parts of the interior he may be purchased for ten pieces of salt, equivalent to two shillings and a penny—for a pair of Birmingham scissors, or even for a few ells of blue calico. Hence it may be inferred that the hire of the freeman would be in the same ratio; and if so, it is obvious that this cheap labour, applied to a soil as productive as any in the world, would ensure to African tropical produce the superiority in every market to which it might be introduced.

Able advocates of the cause of humanity have upon these grounds clearly demonstrated, that, in order to suppress completely the foreign traffic in human flesh, it is only necessary to raise, in any accessible

point affording the readiest outlet, sugar, coffee, and cotton, and to throw these yearly into the market of the world, already fully supplied by expensive slave labour. The creation of this cheap additional produce would so depress the price current in every other quarter, that the external slave-trade would no longer be profitable, and would therefore cease to exist.

The baneful climate of Africa is the obstacle which has hitherto opposed the introduction of agriculture, and the chief object in seeking geographical information has been to discover some point whence the object may be accomplished with safety. That point is presented in the north-eastern coast, where, from no great distance inland to an unknown extent, the spontaneous gifts of nature are transcendently abundant—the people are prepared by misfortune to welcome civilised assistance—the soil is fertile and productive, and the climate, alpine and salubrious, is highly congenial to the European constitution.

All these countries are believed to be accessible from the Juba, more commonly called the Govind, which is said to rise in Abyssinia, and to be navigable in boats for three months from its mouth. Its *embouchure* is in the territories of the friendly sheikhs of Brava, seven in number, the hereditary representatives of seven Arab brothers, who were first induced to settle on that part of the coast by the lucrative trade in grain, gold, ambergris, ivory, rhinoceros' horns, and hippopotamus' teeth. They were formerly under the protection of Portugal; but even the remembrance of that state of things has nearly passed away from the present generation. From Mombás, which is the most northern possession of Syyud Syyud, the Imam of Muscat, the coast as far as the equator is in occupation of the Sowáhili, a quiet and intelligent

race of Moorish origin, and thence to Zeyla, which is now in the hands of Sheikh Ali Shermárki, the entire population is Somauli. The climate, even so far south as Mombás, is notoriously good; and the government affords a striking contrast to that of the western coast, where the regions in corresponding latitudes are subject to bloody despotism, such as is submitted to by none but the ignorant savage.

Measures at once simple and profitable, might therefore be adopted by the purchase or rent of land on this river, which is conjectured to be the Gochob, and would seem to promise easy access to the very hotbed of slavery. It has been well remarked by McQueen, in his Geographical Survey, that “rivers are the roads in the torrid zone;” and should the stream now under consideration fortunately prove fitted for navigation, the introduction through its means of the essential requisites to the happiness and the emancipation of the now oppressed continent, could not fail to confer the most inestimable advantages.

The power of Abyssinia, once so extended in this quarter, was known even to the Delta of the Niger. It was from the sovereigns of Benin that the Portuguese first heard of the glories of “Prester John;” and as it is quite certain that a communication did formerly exist, “by a journey of twenty moons,” through the countries in the upper course of the Egyptian Nile, there seems no reason to doubt that it might be readily renewed. Of the salubrity of the regions in which all these streams take their source, no question can be entertained. Ptolemy Euergetes, when sovereign of Egypt, penetrated to the most southern provinces of Ethiopia, which he conquered, and he has described his passage to have been

effected, in some parts, over mountains deeply covered with snow.

Those portions of the continent which are blessed with the finest climate, and with the largest share of natural gifts, and which teem with a population long ravaged by the inroads of the kidnapper, must be of all others the most eminently fitted to receive, and the most capable of bringing to maturity, the seeds which can alone form the elements of future prosperity. And what nation is better qualified to confer such inestimable gifts, or more likely to profit by them, when judiciously bestowed, than Great Britain? The most civilised nations are those which possess the deepest interest in the spread of civilisation, and none more than herself are deeply interested in the speedy suppression of the traffic in human beings.

No beneficial change can ever be anticipated, so long as the population of the interior remain cut off from all communication with enlightened nations—so long as they are visited only by the mercenary rover, and are hemmed in by fanatic powers, whose policy it is to encourage this monstrous practice. The Mohammadans are not only traders for the sake of slaves almost exclusively, but they are, as respects the greater portion of interior Africa, jealous, reckless, commercial rivals. It is not, therefore, surprising that they should exert all the influence which they possess from the combination of avarice, ignorance, prejudice, and religion, to exclude foreign influence; and without roads, or any efficient means for the conveyance of heavy merchandise, it is not to be expected that the ignorant despot of the interior will ever think of making his slaves or his subjects cultivate produce of great bulk and laborious carriage, in order to procure in exchange articles

which he requires, whilst with very trifling labour and still more trifling expense, they can be driven even to the most remote market, and there sold or exchanged.

But few people are more desirous or more capable of trading than the natives of Africa; and the facility with which factories might be formed is sufficiently proved by experience in various parts of the continent. Abundance of land now unoccupied could be purchased or rented at a mere nominal rate, in positions where the permanent residence of the white man would be hailed with universal joy, as contributing to the repose of tribes long harassed and persecuted. The serf would seek honest employment in the field, and the chiefs of slave-dealing states, gladly entering into any arrangement for the introduction of wealth and finery, would, after the establishment of agriculture, no longer find their interest in the flood of human victims, which is now annually poured through the highlands of Abyssinia.

I trust that these remarks upon the importance of such a communication as the Gochob may prove to afford to the countries in which it is situated, will not be considered either tedious or superfluous. Much has been written upon the policy which has seen, in many a barbarous location, the future marts of a boundless and lucrative commerce—the centres whence its attendant blessings, knowledge, civilisation, and wealth, would radiate amongst savage hordes. Here are no deserts, but nations already prepared for improvement, and countries gifted by nature with a congenial climate, and with a boundless extent of virgin soil, where the indigo and the tea-plant flourish spontaneously, and where the growth of the sugarcane and of every other tropical

productions may be carried to an unlimited extent—regions affording grain in vast superabundance, and rich in valuable staples—cotton, coffee, spices, ivory, gold dust, peltries, and drugs. But although thus surrounded by natural wealth, and placed within reach of affluence and happiness, the denizens of these favoured regions imperatively require the fostering care of British protection, to become either prosperous, contented, or free.

Volume Three—Chapter Forty.

The Second Winter in Shoa.

Another dreary season of rain, and of mist, and of heavy fog, had now set in; the lance and the shield of the Christian had been suspended in the dark windowless hall, and the war-steed ranged loose over the swampy meadow. During three long months the weather seldom permitted us to quit our damp miserable habitation at Ankóber, but I found ample occupation in endeavouring to put into some kind of order the notes from which these three volumes have been prepared. My assistants were also busily engaged in the various departments which I had allotted to them, and in spite of the gloomy light afforded by oiled parchment, a highly valuable collection of maps, drawings, and reports, had been completed before any change was observable in the weather. Within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, the floods had never continued longer nor wuth greater violence. Morning after morning the heavy white clouds still clung above the saturated metropolis. Every hollow footpath had been

converted into a muddy stream, and each deep valley had become a morass, impassable to the equestrian; whilst the swollen Háwash had inundated the lowlands for many miles on either side of its serpentine banks.

Amongst the few events which occurred to disturb the monotony of our second winter in Shoa, was the annual audience given, towards the close of July, by the king to the Adaïel and Hurrurhi, residing in the market town of Alio Amba. Our old acquaintance, Kalama Work, having been detected in practising extensive peculation, had first undergone imprisonment in the *madi beit*, under the watchful eye of Wolda Hana, and was eventually stripped of his property, and turned forth upon the wide world a beggar. Abd el Yonag, the Hurrur consul, who possessed in eminent perfection the arts of fawning and flattery, had, during the *interregnum*, turned to good account his insatiable taste for power and intrigue. He was formally nominated to the vacant government, and when we entered the raised balcony occupied by the king, the wily old slave-dealer, duly girded with the silver badge of office and authority, occupied the disgraced governor's seat at the footstool of the throne.

Armed with creese, and spear, and shield, the kilted band whirled howling into the courtyard, performing their savage war-dance. The precincts of the palace rung to their wild yells; and the vivid pantomime of throat-cutting and disembowelment was enacted to the life, in all its pleasing varieties. "*Moot! moot! moot*!" shouted each prevailing warrior of note, shaking his sun-blanched locks, and ominously quivering his heavy lance, as he sprang in turn to the front, for the approval of the Christian monarch. "Is he

dead? Is he dead?" "*Burdhoo! Burdhoo*! you've slain him! you've slain him!" returned the turbaned pedlar, facetiously clapping his hands on behalf of his royal patron—"*Burdhoo! Burdhoo*!" and ere the hero of this gratifying applause had retired, another and another brave had commenced his vaunting exhibition in front of the sable ranks, or was in the act of ripping up the foe who in mock conflict had sprung like a tiger across his adversary's loins, to grasp him as in a vice betwixt the muscles of his thighs. The court buffoon was meanwhile diligently plying his occupation, by capering through the ranks with his unsheathed reaping-hook, and chattering in ludicrous imitation of the Moslem barbarians—his successful mimicry eliciting shouts of applause, notwithstanding that the reality, as enacted in the hot valleys below, had, on more occasions than one, been calculated to leave no very agreeable recollections in the mind of the Amhára audience.

At the motion of the herald, the assembled warriors now squatted their meagre, wiry forms before the raised alcove, each resting upon his spear-staff, and peering over his shield, according to the undeviating custom of the Bedouin savage. "Are you all well? Are you well? Are you quite well?" repeated the dragoman who interpreted His Majesty's salutations. —"How have you passed your time? Are your wives and all your children happy, and are your houses prosperous? Have your flocks and your herds multiplied, and are your fields and your pastures covered with plenty?"—"*Humdu lillah! Humdu lillah*!" "Praise be unto God!" was the unvarying reply. —"How are you, and how have you been? We are the friends of Woosen Suggud, your father, who ruled before you, and we will always deal with you as our

fathers dealt with your fathers who are now dead. We are near neighbours. May Allah keep our people and their children's children at peace the one with the other!" Cloths were now presented to the principal men, and oxen having been apportioned to their retainers, each rose in turn, and patted the extended hand of the monarch with his own palm; one atrocious old ruffian, who concluded the ceremony raising himself in his sandals and grasping the fingers of the king so firmly, that he had nearly succeeded in plucking him from his elevated throne.

His Majesty, although obviously little pleased at the practical joke, had sufficient command of temper to take it in good part, but no doubt inwardly congratulated himself upon the happy termination of the wild levée. It had been fully illustrative of the tact and diplomatic sagacity employed in the maintenance of ascendency over the more intractable portion of his nominal subjects, and in the cultivation of amicable political relations with the neighbouring states. Wulásma Mohammad, as chief agent, sat in regal dignity on this important occasion, and his dragoman, a native of Argobba, was the medium of communication. The throat of this man exhibited from ear to ear a conspicuous seam, pointed out by the by-standers as the work of his own hands. Great, indeed, must have been the desperation which at the present day could impel such an attempt at self-destruction on the frontiers of Shoa. One mile beyond, in any direction, would of a surety supply numbers of volunteers for the task, from amongst those whose throat-cutting proficiency had so creditably been displayed during the recent pantomime.

Early in the month of August, the festival of Felsáta

brought a repetition of the customary skirmishes between the town's people and the slave establishment of the king. For the edification of a numerous concourse of spectators, the miry lane leading to the church of "Our Lady" was attacked and defended with heavy clubs, shod with rings of iron; and after a severe conflict, the servile invaders were finally driven from the field, with blood streaming from numerous broken heads, which were brought to the Residency to be repaired. During the fortnight's fast that ensued in celebration of the Assumption, the rough diversion was frequently repeated, and abstinence from food appeared to have soured the temper of the entire population. On the succeeding festival of the Transfiguration, styled "Debra Tabor," the capital was illuminated. Whilst boys, carrying flambeaux, ran singing through the streets, every dwelling displayed such a light as its inmates could afford,—none, however, of the old cotton rags besmeared with impure bees'-wax shining very luminously through the thick drizzling mist.

One of the principal of the royal storehouses at Channoo, on the frontier, was at this period struck by lightning, and totally burnt to the ground. The king as usual was keeping fast at Machal-wans, and thither, according to custom, every nobleman and governor in the land flocked to offer condolence. Many were the long faces on the road, for the greatest consternation pervaded all classes; and the fat Wulásma in particular, on his way to break the dismal tidings to his despotic master, having the consequences of the late conflagration at Wóti still fresh in his recollection, was observed to be in a state of extreme mental perturbation and anxiety.

"Alas!" exclaimed the king, when, in accordance with

etiquette, we contributed our mite of consolation —“Alas! that magazine was built by my ancestor Emmaha Yasoos. It measured six hundred cubits in length, and ninety spans in breadth, and it was piled with salt to the very roof. There is no salt in my country. I feared a rupture with the Adaïel who bring it from below, and I therefore stored up large quantities that my people might never want. Now the lightning has taken all; but who can repine?—for it was the will of God.”

Volume Three—Chapter Forty One.

The Gothic Hall.

The models and plans of palaces that had been from time to time prepared by Captain Graham, had imparted to the royal mind a new architectural impulse; and after much deliberation with himself, he had finally come to the resolution of expending the timber requisite towards the erection of a chaste Gothic edifice. In the selection of the design. His Majesty displayed unlooked-for taste; for although as a penman his talents rank immeasurably in advance of the most accomplished of his scriveners, his skill as an artist had proved very circumscribed. It was nearly exhausted in the delineation of a nondescript bird, perched upon a tree-top, and did wuth difficulty extend to the one-legged fowler, gun in hand, who was conjectured to be planning its destruction. At the royal desire, I had frequently executed likenesses of the court favourites, and they were invariably acknowledged with much merriment; but, although repeatedly urged, no persuasion could induce the despot to sit for his own, from a firm belief in the old superstition, that whosoever should possess it, could afterwards deal with him as he listed.

“You are writing a book,” he remarked to me on one occasion, with a significant glance, as I was in the act of completing a full-length portrait of himself, which I had contrived to make unobserved from his blind side —“I know this to be the case, because I never inquire what you are doing that they do not tell me you are using a pen, or else painting pictures. This is a good

thing, and it pleases me. You will speak favourably of myself; but you shall not insert my portrait, as you have done that of the Negoos of Zingero." Such was the title with which His Christian Majesty was invariably pleased to dignify his heathen brother, Moselekatse, whose acquaintance he had made through the frontispiece to my "Wild Sports in Southern Africa."

The Abyssinians have from time immemorial expended an entire tree in the reduction to suitable dimensions of every beam or plank employed in their primitive habitations; and it is not therefore surprising that Sáhela Selássie should have been equally delighted and astonished at the economy of time, labour, and material attending the use of the cross-cut saw. From age to age, and generation to generation, the Ethiopian plods on like his forefathers, without even a desire for improvement. Ignorance and indolence confine him to a narrow circle of observation from which he is afraid to move. Strong prejudices are arrayed against the introduction of novelties, and eternal reference is made to ancestral custom. But in a country where the absence of timber is so remarkable and inconvenient, the advantages extended by this novel implement of handicraft was altogether undeniable.

"You English are indeed a strange people," quoth the monarch, after the first plank had been fashioned by the European escort. "I do not understand your stories of the road in your country that is dug below the waters of a river, nor of the carriages that gallop without horses; but you are a strong people, and employ wonderful inventions."

Meanwhile the platform required for the new building

advanced slowly to completion. The crowd of idle applicants for justice who daily convened before the tribunal of “the four chairs” were pressed into the service; and whenever His Majesty returned from an excursion in the meadow, the entire cortege might be seen carrying each a stone before his saddle in imitation of the royal example. Early one morning Graham received a message from the impatient despot to announce that the day being auspicious, he was desirous of seeing one post at least erected without delay. Greatly to his satisfaction the door-frames, which had previously been prepared by the carpenters of my escort, were simultaneously raised; and it being ascertained that the sub-conservator of forests had neglected to make the requisite supplies of timber, the delinquent was, with his wife and family, sentenced to vacate his habitation forthwith, and to bivouac *sub divo* during twenty days upon the Angollála meadow—a punishment not unfrequently inflicted for venial derelictions of duty, and attended during the more inclement seasons with no ordinary inconvenience.

But the endless succession of holydays, during which no work can be performed, interfered in a much greater degree with the completion of the rising structure—it being superstitiously imagined that any portion of a work erected on the festival of a saint, with the aid of edged tools, will infallibly entail a curse from above. No little delay arose also from the whims and caprices of His Majesty, who could never satisfy himself that the doors and windows occupied the proper places. On this subject his ideas wandered perpetually to the ruins of a certain palace on the banks of the Nile, which he had visited whilst hunting the wild buffalo—“It is overgrown with trees and

bushes," was his lucid description, "and it has two hundred windows, and four hundred pillars of stone, and none can tell whence it came."

On lawful days, however, the soldiers continued to work as diligently as the quantities of hydromel would permit, with which they were supplied by the royal munificence; and at length the Gothic hall was complete. It had been amusing in the interim to watch the persevering industry of an unfortunate gun-man of the body-guard, who was constructing a hut immediately below the palace. Whensoever the vigilant eye of the church permitted, he would add to the frail wall of his circular dwelling a few layers of loose stone which, with his own single labour, he had collected in the meadow; but each morning's dawn revealed to his sorrowing eyes some monstrous breach in the unstable fabric, which, like Penelope's web, was never nearer to completion, and his patience being fairly exhausted, he finally gave up the task in despair.

The novel style of architecture introduced by the Gyptzis, so immeasurably superior in elegance, stability, and comfort, to anything before witnessed in Shoa, and combining all these recommendations with so limited an expenditure of material, afforded an undeniable contrast to the adjacent tottering pile upon vaults on which Demetrius the Albanian had expended three years of labour. Beyond the rude fabrics of the neighbouring states, where the more common manufactures have attained a somewhat higher cultivation, the palace of the king can boast of no embellishment saving the tawdry trappings which decorate the throne—gaudy tapestries of crimson velvet loaded with massive silver ornaments, but ill in keeping with the clumsy mud walls to which they are

appended, and serving to render the latter still more incongruous by so striking a contrast. But the new apartments were elegantly furnished throughout, and with their couches, ottomans, carpets, chairs, tables, and curtains, had assumed an aspect heretofore unknown in Abyssinia. “I shall turn it into a chapel,” quoth His Majesty, accosting Abba Raguel, and patting the little dwarf familiarly upon the back —“What say you to that plan, my father?”

As a last finishing touch, we suspended in the centre hall a series of large coloured engravings, which the cathedral of Saint Michael might well have envied, for they represented the chase of the tiger in all its varied phases. The domestication of the elephant, and its employment in war, or in the pageant, had ever proved a stumbling-block to the king, who all his life had been content to reside in a house boasting neither windows nor chimneys, and who reigned not in the days when “the Negus, arrayed in the barbaric pomp of gold chains, collars, and bracelets, and surrounded by his nobles and musicians, gave audience to the ambassador of Justinian, seated in the open field upon a lofty chariot drawn by four elephants superbly caparisoned.” (Gibbon.) The grotesque appearance of the “hugest of beasts” in his hunting harness, struck the chord of a new idea. “I will have a number caught on the Robi,” he exclaimed, “that you may tame them, and that I too may ride upon an elephant before I die.” A favourite governor from a remote frontier province was standing meanwhile with his forefinger in his mouth gazing in mute amazement at the wonders before him. “This place is not suited for the occupation of man,” he at length exclaimed in a reverie of surprise, as the monarch ceased:—“this is a palace designed

only for the residence of the Deity, and of Sáhela Selássie."

Volume Three—Chapter Forty Two.

The "Pro Rex of Efát" in tribulation.

Although we had found small reason to be flattered with our first reception in the kingdom of Shoa, at the hands of a Christian ruler who had sought alliance with Great Britain, it was nevertheless matter of notoriety that no previous visitors had, under any circumstances, been treated with one-hundredth part of the same courtesy and condescension, or had experienced such unequivocal marks of confidence and favour. Formed on the most liberal scale, and supplied with all that was likely to add to its weight in such a country, the embassy was almost from the outset admitted to terms of perfect equality with the haughty despot, yet numberless diplomatic troubles were still interposed by the general ignorance of the many, and by the envy and jealousy of a few. No veil had been thrown over the deep-rooted enmity of the bigoted and powerful priesthood, who, to serve their own sinister purposes, cunningly contrived to construe the costly gifts of the British Government into tribute to the illustrious descendant of the house of Solomon; but the assertion carried its own refutation. In a weak moment Comus Unquies, "the king's strong monk," so far forgot the dignity due to his station, as to barter his bishop's staff to the heretic Gyptzis for a pair of Birmingham scissors! European medicines had rescued three thousand patients from the jaws of death; and improved

intercourse with the monarch finally dispelled the jealousy created in a suspicious breast by the treasonable designs imputed to the foreign visitors, who were found to have brought no king or queen in a box, and to entertain designs neither upon the sceptre nor upon the church of Ethiopia.

The opposition of inimical functionaries dressed in fleeting authority, exposed us to a train of persecutions, trifling perhaps in themselves, but amounting in the aggregate to more than martyrdom. Few of the commands issued were obeyed so much in the spirit as to the letter. *Eshee*, or *Basanye* (i.e. “Very well.”), although doubtless signifying assent, did not always bring compliance with even the most trifling application for assistance. The king was too polished to say “No,” when he had inwardly resolved to do nothing; and an uneducated despot, who has never known any law but his own absolute will, and who lives for himself alone; who considers and claims as his property every thing in the country over which he wields the arbitrary sceptre, and whose only idea of wealth, power, and happiness, is centred in individual existence, can so ill understand the wants of others, that His Majesty’s offences towards his guests, founded in Oriental suspicion, might rather be termed sins of omission than of commission.

Covetous, and eager for novelties, Sáhela Selássie never fails to wish for every thing that comes under his observation, but, like a child with a new toy, soon weary of looking at the bauble, though still vain of its possession, he casts it aside to be hoarded in the mouldy vaults of some distant magazine. The savage is the same under every possible form, and in every grade and position—the one stealing what he covets, whilst another, seeking plausible pretexts, obtains

possession through low cunning and stratagem. Among such a nation of beggars as the people of Southern Abyssinia, it was not always easy to satisfy the rapacity of fastidious extortioners. All wanted “pleasing things”—many demanded dollars to defray the cost of slaves that they had purchased, but for whom they could not pay; and for months after my arrival, requisitions for our own private property were unceasing on the part also of the monarch.

Neither compulsory measures nor direct applications were ever employed; but the means resorted to were not the less certain of success. With that duplicity and want of candour which ever marks uncivilised man, he was wont to send underhand communications, or meanly to depute his emissaries to reveal his desires and his intentions in a manner which, in so despotic a land, could leave no doubt of authenticity; and an offer of the article coveted being forthwith made, His Majesty hesitated not, in the presence of his agents, to deny all cognisance of the transaction, or to swear by the saints that he never sought the property tendered for his acceptance. Persuasion would not induce him to receive it at once, and thus to terminate the matter; but no sooner had it been removed from his sight, than his creatures were again at work with even greater activity than before; and rude taunts of breach of promise, with not-to-be-mistaken hints, veiled under the cloak of friendship, were certain to instigate a second and a third offer, which invariably elicited an avowal of the disinclination entertained to “receive the property of his children,” but uniformly ended in his accepting it “as a free gift from the heart,” acknowledged in all gratitude by the benediction—“God restore it to thee, my son! May the Lord glorify and reward thee!”

Chief of all the sycophants who bask in the favour of the monarch, may be ranked Wulásma Mohammad, who, in finesse, plausibility, and the manifold specious devices that are employed to cover total want of sincerity, can find no equal in the kingdom of Shoa. Lavish in professions of friendship, he never suffered to escape an opportunity of gratifying his inwardly-cherished animosity. Presents were frequently exchanged—the sugarcane and the bunch of green gram, which are the symbols of hearts knit together in the bonds of unity, arrived with the same regularity as the week, coupled, of course, with a description of some “pleasing thing” that was not to be found in Góncho. The lemon, denoting by its aromatic fragrance the beauties of permanent amity, was ever sure to follow the receipt of the desired article.

Professions daily grew more profuse, and complimentary inquiries, which constitute the very essence of friendship, waxed more and more frequent; but although the regard entertained “amounted even to heaven and earth,” and although every aid and assistance was volunteered, no packet of letters ever arrived to the address of the Gyptzis, neither did any courier ever depart for the sea-coast without being subjected to a tedious detention on the frontier at the hands of the despotic state-gaoler.

On the first of these occasions, the king, before sending the packet to the Residency, had taken the trouble of breaking the seal of every individual cover with his own royal fingers; and a protest having been entered against a procedure so utterly foreign to European ideas of propriety. His Majesty inquired, with well-feigned simplicity, “Of what use should my children’s letters be to me, who understand not their

language?" Remonstrances were in like manner made to the Abogáz touching his interference in such manners; but as the crafty old fox screened himself behind total ignorance of the value attached to written documents, and volunteered better behaviour, the subject was set at rest.

But although letters were now thoroughly understood to be held in higher estimation even than fine gold from Guráguê, the evil, far from being abated, became greater and greater, until at last it was no longer to be borne. Promises made, were made only to be broken; and a serious complaint was at last carried to the throne at Angollála, representing that another packet had been secreted during an entire fortnight in the fortified vaults of Góncho. After stoutly denying all knowledge of it, until convicted by incontrovertible evidence, and then declaring it to be deposited, for safety-sake, in the custody of his brother Jhália, who was absent on the frontier, the Wulásma was commanded to set out forthwith upon the quest, and to return at his peril empty-handed. "Our friendship has ceased for ever," muttered the burly caitiff betwixt his closed teeth as he descended the ladder—"for through your means the king hath become wroth with his servant." "Let his friendship go into the sea," quoth His Majesty, who had overheard this appalling announcement—"Is not he an accursed Moslem? Look only to me. Have I not always told you that my people are bad? Ye have travelled far into a strange land, and are to Sáhela Selássie even as his own children. Ye have no relative but me."

The escape of the rebel Medóko had formerly led to the suspension of the Abogáz from rank and office for a period of two years, during which he danced attendance upon the monarch with shoulders bared,

as is the wont of the disgraced noble. His troubles had now returned. “My ancestors owed a debt of gratitude to Mohammad’s father,” continued His Majesty, after a pause, “and I would fain overlook his faults; but this insolence is no longer to be borne. I have removed the drunkard from office, confiscated his goods and chattels, and by the death of Woosen Suggud, I swear, that unless you intercede, there can be no hope of his restoration to favour.”

Down came the ex-Wulásma in a furious passion, boiling with old hydromel, and flushed with his rapid ride:—“How should I know that you wanted these vile letters?” he exclaimed, throwing the packet scornfully upon the ground—“I have done nothing. What offence have I committed, that I am thus to suffer through your means?—There is a proverb, that ‘the dog of the house is faithful to its master, whereas he who cometh from beyond is worse than a hyena.’”

But a week had wrought a wonderful change in the sentiments of the humbled grandee, whose beeves were indeed grazing in the royal pastures, whilst his jars of old mead reposed in the royal cellars. He at whose sullen nod the subjects of Efát quailed, and whose presence was as an incubus to the state-prisoners in Góncho, had been, at the representation of a foreigner, stripped of wealth and power, and, in accordance with the usage of the country, was now fain to wait during a succession of days upon those whom he had injured. Seating himself at the door of the tent in sackcloth and ashes, he sent in two friends, who came, according to the custom of the country, to serve as mediators. “Behold, I am reduced to the condition of a beggar,” was his abject message, “and have no support but in your intercession. My children are deprived of their bread,

and they starve through the faults of their father."

The Commander-in-chief of the Body-Guard was spokesman on behalf of the caitiff. He brought me, as a *mamálacha*, a huge Sanga horn, filled to the brim with the liquor that he loved, and ushered himself in with his customary string of complimentary enquiries, "*Endiet aderachoon? Ejegoon dahenaderachoon? Dahena sanabatachoon? Dahena karamoon? Ejegoon dahena natchoon*?" "How have you passed the night? Have you rested very well? Have you been quite well since our last interview? How have you spent the rainy season? Are you in perfect health?"

"Half the people of Hábesh," he resumed, in his husky voice, when each of these points had been satisfactorily disposed of—"have ears like a hill, and they cannot hear—the residue are liars. Furthermore, one-half are thieves and drunkards, and the remainder are cowards." There was no refuting the arguments adduced in support of this position, and his eloquence proved quite irresistible. A solemn oath was therefore administered upon the Korán, by which the suppliant, who united in his own person all the attributes embraced in this able classification, became pledged never again to interfere with messengers bearing letters to or from the low country. His pardon was finally obtained; and he was once more invested with the silver sword of office: nor is it easy to determine whether the disgrace or the restoration of the fat frontier functionary created the greater sensation throughout the realm.

"What can you expect from that besotted old man?" inquired Ayto Melkoo, who had been a silent spectator of all that passed, and who hated both the Abogáz and his mediator with equal intensity. "Did

you never hear that the Negoos was once displeased with me, and that I passed a few months beneath the grates at Góncho; and furthermore, that when the royal order came to set me at large, the State-Gaoler was drunk, and never thought again of his prisoner for a full fortnight? *Sáhela Selássie ye moot*! May the king die if it be not so!—the infidel may swear as long as he pleases, ay, and take his sacred book to witness; but how can you suppose that he will ever be able to think of these letters of yours?"

Volume Three—Chapter Forty Three.

The Bereavement.

A calamity shortly afterwards overtook the Master of the Horse, whose spouse—a gift from the monarch to his faithful subject—was seized with alarming influenza, and became an object of universal attention. The first intimation of the disorder being serious was received from himself, when he came one morning to Graham's tent, in order to perform the interesting operation of shaving with a notched razor that he invariably patronised, and also to demand how it occurred that our inquiries were not more frequent. The not dispatching couriers daily to ascertain how each of your acquaintance fares and has rested, is perhaps the greatest offence that can be committed against Abyssinian etiquette. "Send to me" is a caution invariably given; and such being an indispensable ceremony when people are believed to be well, what must not be exacted when it is supposed that they are invalids? If hourly inquiries be not made, the best friends are sure to become the

worst; and in every case the amount of real solicitude felt, is estimated by the frequency of “amicable correspondence.”

“The patient’s uvula has been cleverly plucked out with a silken thread,” observed the visitor exultingly, when his toilet was happily completed:—“the thorax has been well scarified, and furthermore, we are giving *ya medur oomboi* (Cucumis Africanus, Linn). This medicine is infallible; but remember,” he added, lowering his voice, and looking suspiciously round to see that no eaves-dropper profited by the wisdom he was about to impart in confidence—“remember that it must be gathered by a finger on which there is a silver ring, or, by Michael, it possesses no virtue whatever.”

The good lady did not, however, long stand in need either of treatment or inquiry. She closed her bright eyes shortly after swallowing the infallible nostrum, administered by her quack husband in a jorum of oatmeal gruel, stirred with honey and rancid butter to such a consistency that the spoon would stand—and death left her barely time for confession and absolution.

Every priest in the neighbourhood was instantly called in to the rescue; and the *enchifchif* (i.e. belt of charms and amulets) and *máteb* having been immersed in water, and restored to the body, the sacrament was administered; and under the blazing light of the torch, prayers were chanted for the soul of the deceased until the morning dawned. Then commenced the frantic shrieks of the female crowd that flocked to the house of mourning. Cloths were torn in shreds from the bosom, and the skin plucked from the temples, whilst the low moaning dirge was at

frequent intervals interrupted by the hysterical sob of some new arrival, who came to add her voice to the dismal coronach, and to excite renewed bursts of lamentation.

Preceded by the gay orange umbrellas of the church of the "Covenant of Mercy," the funeral procession wound up the palace hill. A pall of printed Surat chintz, supported by six bearers, was waved alternately with a fanning motion, whilst a numerous train of mourners followed, with loud wails, all having their hands clasped behind their neck in token of the triumph obtained by Death over Sin. The corpse was laid in the sacred edifice, surrounded by twelve lighted tapers betokening purity of life; and when these were nearly consumed, they were lowered with the bier into the sepulchre. The head was laid to the west, in order that on the morn of resurrection the face might be towards the rising sun. A quantity of frankincense was deposited in the grave; and a copy of the book styled *Lefáfa Zádik*, "The supplication of Righteousness," having been placed on the body, the mortal clay was returned whence it came, "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust."

Ecclesiastics alone possess the privilege of a last resting-place within the walls of the church, or on the eastern side, four paces from the porch. The aristocracy occupy the north, and warriors, women, and children, the south and west. All who die without confession or absolution are either interred by the highway-side or in some unconsecrated ground. Governors, men of rank, and all wealthy commoners who have not during life worked in wood, iron, or precious metals, are covered in the sepulchre with the green branches of the juniper; but smiths and artificers being regarded as sorcerers, every care is

taken to keep them under ground when once deposited, to which end great stones are heaped over the body, and the earth is well trampled and secured.

Funeral obsequies concluded, the dirge of mourning, as usual, gave place to the notes of the violin, for harpers and fiddlers usually attend to the last resting-place the mortal remains of the great, and exert their utmost endeavours to raise the spirits of the return party by the liveliest airs. At the funeral feast which followed, oxen and sheep were freely slaughtered, and charity was liberally distributed, in order that *requiems* might be chanted during forty consecutive days for the soul of the departed.

It has been shown that the Abyssinian Christian, whilst execrating Mohammadanism, and forswearing all its abominations, can take unto his bosom four wives and more, and that the solemnisation of matrimony is almost the only occasion on which the priest is not called in. Such had ever been the case in the house of the Master of the Horse, who was nevertheless inconsolable under his present bereavement. Certain malicious whispers had flown abroad, to the effect that applications of the cudgel were sometimes resorted to by the epicure in support of his marital authority; but whether true or without foundation, these scandalous tales were known to have been circulated by Dinkoo, a mischief-making brat, with the falsest of tongues, and the offspring of one whose divorce, from incompatibility of temper, had left the deceased undisputed mistress of the premises, whereas of the matchless “*Etagainya*” now no more, the neighbours were ever wont to exclaim, “Where shall you find her equal?”

At the appointed season, Graham and myself went in compliance with Abyssinian custom, to pay a visit of condolence, after having with considerable difficulty succeeded in shaking off the attentions of the court buffoon, who, with his wonted politeness, exerted somewhat *mal-à-propos* to so melancholy an occasion, insisted upon the exercise of his ingenuity in the comic drama. The widower, enveloped in a black woollen mantle, was seated in a gloomy corner, the very personification of mourning—his temples deeply scarified with his little finger nail, as were those also of the wrinkled old woman who wept beside him. In an opposite corner, equally the victim of grief, and supported by the family priest with cross, crutch, and cowl, sat Marietta, a fat daughter of the former unfortunate union, who, like her mother, had been wedded and divorced, and having taken shelter again under her father's roof, was now sobbing aloud.

"God hath taken her," said one of the guests, breaking silence after the conclusion of the customary salutations. "The life of man is in His hand."

"Alas!" sobbed the bereaved, "that it had pleased Heaven to spare her until after you had left Abyssinia, that I alone might have found cause for affliction. Who could prepare *shiro*, and *wotz*, and *dilli*, like Etagainya? When was the house ever destitute of *quanta* or of *qualima*? (Note 1) and who ever asked for *tullah* or for *tedj*, that she did not reply, '*Malto*,' There is abundance? '*Waiye, waiye*,' Woe is me. Where shall I find her equal? But there could have been no ring on the finger that gathered the *medánit*!"

Note 1. *Shiro*, a sauce composed of peas or lentils boiled with grease and spices. *Wotz*, another, consisting of grease and red pepper. *Dilli*, a third abominable condiment. *Quanta*, sun-dried flesh. *Qualima*, sausages.

Volume Three—Chapter Forty Four.

The Great Annual Foray.

Another Abyssinian year had floated away upon the stream of time, and again the return of spring had been celebrated by the green fillet of *enkotátach*, by the tournament in the bright meadows of Debra Berhán, and by the plaintive ditty of the king's Guráguês, who, with yellow garlands of the cross-flower wreathed among their raven tresses, once more chanted away their three days of privileged inebriety. As September drew towards a close, it had been confidently predicted that the rain would terminate according to its "covenant;" but it still poured on with unabated violence, and the review of Máskal was achieved under a pitiless deluge, which exerted its best endeavours both to mar the pageant, and to extinguish the evening bonfire raised in honour of Saint Helena.

But the beat of the *nugáreet*, and the voice of the herald beneath the solitary tree at Angollála, proclaimed the great annual foray as heretofore; and the plain below the palace hill was soon dotted with the black woollen tents of the leaders of cohorts. There were the governors of Bulga and of Mentshar, and of Morát and Morabeitie, and Efrata and

Antzochia, and of Mahhfood and of Shoa-Méda, with all their subordinates, each surrounded by his own retainers; and the rear division of this feudal host was placed under the command of Besuenech, now governor of Giddem, the father of the king's grand-nephew, who fell the preceding year upon the fair plains of Germáma.

Led on to victory by the holy ark of Saint Michael, the great crimson umbrellas streamed again through the barrier wall at the head of the Christian chivalry. Twenty thousand troopers pursued the route of the Sertie Lake to the Metta Galla, occupying the plains immediately contiguous to the valley of Finfinni, who were now the victims marked out for spoliation. The despot had so invariably passed this tribe without offering any molestation, that the heathen were little prepared for the thunderbolt that was about to fall, and of which the first intimation was afforded in the simultaneous invasion of the entire district. Overwhelmed by the torrent of desolation which had so suddenly burst in, four thousand five hundred Gentiles of all ages were butchered by the "soldiers of Christ," and of these the greater number were shot from trees that they had ascended in the vain hope of eluding observation. Three hapless individuals were thus barbarously destroyed by the hands of Sáhela Selássie, who for the first time led his troops to the summit of the mountain Entótto—the ancient capital of Ethiopia—and, taking formal possession, appointed the arch-rebel Shambo to the government, under the title of "*Shoom* of all Guráguê."

Forty-three thousand head of cattle were on this occasion swept away to replenish the royal pastures, and the rich prize had been obtained with the loss of only nine of the king's liege subjects. Of the heroes

who fell, one was torn by a lion in the deep juniper forest, and another basely assassinated by his comrade in arms, whose disfigured corse was subsequently left in retribution to the hyenas; whilst a third, a priest of extraordinary piety, and the father of the young page Besábeh, was transfixed by the spear of a Pagan who sat concealed amid the branches of a tree, beneath which the holy man rode in a rash attempt to secure a fugitive. The king's Master of the Horse wore the vaunting green *saréti* for having achieved the capture of a child scarce five years of age; and upwards of one thousand captives, chiefly women and young girls, swelled the barbaric pomp of triumphal entry to Angollála.

I considered that the opportunity had again arrived, when a remonstrance from the Embassy would promote the release of these unfortunate slaves; and after reminding His Majesty of his noble conduct with respect to the prisoners taken during the preceding foray, I entreated him not to tarnish, in the eyes of the civilised world, the reputation he had acquired for mercy, but to prove, by his present conduct, that he was indeed influenced by the true principles of Christianity. Under Providence, my application was again crowned with success, and with a few exceptions, all were liberated without ransom. "I listen to your words," said His Majesty, as he issued the fiat of release, "in order that the name of Sáhela Selássie may not be broken."

Sad indeed are the atrocities perpetrated by the undisciplined armies of Ethiopia, when disputing the abstruse mysteries of Abyssinian divinity, or seeking, in the relentless fury of religious hate, to exterminate a heathen and stranger nation by a series of crusades, undertaken as an acceptable vindication of

the sacred symbol of Christianity.

> “Her badge of mercy blazons half their shields;
> Sword hilts are fashion’d as memorials of it:
> This sign of man’s forgiveness leads to battle!
> Whilst every tyrant hangs its ensign out,
> In scorn of justice, from his battlements;
> Mail’d prelates march before it to the field
> —
> Priest fights with priest, and both sides under it!
> This sign and pledge of mercy!”

The people of Shoa have fully adopted that spirit of merciless destruction which impelled the Israelites to destroy their enemies from the face of the earth. Considering themselves the lineal descendants of those heroes of ancient history who were arrayed against the enemies of the Lord, they are actuated by the same motives and feelings which led the bands of Judah to the massacre. The foe is a Pagan, who does not fast, nor kiss the church, nor wear a *máteb*. All feelings of humanity are thrown to the winds; and a high reward in heaven is believed to await the king and the blood-thirsty soldier for the burning of the hamlet, the capture of the property, and the murder of the accursed Gentile. The words of absolution from the mouth of the Father Confessor usher in the ruthless slaughter; and the name of the Most High is wantonly employed to consecrate the ensuing scenes of savage atrocity.

That the minds of the people should not be more disturbed and alienated from agricultural pursuits, by the continual military expeditions which they are thus called upon to make, cannot fail to appear extraordinary. Probably the selfishness of the despot, in his appropriation of the lion’s share of the spoil,

has exerted a salutary influence in checking innate restlessness; and the subject has been instructed in a rough school, that there is more profit to be derived from holding the plough than from wielding the sword: for it is certainly the fact, that when the foray is over, the war-horse is turned loose in the meadow, and the partisan willingly returns to his peaceful avocations in the field. But these campaigns bring annually a repetition of the most atrocious and monstrous barbarity, and none who have witnessed the unhallowed proceedings of the Amhára warrior, can fail to offer up a fervent prayer that the time may be hastened, when nations shall be knit together in the bonds of love, and when true Christianity shall reign paramount in every heart.

December had now commenced, but a dense gloomy mist still enveloped the hill of Anko, and torrents of rain continued to deluge the country, at a season when the smiling sun had been wont to shine over the land. The fair face of heaven was utterly obscured. The ripe crops lay rotting upon the ground; and as the inhabitants waded with difficulty through the deep mire which filled every street and lane of the capital, the exchange of mournful salutations was followed by a foreboding shake of the head at the daily increasing price of provisions. The season was unusually rigorous, and the soaked firewood sputtering upon the hearth, gave not out one atom of genial heat. On the bleak summit of the Abyssinian alps every thing was cold and clammy to the touch; and a searching wind, creeping up the damp sides of the hill, entered at each crevice in the mud wall, and rendered the situation of the inmates of the frail houses even more miserable than usual.

As the evening of the 6th of December closed in, not

a single breath of air disturbed the thick fog which still brooded over the mountain. A sensible difference was perceptible in the atmosphere, but the rain again commenced to descend in a perfect deluge, and for hours pelted like the discharge of the bursting water-spout. Towards morning there came on a violent thunder-storm, and for some minutes the entire scene was fearfully illuminated by the dazzling fire of heaven; and every rock and cranny re-echoed from the succeeding crash of the hurtling thunder. Deep darkness again settled over the mountain. Suddenly the earth groaned and trembled to its very centre: the hill reeled and tottered like a drunken man; and a heavy rumbling noise, like the passage of artillery wheels, was followed by the shrill cry of mortal despair.

Dreadful indeed were the consequences of this shock. The earth, saturated with moisture, had slidden like an avalanche from the steep rugged slopes, and huge boulders, tilted from their muddy beds, were thrown into the glens below. Houses and cottages were buried in the dark *débris*, or shattered to fragments by these monstrous masses bounding on their course with terrific rapidity. Large trees were torn from their roots, and daylight presented to the eyes of the affrighted inhabitants a strange scene of ruin.

Perched upon the apex of the conical peak, the palace had, on the preceding evening, frowned over the capital in all the security of its numerous encircling palisades; but now, shorn of their bristling protection, those buildings that had not been overthrown, stood naked and exposed. Twenty open breaches, as though heavy batteries had been playing for a fortnight on the devoted hill, laid bare

the approaches to the very porch of the banqueting-hall; and palings and palisades, forced from their deep foundations, lay broken and mingled together, strewed over the entire face of the eminence. The roads along the scarp were completely obliterated. Tall green shrubs reclined with their roots reversed among the wreck; and not one vestige of the fragile tenements could be discovered in the bare earthy tracts which disfigured the mountain-side, and marked the disastrous course of the treacherous slip.

The more vigilant inmates had, with the loss of all their little property, found barely time to rush from their houses, and huddled together in shivering groups totally denuded of clothing, had passed the remnant of the night in all the pangs of cold and terror; whilst in the market-place lay extended the stark discoloured bodies of numerous victims that had been already extricated from the slimy ruins, and were placed in the *Aráda* for recognition by surviving relatives, if any there were. The shrieks of the mourners added to the distress of the scene. The hymn of entreaty rose high in the mist from every church throughout the town; and bands of priests, carrying the holy cross, marched in solemn procession through the miry streets, beating their breasts and calling aloud upon Saint Michael the Archangel, and upon Mary the mother of the Messiah, to intercede for them in this the day of their affliction.

Sweeping desolation had spread for miles along the great range: houses with their inmates and household gear had been scattered in fragments over the mountain-side; and the voice of wailing from the green hill top and from the sheltered nook, announced the many victims that were thus

immaturely buried in the dark bosom of the earth. The destruction varied considerably according to situation and locality. Some villages were entirely smothered under the descending tons of heavy wet soil, and the inhabitants of others grieved only for their cattle, their crops, and their farm-steading; but the loss of life and property was altogether immense; and although the tremulous shock had been before frequently experienced, a similar to the present calamity had not befallen the country within the memory of man.

For many nights afterwards, as the thick mist still continued to enfold the mountain in its dark shroud, and the sloppy rain plashed heavily over the denuded rocks, the air at the close of each dull evening was filled with the plaintive sounds of hymn and prayer. The deep voice of the priesthood pealed incessantly from the churches; and groups of bewildered females, collected in every corner of the streets, bowed themselves to the ground, whilst calling in strangely wild cadence upon the Virgin, who is the Mediator, and upon all the saints and guardian angels, to preserve the believers in Christ from impending ruin—for the wise men who deal in sorcery had proclaimed that the present throe was only the harbinger of the wrath of Heaven, which would one day sweep the high mountain of Anko with all her inhabitants utterly from the face of the earth.

Volume Three—Chapter Forty Five.

Liberation of the Princes of the Blood-Royal of Shoa.

Humanity to his own subjects must be considered a distinguishing feature in the character of the reigning despot. He is ignorant, but not stupid—to his foes fierce, but not implacable; and although his manifold good qualities are sullied by the part he sustains in the odious traffic in his fellow-men—a moral plague which has by its baneful influence contaminated the whole of this quarter of the globe—he had, on more occasions than one, evinced an unlooked-for readiness to open his eyes to his errors. Possessed of faults inseparable from the absolute semi-barbarian, he had, nevertheless, been found mild, just, clement, and almost patriarchal in his government:—he is a monarch whom experience has proved worthy to reign over a better people, and to be possessed of an understanding and of latent virtues requiring nought save cultivation to place him, in a moral and intellectual point of view, immeasurably in advance of other African potentates.

Whilst indulging in the agreeable conviction that the endeavours of the British Embassy had been successful in arousing a monarch, who exercises so wide an influence over the destinies of surrounding millions, to a sense of the wickedness and degradation attaching in civilised lands to barter in the flesh and blood of our fellow-men, it occurred to me that he might be exhorted, with the best prospect of success, to break through the barbarous precautionary policy under which those members of the royal house who possess a contingent claim to the crown, and in other Christian realms would hold the highest offices and honours within its gift, had, through every generation since the days of the son of David, been doomed to chains in a living grave. And from the fortunate fact of the issue male of the

present reign being limited to two, I derived the pleasant hope, that if a statute so jealously guarded during nearly three thousand years, could now for once be infringed, it would not, in all probability, be revived on the monarch's demise.

Entertaining the liveliest fears of death, his manifold superstitions were ever the most easily awakened during sickness, when the actions of his past life crowded up in judgment before him. It was on these occasions that, in order to quiet his conscience, he made the most liberal votive offerings to the church and to the monastery, and that he gained the greatest victories over his deep-rooted avarice; and it was on these occasions, therefore, that the chord of his latent good feeling might obviously be touched with the happiest result to the cause of humanity.

That singular blending of debauchery and devotion which marks the royal vigils, has seriously impaired a constitution naturally good. During a long succession of years the Psalms of David and the strongest cholera mixture have equally shared the midnight hours of the king; and although scarcely past the meridian of life, he is subject to sudden spasmodic attacks of an alarming character. In one of these his restoration had been despaired of both by the priests and the physicians; and the voice of wailing and lamentation already filled the precincts of the palace.

Scarcely was it light ere a page came to my tent with an urgent summons to the sick chamber. We found the despot pale and emaciated, with fevered lip and bloodshot eye, reclining upon a couch in a dark corner of the closed veranda, his head swathed in white cloth, and his trembling arms supported by bolsters and cushions. Abba Raguel, the dwarf

Father Confessor, with eyes swollen from watching, was rocking to and fro, whilst he drowsily scanned an illuminated Ethiopic volume, containing the lives of the martyrs; and in deep conversation with the sick monarch was a favourite monk, habited like an Arab Bedouin in a black goat's hair cameline and a yellow cowl, but displaying the sacred cross in his right hand. The loud voice of the priesthood arose in boisterous song from the adjacent apartment: strings of red worsted had been tied round the monarch's thumbs and great toes; and the threshold of the outer chamber was bedewed with the still moist blood of a black bullock, which, when the taper of life was believed to be flickering in the socket, had been thrice led round the royal couch, and, with its head turned towards the East, was then slaughtered at the door, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

"My children," said His Majesty in a sepulchral voice, as he extended his burning hand towards us —"behold, I am sore stricken. Last night they believed me dead, and the voice of mourning had arisen within the palace walls, but God hath spared me until now. Tell me the medicine for this disease."

A febrifuge having been prepared, we attempted to follow the etiquette of the Abyssinian court, by tasting the draught prescribed; but the king, again extending his parched hand, protested against this necessity. "What need is there now of this?" he exclaimed reproachfully: "do not I know that you would administer to Sáhela Selássie nothing that could do him mischief? My people are bad; and if God had not mercy on me to restore me, they would deal evil with you—and to strip you of your property would even take away your lives."

I had oftentimes complimented the king upon the mildness and equity of his rule, and upon the readiness with which he gave ear to intercession on behalf of the slave. The implicit confidence which had supplanted all fear and suspicion in the breast of His Majesty, now favoured a still stronger appeal to his humanity, to his magnanimity, and to his piety. I urged him to take into favourable consideration the abject condition of his royal brothers—victims to a tyrannical and unnatural statute, the legacy of a barbarous age, which for centuries had resulted in such incalculable misery and mischief. I reminded him that it belongs unto those who wield the sceptre to triumph over prejudices; and that by the liberation of many innocent captives, of whom, though possessing the strongest claim that blood can give, he had perhaps scarcely even thought during his long and prosperous reign, he would perform an act alike acceptable to Heaven, and calculated to secure to himself on earth an imperishable name.

“And I will release them,” returned the monarch, after a moment’s debate within himself. “By the holy Eucharist I swear, and by the church of the Holy Trinity in Koora Gádel, that if Sáhela Selássie arise from this bed of sickness, all of whom you speak shall be restored to the enjoyment of liberty.”

The sun was shining brighter than usual, through a cloudless azure sky, when we all received a welcome summons to witness the redemption of this solemn pledge. The balcony of Justice was tricked out in its gala suit; and priests, governors, sycophants, and courtiers, crowded the yard, as the despot, restored to health, in the highest spirits and good humour, took his accustomed seat upon the velvet cushions. The mandate had gone forth for the liberation of his

brothers and his blood relatives, and it had been published abroad, that the royal kith and kindred were to pass the residue of their days free and unfettered near the person of the king, instead of in the dark cells of Góncho.

There were not wanting certain sapient sages who gravely shook the head of disapproval at this fresh proof of foreign influence and ascendency, and who could in nowise comprehend how the venerable custom of ages could be thus suddenly violated. The introduction of great guns, and muskets, and rockets, had not been objected to, although, as a matter of course, the spear of their forefathers was esteemed an infinitely superior weapon. Musical clocks and boxes had been listened to and despised, as vastly inferior to the jingling notes of their own vile instruments; and the Gothic cottage, with its painted trellises, its pictures, and its gay curtains, although pronounced entirely unsuited to Abyssinian habits, had been partially forgiven on the grounds of its beauty.

But this last innovation was beyond all understanding; and many a stupid pate was racked in fruitless endeavours to extract consolation in so momentous a difficulty. The more liberal party were loud in their praises of the king and of his generous intentions; and the royal gaze was with the rest strained wistfully towards the wicket, where he should behold once again the child of his mother, whom he had not seen since his accession, and should make the first acquaintance with his uncles, the brothers of his warrior sire, who had been incarcerated ere he himself had seen the light.

Stern traces had been left by the constraint of one-

third of a century upon the seven unfortunate descendants of a royal race, who were shortly ushered into the court by the state-gaoler. Leaning heavily on each other's shoulders, and linked together by chains, bright and shining with the friction of years, the captives shuffled onward with cramped steps, rather as malefactors proceeding to the gallows-tree, than as innocent and abused princes, regaining the natural rights of man. Tottering to the foot of the throne, they fell as they had been instructed by their burly conductor, prostrate on their faces before their more fortunate but despotic relative, whom they had known heretofore only through his connection with their own misfortunes, and whose voice was yet a stranger to their ears.

Rising with difficulty at the bidding of the monarch, they remained standing in front of the balcony, gazing in stupid wonder at the novelties of the scene, with eyes unaccustomed to meet the broad glare of day. At first they were fixed upon the author of their weary captivity, and upon the white men by his side who had been the instruments of its termination—but the dull, leaden gaze soon wandered in search of other objects; and the approach of freedom appeared to be received with the utmost apathy and indifference. Immured since earliest infancy, they were totally insensible to the blessings of liberty. Their feelings and their habits had become those of the fetter and of the dark dungeon. The iron had rusted into their very souls; and, whilst they with difficulty maintained an erect position, pain and withering despondency were indelibly marked in every line of their vacant and care-furrowed features.

In the damp vaults of Góncho, where heavy manacles on the wrists had been linked to the ankles

of the prisoners by a chain so short as to admit only of a bent and stooping posture, the weary hours of the princes had for thirty long years been passed in the fabrication of harps and combs; and of these relics of monotonous existence, elaborately carved in wood and ivory, a large offering was now timidly presented to the king. The first glimpse of his wretched relatives had already dissipated a slight shade of mistrust which had hitherto clouded the royal brow. Nothing that might endanger the security of his reign could be traced in the crippled frames and blighted faculties of the seven miserable objects that cowered before him; and, after directing their chains to be unriveted, he announced to all that they were Free, and to pass the residue of their existence near his own person. Again the joke and the merry laugh passed quickly in the balcony—the court fool resumed his wonted avocations; and, as the monarch himself struck the chords of the gaily-ornamented harp presented by his bloated brother Amnon, the buffoon burst into a high and deserved panegyric upon the royal mercy and generosity.

“My children,” exclaimed His Majesty, turning towards ourselves, after the completion of this tardy act of justice to those whose only crime was their consanguinity to himself—an act to which he had been prompted less by superstition than by a desire to rescue his own offspring from a dungeon, and to secure a high place in the opinion of the civilised world—“My children, you will write all that you have now seen to your country, and will say to the British Queen, that, although far behind the nations of the white men, from whom Ethiopia first received her religion, there yet remains a spark of Christian love in the breast of the king of Shoa.”

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